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Journal of Governance and Development

Department of Public Administration and Governance Studies, Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University

Implementation of SDG16-Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions in Bangladesh: Present Status and Future Direction

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Abstract

Sustainable Development Goals refers to a series of 17 aspirational goals approved by 193 countries in 2015 at the New York conference of United Nations. SDG 16 is one of the important goals of SDGS which promotes peace, justice, and strong institutions. For achieving this goal government of Bangladesh has taken different initiatives through different intuitions. This paper focused on investigating the current state of implementation of SDG 16 in Bangladesh and to find out the ways for fruitful implementation of SDG 16. This paper is qualitative in nature based on secondary data. Research data shows that Human Rights Commission, Judiciary, Anti-corruption Commission, Local Government Institutions, Ministry of Social Welfare, Media and Press right, Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit and other institutions are working hard to achieve peace and justice indicators in Bangladesh. However, corruption, ACC's institutional tolerance, backlogged judicial system, dependent local government, illicit flow of money is creating hindrance in achieving SDG 16. Strengthening the legal system to secure justice, enhanced capabilities in financial matters, democratic, dependent institutions, accountability, and reducing corruption can ensure fruitful implementation of SDG 16 in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; SDG 16 in Bangladesh; SDG Implementation

1. Introduction

Despite the many ways that different countries are different from one another, a number of cooperation projects have been made in an effort to foster global economic growth and social advancement. When the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were created in 2000, an attempt of this nature was launched with the intention of reducing the humiliation of poverty by the year 2015(Carugi, & Bryant, 2020). The Millennium

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Development Goals (MDGs) had been achieved, which had led to gains in access to water and sanitation, maternity and child health, and overall levels of extreme poverty. The MDGs' objectives, meanwhile, were not entirely met. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also referred to as "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," were subsequently accepted in 2015 (Ashraf et al., 2019). These objectives contained new concepts to address the critical global environmental, political, and social needs, drawing on the legacy of the MDGs. The creation of a comprehensive and universal set of objectives with the aim of assuring human progress and world sustainability is a noteworthy accomplishment (Stafford-Smith et al., 2017).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a series of 17 goals with 169 distinct targets designed to tackle climate change, end poverty, and reduce inequality while also making sure that no one is left behind. By 2030, the SDGs intend to ensure that everyone may live in dignity on a healthy planet (Hak et al., 2016). Peace, justice, and security are the mandatory prerequisite condition for the attainment of sustainable goals. And, sustainable goals are imaginary without peace and justice in the society. SDG 16 promotes inclusive and peaceful societies for sustainable development, ensuring effective justice for all, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels of the society, every citizen free from any kind of violence and torture. The government of Bangladesh has taken initiatives so far to attain peaceful society and ensuring justice for all. This paper will focus on the current status of SDG 16 and future prospects.

2. Objectives of the study

- a) To investigate the current state of Implementation of SDG 16 in Bangladesh.
- b) To find out ways for fruitful implementation of SDG 16.

3. Literature review

The Sustainable Development Goals, which were put forth with the objective of making the world fairer, better, and safer by the year 2030, were approved by 193 states at the United Nations Summit held in New York City in September 2015 (RELX, 2022). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), sometimes referred to as transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, are a list of 169 targets and 17 aspirational "global goals" that were adopted by all 193 UN members. They are designed to direct financing for development and policymaking through the year 2030. The 2030 Agenda is an action plan that aims to strengthen global peace, prosperity, and freedom by focusing on the essential principles of peace, people, planet, prosperity, and collaboration (Iftekharuzzaman, 2017).

Among the goals, SDG 16 denotes peace, justice, and strong institutions which are the prerequisite conditions for achieving sustainable development. SDG 16 encourages the creation of peaceful, inclusive societies that foster long-term growth, universal access to

justice, and efficient, responsible, and inclusive institutions at all levels (United Nations, 2022). We cannot achieve the rest of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) without first securing peace, justice, and strong institutions as specified in SDG 16 - a fundamental framework for all nations (RELX, 2022). This is why urgent action is required to contribute to the advancement of justice and peace by putting an end to exploitation and abuse, supporting the rule of law, reducing corruption, and making sure that decision-making is inclusive. It is impossible to build a peaceful nation without institutions that are both efficient and welcoming, and that can provide for basic human necessities like safety, nourishment, shelter, and safety from the elements. Connectivity to other SDGs is emphasized in SDG 16. Goals like eradicating poverty, guaranteeing access to education, and encouraging economic growth can be challenging, if not impossible, to achieve without peace, justice, and inclusiveness. It's important to note that the progress toward SDG 16 can be aided or hindered by a number of other goals. For instance, climate change can amplify the effects of other social, environmental, and political stressors that can lead to violence.

According to Iftekharuzzaman, (2017) the Bangladeshi government has taken steps to implement the SDGs on a national level. By and large, people from Bangladesh like quiet lives. Bangladesh has managed to remain peaceful owing to its relatively homogeneous population, its communal harmony, and its governmental stability. Still, the country's high population density means that violence and instability are pervasive problems. As an especially pervasive and perilous problem, violence against women must be addressed. Not only is the rate at which such incidents are reported to authorities low, but so is the rate at which they are reported to anyone at all. Maintaining a system of justice in which everyone is treated fairly and according to the law is an ongoing problem. Significant delays in making decisions, inaccessibility to the courts (particularly for the poor), and a massive backlog of pending cases are also sources of worry. Because of this, people are more likely to resort to the informal court system when resolving conflicts, such as those involving property. While the government has made efforts to combat corruption, it is failing because of a lack of personal ethics and morality.

There are 12 objectives and 23 indicators for Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Given the breadth and complexity of these objectives, they have been delegated to a group of around 35 separate government agencies. In addition to the government's efforts, a wide variety of NGOs, DPs, CSOs, and CBOs are cooperating to ensure that all goals are met. Through evidence generation, research, study, training, and mass awareness programs, they are establishing an atmosphere conducive to policy intervention. A government report says Bangladesh is on pace to meet SDGs despite hurdles (Cabinet Division, 2020). Bangladesh excels in poverty reduction, gender equality, power, sanitation, and GDP growth. Munir (2019) identified that illicit flow of money and corruption are the main obstacles towards SDG 16 in Bangladesh in spite of having legal framework on money laundering and corruption. Baseline data for only 4 indicators were available to utilize at the commencement of SDGs projects regarding GOAL-16; however, with ongoing efforts from relevant agencies, we now have baseline data for 10 indicators. There is no way to monitor development without first identifying the current state. There are benchmarks in place where

there is already sufficient data as part of the monitoring and evaluation framework. Goal-16's aims have been implemented by concrete actions and initiatives regardless of the availability of data (Cabinet Division, 2020).

The above literature indicates that there is no focus study on SDG 16 in Bangladesh that discussed about the current status of SDG 16. Though there are some studies on the progress and challenges on overall SDG, a few studies focus on SDG 16 except some government reports and newspaper article. Since peace and justice is a precondition for attaining sustainable goal, it should get priority action from both academic and policy level. So, this paper intends to assess the current status of SDG 16 in Bangladesh and suggest ways for better implication.

4. Materials and Methods

In order to achieve the overall goals of research, qualitative research is both essential and distinctive as researchers may describe and explain the social world, as well as create explanatory models and theories, through the use of this approach. It also serves as the main tool for constructing or reexamining the theoretical underpinnings of social sciences (Morse & Field, 1996). Hence, align with the research objectives, researcher used qualitative approach for conducting this study where, qualitative data have been collected mainly from secondary data sources available, which include relevant laws and policies, research reports, international indices, country reports, institutional reports/ national database, websites and media reports. These collected data from secondary sources helped the researcher to better understand the SDG related information as it presents the necessary information, data, opinion of experts and research reports related to SDG 16. Thematic analysis of text has been conducted to analyze the collected data through using NVivo software.

5. Findings of the Study

5.1 Present status of SDG-16 in Bangladesh

The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has adopted a multi-pronged approach for achieving the globally-adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and necessary exercises have been carried out, which include mapping of relevant bodies and gaps in data, preparing monitoring mechanisms and tracking tools, and needs assessment of funds and possible sources. For achieving the Goal 16, the government has adopted an approach of promoting integrity and good governance among the public administration. SDG-16 aims to ensure peace and justice in society and to strengthen the institutions. In order to attain this goal, the government of Bangladesh took initiatives in every tier of its structure.

5.1.1 Judiciary

According to Bangladesh's Constitution, there must be a separation of powers between the executive and judicial departments. In the landmark ruling known as the Masdar Hossain Case, this ruled that the Supreme Court alone should have the authority to administer the judicial system and not the administrative branch of government. Judiciary has introduced legal aid system in order to protect the rights of the people who are excluded

from justice system. From the beginning of journey, it has been contributing for ensuring the rights of the poorest sector of the society. Before the covid 19 through the legal aid system, the Judiciary was able to help 1, 00806 people in 2018–2019. Though pandemic has breakdown the progress, still it was working in protecting justice for the society. A presidential decree has officially brought legal proceedings in Bangladesh into the modern era of virtual courts. Between two rounds, 178,520 bails were granted, and 369,732 appeals were considered in the online courts. The Supreme Court planned to build a four-tier data center, train 75,000 lawyers, digitalize 2,000 courtrooms, install camera trial systems at the central jail, virtual terminals, and audio recording pools. The encrypted video conferencing app "Boithok" is being used for private hearings (Centre for Research and Information, 2022).

