Original Article

An Analysis of the Working Environment of Road Transport Worker in Gopalganj District of Bangladesh

Sayda Mahmuda[1], Zubaidur Rahman[2]

[1] *Department of Sociology, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University, Bangladesh*
[2]*Department of Economics, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University, Bangladesh*

Abstract - *This paper analyzes the road transport labor working environment in the Gopalganj district. A multistage random sampling technique was used to collect the sample data. Sample respondents in this study were classified as drivers, helpers, and supervisors. Data were collected from 200 road transport workers using a well-structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and tabular and graphical techniques were used in analyzing the data. Result found from the study indicates that the average working length of a helper, driver, and supervisor were 12.35, 8.27, and 9.06 hours per day, respectively. The study also indicates that nearly 71% of transport labours were contractual, and 29% of the respondents were permanent. Among 200 respondents, it was found that 37% were drivers, 21% were supervisors, and 42% were helpers. Among 74 drivers, the highest amount was found by an auto driver, followed by a local bus driver and truck driver. It is observed from the field survey that 28% of drivers have no driving license, whereas 37% have a light driving license. In addition, only 12% of drivers have a heavy driving license. It is observed from the study that the mean income of driver, helper and supervisor per day was Tk. 554.12, Tk. 264.07 and Tk. 475.34, respectively. On the other hand, the mean expenditure of driver, helper, and supervisor per day was Tk. 285.02, Tk. 135.19 and Tk. 195.35, respectively. In terms of working days of transport labour per month, it is evident that the average working day per month was 26.57 days. Considering the issues related to traffic rules, it is seen that 53% of workers have a partial idea about traffic rules, whereas 43% of respondents have a complete idea about traffic rules. In addition, 4% of respondents don't know about traffic rules and regulations. Finally, some policy recommendations are made towards improving the working environment of road transport labour in the study area.*

Keywords *- Working environment, Road transport worker, Bangladesh.*

1. Introduction

A good working environment is essential for any job as it enhances labor productivity by providing explicit and implicit incentives. A favorable working condition helps labour to avoid risks, and thus labour can work efficiently. In contrast, if there are noisy and harsh working conditions, it usually reduces the productivity of labour because labours cannot work efficiently due to unfavorable working conditions. In Bangladesh, transport workers usually work in a diverse working environment. In particular, Bangladesh's road transport laborers usually work under hazardous conditions. The transportation system indicates the culture of communication where material culture dominates the communication system. Air, rail, road, water, cable, and space constitute Bangladesh's modes of the transport system. Among the different modes of transport, roads and inland water transport are considered the dominant mode of transport, carrying more than 90% of total traffic generated in the country. According to the Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation (BRTWF), there are at least 50 lakh transportation workers in the country, including seven lakh for buses. In the case of the water transport side, there are

about 20,000 workers across the country, according to the Bangladesh Shipping Workers Federation (The Business Standard, 2021). For the development of a country, a well-organized and modern transport and communication system is essential. In addition, skilled and educated transport labour is mandatory for the socio-economic development of a country. The contribution of the transport and communication sector to the GDP of Bangladesh is 11.04 percent, and the rate of growth is 6.07 percent during FY 2020-21 at a constant price (Bangladesh Economic Review, 2021). To operate an efficient transport system, transport labour plays an important role. They are considered the driving force of the transport sector and perform multiple duties, from operating buses, cars, trucks, trains, planes, and boats to coordinating traffic and providing customer service. Transportation workers should also have technical skills like handling equipment, installations, and repairs. The activities performed by transport labour in Bangladesh are considered risky.

Road transport workers in Bangladesh hold some common characteristics: labours are usually illiterate; have

excess working load and limited rest time; worker usually violates traffic rules; have temporary job status instead of permanent; attend speed competition on the road. As a result, transport labour in Bangladesh usually earns lower wages compared to developed countries. The lower wage status of transport labour indicates the lower income and purchasing power, which finally hamper their standard of living. Thus, considering the above consequences, a comprehensive study on the working environment of transport labour is needed to analyze. This study, therefore, seeks to analyze the working environment of transport labour in the Gopalganj district, focusing on two Upazilas, namely Gopalganj Sadar and Tungipara. The broad objective of the study is to explore the scenario of road transport labour in the Gopalganj district of Bangladesh. The specific objectives set for this study are as follows:

- To describe the socio-economic profiles of road transport labour in the Gopalganj District.
- To assess the working environment of transport labour in the study area.
- To describe the income and expenditure pattern of transport workers in the study area.
- To show the nature of occupation and employment of transport labour in the study area.

