

Environmentally and Socially Responsible Business (ESRB) Practice in Packaging Sector : A Study of Business Ethics in Rural Areas of Bangladesh

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Abstract

People are now inclined to buy a well packed product with proper labeling and date of expiry. By laws and regulations, it is mandatory to have certification from Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institute for product quality and packaging. It is also mandatory to print necessary information on a product level. Do the labeling policy is followed? Or what is the standard of product quality? To shed light on these questions, this study investigated and explored the practice of business ethics including socially, environmentally responsible business practice in packaging service market in few selected districts in the north Bengal, namely Rangpur and Bogra. Using conveniences sampling technique, the data is collected using in-depth interview, FGD and there is a use of secondary material to support this research as well. The collected data are analyzed by tabulation, percentage, comparison and charts. The findings show that there is an immense scope of work for the improvement of packaging service in terms of environmental and societal benefits in these districts. The research suggested that there should be a stringent control of BSTI to control and monitor ESRB issues in Rangpur and Bogra. The control mechanism should addressed to ensure food graded and bio degraded packaging material usage, ensure the display of necessary information on product label etc. to pursue this activities, BSTI and other organization like CAB should open a branch office in this area.

Keywords : *ESRB issues, Rural Packaging Service, Packaging Development, Business Ethics.*

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1. Introduction

Business ethics is one form of an art of applied ethics that examines ethical principles and moral or ethical issues that can arise in a business environment. Ethics is more important in packaging as it influences consumer buying decision. Packaging service market is developing in Bangladesh with steady pace. Business ethics is very contemporary word of business in different name or variants, such as corporate social responsibility, green business etc. It can be a group of business policies and practice regarding corporate governance, insider trading, bribery, discrimination, corporate social responsibility and fiduciary responsibilities (Investopedia 2014). Business ethics are often guided by law, while other times provide a basic framework that businesses may choose to follow in order to gain public acceptance. Packaging has significant influence on consumers' buying decision. It is important to have a proper packaging for a product to inform its customers about the quality of the product, especially for processed food. For processed food business, packaging is playing a role of brand, hygiene, protection, and quality. Bangladeshi regulations stipulate that all imported food products must be labeled to indicate the country of origin, quantity or weight, ingredients, and dates of manufacture and expiration. But a large number of businesses in Bangladesh have not used proper packaging and do not abide by the rules regulations set by Bangladesh Standard Testing Institution (BSTI). It results violation of consumer rights, degradation of environment and malpractice of business ethics (Islam 2014).

2. Rationale and/or Significance of the Research

Maintaining a balance between business profitability and business ethics is very sensitive and influential element in the sustainability of business operation. In Bangladesh, the existence of business ethics in its economic sector comprising different businesses, regulators, consumers etc. are not in good condition. This research is significant to know about the level of ethics maintenance in packaging practice. This research is conducted on rural areas of northern part of Bangladesh. As the rural part of a country is generally deprived from many amenities and supervision and control of regulatory authorities, it is the area which may give the worst evidence of business ethic. Regulators can start work by setting a standard based on the findings of this research for packaging standard.

3. Statement of the Research Problem

Packaging is an important integrative aspect of the product and often a critical factor in the success or failure of a given product. As a developing country Bangladesh is not ignorable because of its tremendous potentiality in economic progress. Along with the development of the packaging practice, it is also important to pay attention to consumer health, society and environment. In Bangladesh, BSTI is playing the role in this regard, but the business sector is misused and denied using the guideline and regulation for packaging which is not harmful for

society and environment. It is necessary to know about the current practice and reason for malpractice and identify steps to solve or improve packaging service. These circumstances help the research to conduct this research and contribute to the packaging service industry.

4. Research Objectives

The objective of the research is to investigate and explore practice of business ethics including socially, environmentally responsible business practice in packaging service market in few selected districts in the north Bengal. To achieve this objective, this research, firstly explores the market characteristics and then investigate the ESRB issues in packaging market.

