

The Role of Marketing in Ensuring Fair Price of Paddy in the Haor Regions of Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the challenges farmers in the Haor region of Bangladesh face in securing fair prices for their paddy harvests, with a particular emphasis on the influence of marketing. Data were collected from the farmers and agricultural experts through detailed interviews and key informant interviews by using a qualitative phenomenological approach. The findings reveal several significant obstacles, including the intense presence of intermediaries, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to microcredit, difficulties with warehousing, high labor costs, insufficient knowledge, and poverty among peasants. These barriers hinder farmers from receiving fair compensation for the agricultural goods they produce. The study emphasizes the need for enacting comprehensive policy reforms to address these issues and ensure fair payments for farmers. Proposed approaches include improving access to microcredit, enhancing awareness resources, optimizing storage infrastructure, and protecting farmers from exploitative intermediaries. The study was essential as it could enhance our understanding of the complexities of agricultural marketing in the Haor region and its impact on farmers' livelihoods and overall our food security. The results will assist the policymakers to develop related marketing strategies that can be advantageous to the agriculture sector and that can be helpful to the Haor farmers. This would additionally contribute to the establishment of equitable pricing for their paddy crops, thereby fostering the adoption of sustainable farming techniques and stimulating agricultural development in Bangladesh.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A considerable segment of the worldwide populace consumes rice and rice-derived commodities, hence facilitating the fulfillment of their nutritional needs as prescribed. Rice has become a prominent staple meal for a considerable fraction of the global population, particularly in the countries of Asia, Latin America, and Africa (Muthayya et al., 2014). Rice is widely recognized as the agricultural commodity with the highest global consumption rate. Rice cultivation is presently practiced in more than one hundred nations, yielding a global production of 715 million metric tons of paddy rice annually (Renu, 2022). Asia is the leading global region in terms of rice production.

Asia is the most densely inhabited continent in the world, with a primary focus on domestically consumed rice

production. Fifteen nations are notably accountable for 90% of the world's rice production, with India and China being crucial contributors. The consortium comprises Indonesia, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, the Philippines, Japan, Cambodia, the Republic of Korea, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Asian countries collectively contribute to 90% of the world's rice production (Muthayya et al., 2012). Rice farming is of utmost importance in Bangladesh, as it is the main crop. In Bangladesh, the specific area designated for growing rice covers 6.46 million hectares, which accounts for almost 78% of the land used for crops (Jamal et al., 2023).

Bangladesh is predominantly reliant on agriculture as its primary economic sector. The production of rice in Bangladesh is significantly influenced by the socio-economic conditions of the region, which are crucial for the

food security and livelihoods of the population. Rice is the main food source in Bangladesh due to the region's favorable geographical characteristics (Afrad et al., 2018). In Bangladesh, the three main types of rice produced are Aus, Aman, and Boro (Chakraborty, 2017). The Haor is a notable wetland area located in the northeastern part of Bangladesh. Haor refers to large, shallow wetlands that are found in natural river systems that flood every year during the monsoon season.

These geographical features are mainly located in the northeastern region of Bangladesh, commonly known as the Haor basin (Irfanullah et al., 2011). Three varieties of rice are cultivated in Bangladesh namely Aush, Aman and Boro. Among the three paddies, Boro exhibited the best value. Rice yield in Boro cultivation was overall very consistent during the observed years. In 2015, a yield of 3.99 tons per hectare was observed, which was the highest compared to 3.44 tons per hectare in 2006 (Chakraborty, 2017). Between 2006 and 2015, there was a 2.23-tonne per hectare rise in rice production (Chakraborty, 2017). The highest yield was recorded in Australia in 2015 at 2.38 tons per hectare, while the lowest yield was observed in 2008 at 1.64 tons per hectare (Chakraborty, 2017). Boro paddy is the main agricultural product of Haor region. Most of the arable area in Haor region is devoted to Boro rice cultivation.

