

Promoting Environmentally Friendly Enterprise through Quality Production and Marketing of Imitation Jewelry, Bangladesh

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How to cite this paper: Bhuiyan, M. K. H., & Roy, A. D. (2026). Promoting Environmentally Friendly Enterprise through Quality Production and Marketing of Imitation Jewelry, Bangladesh. *Journal of Geoscience and Environment Protection*, 14, 91-102. <https://doi.org/10.4236/gep.2026.142006>

Received: January 1, 2026

Accepted: February 7, 2026

Published: February 10, 2026

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Abstract

Moheshpur & Kotchadpur upazilas of Jinaidah and Chougacha districts in Bangladesh are famous for the imitation jewelry industry. Every household that engages in the production of imitation jewelry does so as a means of subsistence. The majority of the raw materials are imported from India; obtaining goods and commodities from India is simple and accessible. Local markets across the nation sell imitation ornaments. ME-microentrepreneurs are often the people that make these ornaments. In Bangladesh, however, it remains an undeclared subsector because the government does not declare it to be an industry. In addition to legacy challenges, entrepreneurs are addressing economic, social, and environmental change it as challenges, primarily through financial support even more than subsistence income when experts on this particular crafts. The purpose of this study is to determine the main obstacles to and prospects for best industrial practices in the areas of the environment, health, and safety, as well as in the socioeconomic setting and market potential. The study focused on ethnographical methodology combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. In order to gather the most recent information, statistics, and public opinions, a total of twenty-six key informant interviews and eight focus group discussions covering a total of 248 HHs survey were covered during this study using a mixed method technique through a conducive village immersion and stay over there to observe step by step and collected all sampled data for the respondents. The survey's findings indicate that, given the rising demand, it has promising possibilities. There are a number of issues, such as the lack of raw materials in Bangladesh, which are all sourced from India or other countries. Nevertheless, they continue to manufacture goods using conventional techniques; social and environmental concerns are not yet taken into account. However, the usage of heavy metals like lead poses a health

risk, and wastewater from manufacturing and painting supplies is also dumped directly into neighboring water sources. Adopting a community-informed mechanism, a reliable, eco-friendly market linkage, safe wastewater disposal, health and safety concerns for using Pb and other corrosive materials, easy access to lending facilities, raising loan caps, government recognition, legal status, and resource availability are all prerequisites for expanding this sector in order to achieve better market conditions.

Keywords

Environmental Management, Enterprise, Occupational Health and Safety, Imitation Jewelry, Micro Entrepreneurs, Market Demand

1. Introduction

Mohespur, Kotchadpur Upazilas of Jhenaidah district and Chougacha Upazila of Jashore district are well-known for being hubs for the fabrication of crafting (fake) jewelry. They have been manufacturing imitation ornaments since 1980, and they are well-known throughout the nation for their high-quality and abundant artificial gold ornaments for women in urban, peri-urban, and rural areas (Ambepitiya, 2016). However, the Bangladeshi government has yet to acknowledge this subsector, which is why producers encounter many legal and political obstacles throughout the production process. In order to safeguard the health, safety, and natural environments of their employees, targeted microenterprises must adopt more ecologically sustainable practices. The majority of entrepreneurs in Bangladesh are women, and they have made major contributions to the growth of this subsector and to the country's economy (Feng et al., 2023). There are several initiatives, such as a World Bank funded project that encourages the growth of innovative economic activities that are beneficial to a more sustainable environment and prioritizes the promotion of micro-enterprise business clusters. The government of Bangladesh implemented a new policy called the "Gold Policy-2018 (amended)-2021" to encourage this industry to import jewelry raw materials in order to boost local adaption (Ara, 2021).

2. Scope of Study

The analysis was conducted according to the conversations with MEs/sample clusters with the regular artisans, buyers, producer associations, input suppliers, support services like designers, machine suppliers, local customers, local community, environmental challenges and public health issues, local NGOs, and sector experts (Bhuiyan, 2022).

3. Justification of Study

Typically, copycat jewelry contains hazardous elements and metals that pose health hazards to clients, employees, and artists etc. (Charitra & Ram, 2012). In

the meantime, workers' health and safety, the local ecosystem, and technical and non-technical challenges are all at risk during the production process. According to the research, women's preferences are crucial for promoting design, branding, and the market (Sabbir, 2017).

However, the study discovered that low income, potential environmental risks related to product development, MEs' current difficulties and exclusion from the global market, local market opportunities, branding certification requirements, and value chain system development are all essential or prerequisites for this sub-sector development. Nonetheless, raising demand and developing infrastructure through environmentally friendly methods will benefit the subsector's socio-economic growth as well as the nation's economy.