5. Literature Review

Business ethics is one form of an art of applied ethics that examines ethical principles and moral or ethical issues that can arise in a business environment. The driving force behind packaging legislation is environmental concern over resource use, pollution, and waste management, coupled with the notion that businesses that manufacture and use packaging should bear some of the burden of managing packaging waste (Bone & Corey 2000). Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) conducted a survey on packaged biscuits of 66 brands (both imported & locally produced) made of 33 companies in July 2003. The survey revealed that 76% did not have BSTI certification marks and proper labeling, 86% had no expiry date on the label, in 83% cases weight was not mentioned and in 83% cases the sellers are taking more price. CAB conducted another survey in August- September 2002 on 51 brands of Jams and Jelly of 31 companies and it was found that 52% of Jams and Jelly did not have BSTI certification marks, 13.72% did not mention ingredients, 23.52% did not mention date of production and date of expiry and in 54.90% cases retail price was not mentioned on the label (Faruque 2003). There is no separate law regulating the labeling requirements for food and agricultural commodities in Bangladesh. The labeling of domestically produced and packaged condensed milk and dried milk powder are prescribed in Bangladesh's Pure Food Rules (1967) promulgated by the Department of Health. The government was granted the power to implement these rules via the Bangladesh Pure Food Ordinance of 1959. Although these rules detail the provisions on food poisoning, food coloring, preservatives in food, etc., there is no mention of the labeling requirements for packaged food items, except for condensed milk and dried milk powder. The ordinance was amended in 2005 and renamed as The Bangladesh Pure Food (Amendment) Act 2005 (Hussain 2013). The Product Labeling Policy 2006 is not a regulation enacted by the government; rather, it is a policy undertaken by the government with initiative from the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI). There are few mandatory labeling requirements are applicable for agricultural commodities, food, drinks and soft drinks, such as the expiry date/best before date; the names and amount of color and preservatives used; mention if the item is genetically modified (gm); and if an

item can be produced naturally, artificially or by genetic modification, the label is required to mention the method by which the item was produced. If there is not enough space available on the label, additional printed paper containing the required information may be put into a labeling packet (Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution 2014). Ampuero & Vila (2006), showed that the consumers have exhibited harmonious perceptions towards products-packaging strategies. Further this study indicates that the elements of the package design affect consumer's perception differently depending on how they are combined. The review of literature indicates that the information and the design of a package are important to grab customer. In Bangladesh and in other countries in the world, packaging is also a source of information of the product usage, quality and ingredients which is very sensitive for consumption. Due to the ignorance of both customer and businesses, especially in the rural areas, packaging is not done properly which is also a loss of ethics. In the subsequent sections of this paper, the issues reviewed in the previous literatures are investigated whether the practice of packaging is maintaining business ethics in the form of environmentally and socially responsible business.

6. Research Methodology

This research used both primary source and secondary source to collect data. This is a descriptive research with an analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. The summary of the research methodology followed in this research is showed in the following-

Table 1: Research Methodology in a Summary

Research type	Descriptive study	
Population	All stakeholders in Packaging business including	
Geographical coverage	Two districts in the Northwest region of Bangladesh (Rangpur and Bogra)	
Sampling techniques	Convenience sampling technique	
Data collection tools	key informant interview, Focus Group Discussion, Questionnaire survey	
Sampling unit and Number of samples	Demand side of packaging business	28 manufactures, 14 wholesaler, retailer and distributor of different fruit, agricultural products and small businesses
	Supply side of packaging business	23 packaging service providers, and 8 key informants
Time Frame	2010-2012	

This study collects secondary data from articles, newspapers, books, periodicals, and few unpublished works. Most of the secondary data collected from online sources, as it is convenient for the researcher.

6.1. Conceptual framework of the study

In this study, a sequential flow of information with relevant analysis and evaluation is maintained. As it is mentioned earlier that the study utilizes both secondary and primary data, the understanding of the research topic begins in the initial level of the conceptual framework, by reviewing relevant literatures. In the following figure, the conceptual framework of the study is illustrated.