The discussion's topic pertains to the marketing of paddy or rice. Marketing involves all efforts related to transporting a product from manufacture to customer purchasing (Singh et al., 2022). Marketing is crucial to achieving the overarching objectives of food security, poverty alleviation and sustainable agriculture, particularly in the context of smallholder farmers in developing countries. This process involves the participation of multiple individuals and organizations that perform various functions such as assembly, financing, grading and standardization, transportation, packaging and sorting (Singh et al., 2022). The operational mechanisms of these marketing organizations have undergone substantial alterations over time. The government in Bangladesh gathers grains. The local community is actively participating in the harvesting of rice paddies in cooperation with the government.

Several studies have been conducted to examine the profitability of paddy agriculture and marketing in Bangladesh (Islam, 2018; Pervin, 2013; Alam, 2006; Siddiquee et al., 2019; Naznin et al., 2019; Rahaman et al., 2022; M. Rahaman et al., 2020; Mohapatra et al., 2018; Chiv et al., 2020; Chakraborty, 2017; Singh et al., 2022; Mohammad Ali & Saito, 1996). However, there needs to be more research conducted on the fair price of paddy marketing in the specific geographical region under consideration.

Upon examining several literary works pertaining to this specific subject, it has been found that there is a lack of research conducted on the agriculture marketing what is the focus of this study. This study aims to address two research topics, namely: (a) The role of marketing in ensuring equitable pricing of paddy in the Haor region. (b) Do intermediaries play a role in paddy marketing? This study

examines and combines the role of marketing in guaranteeing the equitable pricing of paddy in the Haor region of Bangladesh.

The focus of the study is to identify the absence of an appropriate marketing framework and its ramifications on the equitable valuation of paddy cultivated by farmers in the Haor region. Therefore, this study holds significance from the perspective of farmers as it enables them to assess the costs and revenues associated with paddy marketing. The study not only analyses the financial viability but also elucidates the challenges faced by farmers and their recommendations about paddy cultivation and marketing. The results of the study will aid researchers in further research on contemporary Boro paddy production and marketing, as well as policymakers in developing future policies that take farmers' production issues into account.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Agricultural Marketing

In applied agricultural economics, agricultural marketing emerged as a distinct field in the early 1900s. The central emphasis of our investigation centered on scrutinizing the intricacies and behaviors within agricultural commodity markets. Additionally, we delved into the analysis of governmental interventions, specifically exploring "marketing orders" within the United States and "marketing boards" in the United Kingdom. Eventually, it gained recognition from academics and was incorporated into business management curricula across North America and Europe. The official addition of "marketing" to the name of Newcastle University's Chair of Agricultural Marketing in 1963 marked a significant turning point for the field in Europe. Numerous positions that are similar were created across the continent as a result of this shift. According to Kohls (1955) agricultural marketing is the business process of transferring food products and services from producers to consumers. Its historical significance was limited by the predominance of local food production.

Things gained value when they moved from the farmer to the consumer as a result of the industrial revolution, which increased the gap between production and consumption. In literary works, agricultural marketing entails constructing "marketing utilities" connected to place, time, and shape. Agricultural marketing, which was once seen to be an impediment to agriculture, is now recognized as an analysis of the financial structure and efficiency of the enterprise. This is a reference to policies enacted by governments with the aim of improving the efficiency of the market and raising the share of food expenditure that goes to farmers. Agricultural marketing textbooks extensively delve into a myriad of subjects, including government policy, pricing strategies, futures and hedging, cooperatives, competitive dynamics, commodity markets, grading systems, demand and supply analysis, marketing information, marketing efficiency, and distribution channels. McLeay and Zwart (1993) provide a comprehensive elucidation of these topics in their detailed exploration.