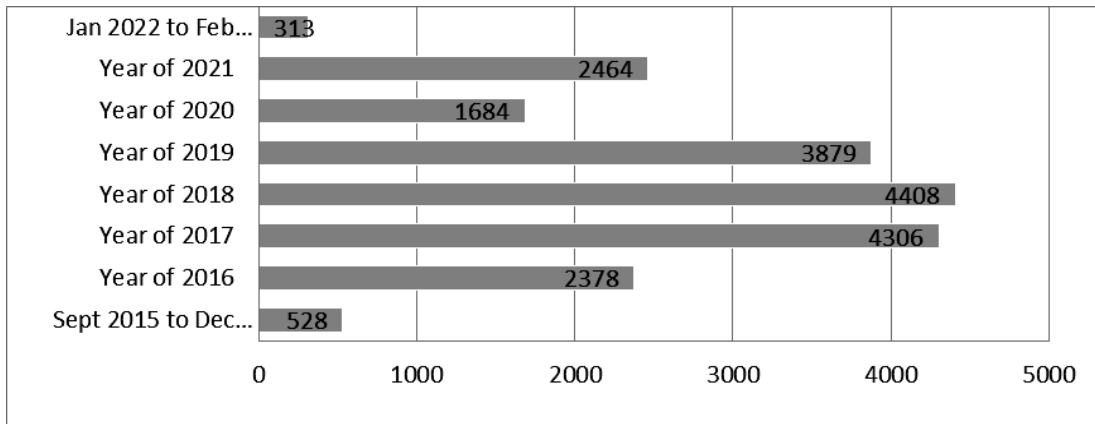


Figure 1: Statistics of Legal Opinion and Advice (cases)

5.1.2 Anti-Corruption Commission

The socioeconomic situation is undergoing enormous changes due to the advancement of economic development, the employment of contemporary technology, the erosion of moral standards and other similar reasons. At the same time, corruption patterns and methods are also evolving. Because of the changing conditions, the commission is actively trying to increase its capacity. The development of web-based software, document management software for the execution and monitoring of the functions of the Commission, the establishment of a digital forensic lab that is on the cutting edge of technology are all included in the plan for the future action. Additionally, policies for the management of the asset recovery unit are developed, the processes of the Commission are automated, and web-based software and document management software are developed. Over the past seven years, the ACC has greatly improved the quality of its investigations and prosecutions, which has led to an increase in the percentage of successful convictions. This seems to be having a direct impact on several improvements that are happening. An indication of this might be obtained by examining the judgments rendered by the courts in the instances that the Anti-Corruption Commission has brought before them during the last five years. It is evident that the proportion of people convicted of a crime increased from 37% in 2015 to

54% in 2016, 68% in 2017, 63% in 2018, and 63% in 2019 as well. When these data are examined, it becomes evident that since 2017, the proportion of instances in which the commission was successful in securing a conviction has not changed. The frequency of penalty application has been constant over the past two years. The panel deserves praise for this successful accomplishment. The conviction rate was only 37% in 2015, but it increased to over 60% in 2017 and continued to rise in 2018 and 2019. Only 37% of people were convicted in 2015. In 2020, the commission recorded the greatest conviction rate in the previous six years (77%). The Commission's lawsuits alleging instances of money laundering were successful in having all of their judgments upheld in both 2018 and 2019, despite the fact that the panel anticipates an extremely high conviction rate in this case (Anti-Corruption Commission, 2022).

Table 1: Number of complaints in 2021

Number of Complaint	Approved Investigation	Running Investigation	Approved Case File	Running Cases	Charge sheet	Number of Settled Cases	Cases sent to concerned Authorities
12108	500	3705	269	1446	150	390	2183

Source: (ACC, 2022; Developed by Researcher)

In 2021, total 12108 complaints were paid down to ACC among which 500 cases were approved for investigation. Finally, 390 cases were settled by the end of the year. 78% of the cases are solved. The Commission is continuously working to improve the procedures for conducting investigations and bringing prosecutions based on its own knowledge and experience. The commission has never claimed that the amount of corruption has decreased in line with public expectations, despite putting into place a variety of regulatory measures like lawsuits, arrests, and punishments. On the other side, a recent study by Transparency International revealed that 86 percent of Bangladeshis have faith in the ACC. One could argue that a rise in public confidence in their government has resulted in less corruption overall. The general public now has more confidence, which is why Bangladesh's fight against corruption is heading in the right direction.

5.1.3 Ministry of Social Welfare

The Ministry of Social Welfare seeks to provide a social safety net for the country's poor, elderly, orphans, vulnerable children, widows, PWDs, and marginalized residents in order to promote socioeconomic growth and preserve their rights. For the sake of orphan children's rights and bettering their lives, this institution oversees both state and private orphanages. In addition, it maintains a daycare facility, a center for child development, a safe home, and shishu families in Upazila level to protect the rights of underprivileged children. Young people and women from low-income families can participate in safe-home programs thanks to training and rehabilitation. Social security, legal assistance, and equitable justice

shall be provided to women who are affected by social ills such dowries, sexual harassment, child marriage, and drug addiction. Women use healthcare at a rate of 50%, thus social security will help them. The provision of health care and rehabilitation for expecting moms, disadvantaged women, and children, who have been given priority, would also safeguard women from loss and vulnerability. Private hospitals will provide free care to 50% of disadvantaged women and women with disabilities.

5.1.4 National Human Rights Commission

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is a fully separate entity that operates in accordance with the legislation. The goal of the National Human Rights Commission is to create a widespread human rights culture in the nation. In addition to investigating and analyzing the state of the nation's human rights, the NHRCB primarily watches and monitors human rights infractions. In order to harmonize public requests, national laws, and international agreements, the NHRCB examines existing laws or creates new ones. In collaboration with important stakeholders, the NHRCB drives and oversees legal reforms. For example, the NHRCB collaborated on the drafts of the Sexual Harassment (Prevention and Protection) Act 2021 and the Human Trafficking (Deterrence and Prevention) Act (2013). For local advocacy, the NHRCB analyzes changes in the ICCPR, ICESCR, VAW, CEDAW, etc. The NHRCB actively denounces infringement of human rights. The NHRCB urges human rights advocates to band together to address specific problems. When necessary, the NHRCB works with stakeholders, the media, and the government to promote human rights. The National Human Rights Commission has introduced human rights scholarships, an online course, and a draft Sexual Harassment Prevention and Protection Act. Classes 09–10 and 11–12 this year participated in a quiz and easy competition on the topic of "Liberation War, Independence, and Humane Values." The NHRC has recently focused on developing a five-year strategic plan (2016–20) and standard operating procedures as well as identifying the Commission's limitations and legal gaps, particularly those in the Constitution. In 2015, the NHRC resolved 241 complaints (Iftekharuzzaman, 2017).

Table 2: Protecting human rights through complaints

Year	Complaints of Previous years	Year wise received complaints	Total Complaints (1+2)	Year wise Disposal	Year wise Pending/ no disposal (3-4)
2016	499	692	1191	430	761
2017	761	644	1405	604	801
2018	801	733	1534	1080	454

2019	454	779	1233	669	564
2020	564	481	1045	347	698
2021	698	573	1271	972	299
Total	3777	3902	7679	4102	3577

Source: (National Human Rights Commission Annual Report, 2021; Developed by Researcher)

According to article 12 of the NHRC Act 2009, citizens of the nation may file complaints with the NHRCB. Since its creation, the NHRCB has been accepting and denying complaints. In 2018, the majority of the complaints that were still ongoing were resolved. Due to this, the number of disposals was highest (1080) in 2018. Due to covid19, there were only 481 complaints in 2020, and the majority of them (347) were dismissed because all official operations were conducted online. In 2021, 1271 issues from previous years were fixed. The National Human Rights Commission is currently performing the function of a safeguard, in which it is defending the human rights of the people of Bangladesh; this would pave the way for the improvement of the human rights situation in the country. NHRC played crucial role during covid 19 pandemic time to protect human rights.

5.1.5 Local Government Institutions

The Constitution gives local governments the power to set their own budgets, raise taxes for local needs, and manage their financial resources. The functions and authority of the local government are established by a number of laws that are tier-organized. All LGIs must adhere to the requirements set forth by the RTI Act of 2009 in order to disclose and share information. A number of statutes issued at increasingly lower levels of local government contain provisions relating to citizen charters, ward meetings, open budget meetings, and citizens' rights to information. The establishment of an open budget system, a citizen's charter, Ward Shava within Union Parishads, and Town Level Coordination Meetings within Municipalities are just a few initiatives taken to increase the LGIs' accountability and openness (Uddin, 2019). The government has set up Union Digital Center in each union parishad which brought government services to the door of the citizens. Citizens are now able to get all kinds of e services from government through UDC. The creation of an operational manual for each tier of LGIs is one of the efforts being made to increase the effectiveness of the LG. The European Union (EU), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the Government of Bangladesh have formed a trilateral partnership to fund and implement Phase II of the Activating Village Courts Project, which is assisting local authorities in making village courts effective in 1,080 unions. There have been a total of 236,868 cases in phase II reports, of which 70% were made by women. 473,740 people benefited from the resolution of almost 200,000 cases (bdnews24.com, 2022).

5.1.6 Media and Press Right

Press freedom in Bangladesh is protected by the constitution. Legislation governs media accountability. The government has the right to confiscate any book or paper that contains offensive, obscene, or scurrilous text, symbols, or images by publishing a formal gazette announcement. If someone disseminates electronic material that undermines law and order, the reputation of the state or a person, or religious convictions, the government may take legal action. Newspapers and journalistic organizations that breach the Press Council Act of 1974 are subject to prosecution by the Press Council.

5.1.7 Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit

The major watchdog and regulator for preventing money laundering and terrorism funding in the nation is the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit. BFIU is in charge of gathering Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs) and Cash Transaction Reports (CTRs) from a range of reporting entities and other sources (including government, semi-government, and autonomous bodies, as well as the media, individuals, and groups), as well as disseminating knowledge and intelligence about these reports to pertinent Law Enforcing Agencies.

5.2 Gaps and Challenges in implementation of SDG 16

Bangladesh has prioritized the SDG targets and taken action to achieve them, but due to a lack of baseline data, SDG 16 receives little attention in government planning. Particularly for extrajudicial killings, public satisfaction with public institutions and services, and corruption and bribery, there is no official information on the target indicators. On several topics, such as violence and related death rates, abuse, exploitation, trafficking, violence against, and torture of minors, only partial information is available. In Bangladesh, corruption, bribery, money laundering, and human rights breaches continue despite official efforts to stop them. The majorities of institutions lack an accountability framework and have subpar internal mechanisms. The effectiveness of vital accountability institutions has been reduced by increased politicization. Proactive disclosure is insufficient for some organizations.

5.2.1 Backlogged judicial system

The court system is significantly backlogged. In Bangladesh's courts, there are presently 3,684,728 cases awaiting resolution (Rahman, 2020). Pending cases frustrate those who seek justice and can also add to the workload, take up more place in the courtroom, and deplete the resources. The government still maintains power over lower courts after the split was formally acknowledged. The Ministry of Law has responsibility for overseeing the budget for the lower courts, not the Supreme Court. It has been claimed that the administration in charge influences the selections, advancements, dismissals, and behavior of its judicial officials (Mollah, 2012). It has been stated that the enormous number of cases that have not yet been resolved is attributable to the judiciary's insufficient financial support as well as a lack of capacity building for judges. An insufficient number of judges in relation to the quantity of cases lead to congestion in the judicial system.