4. Study Objectives

The objectives of the study are mainly as follows:

- To identify the environmental and technology steps required to enhance the subsector's overall environmental practices.
- To evaluate non-revenue-producing physical and income-generating activities that increase productivity and facilitate the growth of the value chain, market link, and environmental conditions that allow buyers and MEs (microenterprises) to easily access the market.
- To make it easier for MEs to enter high-end markets by guaranteeing environmental certifications and simplifying market access for prospective customers with simple connections to regional manufacturers.
- Enhancing product branding in this subsector to spur expansion, which will eventually have an impact on legislative frameworks that promote environmental safety, increased market access, and artisans.

5. Research Methodology

This study is an ethnographical observation, qualitative and quantitative data analysis through a considerable amount of period of a full scale of a production with respective research location. Methodology contains the following.

5.1. Literature Review

"Artificial jewelry" that is created with a variety of synthetic materials is referred to as "imitation jewelry." For variety and their fashionable applications, it's also known as fashion jewelry (Sabbir, 2017). Cut and uncut stones, plastic beads, cast iron, brass, nickel, and other appealing materials have all been employed in imitation jewelry (CBI, 2015). Depending on local availability, fashion, culture, customs, and even religion, these kinds of jewelry vary. People can experiment with various styles and occasions with this kind of jewelry (Fashion, 2016). An accessory used to accentuate one's individuality, sense of style, and ensemble is imitation jewelry. It can be produced in large quantities or by artisans. Non-precious metals like brass, steel, zinc casting, and tin casting; semi-precious metals like ster-

ling silver, gold- or silver-plated brass, and other alloys; non-metal materials like leather, textiles, resins, cords, natural wood, coconut chips, dyed, engraved, or cracked shells, etc.; and non- or semiprecious stones like crystal and cubic zirconia are frequently used in costume jewelry (CBI, 2015). Additionally, it offers the newest styles without a huge expenditure. It is also noteworthy that the choice of jewelry by its wearers is influenced by events and attire. In India or the subcontinent's perspective (India, Bangladesh), ladies wear ornate and heavy jewelry with saris; however, in the current fashion, these ornaments are worn with lehengas and party gowns (Farha, 2013).

The demand for silver, gold-plated, and diamond jewelry has increased recently in Bangladesh, where individuals no longer buy gold jewelry on special occasions. Bangladeshi women can now look more attractive thanks to the use of gold-plated silver or counterfeit jewelry at a lower cost than previously (Ukessays, 2015). Bangladesh has export prospects in the global market because to low labor costs and distinctive jewelry designs manufactured from elements like dirt, wood, fiber, plastic, less expensive stones, etc. (Ukessays, 2015).

It is noted that a number of characteristics of jewelry that are positively correlated with likeliness, include being eye-catching, distinctive, having a special design, being authentic, having symbolic or spiritual meaning, having stone trimming with precious metals, and having historical and cultural connotations (Yagmur & Yesilyurt, 2012). However, women's decisions on purchasing imitation jewelry are heavily influenced by demographic characteristics, quality safety, design, price, attraction, comfort, and weightlessness (Gunasundari, 2015).

Survey findings also suggested that ladies have several benefits when purchasing trendy or imitation jewelry. Their desire to purchase gold jewelry is outweighed by these benefits (Kentucky Folk Web, 2010).

The benefits include affordable, fashionable jewelry that nevertheless looks stunning, beautiful, and breathtaking; a sense of protection and safety; and jewelry that is appropriate for a significant occasion. Furthermore, consumers could readily purchase hundreds of fashion jewelry pieces at any moment due to their low cost.

Customers of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds hypothesized that it is less expensive to select necklaces, earrings, and bracelets that look as good as the real ones (gold); the main justifications for using imitation jewelry are the newest styles and hues, safety, and high-quality finery (Manjit Kaur, 2013).

5.2. Quantitative Survey

To determine the required sample size an approach based on confidence level and precision rate were maintained properly. The advantage of this approach is that the statistical validity of a sample does not depend on its size relative to the population being investigated. Rather what matters is the required level of probability (confidence level), required degree of precision and the variability of the population. The sample size has been designed for the quantitative baseline survey fol-

lowing the formula (Islam, 2011) as stated below.

$$n = \frac{Nn_0}{N + n_0}$$

where $n_0 = z^2 p(1-p)/d^2$

First calculate n_0 . If n_0/N is negligible, then n_0 is a satisfactory approximation to n .

$$n_0 = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2} = 385$$

As N (1300 ME) is known the formula leads to the following:

$$n = \frac{700 \times 385}{700 + 385} = 248$$

n = sample size, $p = 0.50$; $z = 1.96$ to 95% is the Confidence Limit and d = desired level of error or significance is 0.05% or 5%.