B. Agricultural economy and marketing

Agricultural marketing constitutes a subset within the broader realm of agricultural economics, an interdisciplinary field extensively studied by organizations such as the Agricultural Economics Society and the European Review of Agricultural Economics. The research in this domain spans various areas including production economics, farm management, agricultural policy, rural development, factor markets, supply and demand analysis, marketing strategies for food and agricultural products, international trade and development, and methodological approaches. The Journal of Agricultural Economics dedicates 4% of its publications to articles with a specific focus on marketing. Important topics covered in the literature include food consumption analysis, marketing boards, advertising performance, and marketing margin analysis. Over the years, there has been a discernible decline in the quantity of marketing publications, particularly between 1977 and 1986. Based on historical research, 10% of publications over the last 50 years have focused primarily on pricing and marketing. The field of agricultural economics has moved from perceiving marketing as strange to recognizing it as an essential component. To meet the need for economists with training in distribution economics, Newcastle University's Department of Agricultural Marketing and the Chair were established in the early 1960s with funding from the Ministry of Agriculture. The goal of agricultural marketing is to produce, handle, and distribute food, textiles, and other agricultural products with the greatest possible efficiency of resources. By utilizing markets, processing, transportation, promotion, and retail establishments, economic ideas are employed to effectively address challenges in meeting client demands (Bosanquet, 1963).

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A. Research design

The study uses a qualitative phenomenological technique to investigate the effects of inadequate marketing infrastructure on equitable remuneration for rice farmers. A qualitative research method was selected to precisely capture the perspectives of the participants. Qualitative research in this setting explores the perspectives of individuals and their lived experiences, providing valuable insight into the issue.

Forbes (2015) stated that qualitative research offers a more comprehensive and profound understanding of the issue being studied. A phenomenological inquiry is a study that explores the fundamental nature of human experience through the analysis of participants' narratives (Nieswiadomy and Bailey, 2012). The IPA was used to understand the participants' subjective experiences from their own viewpoints.

IPA aims to comprehensively examine how individuals make sense of their unique experiences (Gough & Lyons, 2016). It gives a lot of ideas about how to look at and understand real experience (Shinebourne, 2011). IPA records real-life events (Callary et al., 2015) rather than analyzing them theoretically.

In addition, the utilization of the Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA) approach proves to be highly advantageous for investigating intricate, uncertain, and emotionally charged phenomena (Smith and Osborn, 2015). This study employed the few steps of the IPA data analysis approach as outlined by (Callary et al., 2015).

B. Features of the study area

The study was conducted within the Haor region of Bangladesh. The Haor region in Bangladesh plays a crucial role in contributing to a substantial amount of the country's paddy crop. As a result, a significant market has arisen for the trading of rice within this specific geographic region. This study focuses on the districts of Sunamganj, Sylhet, Netrakona, Moulvibazar, and Habiganj.

C. Sampling and sample size

In order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the issue pertaining to the inadequacy of the marketing structure in ensuring fair compensation for paddy cultivation by farmers, two interview techniques have been employed, namely In-depth Interviews (IDI) and Key Informant Interviews (KII). Utilizing in-depth interviews as a methodological approach offers significant flexibility and interactivity, allowing for thorough analysis and contextualization of participants' perspectives and personal experiences.

Employing in-depth interviews as a methodological approach provides flexibility and engagement, facilitating a thorough examination and contextualization of participants' perspectives and personal experiences. The investigator exclusively speaks with key informants who possess specialized knowledge about a given subject.

Eleven farmers were interviewed in-depth. Ten KIIs were conducted with an agriculture officer and marketing specialist. The researchers selected the study sample using homogenous purposive sampling. This sampling strategy intentionally selects people or groups with suitable skills or knowledge.

For most qualitative research designs, an optimal sample size ranges from 15 to 20 participants, especially when the participants have similar characteristics. Sandelowski (1995) recommended that a sample size of 10 would be enough for qualitative investigations involving a homogeneous population. Crouch and McKenzie (2006) proposed that having a sample size of fewer than 20 participants could help improve open and sympathetic communication by fostering personal ties.

Numerous scholars offer varied recommendations regarding the determination of sample sizes for qualitative studies. For instance, Charmaz (2004) contends that a sample size of 25 individuals is appropriate for small-scale projects. Additionally, Modell (1982), as revised by Guest et al. (2011), emphasizes the significance of systematically selecting 15 respondents for qualitative case studies. Green suggests that a majority of respected researchers typically involve a minimum of 20 or more respondents. However, I opted for the technique of selective sampling. Participant

observation was conducted over a two-month period, spanning from September 2023 to October 2023.