5.2.2 Role of NHRC in protecting human rights

When it comes to taking action against severe human rights violations, the NHRC is weak ever seen. In most cases The National Human Rights Commission plays counseling role rather than taking direct actions. In the case of human rights violations, the members of the commission just visit to the victim family and gave consolidation to them as well as send letter to home ministry requesting for taking actions on the matter. However, the commission do not follow up the future updates in later. The murder of Tanu and Sagar-Runi and so like cases raised question about the effectiveness of National Human Rights Commission. NHRC is seen silent in the case of the extrajudicial killings by law enforcing agencies, the disappearance of people who held opposing political views, etc. However, they tend to only be seen when they make a comment, which is frequently confined to visiting the victims and speaking out against human rights violations in the media. The ability of journalists, bloggers, researchers, human rights activists, and other members of civil society to exercise their fundamental rights, such as identifying and reporting on corruption and holding public officials responsible, is constrained by policies. Numerous domestic statutes, including the Special Powers Act (1974), the Anti-terrorism Act (2009) (amended in 2012 and 2013), the Information and Communication Technology Act (2006) (amended in 2009 and 2013), the Mobile Court Act (2009), and the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act (2016), are in conflict with Bangladesh's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and restrict widely acknowledged freedoms. Journalists are often attacked by the militants. Mahfuz Anam faces 54 criminal defamation cases and 15 sedition cases. Editor Matiur Rahman and certain Prothom Alo writers face 55 criminal defamation and "hurting religious feelings" charges (Iftekhazzaman, 2017).

5.2.3 Corruption

In spite of the existence of a strong anti-corruption apparatus, both legally and institutionally, pervasive corruption persists in the country. One of the most significant types of corruption that can occur in the service industries is the payment of unauthorized or illegal money by individuals who receive the services. The police and RAB are seen as the country's most corrupt law enforcement agencies, according to a Transparency International Bangladesh survey (TIB). In the preceding year, at least 70.9% of the houses surveyed nationwide had engaged in corrupt behavior of some type. According to the results of the "Corruption in Service Sectors: National Household Survey 2021", the most corrupt service sector in the nation is law enforcement, which was found to be corrupt in 74.4% of the surveyed households (The Business Standard, 2022).

5.2.4 ACC's institutional tolerance

The Anti-Corruption Commission is responsible for combating corruption. The ACC has failed to successfully combat corruption despite its attempts. The time and dearth of reliable evidence for launching a case demonstrate the ineffectiveness and lack of professionalism of the ACC's investigations into corruption. The ACC is also accused of focusing on lower-level employees and only bringing a few charges against powerful members of the current ruling party, leaving the major offenders unpunished. Additionally,

political interference and influence are suspected for ineffectiveness of ACC (Iftekharuzzaman, 2017). Studies imply that the appointment of the ACC head and members is influenced by political loyalty to the party. There are numerous claims that ACC has been used against political opponents (Aminuzzaman and Khair, 2017). According to the allegations, cases of alleged corrupt behavior are dropped due to political pressure. Despite information that leaders of the ruling party had amassed considerable riches beyond their recognized sources of income, the ACC filed very few corruption cases against them. As a result of the fact that it has not been able to establish impartiality in the way that it handles accusations of corruption, it is also asserted that the ACC is not politically neutral but rather open to political influence (Sakib, 2020). The ACC played a partisan role in some cases and did not act against all of the accused in an equal manner, which indicates that it treated some of the accused more favorably than others. It is also asserted that the ACC has filed very few cases against influential members of the party that is currently in power. Instead, it is said to have taken action against staff members in lesser echelons, while the primary offenders have been left unpunished or are allowed to walk free (Iftekaruzzaman, 2017). There have been multiple pieces of evidence that suggest that rules and procedures are not implemented uniformly to all authorities, which results in an increased likelihood of power abuse and grand corruption.

5.2.5 Dependent local government

The LGIs depend on the central government for financial assistance due to their meager resources. The central government's influence over LGIs is more comparable to the idea of "de-concentration" than it is to the idea of true "decentralization" (Waheduzzaman & Alam, 2015). The MPs have both direct and indirect influence, which makes the LGI leadership more political and causes them to have a reputation issue owing to claims of corrupt acts. The Monitoring and Evaluation Wing of LGD has an ineffective, weak, and insufficient monitoring mechanism (Aminuzzaman and Khair, 2017). The Upazila and Zila Parishad are unable to successfully complete their assigned tasks as a result of the limited authority given to them by the law. The bureaucracy and local government entities clearly have a difficult time comprehending one another's roles and responsibilities. For instance, the administration of various towns and city corporations recently removed a number of elected mayors and councilors from their roles in those municipalities and city corporations. LGIs lack the skills required for efficient financial management and the adoption of ICT-based services to ensure transparency and accountability. Due to patriarchy and polarization at the local level, the party-centered electoral system for local governments, which was put into place in 2016 by law amendment, has eventually resulted in a weak local government system.

5.2.6 Illicit flow of money

Even though the necessary law has been passed, an institutional framework has been established, and operational capacities have been made apparent, illicit financial flows from Bangladesh continue unabatedly. Following a three-year drop, Bangladeshi individuals and businesses deposited more money in Switzerland's private banking systems in 2021, increasing by 55% to a total of 871 million Swiss francs annually (bdnews24.com. 2022).

The amount was around 563 million Swiss francs in the year 2020. Money related to Bangladesh that was kept in Swiss banks experienced a large surge after declining for two years in a row (Kibria, 2022). The Bangladesh Bank published an explanation statement about Bangladesh-related funds stored in Swiss banks a few years ago. The Swiss National Bank has submitted information on 67 Bangladeshi individuals and organizations to the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (bdnews24.com. 2022). The Anti-Corruption Commission, law enforcement agencies, as well as investigators from other agencies, received the information from it. The majority of Bangladeshi money that is illegally exported is going to the United States, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Dubai, Singapore, and Europe. Therefore, it is believed that if the estimate had included money flows that happened through shady channels like hundi and hawla, the total amount of unlawful financial movements might have been far higher (Kibria, 2022). There have been allegations that considerable number of Bangladeshis have invested in real estates in Malaysia, Canada and the US. Under ‘Malaysia My Second Home Project’, 3656 Bangladeshis have invested in real estates in Malaysia. Bangladeshis’ participation in this project is found third largest after China and Japan. According to media estimate, capital flight of BDT 1,500 crore took place for this purpose (The daily Prothom Alo, 2017).

5.3 Strategies to achieve SDG 16

5.3.1 Strengthening the legal system to secure justice

The judiciary becomes more independent, effective, and inspires citizen confidence in its decisions and institutions through transparency and access to information. It may improve how others view a nation's judicial system.

5.3.2 Enhanced capabilities in financial matters

It is imperative that the budgets of concerned anti-corruption institutions, such as the ACC, OCA, the judiciary, and law enforcement agencies, be enhanced in accordance with the requirements.

5.3.3 Improved capabilities in the fight against money-laundering

It is imperative that law enforcement agencies (LEAs) such as the ACC, NBR, and DNC have their own specialized investigation and prosecution teams for money laundering. In order to put a stop to the illegal flow of funds, the customs authority needs to be given the ability to detect instances of over-invoicing, under-invoicing, over-shipment, under-shipment, or phantom shipping.

5.3.4 Incentives

It is necessary to provide both positive and negative incentives in order to guarantee accountability and openness within public institutions.

5.3.5 Credibility towards institutions

The credentials required of chairpersons and members of constitutional and statutory organizations, as well as the procedures by which they are appointed, need to be specifically specified and put into practice in order to ensure an impartial and open selection process.

5.3.6 Stop unlawful money flow loopholes

The mobilization of domestic resources is hampered by the illicit financial flow. Money laundering is not currently under control by laws or practices. Bangladesh needs international cooperation and support to control the situation and pressure the government to stop MNC tax evasion and illegal resource mobilization because Bangladesh cannot stop illicit flows on its own.

5.3.7 Voting freedom of parliament member

With a few exceptions, Article 70 of the Constitution should be changed to allow members of parliament to vote against the initiatives or conclusions of their own parties.

5.3.8 Actual separation of power

The constitution should be amended to eliminate the legal provisions giving the Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs control over lower courts.

5.3.9 Removing special power Act

Section 54 of the Special Powers Act of 1974 has to be repealed and the Police Act of 1861 needs to be modified in order to make the police force more receptive to the public.

5.3.10 Independent institutions

It is necessary to remove the provision allowing lawmakers to advise local governmental entities. Legislation that governs the Election Commission's creation, the process for selecting its members and its duties must be passed. The National Human Rights Commission should have the power to look into claims of human rights abuses committed by regulated entities, like law enforcement authorities.

6. Conclusion

In this study, an effort has been made to provide an assessment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 16 goals that have been met in Bangladesh based on a review of secondary literature. The government has created a strategy with numerous components to move toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite the numerous actions taken, SDG 16 is not given the appropriate priority in government planning since there are substantial gaps in the baseline data. As a result, a significant amount of effort must be directed toward achieving this Goal. Despite having a sufficient institutional and legal

framework, there has been an increase in the volume of illicit money flows. There is a problem with politicization in regulatory agencies, politico-administrative linkages in the indulgence of corruption, and the presence of politically exposed people and members of their families working in various financial institutions. Some regulatory organizations lack the resources and specialist prosecution sections needed to look into money laundering activities. Corruption is pervasive despite a strong legal and institutional framework. Low complaint to inquiry and investigation ratios, unfavorable case outcomes, and low conviction rates are signs of weak investigation and prosecution skill. Despite recent efforts, the ACC hasn't shown the ability and political will to act against high-level politicians and public officials. Policies relating to accountability and openness are frequently broken by public institutions. The government's anti-corruption initiatives are hampered by legal restrictions and a lack of implementation. Bangladesh has a well-defined legal system and NIS institution structure. Laws and policies are not faithfully carried out and complied with. More than many other nations, Bangladesh's institutional and legal framework protects information and fundamental rights. The right to information still has some limitations. Using legal loopholes, state institutions continue to violate basic human rights and freedoms.

