

International Journal of Social, Political and Economic Research

IJOSPER

ISSN: 2667-8810 (Online)

ijosper.uk

OPEN  ACCESS

Original Article

Article No: 20_V7_I2_A1

DOI: doi.org/10.46291/IJOSPERvol7iss2pp92-104

The Satisfaction Level of the Beneficiaries of Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs) in Bangladesh: A Practical Observation at Field Level

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Key Words:

Social Safety Nets Programs (SSNPs), Bangladesh, Satisfaction Level, Beneficiaries.

Abstract:

Bangladesh government allocates an amount of money in its national budget every year for the wellbeing of citizens. With the spirit of liberation war and the independence of Bangladesh the present government in its roadmap of development “Vision 2021” has incorporated strategies for the banishment of poverty, inequality and human deprivation. To ensure the sustainable development the Government of Bangladesh has started a total of 126 Safety Net Programmes in the FY 2019-20. To explore the extent and to identify the satisfaction level of the beneficiaries of Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs) in Bangladesh, a field study has been conducted in the selected two union councils. Total 70 respondents have been interviewed in this regard. They all have enjoyed different types of benefits of SSNPs. In this study, researchers have been noticed that how many beneficiaries are satisfied after getting the benefits of SSNPs and how many beneficiaries are not satisfied after getting the benefits. The study also found that how the socio-economic conditions of beneficiaries have been changed by getting the benefits.

1. Introduction

Social safety net programs (SSNPs) is protective tools taken by the government of a state to protect the poor and vulnerable groups of its society (Ahmed & Islam, 2011, p. 15). Bangladesh yearns to be a welfare state in near future exhibits firm promise to ensure the bliss of all its citizens. For the wellbeing of the citizens Bangladesh government allocates an amount of money in its national budget every year. SSNPs are provided to protect the individuals and families from the shock of poverty and calamity (Alam & Hossain, 2016). To ensure the sustainable development the Government of Bangladesh has started a total of 126 Safety Net Programmes (Finance, 2020) in the FY 2019-20: notably Cash Transfer Programs, Food Security Programs, Micro-Credit and Miscellaneous Funds Programs, Development Sector Programs etc. The major social safety net programmes (SSNPs) in Bangladesh can be divided into four broad categories: (i) employment generation programmes; (ii) programmes to cope with natural disasters and other shocks; (iii) incentives provided to parents for their children's education; and (iv) incentives provided to families to improve their health status (Khuda, 2011). All programmes are helpful for the vulnerable people in Bangladesh. For all these well planned and effective safety net programs, the percentage of poverty has been reduced (Dailyprothomalo, 2018). Whereas in the FY 1973-74 the poverty rate was 82%, in 1991 it was 56.7% and in the fiscal year 2018-19 the poverty rate has become 20.5% and the government aims to make it 0% by 2030 (Dailykalerkantho, 2019). Despite many positive aspects of SSNPs, there are a number of complaints about the distribution procedure of the benefits at the grassroots level. Moreover, it is important to know how much the socio-economic status of the beneficiaries has improved or not. It is also crucial to study the satisfaction level of the beneficiaries after getting the benefits of SSNPs. To conduct this study the researchers, collect the data through questionnaire for evaluating the nature and trends of SSNPs of Bangladesh. The satisfaction level of the beneficiaries in the rural area is also identified in this study.

2. Objectives of the Study

This study is to explore the satisfaction level of beneficiaries of SSNPs at the rural level in Bangladesh. The specific objectives of the paper are:

- (1) To find out the consciousness level of beneficiaries about the social safety net programmes for vulnerable groups in Bangladesh; and
- (2) To assess the nature and periods of getting benefits at rural level;
- (3) To explore the nature of women's decision-making procedure by getting SSNPs benefits;

- (4) To analyse the difficulties for getting benefits of SSNPs; and
- (5) To understand the nature of deprivation of benefits of SSNPs.

3. Methodology

This is a study on the Social Safety Nets Programmes (SSNPs) of the Bangladesh Government and this research is conducted at the rural area at Rajshahi district of Bangladesh. In this study both qualitative and quantitative methods have been applied and it is considered a mixed-method study in nature. It is combined on both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data are collected with the help of questionnaire through interview method from sampled respondents who are selected through random sampling procedure. For collecting relevant primary data for this research, the beneficiaries of SSNPs at the root level (two union parishads at Paba upazilla under Rajshahi district of Bangladesh) are interviewed. Information concerning Government, NGOs, voluntary and international organizations which have been published in their own reports or in other journals, articles, periodicals, newspapers etc. are taken as secondary data. Details of the categories and frequency of respondents are shown in tables.