D. Demographic profile of the respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic profile distribution of respondents, encompassing gender, age, education, marital status, and place of residence. Among the respondents, 16 are men, while 5 are women. Age distribution indicates varying representation across categories, with the majority falling between 51 and 70 years old. Education levels span from illiterate to graduated, with the highest count in the graduated category (10). Marital status reveals 12 married respondents, 5 unmarried and 4 widows. The residence breakdown illustrates 11 respondents from villages and 10 from cities. This comprehensive table offers insights into the diverse characteristics of the surveyed population.

Table 1
Demographic profile of the respondents:

Category	Variables	N
Gender	Men	16
	Women	5
Age category	21–30	3
	31–40	2
	41–50	4
	51–60	6
	61-70	6
Education	Illiterate	7
	Under primary	1
	High school	3
Marital status	Graduated	10
	Married	12
	Unmarried	5
Place of residence	Widow	4
	Village	11
	City	10

Source: Survey data

E. Data collection instruments

To conduct this investigation, predefined criteria for inclusion and exclusion were delineated prior to the initiation of data gathering. We exclusively chose participants who met the specified both criteria. Three standards were established and are presented below:

1. The individual being surveyed could perhaps be a farmer who is actively involved in the cultivation of rice in the Haor region.
2. The response serves as a mediator between the agricultural producer and the ultimate purchaser.
3. There are two distinct roles within the field of agriculture: the agricultural officer and the agricultural marketing specialist.

The adoption of the semi-structured interview method was deemed appropriate for this research endeavor, owing to its capacity to afford a thorough comprehension of pragmatic queries related to the study's subjects (Catterall, 2000). In addition, a semi-structured interview is employed to gather

more detailed and precise information pertaining to the study issue (Berg and Lune, 2017). To enhance the questionnaire's development, the researchers conducted all preliminary interviews at the field level. The interview questions were modified by the researchers to align with the prevailing conditions.

The interview instructions underwent revision subsequent to the initial interview, a practice commonly employed within the qualitative research methodology (Hecht et al., 2019). A subset of potential participants chose not to participate in the study due to confidentiality concerns, despite our thorough efforts to maintain a high level of privacy. Nevertheless, in adherence to ethical standards, participants were explicitly informed that their involvement was voluntary and confidential. Survey findings preserved the anonymity of participants, and verbal consent was obtained from all individuals. Interviews were documented on paper, with the researcher focusing on capturing the participants' attitudes and expressions. The data collection period spanned from September 2023 to October 2023.

F. Quality assurance

The utilization of QSR International's NVivo 12 platform played a pivotal role in facilitating data management and analysis within the realm of qualitative research NVivo is highly advantageous for the examination of huge quantities of textual data because to its capacity for comprehensive analysis and superior data analysis capabilities (Berg and Lune, 2017; P. Kumar and Singh, 2019). NVivo software is considered to be highly effective for the implementation of coding, categorization, and theme design procedures in the field of data analysis (Joffe and Yardley, 2004). The software facilitates the utilization of convenient and streamlined data administration and analysis techniques, hence replacing the traditional manual approach including the use of paper and pen (Sohel et al., 2022).

The transcripts underwent thematic coding, classification, and structuring through the utilization of NVivo 12 software. This methodology was employed to efficiently manage a significant amount of data, thereby augmenting the reliability and validity of the coding process, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of the research findings (Patton, 2002; Zamawe, 2015). The data acquired through diverse methodologies was systematically processed and promptly organized upon the conclusion of fieldwork. Transcripts were generated through the execution of interviews and active participant observation. The content within the transcripts originated from a combination of participant observation and the verbatim quoting of respondents, without any editorial modifications.

The information was systematically gathered and organized into a dedicated file, with each entry assigned a code corresponding to its employment classification. Subsequently, the data underwent thorough cross-referencing based on various characteristics, classifications, and attributes. The researchers implemented triangulation methods to enhance the accuracy, validity, and reliability of the collected data. Specifically, investigator triangulation

and data source triangulation methodologies were employed, recognized for their substantial contribution in minimizing bias throughout the data collection, reporting, and analysis processes (Denzin, 2010).