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Peoples Participation in Ensuring Good Governance at Local Levels in Bangladesh: A Study on Union Parishads

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Abstract

People's participation is a critical component of good governance, as it strengthens effective decision-making and improves the efficiency of local government practice. However, due to a variety of issues, people's participation in terms of ensuring good governance has been hampered, posing significant challenges to the effective service delivery of local government. In this regard, the study's primary goal was to explore the issue of people's participation in terms of ensuring good governance in Bangladesh. The study was carried out using a quantitative approach, with data gathered from primary sources. The findings of the study reveal that most of the rural people had no idea about the UP-standing committee (95%), open budget meeting (78%), and Union Parishad Act (83%). Similarly, it was found that 98% of rural people did not participate in the pre-open budget session and final open budget session, whereas 95% and 97% of rural people did not participate in the Ward Shaba and UP standing committees, respectively. Conversely, it was found that only 45% of rural people participated in UP village court activities. These findings demonstrate conclusively that individuals were less concerned in their engagement in various local government avenues to ensure good governance. In this vein, the research recommends that public education, awareness, and government-relevant policies might be successful in arousing citizens' concern about ensuring good governance at local government bodies, especially in UPs in Bangladesh.

Key Words: Good Governance, People's Participation, Local Government, Challenges, Practice, Bangladesh.

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1. Introduction

Bangladesh, as a developing country, has already achieved the distinction of having the fastest-growing economy due to its commitment to democracy and good governance at all levels. It is well understood that a country's long-term development is largely dependent on its governing system (Glass & Newig, 2019). Bangladesh has significantly improved human development indicators as well as good governance dimensions since the 1990s (Jahan, 2021). Bangladesh's constitution expressly states that the state shall make every effort to ensure equal opportunity for all citizens and shall take effective measures to eliminate social and economic inequality in order to ensure an equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities among citizens (Ahasan, 2018). The primary goal of this statement is to achieve a consistent level of sustainable development across the Republic (Aminuzzaman, 2006). In this regard, the most pressing issue is good governance, which refers to an ideal governing system that represents a paradigm shift in the role of governments. In particular, good governance is the active and fruitful interaction between the state and its people, and the key to its success resides with the forces that participate in political administration (Keping, 2018). However, good governance is critical for successful economic development (MIRA & HAMMADACHE, 2017). Accountability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness, participation, the rule of law, and fairness are some of the traits of good governance. These traits make sure that society's priorities are widely accepted and that the voices of the most vulnerable and poorest people are heard when decisions are made about how to distribute resources for development (Hassan & Zeb, 2021). Besides, participation is one of the most essential indicators of good governance since it validates the involvement of the people in government decision-making (Uzzaman, 2010). Participation often refers to people's engagement in the decision-making process for implementing their fair share of the benefits of development programs as well as their involvement in attempts to assess such programs (Fitzgerald et al., 2016). Through the participation of the rural people, local government plays a crucial role in the exercise of democracy (Ahmed & Akter, 2021) and good governance in Bangladesh (Anam, 2019). However, the main obstacles in achieving good governance in Bangladesh include people's inadequate knowledge, poor education, and lack of interest as well as the authorities' weak accountability, poor transparency, the inappropriate practice of rule of law, poor inclusion, etc. Participating in the decision-making process and incorporating stakeholders may help to strengthen accountability, transparency, administrative efficiency, improve citizen awareness, etc. regarding ensuring good governance in Bangladesh. In this vein, how citizen participation may improve good governance in Bangladesh is a troubling matter. Therefore, the principal aim of this study was to explore how people's participation leads to ensuring successful good governance through people's participation at the Union Parishad level in Bangladesh.

However, the study significantly focused on the diverse challenges of people's participation in different avenues of local government that hinder practicing good governance at local government institutions, mostly UPs in Bangladesh. In addition, the study demonstrated the people's perception of their participation following a quantitative

approach that helped conclusively illustrate the existing status of people's participation as well as the practice of good governance at local government bodies (UPs) in Bangladesh.

2. Objectives of the Study

The principal objective of this study is to explore the state of people's participation in local government institutions (Union Parishad) in terms of ensuring good governance in Bangladesh.

The specific objectives are

- a) To identify the different avenues of people's participation in Union Parishads (UPs) regarding ensuring good governance in Bangladesh.
- b) To assess the people's perception of participation in the different avenues of UPs.
- c) To explore the major challenges of people's participation in the Union Parishads (UPs) in terms of practicing good governance in Bangladesh.

3. Review of Related Literature

Since the second half of the 1980s, the issues of governance and good governance have been evolving at the vanguard of the global agenda for progress. In recent times, the quality of governance is being measured as the key prerequisite for solving many problems and for socio-economic development in lower middle income countries like Bangladesh (Hasan et al., 2018). People's participation is thus one of the most essential prerequisites for achieving good governance (MIRA & HAMMADACHE, 2017).

4.1 Different Avenues of People's Participation in Union Parishads

Ahmed et al. (2022) examine a study on the most current trends in people's participation in the rural local government in Bangladesh. The study reveals that, despite the fact that public engagement in different forms of local government is fraught with difficulties, it is essential for bolstering decentralization in Bangladesh. The study's results indicate that political complexities, institutional corruption, low levels of education, and general ignorance make it very difficult for the majority of rural residents to participate in the different avenues of the Union Parishad in Bangladesh. As a result, the research suggests that increasing public awareness and ensuring the accountability and openness of service providers may boost people's participation in rural local government in Bangladesh (Ahmed et al., 2022).

As well, Uddin (2019) conducts a study on citizens' empowerment through people's participation in Union Parishad in Bangladesh. On the basis of the constitution, the author predominantly demonstrates the difference between the traditional concept of people's participation and modern practices of people's participation in field administration in Bangladesh. As well, the author explores the different avenues of people's participation in local government. The study was conducted by following a descriptive and analytical approach, whereas the findings reveal that community members' participation in local

government institutions is not only an opportunity for them, but also a mechanism for their empowerment. In addition, people's participation status in Union Parishad was very frustrating. However, the study was only focused on how empowerment of marginalized people occurred through people's participation in local government, but the author did not clarify the issues of people's participation in different avenues (Uddin, 2019).

Respectively, Hao et al. (2022) argue about the implication of people's participation in the governance process in terms of ensuring sustainable development in Kenya. The authors predominantly illustrate the world's current practices of people's participation in democratic process, decision-making process, policy formulation and implementation process. Then the authors highlight the practices of people's participation in Kenya with constitutional basis. The study was carried out by following a quantitative approach whereas the findings of the study demonstrate the impact and relationship between people's participation and sustainable development in Kenya. However, the study was conducted in Kenyan settings and ignored the concept of local government and good governance (Hao et al., 2022).

4.2 Major Challenges of People's Participation in the Union Parishads

Haque (2009) describes a study on the difficulties associated with citizen engagement in local governance. Initially, the author explains the concept of local governance, the actors of governance, and the role of local governance in socio-economic development. Principally, the author illustrates the poor status of the local government system in Bangladesh. The author contends that due to central government negligence, ineffective decentralization, weak economic independence, and limited government practice, local government institutions are frequently overshadowed by national policies, practices, and efforts at economic growth and social and political development. The study was conducted by analyzing secondary data, whereas the findings demonstrate that due to inefficiency, lack of resources, and political corruption, Union Parishads became ineffective and questioned by the general public. Furthermore, the findings reflect the status of various standing committees in terms of people's participation and decision-making in Union Parishad. However, although the author demonstrates a policy framework, he did not highlight the advances in people's participation in local government in terms of ensuring good governance in Bangladesh (Haque, 2009). In addition, Uzzaman (2010) discusses a study on the challenges of citizen participation in fostering good governance in developing nations. The author mainly examines stakeholders' perceptions on encouraging people to participate in local development projects along with a number of obstacles. The study was carried out by following a qualitative method. The study's findings revealed that the idea of good governance in Bangladesh is still relatively vague and confusing due to the conventional mindset of relevant stakeholders. As a result, the author places a strong emphasis on how individuals participate in development efforts in developing nations like Bangladesh. However, the author did not highlight the avenues of people's participation in terms of ensuring effective good governance in Bangladesh (Uzzaman, 2010).

Similarly, Panday and Rabbani (2011) explore a study on good governance at the grass-root level in Bangladesh, incorporating the instance of Union Parishad. In order to develop the body of knowledge on local government, the authors illustrate the four indicators of good governance—public engagement, leadership, transparency, and equality. The research was done using qualitative data, and its results indicate that the governance environment at the local level in Bangladesh is not conducive to the development of good governance and strong local democracy. In particular, the findings of the study demonstrate that although certain elements (such as ward Shaba, open budget, citizen charter, and freedom to information) were included in the Local Government (Union Parishad) Act of 2009, the government has not succeeded in ensuring participation, accountability, good governance, and openness. However, the authors did not provide any comprehensive suggestions to address the issues of people's participation in the Union Parishad regarding enhancing good governance in Bangladesh (Panday & Rabbani, 2011).

4.3 Initiatives for Ensuring Good Governance in Union Parishad through People's Participation

From a localism perspective, Lawton and Macaulay (2014) conducted a study on how people's participation enhances good governance in local government. The authors articulate that people's participation is a crucial factor in local integrity and governance. The study was conducted by following a case study in the United Kingdom, whereas the findings indicate that standards committees influenced the procedures and practices of local integrity governance via the active participation of local people. In fact, the authors say that standards committees are essential for getting people involved locally and making governance better. However, the authors did not clarify the dimension of different avenues of people's participation regarding enhancing good governance (Lawton & Macaulay, 2014). Besides, Poto and Fornabaio (2017) describe a study on the importance of people's participation as the key factor in enhancing good governance. In particular, the authors depict the context of the global good governance dimension in terms of increasing indigenous people's involvement in the environmental governance process. The study was carried out by following the case study method, whereas the findings reveal the implication of new technologies in people's participation as well as decision-making. In addition, the findings of the study recommend that easier access to information, greater engagement, and new forms of involvement, peaceful resolution, and environmental preservation may boost the participation of indigenous peoples in the process of strengthening good governance. However, the authors ignored the issue of people's participation in local government in terms of enhancing good governance (Poto & Fornabaio, 2017). Similarly, Hao et al. (2022) argue that civic education can enhance the consolidation of public consciousness in the governance process. Besides, the authors recommend that, since the Office of Public Engagement Rapporteur (OPP) plays a commendable role in collecting people's and leaders' perspectives, establishing the OPP can increase people's participation in the governance process (Hao et al., 2022).

4.4 Identification of the Research Gap

Throughout the literature review, it has been found that no particular study has been conducted yet to explore the state of avenues of people's participation in local government in terms of ensuring good governance. The author contemplates that although these studies predominantly focused on the general aspect of good governance and people's participation, there is a glaring lack of studies that can serve as a model for elucidating the factors that enhance the sustained level of good governance through people's participation in local government. Also, it has been found that most of the studies that have been done in the past have either looked at issues of good governance or looked at issues of people's participation. However, no study has yet been done to look at how people's participation in local government institutions in Bangladesh affects good governance. Therefore, this study focuses on the people's participation in rural local government to identify the current status of the avenues of people's participation regarding enhancing good governance in Bangladesh.