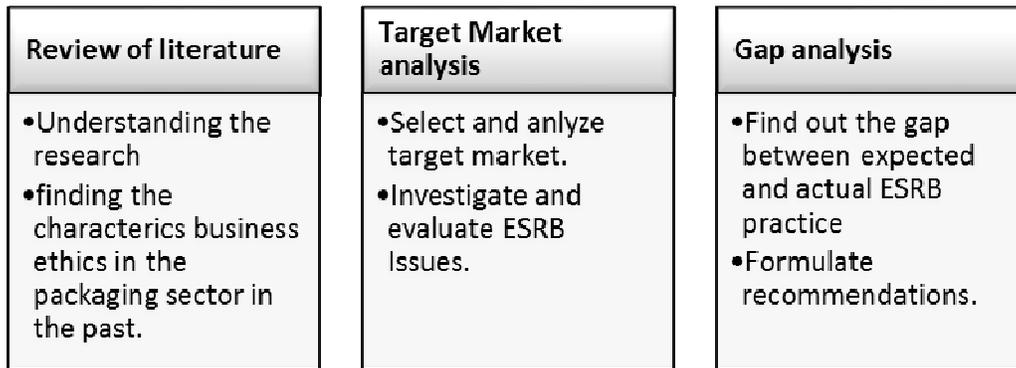


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of this study.

After the information collected from different sources, the data were gathered and validated about its source and then analyzed followed by simple statistics methods such as average, percentage, scoring, and ranking etc. Then the data were interpreted mainly in writing form.

7. Research Findings

In this study, there are different types of issues involved in the analysis of business ethics in the packaging sector. In the subsequent sections discusses the aspects which are important to evaluate the practice of environmentally, socially responsible business in the packaging sector. It is mentioned earlier, the study is conducted in two districts in the north Bengal, namely Rangpur, Bogra.

7.1. Analysis of packaging market in Rangpur and Bogra

Customers demand for packaging products either to purchase raw materials or to sell finished products. However, the packaging products that are used by respondents are of different types which is shown in the following matrix-

Table 2: Different Packaging Products used in different businesses

Packaging Product \ Customer	PP/HDPE/LDPE	Jute Sack	Plastic Sack	Paper packet	Korean Paper Box	Net Bag	Carton	Plastic Crates	Bamboo Basket	Bangladeshi Paper Box	Plastic Box	Earthen Pot	Plastic Container	Tin Container	Plastic Bottle
Bakery and Confectionary															
Restaurants															
Spice															
Flour															
Fruit															
Vegetable															
Seed															
Sweets															
Curd															
Vermicelli															
Chips															
Mustered Oil															
Light Engineering															
Candle															
Agorbati															

Source: primary data

As shown in the above table it is found that PP packet, Jute sack, Plastic sack, paper packet and paper box are the mostly used packaging products. The most variety of packaging products are used by the Bakery, restaurant, sweet, curd, vegetable etc.

7.1.1. Number of Enterprises in the packaging market

According to the KIs and the market actors, there are about 2085 different sizes and types of enterprise (producers and traders) involved in packaging service in Rangpur and Bogra who are the prime packaging service providers.