3.1. Selected Categories of the Beneficiaries of SSNPs

Table 1: Age of the respondents

Age of the respondents.	Frequency	Percent
young (18-30)	5	7.1
middle (31-50)	23	32.9
old (50+)	42	60.0
Total	70	100.0

(Source: Field data, 2020)

Table: 2 Gender of the Respondents

Gender of the respondents.	Frequency	Percent
Male	27	38.6
Female	43	61.4
Total	70	100.0

(Source: Field data, 2020)

Table 3. Educational Qualifications of The Respondents

Educational qualifications of the respondents.	Frequency	Percent
Primary	23	32.9
Secondary	6	8.6
Illiterate	41	58.6
Total	70	100.0

(Source: Field data, 2020)

Table 4: Occupation/Profession of the respondents

Occupation of the respondents	Frequency	Percent
Farmer	6	8.6
Housewife	27	38.6
Unemployed	25	35.7
Others	12	17.1
Total	70	100.0

(Source: Field data, 2020)

For the purpose of effective research, the respondents of this two union councils have been categorized into three categories in the light of age which are follows as young age, middle age and old age. First level from the age of 18 to 30 years (7.1%), second level 31- 50 years (32.9%) and third level is from the age 50 to 80 years (60%). Table 11.1 shows that the percentage and frequency of the respondents of all categories. It is selected categorically so that the representation of all level of ages are being equally surveyed. This study depicts that all of the respondents cover various perceptions and attitudes. Then they are categorized into two levels according to their gender. Table 11.2 shows that 27(38.6%) respondents are male and 43(61.4%) respondents are female among 70 respondents. Then they are categorized into three level according to their educational qualifications. In this regard, table 11.3 represents the qualification of the respondents as primary level (32.9%), secondary level (8.6%) and illiterate (58.6%). The professional area of all the respondents are not same. Table 11.4 shows that the percentage and frequency of the respondents of different professions. Among the 70 respondent's farmer are 8.6%, Housewife are 38.6%, unemployed are 35.7% and other professionals are 17.1%.

4. Justification of the Study Area

It is very time-consuming and expensive to collect data from all of the beneficiaries of SSNPs in Bangladesh. The Researchers select only two Union Councils of Paba Upazila at Rajshahi district. In the study areas, there are various professionals including employees, businessmen, teachers, farmers, day laborer, and households. There are several social safety net programmes run by the Bangladesh government in study areas. We think that it can give an idea of the satisfaction level of the beneficiaries and the challenges of implementing such programmes in the other parts of the country. Moreover, the researchers permanently live in Rajshahi. So, areas have been selected due to the time and budget limitation.

5. Data Analysis and Findings

5.1 Consciousness of Beneficiaries about SSNPs

Consciousness level about the SSNPs is important to assess the satisfaction level of beneficiaries. We have tried to understand the consciousness level of beneficiaries of SSNPs. Table 5 shows that 82.9% of the respondents know a few about SSNPs. On the other hand, 17.1% of the respondents of the beneficiaries have not any idea about SSNPs of the government. Then the table 5.1 indicates that 67.1% of the respondents know a little about SSNPs and only 15.7% of the respondents know well about SSNPs of Bangladesh government. This study finds that many respondents have not enough knowledge about SSNPs.

Table 5: Consciousness about SSNPs

Conscious about SSNPs	Frequency	Percent
Yes	58	82.9
No	12	17.1
Total	70	100.0

(Source: Field data, 2020)

Table 5.1: Level of Consciousness

Level of Consciousness	Frequency	Percent
Know a little	47	81.0
Know well	11	19.0
Total	58	100.0

(Source: Field data, 2020)

5.2 Natures and Periods of Getting Benefits

After getting benefits of SSNPs, beneficiaries can change their lifestyle. Table 6 Shows that 61(61.4%) respondents have been getting the benefits for a long time and 27(38.6%) of the respondents have not been getting the benefits for a long time. Table 6.1 illustrates that 33(78.6%) respondents replied in the affirmative and 9(21.4%) respondents replied in the negative. Table 6.2 shows that the respondents, who said that their previous condition had changed further they were asked, “What kind of change have appended?” In this regard 5(15.2%) respondents told that their poverty has been reduced, 10(30.3%) respondents replied that they can run the cost of their family, 11(33.3%) respondents opined that they can take medical treatment and 4(12.1%) can afford their children’s education cost. But the respondents who told that, their previous condition have not changed further they were asked, “Why have not changed?” In this regard 7(77.8%) respondents opined that the amount of money that the government gives them under the SSNPs is very poor. Some of them 2 respondents weren’t willing to reply in this regard. This study found that the majority respondents (the beneficiaries) believed that after getting the benefits of SSNPs of the government their previous conditions have been changed.