The paper is divided into five sections. After introducing the issue in the first section, a review of past literature is presented in section two. The methodology of the study is presented in section three. Section four shows the results of the study. Finally, section five noted some concluding remarks.

2. Review of Previous Pieces of Literature

Although several studies were done in the field of analyzing socio-economic features of readymade garments workers, domestic workers both domestic and abroad (Islam and Zahid, 2012; Kader et al., 2019; Sikder et al., 2014 and Islam et al., 2014) but studies on analyzing the working environment of road transport workers in Bangladesh was few. The findings of these studies widely differed from each other in terms of the existing relationship between the working environment and its socio-economic determinants. Sikder et al. (2014) studied the socio-economic conditions of female garment workers in Dhaka City, Bangladesh. The study found that women usually work an average of 11.12 hours/day but receive an average salary of less than Tk. 7000 per month. Notably, they maintain a critical life, hardly managing their own and family expenses. Islam and Zahid (2012) operated a study on socio-economic deprivation and garment worker movement in Bangladesh using data both from primary and secondary sources. Results from the study indicate that most RMG workers earn below the minimum wage of Tk. 1620.00 per month and cannot save any money after covering expenditures for food and accommodation. In

addition, almost half of the workers are verbally or physically abused by the management. Kader et al. (2019) investigated the socio-economic condition of female readymade garments workers in Dhaka City. They used primary data in analyzing the socio-economic status of RMG workers. Findings obtained from the study show that 42% of female RMG workers are satisfied, 16% of the workers are dissatisfied, and 31% of the workers express their opinion regarding their earnings. Islam et al. (2014) operated a study on the situation of child domestic workers and the attitude of child specialists about child domestic work towards ILO new standards of decent work for domestic workers among 120 child domestic workers in five selected areas of Dhaka city and 15 child specialists from five different groups. The study has employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. Findings of this study revealed that the education level of child domestic workers is very poor, and the major portion (79.2 percent) has no access to non-formal education. The study found the promising thing that (75.83 percent) of child domestic workers wish to go to school and continue their studies.

In terms of analyzing the socio-economic status, the majority of the previous studies considered some common areas like readymade garments, domestic workers, and child labour as the subject matter and ignored some important areas like road transport labours, daily labour, which were important for making a good conclusion. So, this study will be an improvement over the previous studies as it considers all of those excluded variables in previous studies.

3. Methodology of the Study
3.1. Selection of the Study Area and the Rationale

A survey was conducted in the Gopalganj district to assess the working environment of road transport workers. Male road transport workers were selected for the study because all road transport labours are male in the Gopalganj district. For the study, the Gopalganj district was selected purposively.

Table 1. Selection of the Study area

District	Upazila	Bus stand	Number of Respondents
Gopalganj	Gopalganj Sadar	Kuadanga	50
		Ghonapara	50
	Tungipara	Tongipara	50
		Gimadanga	50

Source: Field survey, 2020

It is bounded by *Faridpur* district on the north, *Pirojpur* and *Bagherhat* districts on the south, *Madaripur* and *Barisal* districts on the east, and *Narail* district on the west. In the Gopalganj district, the literacy rate is 58.1%, and 2.30% of people are involved in the transport and communication sector (BBS, 2011). Among different modes of transportation, the road transport system is dominant in the Gopalganj district. In addition, Asian Highway passes

through the Gopalganj district and connects this district with the capital city and the majority of other districts.

