

## **THE SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF RANGPUR DISTRICT**

\*Sajjad Hossine Sharif, Afroza Akter Opola

Department of Business Administration, Graduate School, Independent University, Bangladesh

\*Corresponding Author

### **ABSTRACT**

This study is conducted with an intention to explore the socioeconomic status of Rangpur. To investigate, this study considers various important determinants of socioeconomic status such as gender, religion, occupation, income, education, wealth class, child marriage rate and health. The study finds that the socioeconomic status of the rural area of Rangpur is far more lagging behind than the urban area. By the conduction of the survey it is closely observed that the socioeconomic factors are so close to one another that hindrance in one factors pulling behind the others factors which may consequence a serious undeveloped socioeconomic condition. It is evident that, in term of women empowerment, literacy rate, health consciousness, and employment these rural areas are facing serious dilemma. Based on the survey the socioeconomic status of Rangpur is not satisfactory as the majority of the population live in the village so that without promoting these rural areas the overall condition will not be able to meet the desired better condition. As a result, based on the findings of this study it is urged to take essential steps in order to improve the rural socioeconomic factors, hence promoting the overall socioeconomic condition.

**Keywords:** Child marriage, Literacy rate, Wealth class, Health awareness, Occupation.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Rangpur is situated at North Bangladesh. When the word "North Bengal" comes under discussion, the first scenario that comes to the mind that is- the people of this region is the poorest among the poor. Based on this perception, this study is an effort to discover the real scenario of their socioeconomic status.

Rangpur has a very low literacy rate though the population density is very high. Not even the half of the population is literate in which women participation in education is unsatisfactory. Women participation in the higher education in term of the tertiary level education is very

insignificant. With a huge uneducated population their quality of occupation is traditional such as traditional way of cultivation. The inefficiency and lack of education also make obstacles in adopting the scientific advanced method of cultivation. As most the rural economy is heavily relying on the agriculture, so that lower production also reduces their income which in return has negative impact on the literacy rate. Moreover, this negative impact continues generation after generation. The negative impact of illiteracy rate and low income also intensify poverty. It was evidently found that 42.35% people live here under the poverty line. Because of the poverty and illiteracy another social disease child marriage become more formidable social phenomena among the rural people. Because it is education which helps people to understand the importance of the getting educated and promotes the next generation to be educated. All of these scenarios also have another negative impact on the women empowerment in term of providing their opinion in the family, casting vote etc. Lack of education, awareness and intensified poverty also indicates unhealthy environment which becomes evident based on the survey when the study investigate and find the very lower rate of the sanitary latrine. Actually the socioeconomic factors are related with one another as like as a web. When any one of them affected negatively the whole web will face the negative impact ultimately.

However, arguments, counterarguments, different opinions, findings and results can be raised based on considering different data, different surveyed area and different socioeconomic factors. But this study will try to focus on determining the true socioeconomic status of the Rangpur based the collected data, analysis and findings with light of existing arguments about this particular subject matter.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Description of the research area:**

Rangpur district with a with an area of 2370.45 square kilometer, it is situated in between 25°18' and 25°57' north latitudes and in between 88°56' and 89°32' east longitudes. Rangpur district has 8 upazila, 3 municipals, 83 unions and 1435 villages. Though the standard of living in the urban area is much better than before and it has changed dramatically over the last few years but the conditions of the villagers did not changes that much dramatically. Their socioeconomic condition is significantly lower than the socio-economic status of the town and city people. Most of the rural people live under the poverty.

### **2.2 Identifying variables:**

This research has an intention to explore the socio-economic status of Rangpur. In such case, to examine and provide an extensive description of the socioeconomic status, this study considers gender, religion, average family size, occupation and income, education, wealth class, child

marriage rate and health as they are the most important and fundamental factors to determine socioeconomic condition of any location.

### **2.3 Data and sample:**

This study considers 42 respondents as sample. To collect primary sample data, 45 questionnaires were distributed among which 39 questionnaires were completed and returned. 3 questionnaires were partially completed and returned. But the rest were not returned. These are the sources of the primary data collection. For the secondary data this study considers various relevant websites, previous study, newspapers. To collect the sample data convenience sampling method was applied.