5. Research Questions

- a) How do people participate in local government (particularly Union Parishads) in Bangladesh to ensure good governance?
- b) How can we evaluate the public's sense of engagement in the various UPs avenues?
- c) In terms of implementing good governance in Bangladesh, what are the greatest obstacles to people's engagement in Union Parishads (UPs)?

6. Materials and Methods

The study has been conducted using a quantitative approach on the basis of the positivism philosophy, where an exploratory research approach has been applied. The quantitative approach has been applied to collect survey data. Quantitative studies provide data that is expressed in numbers, and the researcher is able to apply statistical tests in preparing statements about the data. Particularly, another reason for choosing the quantitative approach is that it is helpful in preparing descriptive statistics and inferential analysis (Demetrius Madrigal, 2020). In addition, by applying a quantitative approach, the researcher can get valid, and reliable results from the data analysis. Therefore, to attain the principal objective of this study, the quantitative method has been applied in an exploratory manner. However, survey data has been collected from the local people who belong to the selected Union Parishad in Bangladesh. A total of 120 respondents from two selected Union Parishads (Trishal and Osmanpur Unions) in Trishal Upazilla and Kuliarchar Upazila took part in the survey.

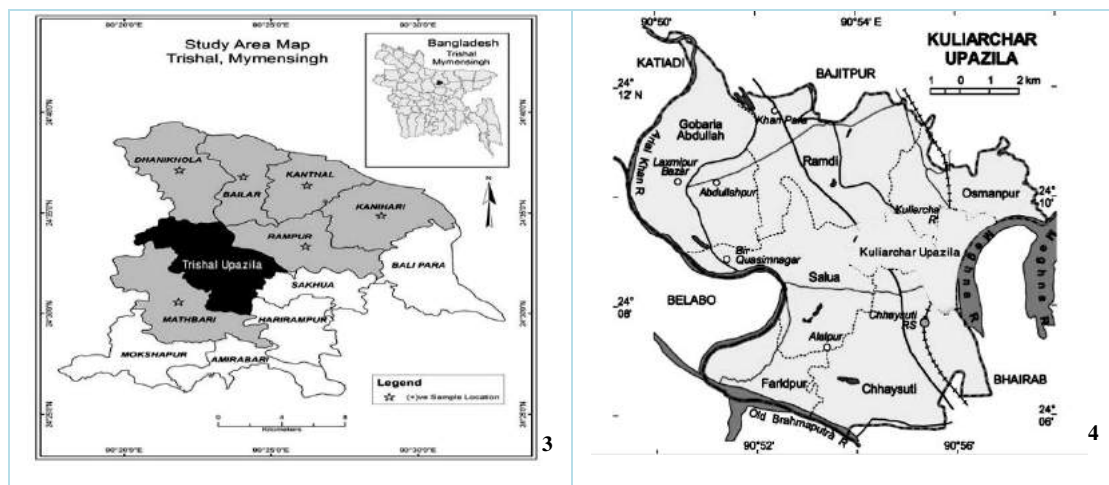


Figure 1: Study Area (Islam et al., 2017); (Portal, 2023)

Since the data were collected during the lockdown amid the pandemic, the researcher could not reach more respondents. Similarly, it is worth mentioning that the respondents were general people (government employees, day laborers, businessmen, and members of civil society) who belonged to the particular study areas and that the researcher selected them randomly. In this spirit, it is also mentioned that the research area was chosen on purpose. Due to the fact that no prior research on this issue has been undertaken in this region, this region was purposefully chosen for the study. Indeed, the researcher contemplates that it is enough to establish the proposition by only collecting information from the local people. However, close-ended questions were applied to collect survey data. Finally, data has been analyzed using MS Excel and SPSS software. Conversely, to ensure the balance between the probable threats of research and the possible benefits of research, all ethical issues have been maintained strictly.

7. Findings of the Study

7.1 Demographic Information of the Respondents

Demographic data is considered significant information in any study since it reveals the overall status and conditions of the participants. However, the demographic information of the respondents is illustrated by evaluating gender, age, and profession.

³ Red colour area indicates the Trishal Upazila

⁴ Yellow color area indicates the Kuliarchar Upazila

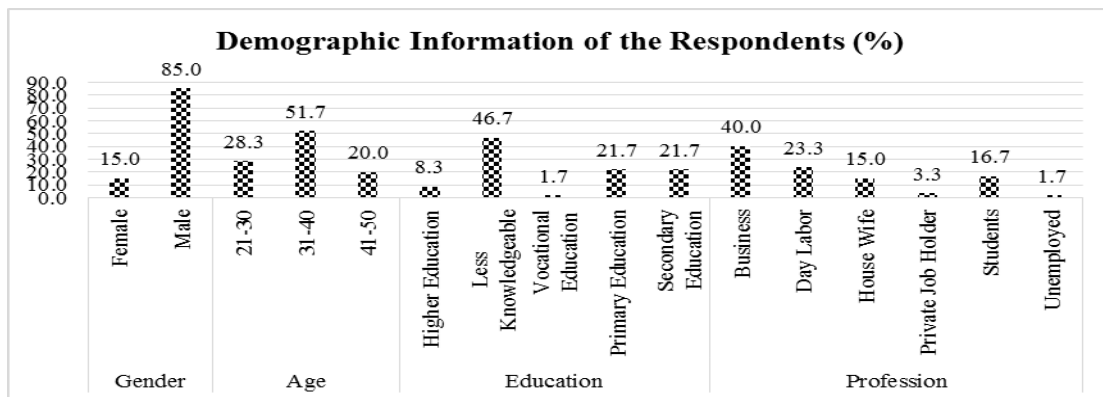


Figure 2: Demographic Information of the Respondent (Source: Field Survey, 2020)

The demographic characteristics of this research were measured by gender, age, education, and the respondents' profession (table 1). Gender distribution showed that there were more male respondents (n = 102, 85%) than females (n = 18, 15%). The majority of the respondents were aged between 31 and 40 (n = 62, 51.7%). Besides, most of the respondents were less knowledgeable, i.e. illiterate (n = 56, 46.7%), whereas merely 21.7% (n = 26) were knowledgeable and 8.3% (n = 10) had a higher educational background. In addition, most of the respondents were involved in business professions (n = 28, 40%) and day laborers (n = 28, 23.3%).

7.2 Understanding of Participation Avenues

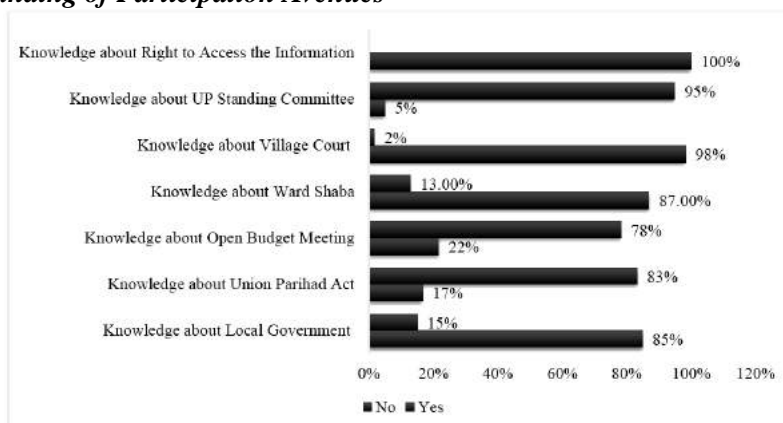


Figure 3: Understanding of Participation Avenues (Source: Field Survey, 2020)

The above bar chart (figure 2) shows how much people in Bangladesh know about the different avenues they can take part in local government to improve good governance. According to the survey data, it was discovered that 100% of the population was aware of their right to access information (n =120, 100%), while the majority of people were familiar

with local government (n= 102, 85%), Ward Shaba (n = 104, 87%), and village court (n = 118, 98%). Conversely, the majority of people were unfamiliar with the UP standing committee (n = 114, 95%), open budget meeting (n = 94, 78%), and Union Parishad act (n = 100, 83%). These statistics imply that half of the total rural population is unaware of their entitlement to take part in various avenues aimed at promoting good governance and strengthening local government in Bangladesh.

7.3 Participation of Respondents in the Different Avenues of Local Government

The following bar chart (figure 3) illustrates the participation of respondents in the different avenues of local government in Bangladesh. Based on the survey, it found that the majority of the respondents participated in the local government election (n = 110, 92%) and village court activities (n = 54, 45%). People's participation in the pre-open budget meeting (n = 118, 98%), final open budget meeting (n = 118, 98%), Ward Shaba (n = 114, 95%), and standing committee (n = 116, 97%), on the other hand, was frustrating.

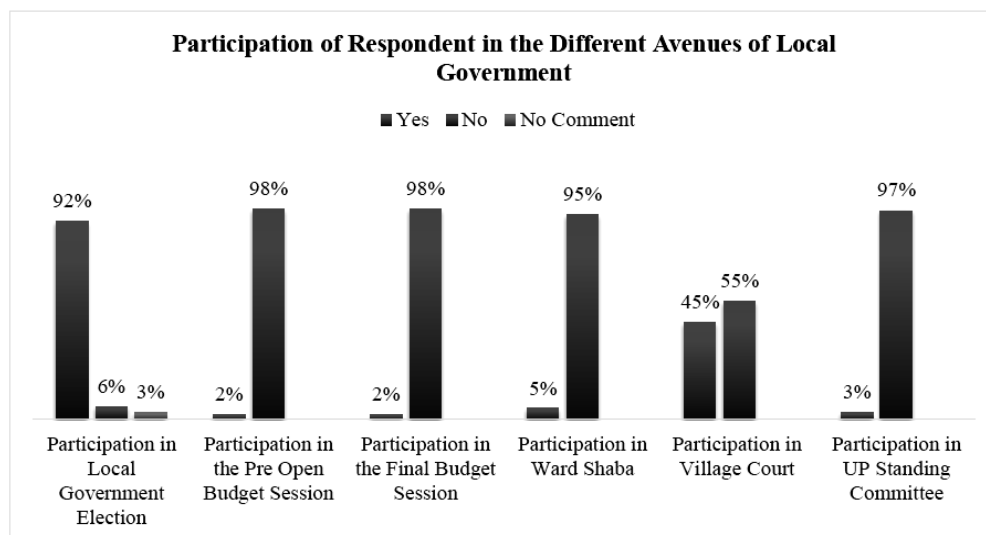


Figure 4: Participation of Respondents in the Different Avenues of Local Government (Source: Field Survey, 2020)

However, these statistics imply that most of the rural people do not participate in the Ward Shaba meetings, UP standing activities, and open budget meetings, which create colossal challenges in terms of ensuring good governance in Bangladesh.