Table 6: Duration of Getting Benefits

Duration	Frequency	Percent
For long time	43	61.4
Not for long time	27	38.6
Total	70	100.0

(Source: Field data, 2020)

Table 6.1: The Level of Changing Previous Conditions

Previous condition	Frequency	Percent
Changed	33	78.6
Not Changed	9	21.4
Total	42	100.0

(Source, Field data, 2020)

Table 6.2. Nature of Change

Nature of Change	Frequency	Percent
Poverty has reduced	5	15.2
Cost of the family	10	30.3
Medical treatment	11	33.3
Children's education cost	4	12.1
Others	3	9.1
Total	33	100.0

(Source: Field data, 2020)

Table 6.3: Causes for Not Changing

Causes for not Changing	Frequency	Percent
Amount of benefits is very poor	7	77.8
No reply	2	22.2
Total	9	100.0

(Source: Field data, 2020)

5.3 Women's Importance in The Decision-Making Process

Table 7 shows that 33(76.7%) female respondents think their importance have increased in their families after getting the benefits, while 23.3% of the respondents think the opposite. Another table 7.1 clears that 40(93%) female respondents can spend the money of SSNPs freely, and only 3 female respondents told that they cannot expend the money as their own wish. This research found that SSNPs have been playing an important role for increasing the women's importance in their family.

Table 7. Increasing Level Women's Decision-Making Process

Decision making process of Women	Frequency	Percent
Important	33	76.7
Not Important	10	23.3
Total	43	100.0

(Source: Field data, 2020)

Table 7.1. Nature of Spending Money

Can you spend the money freely?	Frequency	Percent
Freely	40	93.0
Not Freely	3	7.0
Total	43	100.0

(Source: Field data, 2020)

5.4 Complications of The Beneficiaries to Get the Benefits

As a citizen it is his/her right to get the benefits from the country without any complications and hesitations. It is the responsibility of an elected representative to provide him/her citizens the benefits. But the poorest people have faced a lot of complications and difficulties when they want to get the benefits. The table 8 illustrates that 22.9% of the total respondents have faced complications before getting the benefits of SSNPs while 77.1% of the beneficiaries opined that they have gotten the benefits without any complications. Table 8.1 shows that 14.3% of the respondents get their benefits by payment and 71.4% of the respondents told that they must go to UP again and again for getting the benefits of SSNPs and 2 respondents weren't willing to reply in this regard.

Table 8: Complications for Getting the Benefits

Complications for getting the benefits	Frequency	Percent
Yes	16	22.9
No	54	77.1
Total	70	100.0

(Source: Field data, 2020)

Table 8.1: Nature of difficulties

Nature of difficulties	Frequency	Percent
By Payment	2	14.3
By going to UP again and again	10	71.4
No reply	2	14.3
Total	14	100.0

(Source: Field data, 2020)

5.5. Satisfaction Level of The Beneficiaries

Table 9 shows that 55 (78.6%) beneficiaries are satisfied after getting the benefits of SSNPs while 15(21.4%) beneficiaries are not satisfied after getting this benefit. The study found that 33.3% of the respondents are not satisfied, because the amount of money is less. 20% of the respondents are not pleased since they don't get the benefits timely, 20% of the respondents are not happy because all programs of SSNPs are not continues all year long and other 4 respondents weren't willing to reply in this respect. This research found that several beneficiaries are not fully satisfied to get the benefits for various reasons.