### **2.4 Processing and analysis of collected data:**

Questionnaires were developed based on the most related questions in order to identify the socioeconomic status. Based on the logical sequence, the questionnaires mostly related to the intended variables in order to extract more authentic information. It should be noted for some socio economic abstract such as child marriage concept this study considers the primary data. The study also considers the primary data where no secondary reliable data was found. For more concrete socioeconomic factor such as gender, religion, occupation etc the study considers the secondary data.

### **2.5 Presentation of the processed data:**

For this study both the primary and secondary data is considered where all the primary data was collected through direct semi-structure interview with the household head or the adult person of the selected household. The interview was conducted with an aim of extracting the authentic information about the selected variables. To meet this demand it was also carefully observed that whether the interview is conducted in an effective way to meet the major objective.

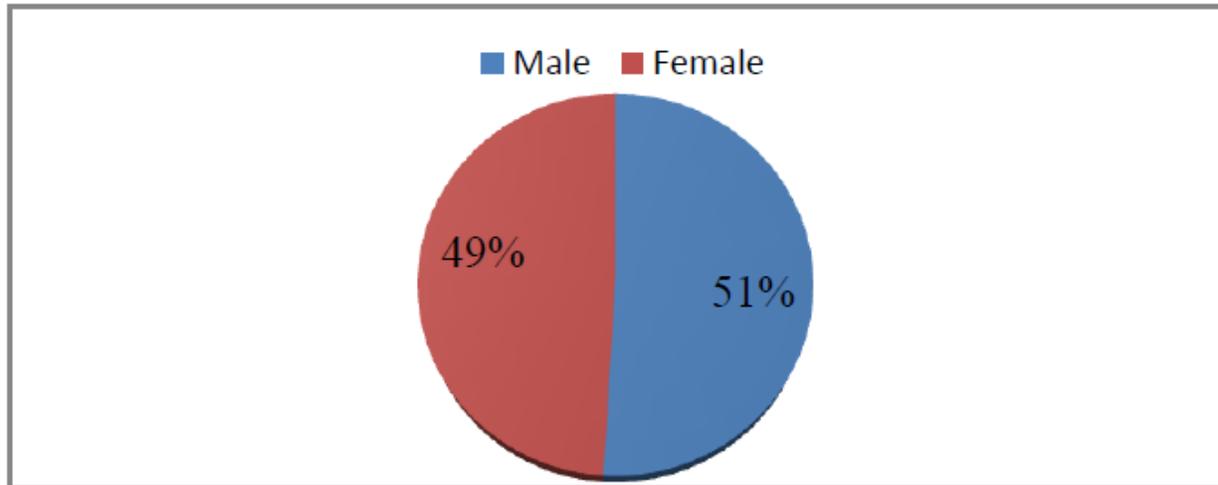
The primary and secondary, both types of data were processed through mathematical software. The result derived from processed data is represented by implementing various chart and graph.

### **2.6 Scope of the study:**

The scope of the study is limited to the consideration of few determinates of the socio-economic status such as sex, age, income, occupation, education etc. Moreover, the study does not consider any household outside of the selected study area to get more elaborate and intensive result.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

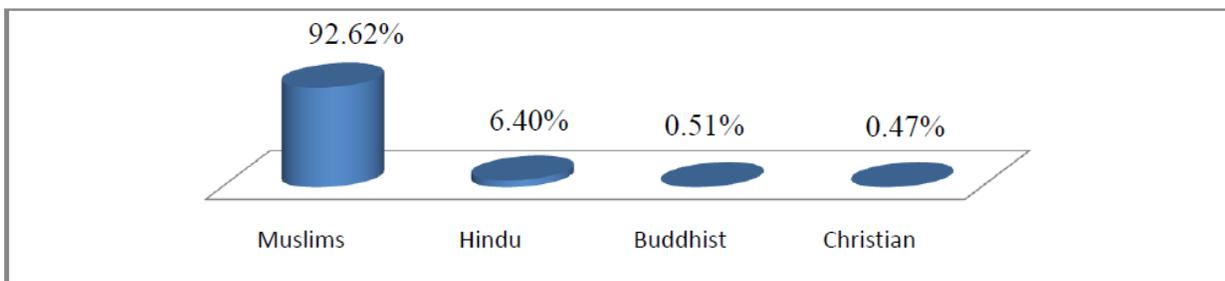
#### 3.1 Gender:



**Figure 1: Percentage of male and female in total population**

Rangpur has total population of 2534365 (100%) where 49% is female population and 51% is male population. This statistic is based on the secondary data. But when this study considers the number of population under 18, the results were more interesting. Based on the surveyed data, under 18 population is 40% of the total population where male population is 43% and female population is 57%.