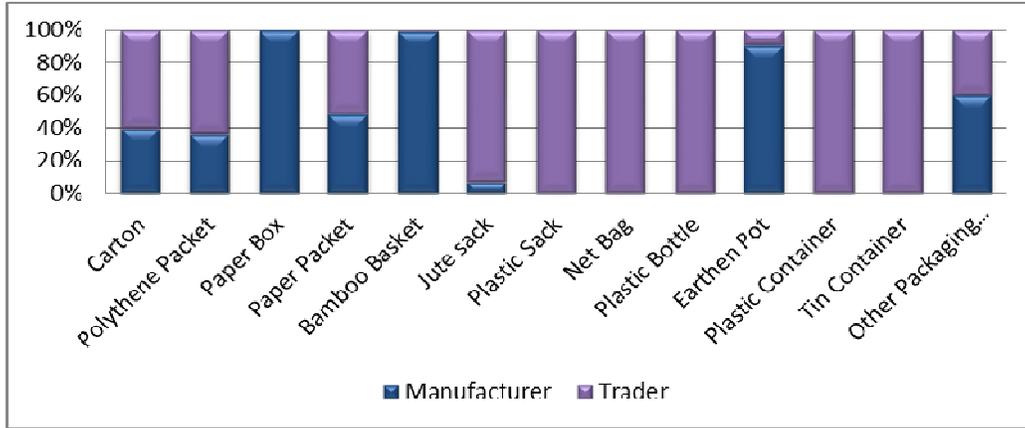


Figure 2: percentage of manufacturer and trader involved in packaging business in Rangpur and Bogra (primary data)

As shown in the above figure, the number of producer is more than the number of trader because in most of the cases packaging products are directly delivered to the customers by the packaging product producer. Here the chain from producer to customer is very strong. The wholesaler and retailers are mainly supply raw materials of packaging products and some other packaging products which are not produced locally.

7.1.2. Number of people employed in packaging business

The study found that there are about a total of 7476 people involved in the packaging service industry in Rangpur and Bogra. Of them 6471 are directly involved in producing packaging products and designing and printing; and 855 are engaged in wholesaling and retailing those packaging products. There is about 150 broker play an important role in packaging service market. Most of the transactions take place through them.

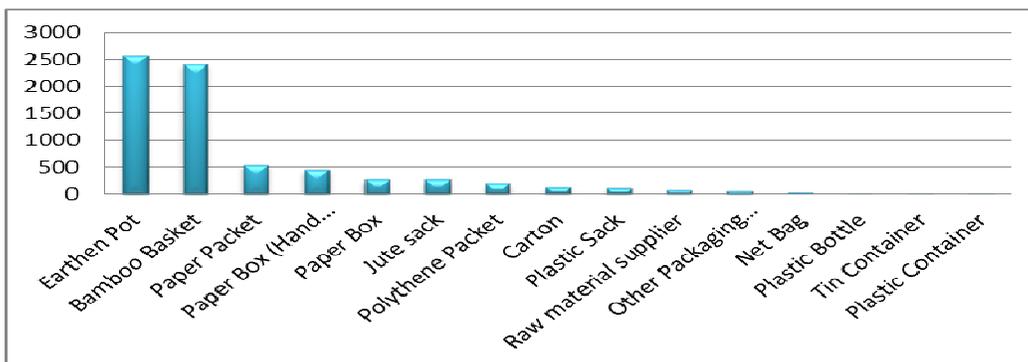


Figure 3: People involvement in different segment of packaging Service Market (primary data).

The total size of direct employment in the packaging service market in Rangpur and Bogra is estimated to be 7476. A lion portion 3600 of this employment is unpaid that is family labor. These unpaid workers are mainly related with bamboo basket and earthen pot production. In packaging service market, lack of skilled worker is an acute problem. According to employers most of the workers join as unskilled hands as apprentices. Whenever the employees become skilled, they switch to another job. In case of printing and designing, employees turning into entrepreneurs is a common phenomenon. From the chart it can be easily identified that most of the people are involved in producing earthen pot, bamboo basket, paper packet, designing and printing service and so on.

7.2. Current practice of ESRB issues in the packaging sector

In This study, the ethical practices in packaging business analyzed in two phases, firstly the existing regulatory issues are investigated and then their influence on the ESRB issues are evaluated. Here the regulatory and ESRB issues are concerning the facts and practices related to packaging industry.

