

A STUDY ON APARTMENT HOUSING SCENARIO OF GULSHAN – BANANI RESIDENTIAL AREAS OF DHAKA

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ABSTRACT

Cities are in a state of continuous transformation and readjustment of its different parts; urban housing scenario is one of them. Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh has experienced dramatic changes in its housing scenario over the last few decades. Elevated growth rate of population in Dhaka, inadequate infrastructure, failure in prediction of the growth of the city in terms of spatial boundary and population has eventually led to the dearth of housing for the urbanites. City planning initiatives regarding housing schemes fell short of the demand for shelter by the urbanites, which eventually led to the growth of the apartments throughout the city. Deficit infrastructure services in fringe areas along with other factors enhanced the housing requirement crisis, forced its inhabitants to live in the congested high-rise apartments, especially in and around the once planned residential areas of Dhaka. The apartment housing projects in the planned residential areas of Dhaka has undergone drastic changes over time due to socioeconomic, political and technological forces. In this paper, there is a strive to identify the market demand analysis and the probable reasons behind the current apartment housing scenario of the planned residential areas of Dhaka. Emphasis has been laid on the two planned residential areas: Gulshan and Banani, contemplating the income levels of inhabitants and development diversity. In the analysis process, a number of variables have been taken into consideration, which shows variations between both the study areas.

KEYWORDS: Apartment Housing Scenario; Dhaka City; Planned Residential Area

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INTRODUCTION

Residents of Dhaka experienced turnabouts in their lifestyle over the last few decades. Primarily, the urbanites were residing in low-rise detached or semi-detached houses surrounded by spaciousness (Hasan, 1991), but due to rapid urbanization, tremendous increase in the number of urbanites, socioeconomic, political and technological forces, the lavish initial housing scenario in and around the planned residential areas of Dhaka changed dramatically and emergence of apartment housing took its place. In the lifestyle of the citizens of Dhaka, apartment dwelling is a tenacious trend. Initially, apartments were constructed along the main thoroughfares, which gradually spread over both the inner areas and outskirts of a city. The housing market is extending day by day. Price of the land in the capital is multiplying at an astonishing pace, about 20-60 times in the last 25 years, due to the inadequacy, conjecture and uprising demand for dwelling units. Excessive land price incorporating scarcity of buildable land has made it roughly impossible for most of the urban population to own a piece of land for constructing a detached or semi-detached house. In such a situation,

urbanites are forced to purchase flats with a hope to secure their own abode in the promptly developing capital city, Dhaka. Usually, an apartment consists of 6–14 stories, and each story may accommodate single to four or more accommodations. A substantial number of real estate developers, owing to the market demand, have engaged themselves in the construction of apartments. Developers, construction firms and general buyers are more or less aware of the prospects and complexities of apartment dwellings. Apart from this, quite a few efforts have been made to understand the functional condition of these type of houses, their economic and social role and their current market price or rent structure. Factors determining the choice of dwelling units, development and growth are practically non-existent in the statistical database, which it appears that the determining factors related to apartment dwelling is completely ignored by both the parties involved. This paper represents empirical evidences from two prominent residential areas of Dhaka, on the basis of field survey conducted in the period of January 2017 to March 2017.

Study Area

Located in Dhaka, the prime planned residential areas of the city, Gulshan and Banani are selected as the study area for this research. People aspire to live in these elite residential areas due to a sense of security, pride of ownership, prestige and status. These planned residential areas have some common features, both are implemented following the method of sites and services' schemes (Hasan and Kabir, 2002). Most of the roads here are laid out in the grid-iron pattern. Connected by two main arterial roads (Gulshan Avenue and Kemal Ataturk Avenue) of the city, the internal roads of Gulshan and Banani residential areas are adequately wide (40 feet wide) and well maintained. Development of medium-to-high-density apartments is a trend in the study area.

Gulshan – Banani

Gulshan was developed in the mid-70s, while Banani was established in the late 70s as a major planned residential model town in Dhaka city. Most of the houses are built over plots of sizes varying from 8.25 to 33 decimal in Gulshan, while in the case of Banani, the size varies between 8.25 and 22 decimal. Initially, most of the houses in Gulshan – Banani area were architecturally modern, structurally sound and aesthetically attractive with modern amenities, which reflected the taste and culture of the dwellers.