A single investigator carried out the data gathering procedures. During the data collection phase, the researcher made regular field visits for investigation, adhering to the notion of investigator triangulation without participating in pre-established talks. This method sought to greatly improve data validation. Data was collected using three different methods to ensure high study quality: in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), and participant observation. Data source triangulation technique was used simultaneously.

G. Approaches for measuring insufficient marketing structure

The data analysis process employed a hybrid approach, integrating both data-driven inductive methods and deductive techniques (Crabtree, 1999). Three inductive codes were based on data Poverty, a lack of education, and natural catastrophes and the five deductive codes were Middlemen, a lack of infrastructure, a lack of microcredit, a lack of proper warehousing, and a lack of technology. Moreover, the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) research employed a thematic approach, which centered on the four stages of data analysis (Catterall, 2000) in order to guarantee the attainment of accurate and high-quality data. The initial step of the investigation was the categorization of significant interviewee interactions through the regular examination of transcripts.

The phenomenological methodology employed in this study entailed active and empathetic listening to the narratives provided by participants. The focus was on understanding their subjective experiences, employing their language as a key element. In the subsequent phase of the research, the narratives underwent a thorough rereading process. During this phase, significant sections were succinctly summarized, and codes were applied to denote the researcher's level of comprehension. The third stage involved organizing the codes generated in the previous phase into thematic categories, with an examination of their interrelationships. In the fourth stage, interviews were meticulously analyzed to identify common themes and their corresponding captions. The research study concluded by addressing specific subjects that emerged from the analysis.

4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The Haor regions play a crucial role in meeting Bangladesh's paddy requirements. Food security in Bangladesh can be achieved through the diligent efforts of farmers residing in the Haor region. Nevertheless, the sale of paddy, which serves as the sole source of income for Haor farmers, is characterized by a notable degree of unpredictability. Despite the presence of favorable national and global prices for paddy and its associated products, a significant proportion of farmers residing in the Haor region face limited accessibility to these resources. The absence of a

well-established marketing framework is exerting a detrimental impact on the broader economic system of the Haor region. Consequently, a significant number of farmers are compelled to alter their initial vocation.

An evident illustration of this phenomenon is the insufficiency of agricultural laborers required for the harvesting of mature paddy crops in the month of Baisakh. As a consequence of this circumstance, the farmer is compelled to allocate additional funds on an annual basis, thereby resulting in an escalation of the overall production expenses associated with paddy cultivation. The Haor area experiences significant flooding on an annual basis. Consequently, the cultivation of Aush and Aman paddy is not practiced in the aforementioned region. The primary agricultural crop in the Haor region is paddy rice. The vast majority of individuals residing in the Haor region are heavily dependent on the cultivation of this particular variety of rice known as Buro paddy. Nevertheless, as a consequence of the inherent vulnerability of the marketing framework, farmers find themselves in a dire predicament at present.

A. Intense presence of intermediaries

Intermediaries provide significant obstacles in the paddy marketing business. An intermediary entity exists between the farmer and the final buyer, who could be a mill owner or the government. The individuals buy paddy from farmers at a low price and then sell it to mill owners or the government at a higher price. Consequently, the farmer is denied his fair share of profit. One female reply elaborated on this matter as follows:

“Intermediaries exploit the prevailing circumstances by acquiring paddy at reduced rates. We are compelled to vend our contributions to them at reduced rates (Interviewee No. 4).”

Respondents No. 19 and 21 explained, in this regard, as follows:

“Due to the considerable distance between our hamlet and rice mills, as well as government food depots, we are compelled to engage with intermediaries in order to sell our paddy (Interviewee No. 19, 21).”