3.2. Sampling Technique, Nature of Data, and Period of Data Collection

The present study demands a multistage random sampling technique with the Gopalganj district as the initial stage, while road transport labour is considered the last stage. After selecting the Gopalganj district purposively, two Upazilas were selected randomly for the present study. The selected upazilas were Gopalganj Sadar and Tungipara. Then, four bus stands were selected randomly: *Kuadanga, Ghonapara, Tongipara, and Gimadanga.* To select the transport labour for the interview, a list of transport workers was collected from the district labour union office of Gopalganj and considered a population. 200 road transport labours were selected using a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected from the transport labours with the help of an interview schedule. Before starting the interview, each respondent was given a brief description of the nature and purpose of the study. For the study, data were collected from April to July 2020. Although this study is mainly primary data, some secondary data were collected and used for analysis. These secondary data were collected from various sources such as the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Bangladesh Economic Review (BER), district labour union office, various journals, daily newspapers, etc.

3.3. Analytical Techniques

Univariate analysis was applied to know the status of selected variables and recognize the sample data's nature. Tabular and graphical techniques were used to find relationships among the relevant variables. Statistical techniques like frequency distribution, percent, maximum, minimum, and mean were used to analyze the collected data.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Socio-economic Profiles of Road Transport Labour in Gopalganj District

The socio-economic characteristics of transport labours are analyzed in terms of their age structure, educational background, occupation, family size, year of experience, smoking habit, the pattern of duty, membership in the labour union, etc.

The age of the transport workers is classified into five categories. Result reveals that the average age of the road transport worker is 27.45 years. The study found that 37 percent of the transport workers are aged between 21-30 years, while only 7 percent of the workers are aged above 50 years (Table 2). It implies that employers do not prefer aged workers as jobs in the transport sector are laborious. Most of the aged workers complained that the management intentionally behaved roughly so that they quit the job. But employer claims that young workers are more productive

than aged workers. Both married and unmarried workers work in the road transport sector. Among the transport workers surveyed, 72 percent are married, and 21 percent are unmarried.

Furthermore, 7 percent of transport laborers are divorced (Table 2). In the present study, transport workers were classified into four categories based on their level of education. About 17% had no formal education, 43% had primary education, 33% had secondary education, and 7% had higher secondary education. In the case of the level of education, the average schooling of the workers is 7.08 years (Table 2). This result implies that working efficiency and capacity of transport labour are low as their level of education is low. The mean family size of the transport labour was 4.86 persons. Table 2 describes that most transport workers (56%) had a family size range between 1 and 3 persons, whereas 15% had a family size range between 7 and above. In addition, 29 percent of workers had a family size of between 4 and 6 people. The study reveals that 56% of respondents had 1 to 10 years of experience as transport labour, and 5% of transport labours had 21 to 30 years of working experience as transport labour. The mean experience of road transport workers found as 13.75 years. Table 2 indicates the status of the smoking habit of the transport labour, and it is observed that 66% of respondents had a smoking habit while 34% were a non-smoker. In terms of financial support, it is found that almost 51% of respondents take financial support from NGOs, while 26% reported that they get financial support from the government. It is found that about half of the respondent takes their meal from the hotel while only 21% of the respondent takes their meal from their owner (Table 2). It is seen that 55% of respondents use a counter toilet while 38% use a filling station toilet. In addition, 7% use open places for defecating. Table 2 indicates the items used after defecating and found that almost 51% of the respondents use soap while 11% use soil or clay after defecating. The majority of the transport worker (54%) work during day time while 33% of workers work at night time. In addition, 13% of workers work both day and night shifts. Among 200 workers, only 8% experienced severe road accidents while 23% experienced mild ones.

4.2. Pattern of Daily income and expenditure of transport worker

It is observed from Table 3 that the mean income of driver, helper and supervisor per day was Tk. 554.12, Tk. 264.07 and Tk. 475.34, respectively. On the other hand, the survey result also indicates that the mean expenditure of drivers, helpers, and supervisors per day was Tk. 285.02, Tk. 135.19 and Tk. 195.35, respectively.

4.3. Occupational Status of the Respondent

Diversity in occupation is found among the transport labour in the study area. Occupation is classified into three categories: driver, helper, and supervisor.

**Table 4. Occupational Distribution of the Respondent**

Occupation	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Driver	74	37
Helper	84	42
Supervisor	42	21

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 4 illustrates the occupational distribution of transport labour in the study area. Among 200 respondents, it was found that 37% were the driver and 42% were helpers. In addition, 21% of the transport labours were the supervisor.