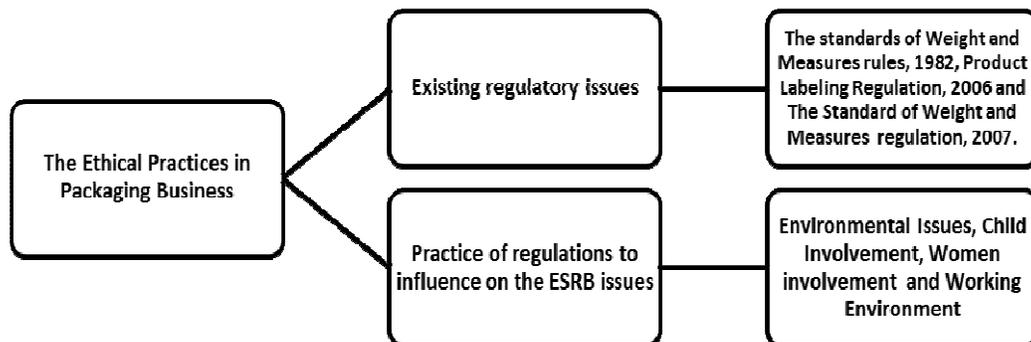


Figure 4: Framework for the analysis and evaluation of business ethics.

Under the regulatory issue, there are rules and regulations and actual market practice under packaging service and under the ESRB issue, there is market practice of the packaging service.

7.2.1. Legal and Regulatory framework for ESRB practice in Bangladesh

There are some rules and regulations to guide the packaging practice and standard. Such rules and regulations covers labeling guidelines, maximum wastage limit, probable packaging sizes, punitive action etc.

Existing Policies regarding packaging: Some policies are taken to make the packaging service market more standardized supported by rules and regulations. Some institutional bodies like CAB, BCSIR and BSTI, Department of Environment etc are dealing with these issues to some extent. The policies regarding packaging service market are -

- Product Labeling Policy, 2006
- The plastic which are hazardous to health on the basis of thickness will be banned. The thickness should be less than 100 micron in any type of plastic packaging.
- A product must be declared, either in weight or in volume or in number.
- The weight of Packaged Commodities should be in specified quantities.

Labeling rules for any types of product packaging: To package a product properly, some certain information must be given on a package of the product. To ensure that the necessary information is given on every product package and to standardize the labeling practice some rules and regulations are currently in action which are-

- a) The name and address of the manufacturer or where the manufacturer is not the packer, the name and address of the manufacturer and packer.
- b) The common or generic names of the commodity contained in the package; explanation- Generic name in relation to a commodity means the name of the genus of the commodity, for example, in the case of common salt, sodium chloride is the generic name.
- c) The net quantity, in terms of the standard unit of weight or measure, of the commodity contained in the package or where the commodity is packed or sold by number, of the commodity contained in the package;
- d) The month and year in which the commodity is manufactured or pre-packed
- e) The sale price of the package
- f) Where the sizes of the commodity contained in the package are relevant, the dimensions of the commodity contained in the package and if the dimensions of the different pieces are different, the dimensions of each such different piece;
- g) Such other matters as are specified in these rules
- h) Every package shall bear a label with a securely affixed thereto, a definite, plain and conspicuous declaration, made in accordance with the provisions of this rules described above.

(Source: Product Labeling Policy, 2006)

Rules of BSTI regarding Packaging: Currently BSTI implement and monitor packaging practices by three rules and regulations namely

- The standards of Weight and Measures (Packaged Commodities) rules, 1982,
- Product Labeling Regulation, 2006 and
- The Standard of Weight and Measures (Packaged Commodities) regulation, 2007.

Penalty and punishment: If anyone violates the rules and regulations written before, the Director or the authorized person shall take punitive actions like

- Compelled the manufacturer or packaging service provider to repackage the poorly packaged product when the net quantity contained in packages is lesser than the quantity declared on the packages or on the labels affixed thereto.
- Seize the poorly packaged product when it is not possible to repackage or not repackaged after giving order.
- Disposal of the packages if it is a package of such a product which can be decomposed.
- A magistrate can fine 7000-100000 taka for any violation of packaging or labeling rules and regulations (According to BSTI)

7.2.2. Current practice of packaging regulation in business sector

With packaging regulations growing in a number of markets, and regulations pending in many more, understanding where responsibility lies is crucial to ensuring worldwide compliance and sustained economic edge. These requirements differ greatly from the current regulations in Bangladesh for packaging industry, but their impact on goods sold cannot be ignored. From the study it is evident that the current rules and regulations of the packaging system are not vastly practiced by the producers or service providers of the packaging industry. Failure to adhere to the packaging requirements set out by Bangladesh Ministry of Industry lead to poor cost-competitiveness of products, quality degradation, environmental degradation and also unethical business practices.