A standardized questionnaire was used to administer a household survey to 248 respondents in three upazilas under two districts of Jashore and Jhenaidah, including craftsmen, manufacturers, designers, small dealers, and entrepreneurs.

5.3. Qualitative Survey

For qualitative data collection, 8 (eight) FGDs and 26 (twenty-six) KIIs was held between workers, artisans, factory owners or entrepreneurs (large/small) in the study areas. Among them, six FGDs were held in Mohespur & Kotchadpur under Jhenaidah district and one was in Chougacha Upazila of Jashore district.

5.4. Sample Collection Techniques and Distribution

In the sample survey, a systematic sample identification technique was applied. Sample was selected from the list of ME and the measurement interval was established after discussion with SNF. For example, the total ME's is 1100, and the required sample population was 248.00. The interval was therefore calculated as $1100 \div 248 = 4.43$ meaning a minimum of 4 members in each area. The sample was primarily collected from two districts e.g., Jhenaidah district (Mohespur 75%, Kotchandpur-10%) and Jashore district (Chougacha-15%). A total of 24 MEs were surveyed, of which Moshepur (15), Kotchanpur (5) and 4 in Chougacha. The highest qualitative survey was conducted in Moshepur, involving 13 KII & 6 FGDs. Details shown in **Table 1**. Consequently, the 1st respondent was randomly selected from ME list, given that every two or three individual intervals were identified in the list. However, to accommodate the largest sample size of 248, irregular group size adjustments were considered. However, the sample individuals reached 248 including entrepreneurs & workers were statistically sufficient for the baseline study.

The sample size for qualitative sample was determined based on availability of the respondents and their number in the entire MEs of the respective surveyed areas.

Table 1. Sample distribution technique.

Name of Upazila	Upazila-wise sample distribution						
	Name of District	Percentage of data collection	Total population	Total sample	No of ME	No of FGDs	No of KII
Chougacha upazila	Jashore district	15%			4	1	2
Maheshpur upazila	Jhenaidah district	75%	1100	248	15	6	13
Kotchadpur upazila	Jhenaidah district	10%			5	1	3
	Total		1100	248	24	8	28

5.5. Sample Selection Approach

Step 1: Literature review & questionnaire developed.

Step 2: Understanding of the existing market system, Kickoff meeting with SNF, data collection tools & techniques and orientation to the enumerators.

Step 3: Data collection, observation and consultations/field visits, FGD, & KII were conducted with:

- Artisans
- Input sellers/Distributors
- Market traders/collectors
- Small, medium and large scale finished product traders'/color factories.
- Distributors/Jewelry Showroom
- Equipment and input service providers
- NGOs & other institutes

Step 4: Data entry and analysis.

Step 5: Compilation of report and observations.

5.6. Data Processing and Analysis

Data processing techniques

Step-1: Data collection from the field level by both the researchers and trained & experienced data enumerators.

Step-2: Data coding.

Step-3: Data entry by SPSS software.

Step-4: Data evaluation (table, pie chart, diagrams etc.) and,

Step-5: Converting data into Excel format.

Strategic analysis techniques:

- Situational analysis.
- Strategic evaluation.

6. Results Analysis and Discussion

6.1. Results Analysis

Respondent Types and Sex Segregation

Since over 90% of ME and loanees work in the Moheshpur Upazila of the

Jhenaidah district, surveys of around 90% of the households in the research regions were conducted there. 78% of the respondents were female, with the remaining respondents being male. However, in the Jashore district's Chougacha Upazila, where the qualitative survey was carried out, the sample size was minimal. As a result, most of ME are shop or factory owners. Data was gathered from several Unions and Pouroshova in the survey areas, including Moheshpur Pouroshova, Fatepur, Mandarbaria, Azampur, and Kotchadpur Pouroshova in Jhenaidah district and Chougacha Pouroshova in Jashore district. The respondents age ranges from 11 to 60; 37% were between the ages of 31 and 40, 31% were under 30, and 15% were over 40. People under 20 were taken into consideration because they operate in many factories on a regular basis.

Raw Materials for Production

The primary raw materials used in the study are copper, plaster of Paris powder, gas burner, dye, acid, stone, silver, diamond-mounted sharper, filter papers, electricity, and machinery. Copper and plaster of Paris powder, acid, silver, and diamond-mounted sharper are the most commonly utilized products among these. All of these materials are reasonably priced and accessible locally.