4.4. Nature of the Driver

It is found in Fig. 1 that among 74 drivers, 39% percent was found to an auto driver, followed by the local bus driver (24%) and truck driver (17%). The long-distance bus driver was found as the lowest percentage.
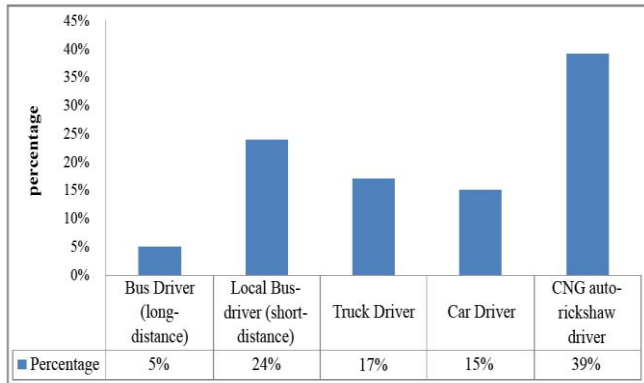
Fig. 1 Nature of Driver

4.5. Types of the license of the driver

Fig. 2 presents the driver's license types in the study area. It is found in figure 2 that 28% of drivers have no driving license, whereas 37% have a light driving license. In addition, only 12% of drivers have a heavy driving license. Furthermore, it is seen from the figure that 23% of drivers have both light and heavy driving licenses.
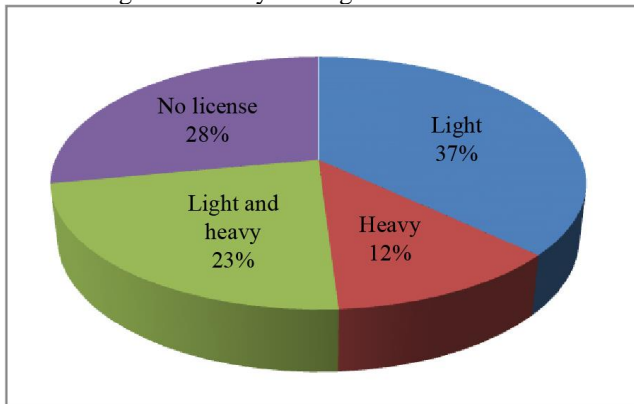
Fig. 2 Types of license of the respondent

4.6. Working Days of Transport Labour per month

From Table 5, it is evident that 49 percent of workers are found to work 26 days in a month, and 37 percent of labour work for 27 days in a month. The average working day per month was 26.57 days.

Table 5. Working Days of Transport Labour in a month

Working days/month	No. of transport worker	Percentage (%)	Average
Less than 25	20	10	
26	98	49	
27	74	37	26.57
28	6	3	
29	2	1	

Source: Field Survey, 2020

4.7. Average working hours of Transport labour

In the case of the nature of employment of the respondents in the study area, it is found that nearly 71% of transport labours were contractual, and 29% of the respondents were permanent. It is found from Figure 3 that the average working length of a helper is 12.35 hours, whereas a supervisor usually spends 9.06 hours daily. On the other hand, a driver's average working period is 8.27 hours.
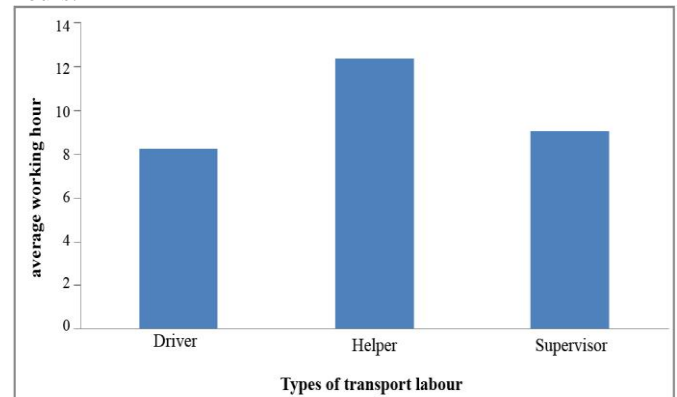
Fig. 3 Average working length (in hours)

Table 6. Illness status of the respondent

Types of illness	No. of Respondent	Percentage (%)
Insomnia	14	7
Jaundice	10	5
Fever	18	9
Headache	48	24
Stomach Pain	32	16
Respiratory problem	74	37
Pressure and heart-related issues	4	2

Source: Field Survey, 2020

4.8. Illness status of the respondent

It is found from the study area that 24% of respondents suffer from headaches while 16% suffer from stomach pain. In addition, 37% of respondents suffer from respiratory diseases (Table 6).