In both cases, of Gulshan and Banani areas, roads are laid out in grid-iron pattern, maintaining the hierarchy. Two primary thoroughfares serve Gulshan area, which is continuously developing and changing its character, with substantial commercial and institutional functions, along those thoroughfares and becoming more crowded due to rapid development and uninterrupted change (Zereen, 2009). A substantial number of residential structures have been occupied by non-residential functions and this process has been continuing for a long time. This phenomenon puts additional pressure on the supply of utility services. Originally designed service facilities, like drainage, sewerage, gas and electricity, became inadequate, and needed continuous development due to the rapid trend of apartments' growth along with high rate of commercial investments.

The distinctive residential character of Gulshan – Banani area could not be maintained due to excessive demand and commercialization, although the selling price and rent of the houses are very high in these areas, compared to other residential areas of the city. The residents who can afford to live in the study area have a diverse socio-economic background. As the price and rent of these houses are relatively high, so is their affordability, only by the upper class).

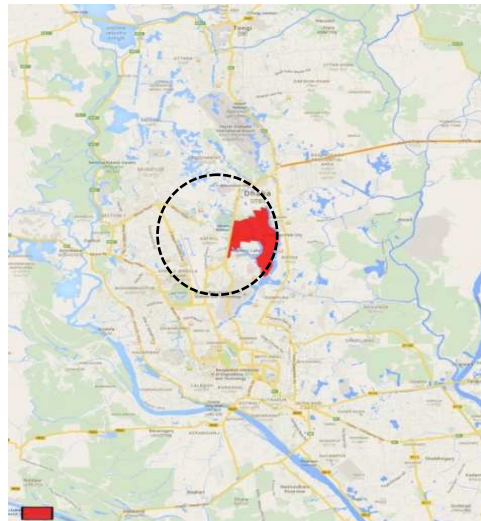


Figure 1: Study Area (Gulshan – Banani) with Surroundings.

METHODOLOGY

Field survey was conducted for data collection in order to perform this research work. For sample collection, a random survey was conducted covering 5% flats of the study area. In Gulshan, 10 apartments have been surveyed with a total of 100 flats. In every case, each plot has one apartment with 5 or 10 flats within them. In case of Banani, eight apartments with a total of 80 flats have been surveyed. The detailed information is presented in the following tables:

Analysis of the Findings

The main findings of this study comprise of the size, price and rent level of the flats, per capita occupancy of floor space, etc. The findings are discussed in the following passages:

Size of Flats

Different sizes of flats are found in the study area. The table below indicates the studied flats of different sizes and their relevant features. From field survey, it has been revealed that, in Gulshan, 70% flats are in between the sizes of 2000 and 2500 sq. ft., while none of the flats are below the size of 2000 sq. ft. area. On the other hand, a very few number of flats are found above the area of 5000 sq. ft. In Banani, flats are found neither less than 1300 sq. ft. nor above 3500 sq. ft. Among these flats, 60% are of 1501–2200 sq. ft. area. Average size of flats in Gulshan is larger (2200 sq. ft.), compared to the average size of flats in Banani (1785 sq. ft.).

Table 1: Size of Flats (Study Area)

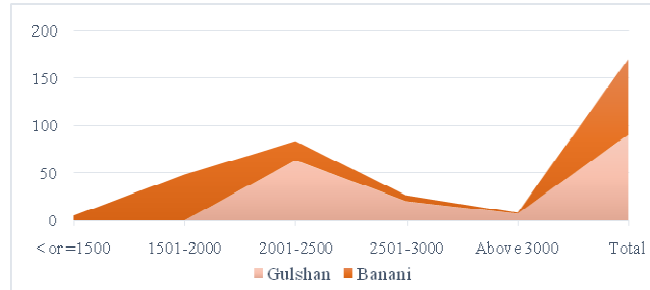
Size of Flat (Sq. Ft.)	Gulshan		Banani	
	No. of Flats	%	No. of Flats	%
1200–1500			5	6%
1501–2000			46	57%
2001–2500	70	70%	20	25%
2501–3000	23	23%	7	9%
Above 3000	7	7%	2	3%
Total	100	100%	80	100%
Average	2200 sq. ft.		1785 sq. ft.	

Source: Field Survey 2017

Notes

* Of 100 surveyed flats in Gulshan, 26 were excluded because of commercial use (10) and non- occupancy (16).

** Of 80 surveyed flats in Banani, 22 were excluded due to commercial use (12) and non- occupancy (10).



Source: Field Survey 2017

Figure 2: Size of Flats in Gulshan – Banani Area.