#### 3.2 Religion:



**Figure 2: Percentage of population of different religion**

Most of the people in Bangladesh are Muslims. For Rangpur it is also true as here Muslim religion is further more populous than any other religion. It is evidently found based on the census that 92.62% of the total population is Muslims. It is the most dominated religion in this

area. After that 6.40% of the total population is Hindu. Other religion people Buddhist and Christian are very few in percentage in this area.

### 3.3 Family size:

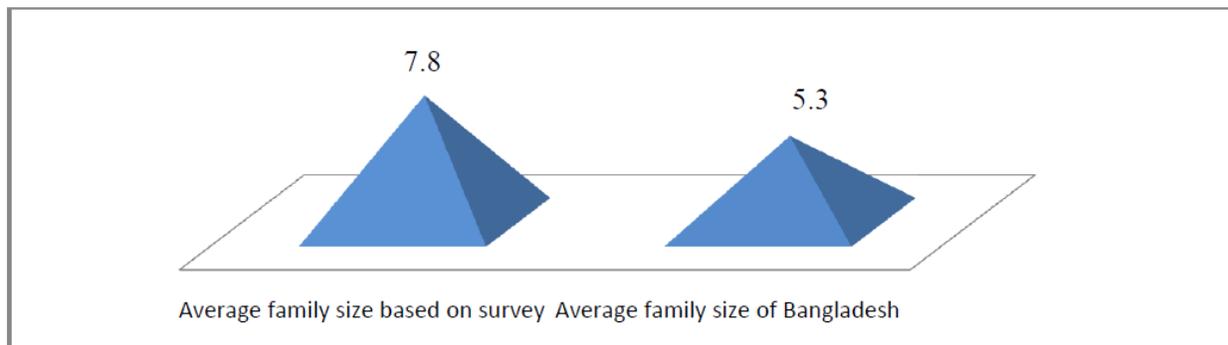


Figure 3: Comparison between average family size

Based on the surveyed data the average family size is 7.8 where in Bangladesh the average family size is 5.3. This finding actually indicates that people are not aware about the benefit of family planning. It is a matter of concern in a sense that the average family size is almost 2.5 persons higher than the average family size of Bangladesh which indicates an unusual growth of population that may enhance unemployment rate, poverty, illiteracy rate etc. The major reason behind this scenario is the existing lower literacy rate, unawareness about family planning and social superstition.

### 3.4 Income and occupation:

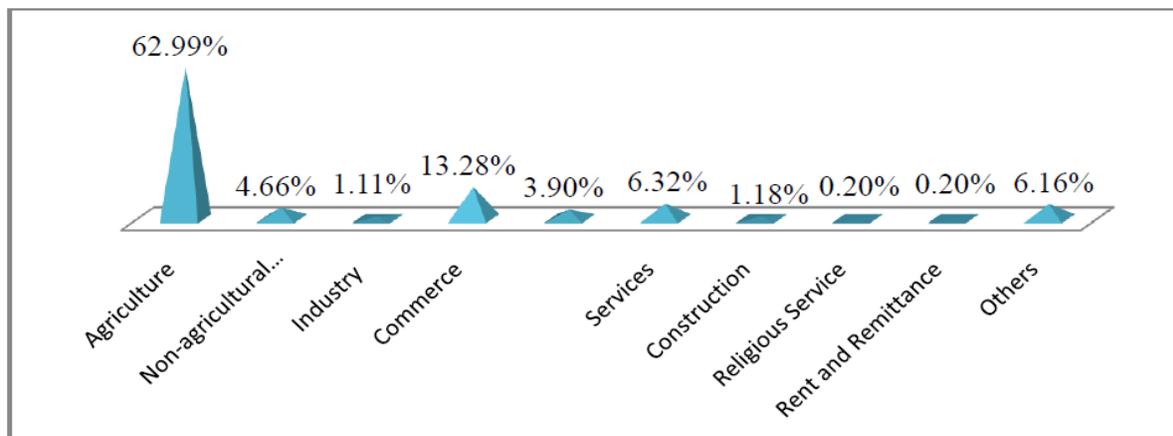
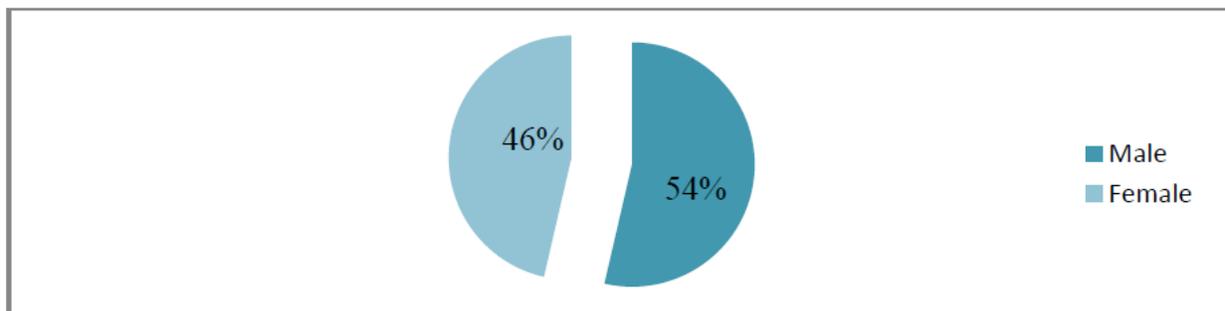