The conversation about the significance of price in relation to intermediaries in the marketing of paddy in the Haor region highlights a crucial part of the difficulties encountered by farmers. Intermediaries have an essential impact on the price that farmers accept for their paddy harvest. Intermediaries, who serve as intermediaries between farmers and end buyers like the owners of mills or government food warehouses, frequently take advantage of the situation by buying paddy from farmers at cheaper prices and selling it at more expensive rates. This results in farmers needing more compensation for their crops. This exploitation sustains a recurring pattern of poverty and socioeconomic susceptibility among farmers. The existence of intermediaries worsens the inequality in pricing processes, weakening the farmers' capacity to generate fair revenue from their agricultural activities. Therefore, it is

crucial to tackle the problem of intermediaries and implement clear pricing procedures in order to guarantee fair payments for farmers and promote sustainable growth in agriculture in the Haor region of Bangladesh.

B. Insufficient infrastructure

Haor township is now facing significant infrastructure challenges. In the period of increased precipitation, a significant portion of roadways become inundated, resulting in the disruption of paddy transportation. The transportation of paddy during the dry season is hindered by insufficient road infrastructure and limited access to transportation, hence posing a limitation to the donated marketing mechanism. Our Respondent No. 3, 16, 18 said,

“The elevated cost of transit can be attributed to the suboptimal state of road infrastructure. Additional payment is required. The transportation and marketing of paddy are impeded by the presence of inadequate road infrastructure (Interviewee No. 3, 12, 17).”

Discussions with participants highlighted the crucial significance of price in the broader framework of agricultural marketing difficulties in the Haor region. Insufficient infrastructure substantially increases transportation costs, thus affecting the final price that farmers receive for their paddy harvests. The respondents consistently emphasized that the inadequate road infrastructure hinders the smooth transportation of paddy to marketplaces, resulting in additional costs that eventually affect the farmers. As a result, the current market prices need to account for further transportation expenses sufficiently, resulting in reduced profitability for farmers. The difference between the expenses and the sale price highlights the importance of fair pricing procedures in the marketing of paddy in the Haor region. To ensure fair returns to farmers and promote sustainable agricultural practices, it is crucial to address deficiencies in infrastructure and implement fair pricing policies.

C. Lack of microcredit facilities

Farmers encounter a range of challenges in relation to paddy production and sales as a result of insufficient access to microcredit. The absence of enough financial resources hinders the collection and manufacture of enhanced paddy seeds. As a result of this phenomenon, the paddy marketing structure experiences adverse consequences. Respondent No. 5 said,

“Insufficient microcredit prevents the purchase of high-quality seeds. Hence, it is necessary to gather rather poor seeds. As a result, the rice that is produced is of low quality. As a result, we are denied the market price that justly belongs to the paddy we produce (Interviewee No. 5).”

Within the Haor region, a distinct social group known as the moneylender class may be observed, whose practices of lending money and charging interest on loans often result in a situation where farmers are compelled to sell their paddy crops to the moneylenders at a significantly reduced price. The conversations draw attention to the crucial importance of equitable pricing in addressing the difficulties farmers in

the Haor region encounter. Lack of adequate access to microcredit results in poor-quality seeds, which in turn leads to lower-quality paddy. This, in conjunction with the exploitative techniques employed by moneylenders, compels farmers to sell their crops at rates that are below the current market value. Establishing just pricing mechanisms is crucial to guaranteeing fair remuneration for farmers, thereby alleviating the adverse effects of financial limitations and exploitative loan practices on their means of subsistence. Our one respondent No. 14 said,

“The high interest rate on loans from moneylenders compels us to sell the paddy at a low price to meet the loan repayment deadline (Interviewee No. 14).”

D. Problems of warehousing

The Haor region lacks a sufficient storage infrastructure for paddy production. Based on conventional norms, paddy continues to be stored within the domicile of the farmer. The decrease in quality of the paddy results in a corresponding decrease in its value, hence causing the farmer to be denied receiving a fair price for their crop. In this regard, a respondent No.16 said,

“The proprietors of rice mills exhibit a lack of willingness to procure paddy that fails to meet the required standards. The quality of donations is compromised when paddy is stored on the floor of a residence. Consequently, I am compelled to vend this paddy of substandard or inferior grade at a reduced price (Interviewee No. 6).”