Table 9. Satisfaction Level

Satisfaction Level	Frequency	Percent
Satisfied	55	78.6
Not Satisfied	15	21.4
Total	70	100.0

(Source: Field data, 2020)

Table 9.1. Reason for not Satisfaction

Reason for not Satisfaction	Frequency	Percent
The amount of money is less	5	33.3
Don't give timely	3	20
All programs are not existing whole year long	3	20
No reply	4	26.7
Total	11	100.0

(Source: Field data, 2020)

5.6: Deprivation from The Benefits

Above 10 shows, 27(38.6%) respondents think that someone has been deprived of the benefits. On the other hand, 39(55.7%) respondents opine that nobody has been deprived of the benefits. 29.6% of the respondents think, because of party consideration someone deprived of the benefits, 14.8% argue someone deprived of nepotism of the local authorities, 11.1% opined that someone deprived of the lack of communications. On the other hand, 11.1% think because of information lacking someone deprived of and 22.2% of the respondents opined the government allocation is not sufficient so that someone deprived of the benefits of SSNPs. Both the

Beneficiaries and the general people gave same opinion that someone is being deprived to get the benefits of SSNPs.

Table 10: Deprivation of benefits

Deprived of access to benefits	Frequency	Percent
Yes	27	38.6
No	39	55.7
No reply	4	5.7
Total	70	100.0

(Source: Field data, 2020)

Table 10.1: Reason of Deprivation

Reason of Deprivation	Frequency	Percent
Party consideration	8	29.6
Nepotism	4	14.8
Lack of communication	3	11.1
Lack of information	3	11.1
Not Sufficient Allocation	6	22.2
Others	1	3.7
No reply	2	7.4
Total	27	100.0

(Source: Field data, 2020)

6. Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1: Conclusion and Findings

No government in any country of the world can ensure hundred percent satisfaction of the citizen of his country and Bangladesh is not exception that. Bangladesh government has been working tirelessly to eradicate hunger and poverty from the country by launching various programs. But the successful implementation of this programs sometimes are hampered by some inconsistencies on the field and for the same reason there is some resentment among the public, for example- Table 9 shows that 55 (78.6%) beneficiaries are satisfied after getting the benefits of SSNPs but 15(21.4%) beneficiaries are not satisfied after getting this benefits. 33.3% of the respondent are not satisfied, because the amount of money is less. 20% of the respondents are not pleased since they don't get the benefits timely, 20% of the respondents are not happy

because all programs of SSNPs are not continues all year long. The beneficiaries have also raised specific complaints about the program such as- The table 8 illustrates that 22.9% of the total respondents have faced complications before getting the benefits of SSNPs. 14.3% of the respondents answered that they have to pay, 71.4% of the respondents told that they have to go to UP again and again to get the benefits for first time. However, all these problems will be solved if the appropriate authorities play a more responsible role in the field level. Above table 10 shows, 38.6% respondents think that someone has been deprived of the benefits. On the other hand, 55.7% respondents opine that nobody has been deprived of the benefits. 29.6% of the respondents think, because of party consideration someone deprived of the benefits, 14.8% argue someone deprived of nepotism of the local authorities, 11.1% opined that someone deprived of the lack of communications. On the other hand, 11.1% think because of information lacking someone deprived of and 22.2% of the respondents opined the government allocation is not sufficient so that someone deprived of the benefits of SSNPs.

6.2: Recommendations

- 1) Social Safety Nets programmes with specific objectives/goals need to be integrated. As a result, the beneficiaries will be more benefited and it will be more helpful to reduce unnecessary expenditure in SSNPs sector (Haider and Mahmud, 2017, p. 49).
- 2) The development of the lifecycle programmes was mentioned in the NSSS (National Social Security Strategy of 2015), but it is not yet possible to implement completely. It needs to be implemented (Hossain and Ali, 2017, p.92).
- 3) The actual value of the benefits under SSNPs should be increased (Ahmed, 2019, bdnews.24.com).
- 4) For those who are living below the poverty line, it is important to take certain programme so that they can get better from that situation soon (Ferdous, 2014, p.122).
- 5) The allocation for social security sector should be increased in view of the poverty rate in the country and in line with other countries in the world.
- 6) The government should increase the actual value of benefits without increasing the number of benefits.
- 7) The success of Social Safety Nets largely depends on the choice of the beneficiaries but there is still a lack of transparency and accountability. So, it is necessary to ensure transparency and accountability as well as regular monitoring.

9) Political considerations or party considerations hamper to choose the beneficiaries. So political considerations or party considerations should be eliminated in the case of benefits distribution and the beneficiaries' selection procedure.

10) Professionalism in social safety nets distribution and monitoring need to be ensured (Hasan, 2018).

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