4.9. Treatment received by the respondent at the time of illness

Fig. 4 indicates the advice received by the transport worker at the time of their illness and found that 43% of respondents received treatment from a public hospital. In contrast, only 7% of respondents take treatment from a private hospital as taking services from a private hospital is always costly. Also, 2% of respondents take treatment from a village doctor.
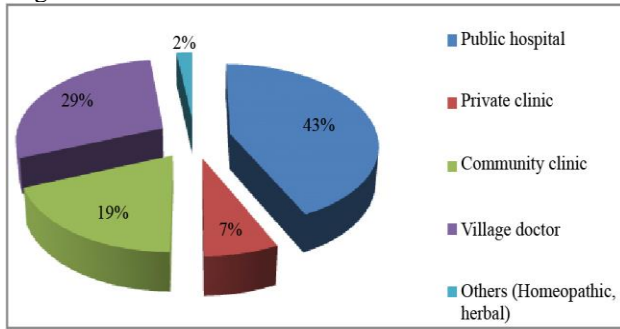
Fig. 4 Treatment received by the Respondent at the time of illness

4.10. Restroom status of transport worker

Table 7 represents the restroom status of the respondent in the study area. It is found from the survey that the majority of the respondents use their vehicles as their restroom, whereas 10% of respondents use the counter as their restroom. In addition, 21% of respondents use mess as their restroom.

Table 7. Restroom Status of the Respondent

Sources	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Counter of the bus/truck	20	10
Inside the bus/truck	114	57
Mess	42	21
Own house	24	12

Source: Field Survey, 2020

4.11. Recreational Status of road transport worker

Table 8 shows the recreational status of road transport workers in the Gopalganj district. It is found in Table 8 that 63% of workers use Facebook and youtube as a means of recreation while 11% use cinema halls as a source of recreation. About 15% watch TV, and 8% play sports as their source of recreation.

4.12. Status of the worker in terms of traffic rules

Fig. 5 shows the status of road transport labour using traffic rules. Figure 5 shows that 53% of workers have a partial idea about traffic rules, whereas 43% of respondents

have a complete idea about traffic rules. In addition, 4% of respondents do not have any idea about traffic rules and regulations.

Table 8. Recreational Status of the Respondent

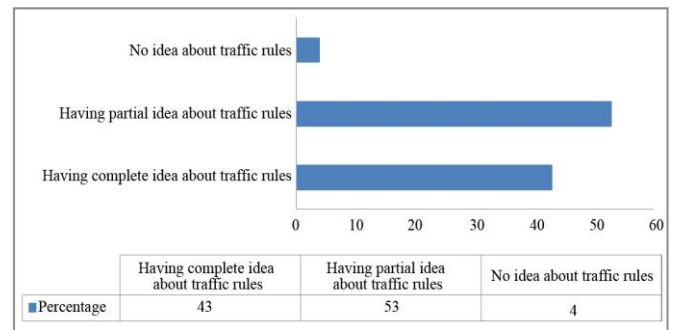| Sources	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Watching television	30	15
Cinema hall	22	11
Sports	16	8
Internet browsing (Facebook, YouTube)	126	63
Family outing	6	3

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Fig. 5 Status of worker in terms of traffic rules

5. Conclusion and Policy Suggestions

The major objective of this paper was to identify the working environment of road transport labour in the Gopalganj district. Descriptive statistics were used mainly to evaluate the collected data. Besides, tabular and graphical techniques were used to explain the collected data. Result obtained from the study indicates that the mean age of the road transport worker is 27.45 years. The study found that 34 percent of the transport workers are aged between 21 and 30 years, while only 7 percent of the workers are aged above 50 years. About 17% of transport workers had no formal education, whereas 43% had primary education. In the case of the level of education, the average schooling of road transport workers is 7.08 years. In terms of household size of transport labour, it is found that the mean family size of the transport labour is 4.86 persons. In addition, most transport workers (56%) had a family size of between 1 and 3 persons. The study reveals that 56% of respondents had 1 to 10 years of experience as transport labour, and 5% of transport labours had 21 to 30 years of working experience as transport labour. The mean experience of road transport workers found as 13.75 years. It is observed from the study that the mean income of driver, helper and supervisor per day was Tk. 554.12, Tk. 264.07 and Tk. 475.34, respectively. On the other hand, the mean expenditure of driver, helper, and supervisor per day was Tk. 285.02, Tk. 135.19 and Tk.