Food and Allied Products- Labeling regulations in Bakery and Confectionary items are not properly followed. Although in some areas it is partially followed but significant information like manufacturing date, expiry date etc. are usually missing or incorrect. Moreover, a handful number of producers of bakery items do not have BSTI certification but still they use false logo and certified labeling misleading consumers and also impose a threat to their health. This is due to inefficient to absence of monitoring activities by BSTI officials as there is no branch of BSTI in Rangpur or Bogra, and also lack of manpower of BSTI results in illegal business practice by the producers. In addition to this, about 30% manufacturers sell their bakery items

non-packed which may cause hygiene problems, physical insecurity leading to mishandling, transportation, or storage problems. About 10% of the packaged products of the food items are not labeled with manufacturing expiry date, net weight, ingredients, and food value. Therefore, manufacturers lack awareness about the negative impact of such unethical practices.

Table 3: Packaging practice in seed business in Rangpur and Bogra.

Packaging status	Percentage of total market
well-branded labels	45%
poorly packed	20%
without package labels	35%

Source: primary data.

Agro Products- as shown in the above table, in agro product sector, 45% of the seeds are packed with well-branded labels, 20% are poorly packed, and 35% are sold without package labels. The non-brand packed seeds are partly labeled. The labeling requirements specify variety of crop, lot number or batch identification, net weight or count, minimum germination percentage, physical purity, name and address of the company packaging the seed and the date of packaging. However, exclusion of such important information may leads to unsafe protection and unhygienic use of the products.

Agro Tools- In this sector, all the imported parts and machineries of agro tools are mostly well packed and labeled. However, the local produce of the agro tools are mainly packed with brown paper, jute sack, and paper bow that degrades the quality of the goods. The packaging is done without proper labeling and containment. Rules and regulations of packaging are hardly followed exposing a threat to both the seller and the user. Moreover, there is also the risk of rust and tarnishing of the metals of the agro tools which lead to unsafe usage of the tools. This also increases the risk of security in terms of transport, handling, resistance and pilferage.

Products of Small Producer – In this sector, agarbati and candle have been mainly focused. Agarbati is mainly packed with paper packet and pp. An interesting finding in case of agarbati is that the producers labeled their products with false foreign brands mainly India although these products have been produced locally. This unethical practice of business misleads the consumers. While packing the candle, only the name of the brand and number of contents are labeled, no other information such as weight, expiry date, etc. are not provided in the packet.

7.2.3. Current practice of social and environmental safety in packaging sector

In SMEs, the complexities of Environmental and ethical issues to engage small businesses in ethical practice and environmental stewardship should be addressed by contributions from government policies peppered with practical ideas on how to achieve these standards which would ultimately benefit them. In the present atmosphere of increasing commerce, interest in environmental sustainability has mounted. To address environmental concerns relating to packaging waste, many countries have implemented environmental packaging requirements to allocate and distribute waste management costs, shift responsibility onto product manufacturers, and to decrease the environmental impact of packaging. Companies selling goods in foreign markets face an ever-growing range of international packaging regulations, including environmental design requirements and extensive packaging fee systems.