ME Growth and Potentialities

Most of the MEs in the study areas was female (77%) and remaining (23%) are male, and workers in this sub-sector are mostly female (around 90%). As they enjoy this work and spend leisure time for additional earnings after households works. However, 85% of MEs believed that their business has been increased day by day. Because of, low investment and good return, low risks and challenges persist, gender friendly particularly women friendly, workers and dais are available etc. The key items are made in the study areas are 'Buri pasha for old age people', earrings, kanpasha, ruhiton, tin tupa, neckless, bracelets and others. Among these items, small items (e.g., earrings) are the most popular items in the Moheshpur and Chougacha upazila, while most of the gold plating (GP color) and large items (e.g., neckless, bracelet etc.) are being produced in Kotchadpur upazila of Jhenaidah district. Because of, high market demand and high orders, women and youth people can be involved, can be worked from households, comparatively low product cost, easy to production with minimum structure and raw materials are available.

Household Income and Expenditure Status

Ninety-three percent of the people in the study areas were single. Of the respondents, 25.8% made their living from jewelry, with the remainder earnings coming from various business ventures and agriculture. According to 68% of respondents, their average income from jewelry work was 10,000 takas. However, they have used their earnings for a variety of things, including buying food for the home, educating their children, buying clothing and animals, buying property, paying for medical care, buying raw materials, repaying loans, and more. However, this portion presented a number of difficulties for the responses. First, they lack solid technical expertise, which makes it difficult for them to work on the new

design; second, natural shocks and stressors interfere their production during the monsoon season, making it impossible for them to deliver goods on time; and third, they lack access to resources, money, land, power, etc.

It is frequently noted that factory owners have set labor rates and there is no room for growth.

Market Opportunities

In the survey areas around 34% respondents sold their product to other districts customers and 36% depends on large local and neighboring customers to marketing their products. Only 3.8% of respondents received regular work orders, 88% received weekly work orders, 3.4% received monthly work orders, and 4.4% received quarterly work orders. However, 37.2 percent of respondents received large orders in research locations, and 62 percent of respondents received minor orders to complete the products.

6.2. Discussion

General Observations:

The following findings were discovered to enhance the manufacturing of Imitation Gold Jewelry (IGJ) in research locations based on Artisan's interview, field observation, FGDs, KIIs, and conversations with relevant actors. The need for fundamental raw materials or inputs in the Indian market grew daily. Local demand for opulent goods also rose. The jewelry industry appears to have a bright future because it has a growing demand among women customers covering middle class to lower income society. There is potential for corporate growth as a result of a promising market. The current market is inadequate, but further market connections require to improve the system as a whole small actors (MEs) were entirely dependent on middle-class and major businessmen, which could limit their income. A big number of women work in this sector because it is quite possible for them to work from home. It has good employment opportunities, especially for women if it is regarded an industry. Students have the chance to work in their free time or while classes are closed. There is a good chance to establish new factories provided they have access to funding (loans) from financial institutions or non-governmental groups. People usually use the "learning by doing" approach to improve their skills without institutional capacity. Indigenous experience serves as a resource in the research areas while gold plating (GP color) and large items such as neckless, sitahar, etc., are primarily popular in the Kotchadpur, little items (earrings, finger rings) are popular in the Moheshpur and Chougacha areas. However, solid trash (the leftover portion of the ornaments) is sold to the factory owners for recycling, there is currently no waste management system in place (such as gray water after dyeing). Absence of a master trainer to implement new color technology and build new designs in the study areas. Leadership, innovative design, and reinforcing activities to strengthen the market system are severely lacking. There is currently no market linkage program in place to connect the market with other districts, importers, big factory owners, etc. Local NGOs often offer loans

ranging from 30,000 BDT to 12,000,00 BDT, which is insufficient to satisfy the increasing demand. As of yet, no organizational set up has been established to maintain the right.

Specific Observations:

During the study period, certain unique findings were made, such as the lack of a diverse design with categories and the increased sensitivity to price swings due to low productivity. This sector has not yet received any assistance from the government, legal issues that arise when the goods are transported to different districts. It was viewed by the law enforcement agency as being unlawfully brought from India. There are many chances to teach young people about economic empowerment using a variety of skills and contemporary technology. There is a good opportunity to develop female entrepreneurs could contribute to the advancement of women's empowerment. The most popular items are flat rings and bangles (Churi of different kinds) are the most profitable and well-liked in local and district markets. However, the health of employees is not protected, and they are unaware of the negative effects of employing chemicals and other metallic elements. The environment in factories is unclean and untidy, and there is insufficient air ventilation. Grey water, or liquid waste, is handled carelessly and mostly finds its way into open water sources like lakes, canals, ponds, rivers, etc.