7.4 The Importance of Voter Turnout in the UP Election to Ensure Good Governance

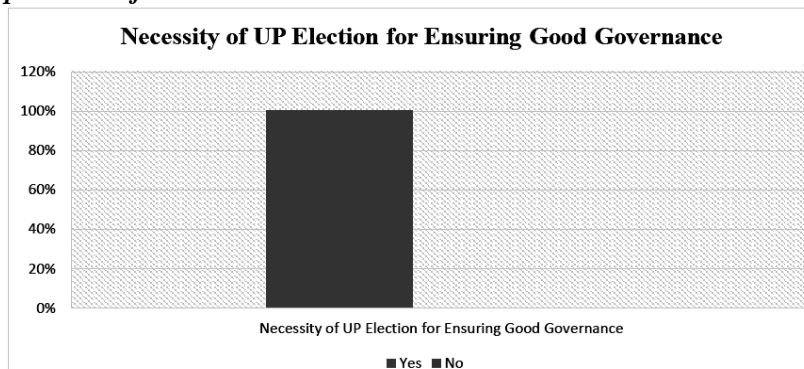


Figure 5: The importance of voter turnout in the UP election to ensure good governance (Source: Field Survey, 2020)

In terms of assessing the importance of voter turnout in the UP election to ensure good governance, the above bar chart (figure 4) demonstrates the perception of rural people. According to the survey data, it was found that 100% of the respondents (n =120, 100%) argued that in terms of ensuring good governance in Bangladesh, there is no alternative way to ensure people’s participation in the governance process except through local government elections.

7.5 Public Participation in Open Budget Meetings is Essential to Ensure Good Governance

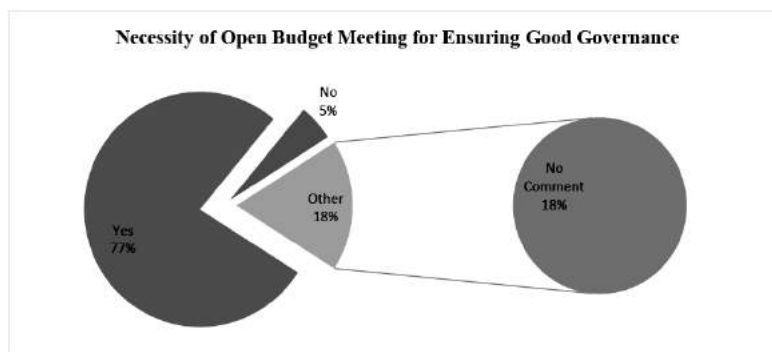


Figure 6: Public participation in open budget meetings is essential to ensure good governance (Source: Field Survey, 2020)

The above pie chart reveals the necessity of people’s participation in the open budget meeting to ensure good governance in Bangladesh. According to the survey, it was found that a majority of the respondents (n = 92, 77%) argued that people’s participation in the open budget meeting is essential to ensure good governance in Bangladesh, whereas only a small group of people (n = 6, 5%) overruled this opinion.

7.6 The Importance of Citizen Engagement in Ward Shaba to Ensure Good Governance

The following line chart (figure 6) demonstrates the importance of citizen engagement in Ward Shaba with regard to ensuring good governance in Bangladesh. According to the survey data, it was found that a majority of the respondents (n = 90, 75%) believe that people’s participation in Ward Shaba is an important mechanism to ensure good governance in Bangladesh. Conversely, a small group of people (n = 22, 18%) argued that only people’s participation in the Ward Shaba wouldn’t ensure good governance in Bangladesh.

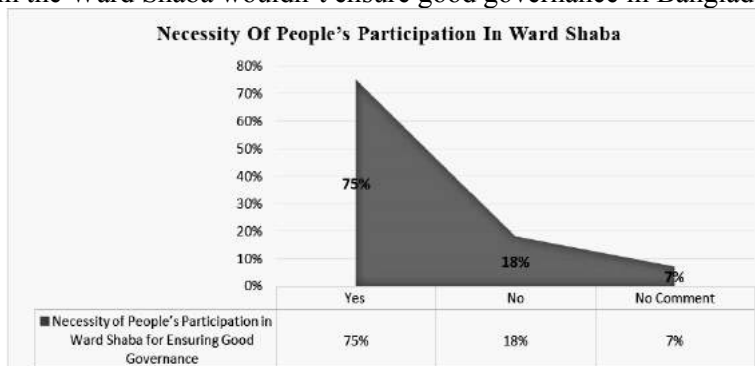


Figure 7: The importance of citizen engagement in Ward Shaba to ensure good governance (Source: Field Survey, 2020)

7.7 Existing Status of the Village Court regarding Ensuring Good Governance

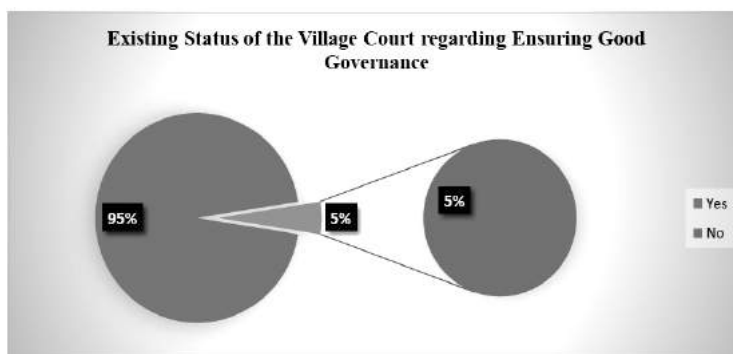


Figure 8: Existing status of the village court regarding ensuring good governance (Source: Field Survey, 2020)

The above pie chart shows the existing status of village court performances in terms of ensuring good governance in Bangladesh. Based on the survey results, it was found that a large group of respondents (n = 114, 95%) articulate that village court plays an imperative role in terms of carrying out good governance activities through people’s participation in the local government institution in Bangladesh. Although a minor group (n = 6, 5%) debates

about this issue, it seems right that the village court plays a praiseworthy role in terms of enhancing good governance in rural areas in Bangladesh.

7.8 The Social Problems may be Resolved by the Village Court

In terms of addressing social issues, village courts play a noteworthy role in rural areas in Bangladesh. According to the given line chart (figure 8), it was found that the majority of the respondents (n = 112, 93%) believe that village court is an essential mechanism in local government institutions to fix the social issues that also play a substantial role in promoting good governance in Bangladesh. In contrast, a small minority (n = 6, 5%) criticizes the role of the village court in promoting good governance in Bangladesh.

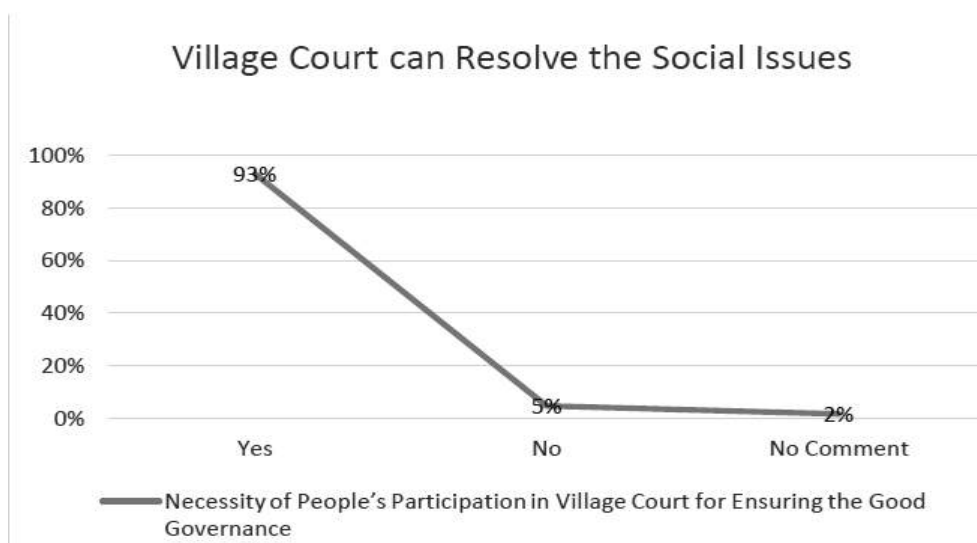


Figure 9: The social problems may be resolved by the village court
(Source: Field Survey, 2020)

7.9 Participation of the Populace in Village Court is Essential for Ensuring Good Governance

Similarly, the following bar chart (figure 9) highlights the importance of people's participation in village court in terms of ensuring good governance in Bangladesh. According to the survey data, a large group of respondents (n =118, 98%) believe that people's participation in village court activities can certainly play an important role in terms of promoting good governance in Bangladesh. Since village court activities are open to all, the respondents trust on its performance regarding enhancing good governance in Bangladesh.

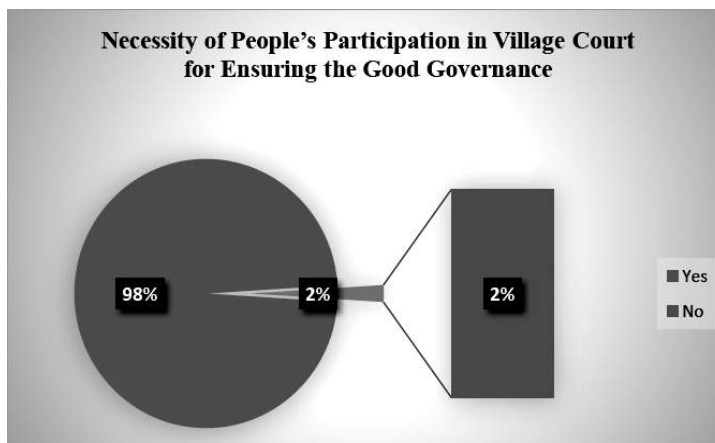


Figure 10: Participation of the populace in village court is essential for ensuring good governance (Source: Field Survey, 2020)

7.10 Participation of the public in the UP Standing Committee is Essential to Implement Good Governance



Figure 11: Participation of the public in the UP-Standing Committee is essential to implement good governance (Source: Field Survey, 2020)

The above pie chart (figure 10) depicts the significance of the people's participation in the UP-standing committee in terms of ensuring good governance in Bangladesh. Based on the survey results, a large group of homogeneous respondents ($n = 82$, 68%) articulate that participation of the rural community in the UP-Standing Committee is indispensable to promote good governance in Bangladesh. Remarkably, it was found that around 22% ($n = 26$) of the respondents did not say anything on these issues, although a small group of respondents ($n = 6$, 10%) thought that people's participation in the UP-standing committee is not effective in terms of enhancing good governance in Bangladesh.