Environmental Issues: There are some environmental friendly practices maintained by some packaging service providers and users. Although few of the businesses cause no harm to the environment through their packaging product and wasted packaging material but most of the producers cause sufficient damage to the environment. Such findings from the study are -

- According to the Labeling Regulation, 2006, the rule says that any product package should include “Eco-Friendly” label in its product and its package should not be environmentally harmful. However, such rules were followed in any of the sub-sectors.
- About 90% of all the bakeries have no knowledge about packaging standard
- Although there is provision for the information to be included in the package, headings such as date of expiry, manufacturing date, weight etc. are also included but no information is given.
- In plastic industry, waste of plastic is recycled to produce other plastic which is used to make different types of plastic commodities. Glass bottles are recycled to produce other glass materials. Same process of recycling is followed in the paper industry.
- Many non-food graded quality pp has been used for food items since the market have no knowledge about the food-graded packaging material, absence of availability of such material, lack of awareness, and low cost of the non-graded material.
- Bakery items, imported fruits, vermicelli, candle, agro-tools, seed, dalda are packed in large quantity carton for transportation. Brand new cartons are used for these types of product packaging. After being used for once, these types of carton are used for local fruits and vegetables which work as a recycling technique.
- Waste cartons are being recycled in the paper mills
- Collectors from Dhaka collect scraps of PP, HDPE, LDPE, from Bogra and Rangpur which are used for producing plastic utilities in Dhaka.

Packaging waste is a growing waste stream in these rural areas, particularly those undergoing rapid socio-economic change. Therefore, it shows that there exists some recycling process in these regions and there is a vast scope to strengthen the recycling process resulting in waste reduction and prevent environment from the harmful effects. Moreover, there is also scope for employment generation by reinforcing recycling process and investing in plastic industry in these regions and encouraging producers to take responsibility for their environmental impact and allow environmental consciousness to grow.

Child Involvement: Child labor is mainly used in packaging service provider industry especially in operating machine and equipment, transportation etc. In some cases, children are seen carrying banana from field or working as tokai for the paikers. The percentage is about 10-12 % of total labor. Employment of children in packaging service market is very less.

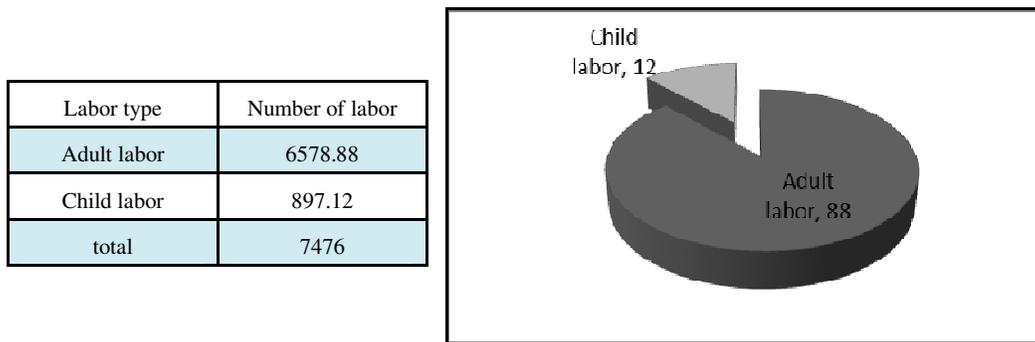


Figure 5: Child involvement in the packaging business in Rangpur and Bogra (primary data).

They were found to be employed in carton production, paper box making, and in printing houses. They are mainly employed as apprentices and are generally not given heavy or risky tasks. They are also found to be engaged in bamboo basket production, paper packet making and in pottery. Besides, out of the mainstream job of packaging service market, they were also found to be employed for do undignified jobs.

Women involvement: The total size of direct women employment in packaging service market in Rangpur and Bogra is more than 1036. Of them 800 is in bamboo basket production, 75 in paper packet making, and 150 in pottery. In some service provision like designing, printing, plate making, etc., the presence of women is almost zero. Women are also involved in making bamboo basket etc and also in low labor-intensive work such as making paper packet. The percentage is about 5-10 percent approximately. There is scope to involve women in many packaging activities which is suitable for them. They can prepare bamboo baskets in home and sell to traders.