Figure 4: Contribution from the main sources of income

This exhibition is postulating that agriculture is the main source of income. As the land is suitable for cultivating tobacco, paddy, mustard, potato most of the people are still relying on the agriculture. Another major reason is their lack of skill and education to engage with any other occupation. Moreover, the higher rate of agricultural occupation indicates the higher rate of seasonal unemployment as cultivation of crops is directly related to season. However, 54% people is directly depending on the agriculture to lead their life. But the 22.48% people who are associated with agriculture also associated with other occupation to earn more and eliminate their seasonal unemployment problem. The remaining 23.52% people are not relying on agriculture for earning. They are engaging with other occupations. Small businesses, vegetable selling, shop keeping and transportation are also the dominated source of income right after the agriculture.

### 3.5 Education:

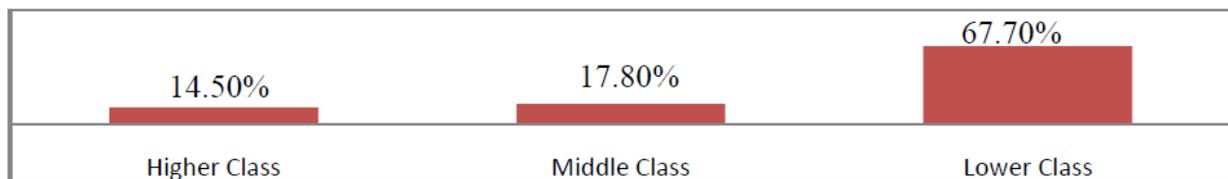


**Figure 5: Literacy rate for male and female**

The average literacy rate is 47.20% with an average school attendance rate of 55%. Based on the surveyed data, in case of higher education 17.08% male population can make their access where female members' percentage is almost half of the male. Only 8.30% female population is enrolling the tertiary level education. Over the last 14 years the literacy rate increased gradually. In 2001 it was only 15.91% where female participation in education was almost 1.4% of total population in Rangpur. As the literacy rate increases so that the number of educational institute also increases over the last few years. It should be noted that in Rangpur district there is one university and one open university. Besides there is one medical college, one law college, one teacher's training college, one Cadet college and one homeopath college. For higher secondary education there are 65 colleges. There are 320 secondary schools, 1166 primary schools, 370 madrasa, 44 satellite schools, 20 community schools, 193 NGO administrated schools, 25 Kindergarten and 1 music schools. To make the labor force more efficient and productive there is one polytechnic institute and one vocational institute.

### 3.6 Wealth class:

Economic structure refers to here the wealth class in society. This study considers standard of living equation to postulate the wealth class. In this study the standard of living is divided into 3 classes which are upper class, middle class and lower class. Based on the annual income and wealth the economic structure will indicate how many households will belong to upper class, middle class and lower class in our sample. It should be noted that wealth is considered based on the number of livestock owned by households, area of cultivatable land owned by the household, bank account balance, housing condition and amenities, loans and other property such as tractor and the assets of other business if applicable.