7.11 Necessity of Accessing People’s Participation in Information for Enhancing Good Governance

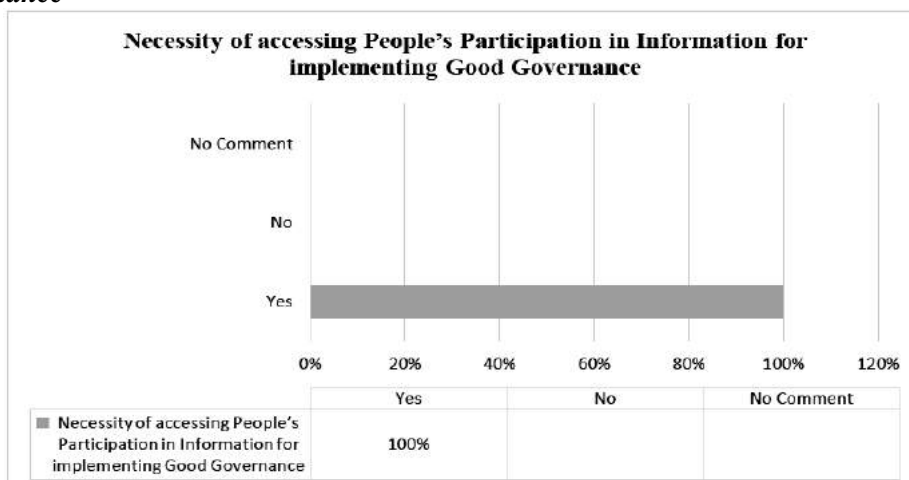


Figure 12: Necessity of accessing people’s participation in information for enhancing good governance (Source: Field Survey, 2020)

The above bar chart (figure 11) demonstrates the importance of people’s participation in A2I (access to information) in terms of enhancing good governance in Bangladesh. According to the survey results, 100% of the respondents (n = 120, 100%) believe that people’s access to information ensures the transparency of government services, which may accelerate the practice of good governance at the grass root level in Bangladesh.

7.12 Respondent has Difficulties Getting Information

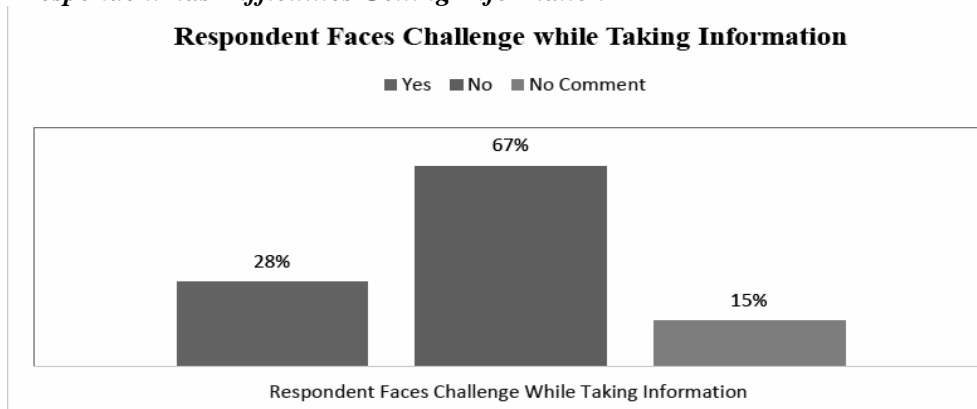


Figure 13: Respondent has difficulties getting information (Source: Field Survey, 2020)

The above bar chart (figure 12) shows whether citizens face challenges in terms of accessing a2i. According to the survey data, almost half of the respondents (n = 34, 28%)

face challenges in terms of accessing A2I for their required information. Although the majority of respondents stated that they have easy access to the A2I, the reality varies depending on the nature of the information. In this regard, the limitations behind access to A2I may limit the practice of good governance in Bangladesh.

7.13 The Gap between Policy Formulation and Implementation

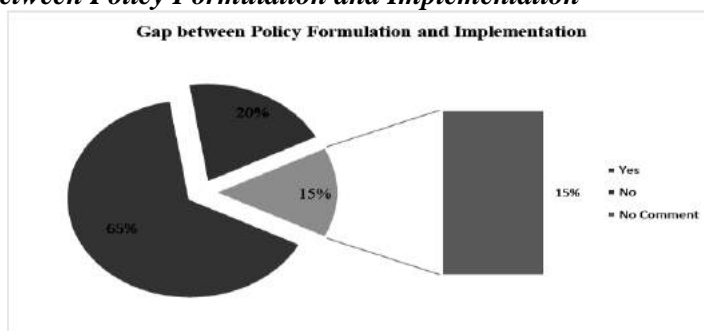


Figure 14: The gap between policy formulation and implementation (Source: Field Survey, 2020)

The above pie chart (figure 13) illustrates the gap between policy formulation and implementation regarding people’s participation and ensuring good governance in Bangladesh. This is the most important finding of the study. According to the survey data, a majority of the respondents (n = 80, 65%) contemplate that there is a comprehensive gap between policy formulation and implementation in terms of ensuring people’s participation and good governance in local government in Bangladesh. This statistic clearly implies that regarding ensuring good governance in Bangladesh, the gap between policy formulation and implementation should be addressed in a proper way.

7.14 Awareness of the Right to Information Act (2009) Among the Public

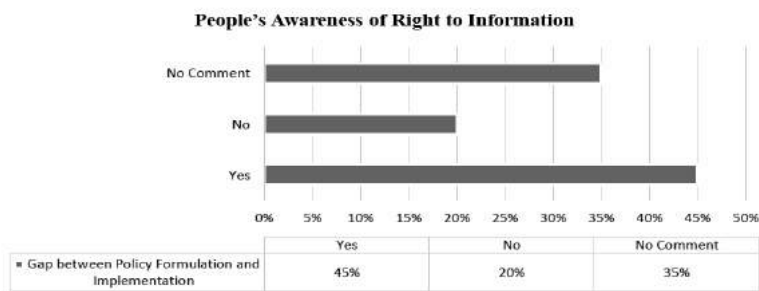


Figure 15: Awareness of the right to information act (2009) among the public (Source: Field Survey, 2020)

The above bar chart (figure 14) illustrates the public awareness of the right to information act (2009) in Bangladesh. Based on the survey results, it was found that 20% of the respondents (n =24, 20%) were unaware of the right to information act (2009). Although

the findings show that the majority of the respondents (n = 54, 45%) were aware of the right to information act (2009), they didn't know how to obtain information from the concerned authorities. Astonishingly, a large group of respondents (n = 42, 35%) did not provide their opinion on this issue.

7.15 Effective Strategy that can Ensure People's Participation as well as Good Governance

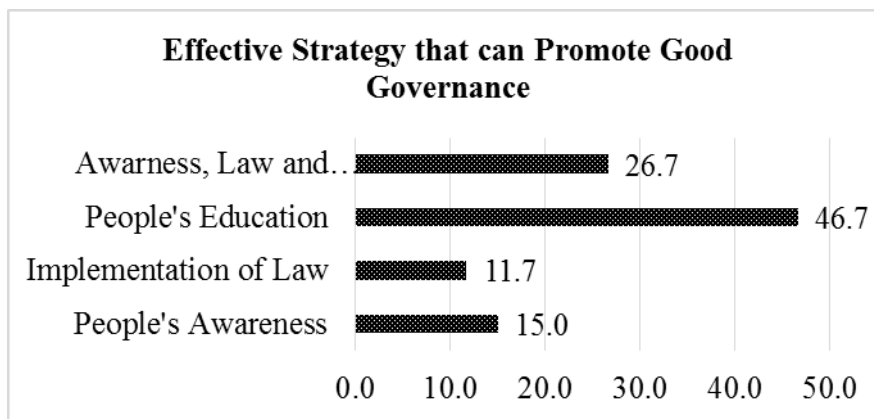


Figure 16: Effective strategy that can ensure people's participation as well as good governance
(Source: Field Survey, 2020)

This is another of the most significant findings of this study. The above bar chart (figure 15) reveals the significant strategy that can eliminate the issues of people's participation as well as ensure good governance in Bangladesh. Based on the survey results, it was found that the majority of respondents (n = 56, 46.7%) believe that people's education could be the best and most effective strategy to reduce the gap between policy formulation and implementation in Bangladesh. Similarly, a minor group of respondents argues that implementation of the law (n = 14, 11.7%) and people's awareness (n = 18, 15%) can be the best strategy in terms of ensuring people's participation and good governance in Bangladesh. In this vein, around 26.7% of the respondents (n = 32, 26.7%) articulate that people's awareness, law, and education together can be the best method to ensure people's participation and good governance in Bangladesh.

7.16 Discussion of the Study

The principal aim of this study was to explore the practice of people's participation in local government institutions (Union Parishad) in terms of ensuring good governance in Bangladesh. Since the Union Parishad is the lowest administrative entity in Bangladesh that provides services to the doorsteps of its inhabitants (Akhter & Ahmed, 2022), based on the survey results, it was found that most of the rural people have no idea about the different avenues of participation in local government units. In particular, the majority of the

population was unaware of their rights regarding participating in different avenues of local government. Even, most of the respondents did not participate in the Ward Shaba activities, UP standing committees' activities, open budget meetings, citizen charters, etc. Conversely, it was found that only an expected group of people participated in the village court activities and local government elections. In this context, the authors argue that without sustaining the participation of people in different avenues (i.e., Ward Shaba, UP standing committee, open budget meeting, village court, local government election, and citizen charter), local government institutions would fail to ensure good governance in Bangladesh. The study found that the main reasons behind the majority of people's unawareness are poor educational backgrounds (46.7%), a lack of concern for participation (95% in the UP standing committee, 78% in the open budget meeting, and 83% in the UP act), and a lack of self-interest that is conclusively illustrated in the demographic information and major findings sections, i.e., figures 1, 2, and 3. According to the findings, the study, therefore, suggests that the central government, as well as concerned authorities, should ensure the people's equitable participation in the different avenues in terms of ensuring good governance in Bangladesh.