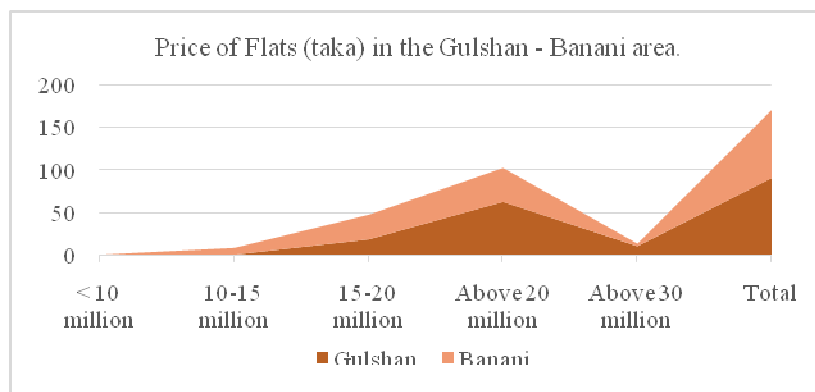
Price of Flats

The surveyed flats have different price range, depending on the location of the building, services and facilities provided by the developers, size and design of the flats, etc. Usually, the prices of the newly constructed flats are higher compared to that of the old (constructed, sold and used earlier) flats. Flats with the following price range are found through the survey.

Table 2: Price of Flats

Price of Flats (Taka)	Gulshan		Banani	
	No. of Flats	%	No. of Flats	%
10–15 million			8	10
15–20 million	18	18	29	36
Above 20 million	62	62	40	50
Above 30 million	20	20	3	4
Total	100	100	80	100
Average Price	30 million Taka		22 million Taka	

Source: Field Survey 2017



Source: Field Survey 2017

Figure 3: Price of Flats (Taka) in Gulshan –Banani Area.

Average price of flats in Gulshan is tk. 30 million, while in case of Banani, this range varies around tk. 22 million.

Price per Square Feet

Flat size is the determinant factor for asking price. Unit price or per sq. ft. price of smaller flats is higher compared to the unit price of larger flats. Per sq. ft. prices of flats in Gulshan vary between tk. 12000 and tk. 28000 with an average price of tk. 18000. In most cases, the situation of Banani is completely different from that of Gulshan area, where the variation of unit price with the variation in size of flats do not follow the general trend found in Gulshan. Price range per sq. ft. flat is tk. 10000 to tk. 18000, which is higher for the larger flats (as opposed to the trend observed in Gulshan). Average per sq. ft. price of flats in Banani is tk. 12000.

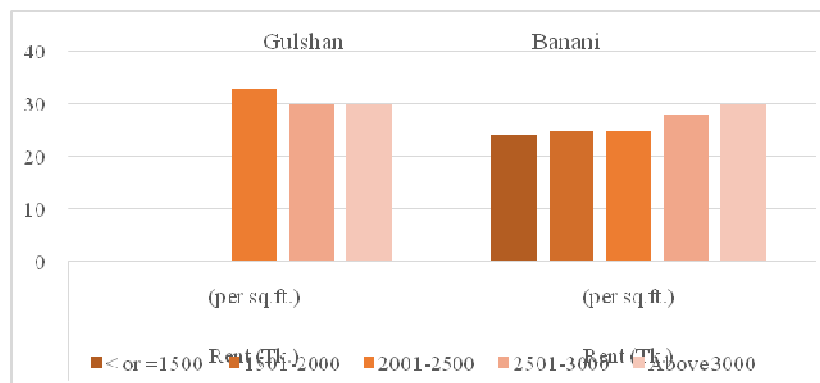
Rent of Flats

In order to evaluate the characteristics of any housing area, rent is an important determinant. The range of house rent depends on various factors, e.g., house type, location, size, utility services, environmental characteristics of the area, distance from CBD, length of tenancy, etc. (Nur, 1981).

Table 3: Rent per Sq. Ft. in Gulshan – Banani Area According to Size of Flats

Size of Flat (Sq. Ft.)	Gulshan			Banani		
	No. of Flat	%	Rent (Tk.) (Per Sq. Ft.)	No. of Flat	%	Rent (Tk.) (Per Sq. Ft.)
< or = 1500				5	6%	24
1501–2000				46	57%	25
2001–2500	70	70%	33	20	25%	25
2501–3000	23	23%	30	7	9%	28
Above 3000	7	7%	30	2	3%	30
Total	100	100%		80	100%	
Average (per sq. ft. Rent)	31			25		

Source: Field Survey 2017



Source: Field Survey 2017

Figure 4: Rent Per Sq. Ft. (Taka) in Gulshan – Banani Area.