**Figure 6: Wealth class for surveyed households**

**The standard: 1.5 dollar/ day \* 5.26 dollar / family \* 30 days \* 12 months \* current currency rate (Dollar to BDT).**

**= 1.5\*5.26\*30\*12\* 77.6414 (exchange rate between BDT and USD is used based on 2014 average rate)**

**= 220532.63256 BDT**

In the economic structure with a monthly average income higher than 18377.71938 BDT considers as that household belongs to the upper class. Based on the survey a upper class household has monthly average expense higher than 8658.33 BDT. But this is not found by any standard equation. People in various occupations such as owning and cultivating large agricultural land (more than 3 acres), work in aboard, wholesaler in village and town market and more than two earners in one family are basically the major reasons of their better standard of living. It should be noted that in this class literacy rate is high and child marriage rate is comparatively very low. Percentage of both male and female students who are enrolling tertiary education mostly comes from this class.

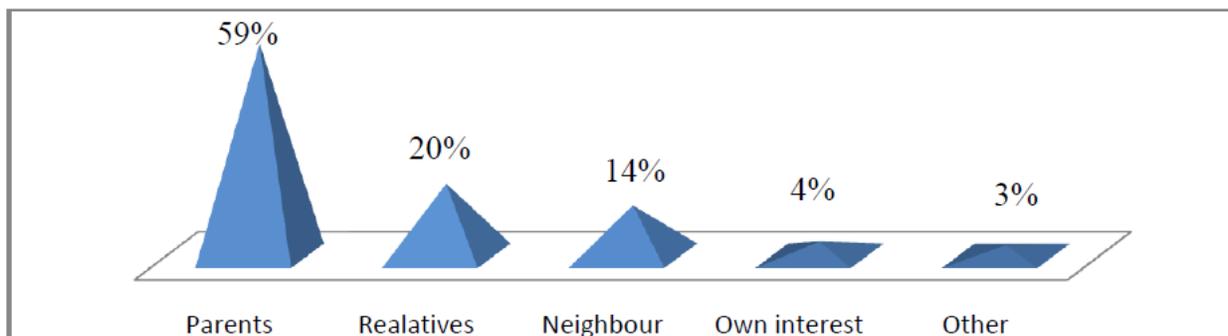
Households with an average income approximate to 18377.71938 BDT considers as middle class. Based on the survey they have also an average expense of 6850.36 BDT per month. People occupied in one occupation, owing and cultivating agricultural field less than 1 acres, vegetable retailers in the in the village market, shopkeepers, transport workers are the members of this class. Here literacy rate is in moderate level as the number of school going children is

satisfactory but the percentage of students in tertiary level education is very low. Concept of child marriage is also acceptable dominantly in this class.

Household with an average income significantly lower than 18377.71938 BDT considers as lower class. Based on the survey, these household have an average monthly expense of 4281.86 BDT. Mainly seasonal occupational, unemployment, owing no agricultural land, loan with higher interest from land owner, extremely low rate of literacy, superstition are the major reasons behind their poor living standard. According to the survey their family size is unusually large. Child marriage is part of their culture and philosophy.

### 3.7 Child marriage:

Child marriage is one of the most dominated socioeconomic factors. Because child marriage is such a social disease which results from the poor literacy rate, higher poverty, lack of women rights and superstitions. In a fact, it is such an indicator that evidently postulates the negative epidemic impact of the illiteracy and also indicates the urgency of women empowerment. Child marriage is also another influential factor to measure women health condition in term of pregnancy at an immature age. Based on the survey it is illustrated that child marriage is mostly promoted by parents. Relatives and neighbors are also playing vital role and to some extent the subject has own interest about child marriage.