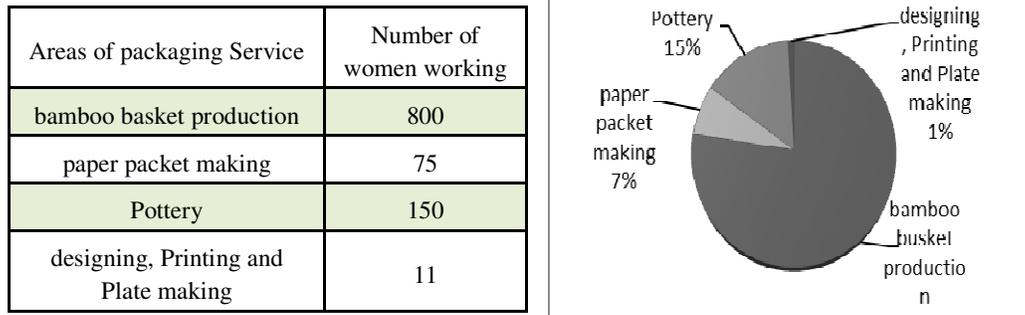


Figure 6: Women involvement in the packaging business in Rangpur and Bogra (primary data).

There is an evidence of discrimination with women that in case of employment, women are discriminated in wages even if they possess the same skill as men or do the same as men. However, most of the women have taken it for granted as a social rule in terms of wage payment and working hours. The wage rate of women ranges from BDT 50 to 60 while the men earned around BDT 80 to 100 although they work for the same hour.

Working Environment: Products that are harmful if comes in contact or swallowed then the prohibition marks or indication must be given on the package of product according to the product labeling regulation. However, while conducting the survey no such provision were found in the selected industries. In printing press, working environment is noisy and somewhat dirty. Labor working with chemical and ink does not have any safety measure to protect their health from the harmful ingredients of printing service. In plastic factory the level of noise is intolerable, labor working in such places have no protective measure to protect their hearing organ and is unsafe from hazardous effects, ingredients of plastic are also harmful but no protective measures for labor is taken. Moreover, the producers of such industries are not concerned about these issues and they believed that it is not of importance for improving these conditions. Many small businesses do not perceive their own ethical and environmental impacts as significant when set against those of larger operators. But, collectively they are. It is therefore important, both in terms of environmental protection and sustainable development more generally, that they too are encouraged and helped to improve their performance. Raising awareness and stimulating appropriate action for ethical issue is no easy task. By their nature, small businesses have limited capacity to deal with the many issues that confront them on a daily basis. In this context the priority will always be to address these concerns seen as having a more immediate bearing on their survival: their competitiveness, the skills and training of the staffs, productivity etc. However, as the environmental performance and ethical impact of business generally is increasingly being subjected to

scrutiny by regulators, customers, employees, insurers, funders, and local community, there is possibility to improve these issues which would significantly benefit the SMEs.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Being the northern region of Bangladesh, Rangpur and Bogra are relatively underdeveloped and non-food graded packaging materials are mostly used while packing food products that create injurious effect on the contained food and finally strike the health of consumers especially children. This non-food graded packaging materials is not only injurious for public health but also a threat for the sustainable environment. Due to low quality these packaging materials are non-bio degradable which is very unfriendly for the environment. Besides this, there are few more issues which must be addressed to ensure environmentally and socially responsible business practice in the packaging sector in Bogra and Rangpur. These issues are:

- BSTI, CAB and department of environment should increase their manpower or establish branch office in Bogra and Rangpur to investigate and monitor ESRB issues.
- It must be ensured to follow labeling policy and regulations by displaying important information, such as weight, expiry date etc.
- Recycling process should be strengthened by establishing plant which will reduce wastage and prevent degradation of environment.
- Equal wages should be maintained for women labor

In case of Agro Tools packaging, all the imported parts and machineries of agro tools are mostly well packed and labeled. However, the local produce of the agro tools are mainly packed with brown paper, jute sack, and paper bow that degrades the quality of the goods. Besides this, BSTI should control the pirated brand of agarbati and misuse of branding by their laws and rules.

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