Rent of the flats in Gulshan – Banani area vary extensively, from the range of tk. 40,000 to a maximum of tk. 2,50,000. Most of the flats have rent between tk. 80,000 to tk. 1,20,000 in these posh areas. If we compare the average rent of the study areas, flats of Gulshan are of higher rent (some of the flats are provided with furnishings and other facilities like air conditioner, refrigerators, etc.) compared to Banani, where rent varies between tk. 35000 and tk. 65000.

The number of flats according to diverse size and their corresponding rent per sq. ft. is found from table-3. In Gulshan, the rent of flats decreases with the increase in size of the flats. On an average, per square feet rent in Gulshan is tk. 35; while in Banani, this rate varies between tk. 24 to tk. 30. Reasons behind the difference in the level of rent may be

due to location, amenities, standard and other planning aspects, which include the presence and influence of the diplomatic enclave.

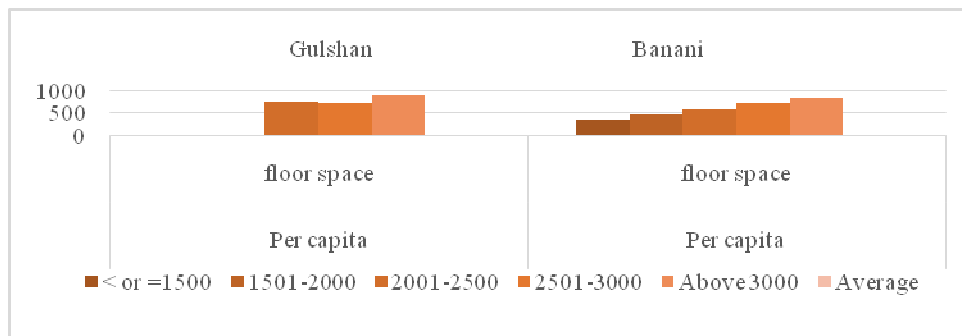
Per Capita Floor Space

Per capita floor space is one of the determinants of the living standard of high-class residents of Dhaka. It indicates the amount of space available for each person in the dwelling unit. In Gulshan and Banani, per capita floor space varies significantly with the variation in the size of flats. Table-4 shows per capita floor space based on the different sizes of flats. The table shows per capita floor space is higher in Gulshan (765 sq. ft./person) compared to Banani (603 sq. ft./person).

Table 4: Per Capita Floor Space in Gulshan-Banani Area According to Size

Size of Flat (Sq. Ft.)	Gulshan			Banani		
	No. of Flats	%	Per Capita Floor Space	No. of Flats	%	Per Capita Floor Space
< or = 1500				5	8%	344
1501-2000				30	52%	458
2001-2500	48	65%	748	18	31%	578
2501-3000	20	27%	718	4	7%	728
Above 3000	6	8%	900	1	2%	840
Total	74*	100%		58**	100%	
Average		765			603	

Source: Field Survey 2017



Source: Field Survey 2017

Figure 5: Per Capita Floor Space in Gulshan – Banani Area.

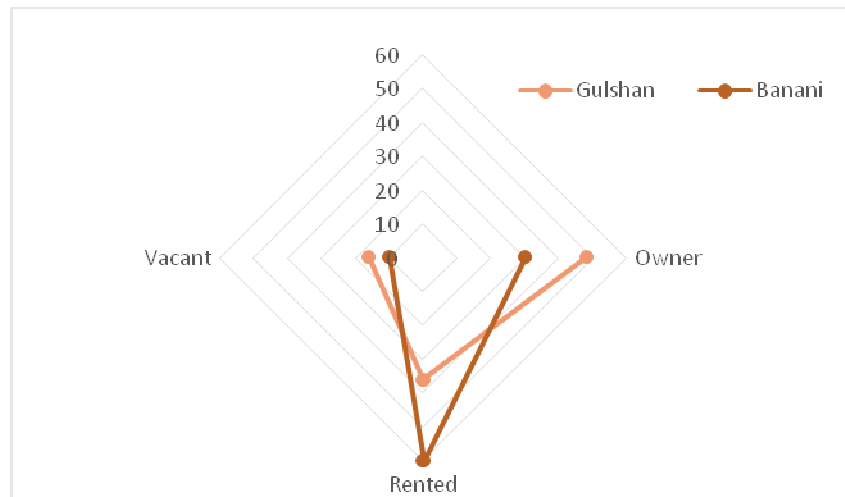
Occupancy Status

In Gulshan, the percentage of vacant flat is relatively high (14%) compared to Banani area (10% vacant). However, in Gulshan, the percentage of owner-occupied flat is 54% and rented flat is 32%. In Banani, the percentage of rented flat is 60%, which is higher than that of owner-occupied flat (30%).