The critical role of pricing in the context of agricultural marketing issues in the Haor region of Bangladesh. The insufficient storage infrastructure hampers farmers' capacity to obtain equitable pricing for their paddy harvests, resulting in the degradation of quality and subsequent decrease in the value of the commodity. As a result, farmers are compelled to sell their low-quality products at lower prices, worsening their financial hardship. Therefore, it is crucial to prioritize the resolution of price concerns in order to guarantee fair remuneration for farmers and promote the development of sustainable agricultural methods in the area.

E. High labor costs

Currently, there exists a significant deficiency in human resources throughout all stages of the paddy producing process. As a consequence of inadequate human resources, farmers are compelled to engage laborers at a considerable expense. Consequently, the escalating production costs of rice have led to a situation where farmers are unable to obtain a justifiable price for their cultivated paddy. Respondent No. 17 mentioned,

“The rice production process has challenges in recruiting adequate workforce due to the presence of high labor wages. As a consequence of this phenomenon, there has been a decline in the optimal production of rice. Furthermore, we are failing to attain the anticipated value for our paddy (Interviewee No. 20).”

The significance of price in discussions with farmers and agricultural professionals discussing issues in the Haor

region of Bangladesh highlights its crucial role in determining the feasibility of paddy production. Despite facing challenges such as intermediate exploitation, insufficient infrastructure, and high labor costs, the problem of securing a fair price for grown paddy is a significant concern. Agricultural workers express their frustration at the challenge of obtaining just remuneration as a result of the rising expenses associated with rice production, which is further worsened by the burden of high labor salaries. This emphasizes the importance of fair pricing methods for maintaining agricultural livelihoods and promoting economic stability in the region.

F. Lack of adequate training and information

Lack of adequate information and education is another major barrier in rice marketing. If there is no light of education, just as the whole life is spent in darkness, it is natural that when the main driving force of our country, the farmers are ignorant or have little literacy, they cannot play a proper role in marketing the agricultural products of our country. Ignorance of caste of farmers is one of the obstacles in marketing of agricultural products. Respondent No. 15 indicated,

“We marginal farmers do not receive timely and accurate information about agriculture. Additionally, it might be quite challenging to predict when paddy prices will rise. We consequently lack fair price even though we have paddy of high quality (Interviewee No. 15).”

The significance of price in the conversation becomes a crucial factor in determining equitable remuneration for paddy farmers in the Haor regions of Bangladesh. Farmers frequently encounter pricing inequalities as a result of inadequate access to timely and correct information, exacerbated by poor levels of education and literacy, despite their production of high-quality paddy. This deficiency creates a substantial obstacle in the process of negotiating equitable rates for their agricultural produce. As a result, the lack of transparent pricing methods compounds the difficulties experienced by farmers, leading to the continuation of unfairness within the agricultural marketing system.

G. Peasants' poverty

The issue of poverty among farmers is a significant challenge in obtaining fair market prices for their rice crops. As a result of financial constraints, the farmer is compelled to expeditiously sell his paddy subsequent to the harvest. One respondent (Respondent No.16) shared her experienced,

“Borrow money to accumulate funds, then cultivate paddy. Since the people I borrow money from have short payback terms, I sell the paddy as soon as it's harvested. Selling unripe rice doesn't fetch me the best price for it (Interviewee No. 15).”

The fair valuation of paddy has a direct and significant effect on the economic well-being of farmers residing in the Haor region. The impoverished conditions of peasants compel farmers to quickly sell their crops, frequently at reduced prices, thereby creating a cycle of economic hardship. The

urgency to address farmer problems is evident as the need for immediate cash outweighs the potential for higher returns, emphasizing the crucial role of price in economic decision-making. This underscores the importance of implementing fair pricing procedures.

5. DISCUSSION

The present study indicates that the challenges faced in ensuring equitable payments for paddy cultivated by farmers in the Haor Region primarily stem from the presence of intermediaries, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to microcredit, issues related to warehousing, high labor costs, insufficient information and education, and the prevalence of poverty among peasants. These findings provide support for various previous investigations that were undertaken in Bangladesh (Siddiquee et al., 2019a; Singha and Maezawa, 2019; Sultana, 2012). These findings are also consistent with previous studies conducted in various nations (Abah, Abu, et al., 2015; Abah,; Dey and Singh, 2023; Karthick et al., 2020; Prasanna et al., 2012; Srivastava, 2017).