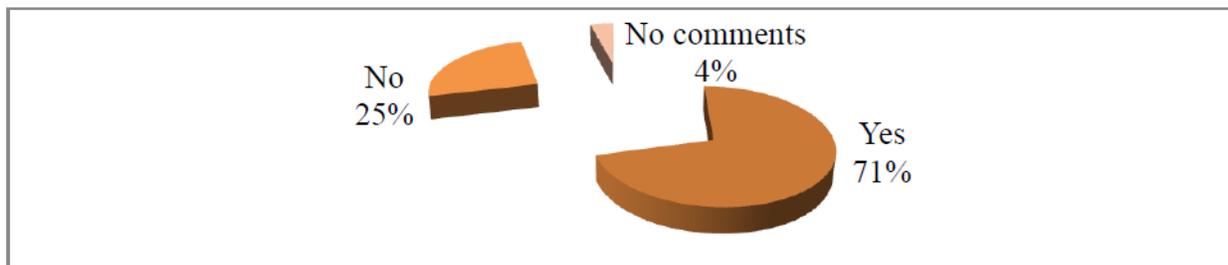


**Figure 7: Percentage of respondent who promotes child marriage**

Most of the parents have a strong positive perception about the child marriage of their daughters. Parents believe that marriage of their daughter at early age will allow them to enjoy both of the social and economic benefit. In most of the case as the family size is high so that early marriage of the daughter will reduce the cost of living for a family. Early marriage also reduces the amount of dowry. Moreover, parents believe that feeding and educating their female children is economic burdens for them, as they will not contribute to their paternal family after get married. Marriage at an early age also makes possible opportunity to enhance social status. As early

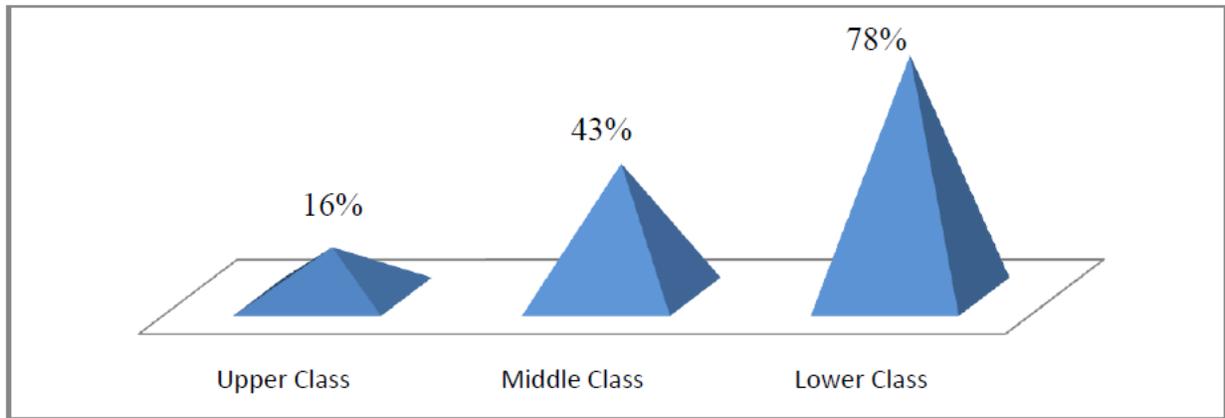
marriage has positively accepted so that neighbors also welcome the marriage warmly and there is also a possibility to make relationship with the people who has better standard of living. Moreover, parents also attracted to the early marriage in order to avoid sexual harassment and protect their daughters.

Based on the survey it is evident that the entire respondent did not promote the child marriage. Moreover, those female members who are fulltime workers did not approve the child marriage. One of the major reason behind this, they are contributing in their family. Parents of the fulltime female workers also reluctant about child marriage. Amin et al., (1998) claimed that garment provides an incentive toward their female workers to get married in delay and give birth of child in delay because of the cost of living the workplace. Based on the survey, in a very few case, parents also disapprove the child marriage because of the completion of their children higher education.



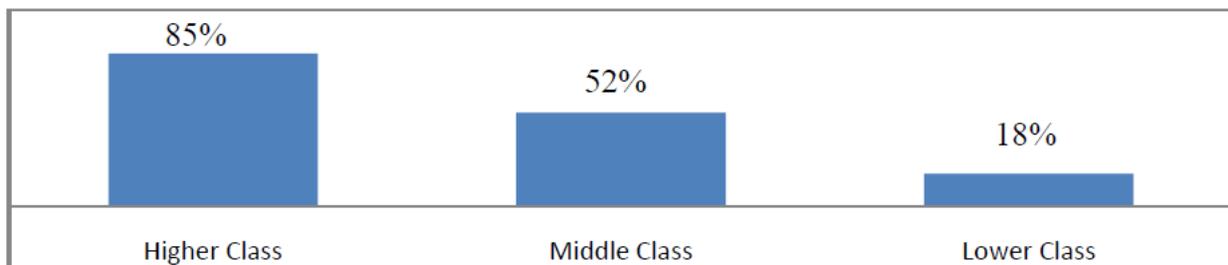
**Figure 8: Percentage of respondent who has positive, negative and no opinion**

The economic status of the household has significant impact on the occurrence of child marriage. This study has already discussed 3 types of wealth classes based on the income and wealth. Based on the survey, in the upper class the rate of child marriage is low. On the other hand, in the lower class the rate of child marriage is very high. Another important thing is it is not only the economic status that actually has only impact on the child marriage. Illiteracy rate is another major factor which also influences this social disease. The effect is simultaneous as illiteracy rate is higher in lower class so that both of these factors, higher illiteracy rate and poverty create an upward pressure on the child marriage rate.