Gender Dimension and Empowerment

Gender dimensions and empowerment are embedded at every stage of household-level jewelry production, where the division of labor departs significantly from traditional gender roles. Men and women work either collaboratively or independently, both within and beyond the household, using technology according to their own choices, time availability, and willingness. This flexibility in work arrangements combined with respect for individual roles, freedom of occupational choice, and meaningful participation of women forms the foundation of the empowerment process.

The key preconditions for this empowerment include generational knowledge and hands-on skills that already exist within household premises. Once family members are able to engage in production activities, they gain the capacity to take independent action and ultimately produce raw or finished jewelry. This process not only generates income but also strengthens women's agencies' decision-making power to accumulate resources, and control over productive assets, thereby enhancing gender equity through their achievement (Kabeer, 2005).

Social stigma and patriarchal norms within these communities have proven to be fragile and adaptable. As a result, community-led jewelry initiatives have emerged as a sustainable livelihood model in Bangladesh, gradually reshaping gender relations and reinforcing inclusive, family-based economic participation.

Environmental Challenges

The factory owners buy the leftover components of counterfeit gold jewelry from the employees for recycling as part of an excellent solid waste management system. However, the liquid waste has been handled carelessly and has essentially

leaked into the factory's ditches, canal, river, land, or open water body. In addition to seriously harming living things and human health, this uncontrolled liquid also harms the environment. The majority of responders are unaware of the consequences of this uncontrolled liquid waste. Some of them are worried that this uncontrolled liquid waste is bad for their health, but they don't speak up to change the situation. Few of them have a good opinion that it is not bad for their health. They haven't given this problem much thought as a result. Even though sulfuric acid has detrimental effects, they believe that when 80% water and 20% acid are mixed, this kind of acid will not have an adverse effect on the environment. The factory does not take any safety precautions when handling these compounds.

Occupational Health and Safety Risk Assessment

Hand burning while handling ornaments, electrical shocks from a loose connection, eye irritation, discomfort from prolonged work, muscle soreness, headaches, etc. are typical occupational dangers. However, because they are unaware of the potential consequences, the employees voluntarily ignore this kind of risk.

Other Challenges

It is noted that around 69% of respondents have a variety of business-related difficulties, such as a lack of expertise and technology for contemporary design, rate problems, low work orders, marketplaces dominated by goods from other nations, etc. About 35% of respondents stated they had environmental concerns, such as the processing of liquid waste, and 22.8% agreed that they have market-related issues, such as delayed deliveries, low bulk orders, insufficient local clients to grow this kind of business, etc. There must be a way to address the problems, such as obtaining raw materials directly from the supplier and adjusting raw material costs in relation to the current market price of completed goods.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1. Conclusion

One extremely attractive subsector is imitation gold jewelry. After finishing household chores, women can work from home. It might lessen their reliance on their parents and aid with family expenses. It might improve women's empowerment. In this field, women have patients and the chance to work just on finished goods. It has the potential to expand in the future due to market demand. However, there are certain difficulties, like transportation harassment when workers or factory owners transfer raw materials and finished goods, which are perceived by police and administrative authorities as being unlawfully imported from India or other nations. Government assistance is desperately needed to lessen this issue.

However, MEs need to have a direct connection to major players for bulk orders to grow their business. This industry would grow quickly if they consistently received large orders. They must be able to speak their ideas if they belong to any form of affiliation. The association will handle issues and prospects. The benefit of the association will help to establish this sector as an industry and strongly make liaison with governmental agencies to reduce the existing barriers, and it will be

the long-term solution to closing the gaps and obstacles in this field if government provides industrial status.

7.2. Recommendations

To make the subsector an industry, the existing interest rate should be lowered and fix the loan cap based on ME requirements. There should be long-term payment choices and a more advanced loan repayment structure. In order to prevent the system from being handled haphazardly, liquid waste should be managed structurally. Training must be provided at the ME level with an emphasis on environmental pollution and business potential. To reduce casualties, worker health and safety should be prioritized. Upgrading the ventilation system is crucial since the factory should have sufficient access to sunshine and air flow. There shouldn't be any hanging wires in the workplace; instead, electrical wiring should be improved and attached to the wall. It is important to create a market linkage where buyers and sellers can meet at a certain location. establishing a forum or association to fortify the sector and recognize it as an industry. Government assistance, such as easy access to financial institutions and banks and the quest for more government assistance, and appropriate actions should be taken to lessen harassment of any kind, etc.

Acknowledgements

Authors would like to express their sincere appreciation to SNF, a local NGO, for their logistic support during the study as well as PKSF management for providing opportunities to conduct this study and highest level of cooperation during the entire process.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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