The research findings suggest that issues related to warehousing and insufficient information and education are significant factors in the marketing structure's ability to ensure fair payments for paddy cultivation by farmers in the Haor Region. Insufficient education and limited access to information provide a substantial obstacle in the realm of rice marketing, impeding farmers' capacity to effectively fulfill their roles. Furthermore, the deficiency of sufficient storage infrastructure in the Haor region contributes to the degradation of stored paddy quality, hence leading to farmers obtaining unjust remuneration for their agricultural produce.

The Haor region encounters difficulties pertaining to the infrastructure for paddy storage, resulting in the deterioration of quality and inequitable pricing of crops for farmers. Furthermore, the limited access to knowledge and information is a significant obstacle to the active engagement of farmers in the rice marketing sector. Moreover, the lack of awareness regarding their social caste further exacerbates the challenges associated with the selling of agricultural products. Sultana (2012) identifies the inadequacy of storage facilities and the insufficiency of information as significant challenges within the rice marketing sector in Bangladesh.

The research revealed that peasant poverty poses a significant obstacle in the context of ensuring equitable payments for paddy cultivation by farmers in the Haor Region within the marketing structure. Farmers face the challenge of poverty due to financial constraints, leading them to sell their rice crops quickly after harvest, often at unfair market prices. Peasant poverty is observed in other research as well (Soe et al., 2015). The study indicated a substantial correlation between high labor costs and the lack of microcredit in relation to the objective of ensuring equitable payments for paddy cultivated by farmers in the Haor region.

Similar findings have been observed in other scholarly investigations (Soe et al., 2015; Srivastava, 2017; Sultana, 2012). Numerous studies have identified the issues associated with the paddy marketing structure, specifically the prevalence of intermediaries and limited infrastructure (Karthick et al., 2020; Singha and Maezawa, 2019; Soe et al., 2015; Srivastava, 2017; Sultana, 2012). Analysis also shows that there are one of the factors contributing to the need for equitable payments for paddy cultivated by farmers in the Haor region is the presence of intermediaries and inadequate infrastructure.

6. LIMITATIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

We must recognize that there are certain constraints to this investigation. The study utilized qualitative data. Therefore, the inability to generalize and the lack of evidence-based statistical findings made it impractical. Data was collected from a limited number of villages in the Haor Region. Collecting data from more communities in the Haor region could lead to a more appropriate scenario. The data collected was inadequate due to the respondents' limited educational background. The interviews were limited to farmers, but the research may have been improved by include including interviews with organizations and individuals involved in agriculture in the Haor region.

Comprehensive study is required to address the inadequate marketing framework that hinders fair payments to farmers cultivating paddy in the Haor region within the paddy marketing sector. New agriculture policies should be based on the insights of genuine farmers and agricultural specialists. To ensure fair pricing of paddy in the Haor region, farmers should receive small-scale loans, be provided with extensive education and knowledge, have access to suitable warehousing facilities for paddy storage, and be protected from exploitative middlemen. To protect Haor areas and Haor farmers, the government must develop a new agriculture-friendly marketing plan.

7. CONCLUSION

This study elucidates the significant obstacles encountered by farmers in the Haor region of Bangladesh when it comes to securing fair remuneration for their paddy harvests, primarily attributable to an inadequate marketing framework. Several factors contribute to the issue at hand, including the existence of intermediaries, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of microcredit, challenges with warehousing, high labor costs, insufficient education and knowledge, and the prevalence of peasant poverty.

The aforementioned findings underscore the pressing necessity for all-encompassing policy reforms within the agricultural marketing domain, with the aim of guaranteeing equitable remuneration for farmers. Suggested measures encompass facilitating microcredit accessibility, augmenting instructional provisions, optimizing storage infrastructure, and safeguarding farmers against exploitative intermediaries. The development and implementation of an agriculture-friendly marketing strategy by the government is of utmost

importance in order to protect the livelihoods of haor farmers and promote fair valuation of their paddy harvests.

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