195.35, respectively. Among 200 respondents, it is seen that 37% were the driver and 42% were helpers. In addition, 20% of the transport labour was supervisor. It is also found that nearly 71% of transport labours were contractual, and 29% of the respondents were permanent. Findings obtained from the study show that the average working length of a helper, driver, and supervisor are 12.35, 8.27, and 9.06 hours, respectively. In terms of traffic rules, it is seen that 43% of transport labour completely know the traffic rules while 53% of road transport workers have a partial idea about laws. Furthermore, 4% of respondents do not know traffic rules and regulations. Concerning working days per month, it is evident that 49 percent of workers are found to work 26 days a month, and 37 percent work 27 days a month. The average working day per month was 26.57 days. Based on the findings of this research, it is necessary to recommend some policies regarding improving the working environment of transport labour. Some of the suggestions emerge from the field survey experiences of this researcher. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations can be made:

- The present study indicates that 53% of road transport workers have a partial idea about traffic laws, and 4% of respondents do not know about traffic rules and regulations. Thus special training on traffic rules should be arranged so that labour can achieve knowledge of traffic rules.
- Since the working length for drivers, helpers and supervisors were more than 8 hours per day and the average working day per month was 26.57 days, which is excessive, it should be reduced to help them be more efficient and productive.
- It is seen from the field survey that nearly 71% of transport laborers were contractual, so they always feel insecure. Thus, permanent job status should be started instead of contractual.
- At the time of accidental injuries, the government and the owner should provide financial support so workers can again attend their jobs.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix 1

Table 2. Socio-economic characteristics of transport worker

Variable	Description of variable	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Age structure (years)	15-20	50	25	27.45
	21-30	74	37	
	31-40	40	20	
	41-50	22	11	
	51 and above	14	7	
Marital status	Married	144	72	-
	Unmarried	42	21	
	Divorced	14	7	

Education	No formal education (0)	34	17	7.08
	Primary education(1-5)	86	43	
	Secondary education(6-10)	66	33	
	Higher secondary (11-12)	14	7	
Family size (person)	1-3	112	56	4.86
	4-6	58	29	
	7 and above	30	15	
Year of experience as a transport worker	1-10	112	56	13.75
	11-20	78	39	
	21-30	10	5	
Smoking habit	Yes	132	66	-
	No	68	34	
Source of financial support	Government	52	26	-
	NGOs	102	51	
	Friends and relatives	38	19	
	Others	12	6	
Source of Taking a meal	Hotel	124	62	-
	Self-cooking	34	17	
	Provided by the owner	42	21	
Status of Defecate System of the transport worker	Counter toilet	110	55	-
	Filling station toilet	76	38	
	Open defecation	14	7	
Status of using items after Defecating	Tissue paper	62	31	-
	Ash	14	7	
	Soil/clay	22	11	
	Soap	102	51	
Pattern of duty	Day time	108	54	-
	Night time	66	33	
	Both day and night	26	13	
Pattern of accident	Severe accident	8	4	-
	Mild accident	46	23	
	Never fall in an accident	146	73	

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Appendix-2

Table 3. Daily income and expenditure pattern of transport labour

Types of Transport Labour	Mean Income (in Taka)	Minimum (in Taka)	Maximum (in Taka)	Types of Transport Labour	Mean Expenditure (in Taka)	Minimum (in Taka)	Maximum (in Taka)
Driver	554.12	354	675	Driver	285.02	200	350
Helper	264.07	200	327	Helper	135.19	100	150
Supervisor	475.34	275	527	Supervisor	195.35	150	250

Source: Authors' calculation.