Table 5: Occupancy Status in the Study Area

Occupancy Status	Gulshan		Banani	
	No. of Flat	%	No. of Flat	%
Owner	54	54	24	30
Rented	32	32	48	60
Vacant	14	14	8	10
Total	100	100	80	100

Source: Field Survey 2017



Source: Field Survey 2017

Figure 6: Occupancy Status in Gulshan – Banani Area.

Usually, the number of vacancy changes as demand and supply condition in the market change. If demand increases, while supply remains constant, or if demand increases more than the supply, the vacancy level will decline or vice versa, but this phenomenon is not the only cause of occupancy status in the case of Gulshan – Banani area. According to flat owners of these areas, they are reluctant to rent their houses under any sort of unreliability, even if their flats remain vacant. This is a vital issue for the flats of the study area to remain vacant.

FINDINGS

Housing market is mainly instigated by the sellers, purchasers and renters. In case of free economy as ours, the demand and supply of dwelling unit is determined by different aspects of housing and socio-economic factors of the people associated with such activity. Due to elevated price and dearth of land, the culture of high-rise apartment was introduced in most of the areas of Dhaka. Initially, the high-rise apartments were constructed by the developers for high-income group of people with an expectation of gaining higher profit, comparatively low risk in gaining profit, demands by higher income group of people and so on. As a result, the concentration of high-rise apartment is relatively greater in the high-income residential areas of Dhaka.

From the field survey, it has been found that the variety of flat sizes in Gulshan is relatively low compared to Banani, which could meet the variant demand of the citizens. An interesting phenomenon was revealed during the survey, as the flat size increases, per sq. ft. rent of the flat decreases, whereas with the increase of price per sq. ft. of the flat, the rent per sq. ft. increases. Low rent fascinates renters towards Banani, which reflects greater demand for rented flats in this area.

Compared to Gulshan area, the price of flats in Banani is relatively low. It causes a negative impact on the housing market of Gulshan, where more than 16% of the flats are lying vacant. The tendency of the working people to stay near the CBD area causes rise in demand of houses in these areas. Again, flats of Gulshan have buyers' priority on the grounds that there is a sense of pride of ownership, sense of security, prestige and status in staying at high-income residential area. Average per capita floor space is higher in Gulshan compared to Banani. This shows that higher number of people live in Banani, in a relatively lower size of flats than that of Gulshan area.

Occupancy status is a significant reflection in determining the acceptability of the neighborhood as a residential area, and vacancy shows the negative feature of housing as well as low housing demand of an area. In Banani, there are very few vacant flats. It means that the demand of flats here is so high that most of the flats are sold or rented the moment they are in the housing market. The situation is a bit different in case of Gulshan with higher number of vacant flats, compared to that of Banani. It reveals that in Gulshan, the demand for currently available flats is lower at prevailing price level, compared to that of Banani; which means the buyers and the tenants prefer Banani, for getting the same standards of flat at lower price than that of Gulshan.

Epilogue

Megacity Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh is dealing with a complex mechanism of urban housing market. It has been observed that the emergence of housing market is the resultant force of housing problems. Usually, in large metropolises, the accommodation is either procured or rented. The dynamics of demand and supply reflects the consequences of housing situations, where the demand often outperforms supply due to the enormous number of in-migrants and the inadequate amount of dwelling facilities. As a result, the price rises gradually due to the scarcity of the housing units, but the dimension of problem is more complex in case of once planned elegant residential areas (Gulshan – Banani) of Dhaka. The balance between people and their housing provisions are becoming more and more challenging, as the environmental, technological and demographic conversions accelerate and become more persistent. To meet this challenge, it is high time that the government and all the concerned authorities take appropriate measures to ensure adequate supply of dwelling units in apartments, according to the desire and requirements of the people of Dhaka, the rapidly growing city.

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