**Figure 9: Rate of child marriage in different economic class**

Another momentous reason behind the child marriage is the unawareness about the law and legislation of child marriage. The implementation of the child marriage law is a considerable factors but when the rural people unaware about the significance of this law, it becomes impossible to implement the law extensively and effectively. Higher illiteracy rate, ineffective governmental effort, superstitions, poverty and unawareness are the major reasons behind this scenario. Based on survey it is evident that, the higher economic status causes to increase the literacy rate which in return helps the people to understand the importance of eliminating the child marriage. Without the rural people awareness about child marriage law, the effective enforcement will not possible. Moreover, without tightening the law and restrictions the child marriage will increase at the every socioeconomic stage which will ultimately affect the overall of socioeconomic condition of the society.

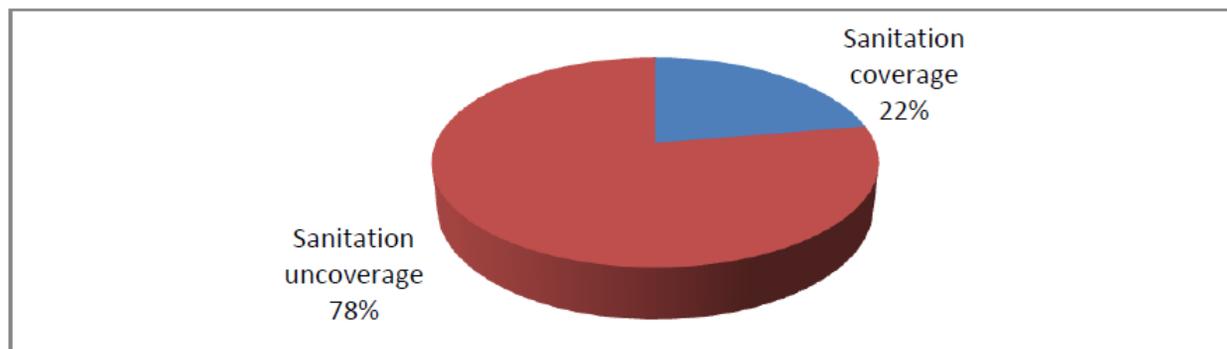


**Figure 10: Percentage of respondent aware about child marriage**

### **3.8 Health and sanitation:**

Health is one of the most important socioeconomic factors. Most importantly in the rural area, one of the main indicators of health is to have and use sanitary latrine. But based on the secondary data and to some extent by using our surveyed data this study explores that the

sanitation latrine converges is only 22%. This unhealthy environment is the root of many hazardous maternal diseases, waterborne diseases and creates many unusual problems in pregnancy. Moreover, it may reduce the average longevity of the people. From a basic perception, anyone can argue that most of the waterborne diseases are not such dangerous as before. But it is also true that this rural people are not aware about the modern medical technology. They have more believe in quack doctor. Another reason is government has lack of capacity to sent free modern medicine and expert doctors. As a result, because of the higher cost of medicine they have no access in the modern hospital or modern medical care. In most of the case the government hospital has no modern equipment and expert doctors. As a result, in such scenario the waterborne diseases can affect the rural people epidemically.



**Figure 11: Percentage of sanitary latrine coverage in term of population**

## CONCLUSION

With high literacy rate and effective governmental efforts, it will be possible to make the rural people of Rangpur to be more skilled in their occupation. Not only it will positively intensify the production of agriculture but also create more opportunities for employment. In such a way, the seasonal unemployment will be eradicated permanently. Hence, the above discussed economic structure will be healthier. With some planned multiple effective steps which will be initiated by the government, private organizations and NGOs, the people of this area might be able to enjoy a better standard of living. Moreover, these initiatives of making human assets will be a great effort to eliminate the social curse child marriage by increasing the social status with better earning. In this way the women empowerment through their anticipation in various social and economic activities will be achieved. To improve the overall socioeconomic status of Rangpur needs long term effective plans and the efficient enforcement of those plans by the specialized people in this sector where government might have to take both preventive and protective approaches based on case to case.

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