8. Implications of the Study

In Bangladesh, Union Parishad is the lowest tier local government institution which delivers services to citizens at their entrance. It is also the largest service sector in the country, and this sector is continuously performing in terms of the number of challenges (Ferdous et al., 2022). In this setting, Union Parishad requires a great deal of attention, attachment, commitment, and determination to accomplish good governance at the grassroots level via effective engagement of the people. The cornerstone of establishing effective governance is people's participation, whereas Union Parishad plays a crucial role in this process as a rural local government unit. People may express their views, rights, and demands and secure their active participation in the government's decision-making process via participation (Asaduzzaman, 2008). This study provides a comprehensive idea about people's participation in local government units (Union Parishad) for ensuring good governance in Bangladesh. In particular, the findings of the study would help to develop the practical and theoretical insight of the learners. At the same time, these findings will help policymakers develop appropriate policies regarding enhancing people's participation in local government. In this spirit, the contribution of this research is very significant and pragmatic for ensuring good governance through people's participation in local government sectors (Union Parishad) in Bangladesh.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

Good governance refers to a process of assuring government commitment and establishing a system that safeguards civil liberties and human rights, reduces corruption, considers the perspectives of all people, especially minorities, and increases transparency as well as government accountability. This study sought to explore how people's participation strengthens good governance in the field of administration in Bangladesh. In particular, the

findings of the study demonstrate the different avenues of people's participation in the field administrative units and the current status of people's participation regarding enhancing good governance at the grassroots level in Bangladesh. According to the survey data, it has been observed that most of the rural people were unaware of local government acts, UP standing committees, and open budget meetings, which limit the scope of their participation in different avenues of local government. Despite the fact that many rural residents were aware of the UP's operations, those of the UP-village court, rights to access information, and Ward Shaba activities, they were nevertheless denied access to the basic services provided by the field administrative units in Bangladesh. Since people's participation is the precondition of ensuring good governance, concerned authorities must strengthen the local people's participation in decision-making in the different avenues through incorporating effective mechanisms, i.e., ensuring public awareness, citizen charter, and the application of the rule of law. Based on analyzing the findings, the authors make a number of recommendations to increase public engagement in local government organizations and advance good governance in Bangladesh.

First and foremost, since most rural people are unaware of their participation rights, local government units should make the appropriate efforts to increase public awareness of their participation rights in different local government avenues. Secondly, based on the findings and discussion, the researchers argue that to encourage people's engagement in different avenues of local government, local government officials should restrict grouping, nepotism, and rural provocative political activities. Thirdly, concerned authorities should provide a conducive environment for rural people's participation in Ward Shaba, the UP-standing committee, the financial budget session, and the village court. Fourthly, in order to increase local government competency, central-local ties, and effective people's participation in Bangladesh, current patron-client relationships in local government institutions should be balanced. Fifthly, local government authorities' collaboration, synchronization, and professionalism should be strengthened to achieve good governance by assuring people's participation in field administrative units. Last but not least, Local government bodies should ensure the transparency of all their activities so that people's trustworthiness can enhance on local government's performance. In this regard, transparency of local government activities would boost good governance practices in Bangladesh.

Conflict of Interest

There aren't any instances of plagiarism, and the material is entirely unique. In addition, the authors state that they have no competing interests with regard to the study, their authorship, or the publishing of this manuscript.

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Unseen Gender Bias and Informal Cultural Factors: A Case Study on Public Universities in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The unseen gender bias is also termed as unconscious or second-generation gender bias, which refers to workplace practices or normative patterns of interaction between the sexes that may appear neutral or non-sexist. They seem to apply to everyone, but which discriminate against or oppress females in social situations. This paper aims to identify socio-cultural forces, in other words informal cultural factors responsible for the unconscious biases that female employees face in their institutions and explore the driving forces to clean down the gendered working environment. This exploratory case study was conducted based on Force Field Analysis (FFA) theory, and the findings explored that the interaction of both national and organizational cultural forces results in unseen gender bias in an organization. Among these organizational politics, networking, leadership quality, individuals' stereotype beliefs, and informal politics in an organization are the dominant factors that are strongly interconnected with generating unseen gender bias in working settings. This study bears both methodological and theoretical implications.

Keywords: Gender bias, Socio-cultural forces, Force Field Analysis

1. Introduction

Bangladesh, one of the many nations promised to eliminate gender discrimination in both public and private spheres. Accepting women as equals and passing numerous anti-discrimination laws and policies such as Bangladesh Labor Rules, 2015 and Article 29 of the constitution of Bangladesh encourage equal employment opportunity for both men and women (Dewan, 2022). Particularly, two clauses of Article 29 of the Constitution of the

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People's Republic of Bangladesh guarantee possibilities for non-discriminatory employment:

“(1) There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in respect of employment or office in the service of the Republic. (2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office in the service of the Republic (The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, ACT NO. OF 1972, Part 3).”

Indeed, the anti-discriminatory policies have contributed to increased women's employment than before (Kabir & et al., 2019). For example, compared to 2013, women's participation as employed citizen has increased from 41.2 percent to 42.2 percent in 2017 (Statistical Pocket Book of Bangladesh, 2020). However, gender bias against employed women demonstrates that even though women have secured access to employment to a large extent, they continue to face indirect barriers that impede their hard-won career advancement in numerous ways. For instance, with the increased quota for reserved seats for women in the National Parliament in Bangladesh, appointed women's participation has increased. But they are discouraged by party leadership from acting proactively on their own initiatives in the parliament, and those who have acted in this manner have frequently been ostracized for their actions (Ahmed & Hasan, 2018). In this backdrop, it can be assumed that the indirect biases against women are prevalent in different institutions and organizations in Bangladesh.

The indirect gender biases, most popularly known as unseen gender bias is also termed as the second-generation gender bias, which refers to predominantly informal discriminative practices or normative patterns of interaction between the sexes that may appear neutral or non-sexist at first glance (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; D'Agostino & et al., 2022). Technically unseen gender bias could happen to any gender in organizations, but it often discriminates or oppress female employees. It results from cultural beliefs about gender and workplace structures, practices, and patterns of interaction that inadvertently favor men (Calas & Smircich, 2006; Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Kolb & McGinn, 2009; Sturm, 2001).

Scholars (Zafarullah, 2002; Olsson & Pringle, 2004; Agarwal, 2018) identified that gender biasness at workplace is detrimental for women's career advancement. Women's upward career mobility is inhibited by an unpleasant and hostile environment characterized by strict conditions such as rigid working hours and the absence of facilities that support their health and safety (Zafarullah, 2002). Their focus was more on identifying the impact than identifying the interaction between different factors behind the gender bias.

Secondly, it is possible to overcome unseen gender discrimination, and organizations hope to do so (Heilman & Caleo, 2018), however, organizations lack a fit model due to marginal investigation on the informal factors that give rise to the unseen gender bias and the conditions that promote it. Therefore, the present exploratory study under the light of the

Force Field Analysis (FFA) theory, aims to uncover how do informal cultural factors results unseen gender bias in work settings.

The article progresses into six sections, including this introductory part. Section two reviews the related literatures. The following part examines the theoretical components of this inquiry. In the fourth section, the methodology employed in this study is discussed. The findings are presented in the next section, which focuses on informal cultural dynamics and includes an in-depth discussion of the essential themes. Final section, the conclusion, summarizes the findings and identifies areas for further investigation.

Objectives of the study

- (a) To identify the informal cultural driving forces and the restraining forces that influence the implementation of non-gender-biased behavior in an organization.
- (b) To identify the interaction between the informal cultural driving forces and restraining forces.

Research Questions

The research questions lead the current case study were:

- (a) Which informal cultural factors can impact employees to behave gender neutrally in the organization?
- (b) Which informal cultural forces hinder employees to behave gender neutrally in the organization?
- (c) Which forces are dominant in influencing gender bias behavior?

2. Literature Review

a) Unseen Gender Bias

Direct gender bias refers to "intentional" discrimination against women in society (Rifkin, 2005). Indirect or unseen bias, by contrast, has no aim of excluding or harming women directly in society (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013). It is the result of stereotyped notions and societal expectations regarding gender (Rifkin, 2005). Unlike direct discrimination, the discriminatory manifestations of unseen bias may not be visible with a passing glance (Jones, 2017), but the effects of discrimination on victims and society remain as powerful as ever (Paterson, 2014). Such invisibility of forms and manifestations of unseen gender bias makes it doubly difficult to track down unless clear and categorical measures are used as indicators (Batara, & et.al., 2018). This form of bias therefore can exclude women from opportunities in many ways. For instance, it may provoke society to reserve jobs for women that are culturally perceived as having "feminine" qualities and exclude them from the jobs that hold leadership characteristics (Bilimoria, 2017).

Sadker and Sadker (1986) stated that in group meetings males are more likely to dominate discussions. Zafarullah (2002) investigated the implications of the Brick Wall³ and Glass Ceiling in Bangladesh's public administration. His research revealed that from recruitment to higher tiers (Glass Ceiling)⁴ women face discrimination in Bangladesh's government service. He mentioned that social and cultural factors, systematic and attitudinal reasons, and ineffective government regulations impede women's career paths in civil service. This differential treatment against women has implications for their morale, motivation, and performance (Zafarullah, 2002).

Erik & Ohls (2007) have researched whether women are discriminated against through sticky floor or glass ceiling effects in Sweden. According to their findings, sticky floor effects affect women in Sweden more than glass ceilings. Their research also revealed that women with small children experience the greatest career disadvantage. The gender penalty is more considerable for younger and older women than for middle-aged women (Erik & Ohls, 2007). Mahtab (2007) illustrated cases in which the university authorities are concerned about appointing women candidates because they could become pregnant. She also noted that male colleagues frequently accuse female colleagues in academia of being uncommitted to their work after having children, which hinders their tenure, promotion, and advancement possibilities. The paucity of women in universities, especially in the Science Departments, leads the few who have infiltrated the system to be viewed by some as "tokenism"⁵ (Mahtab, 2007).

However, Ely, Ibarra, and Kolb (2011) in their paper *'Taking Gender into Account: Theory and Design for Women's Leadership Development Programs'* identified how unseen gender biases interfere with women leaders' work. They mentioned seeing leadership as a quintessentially masculine role and double-bind barrier for women in leadership; few women role models for others; gendered work practices; dearth access to the informal network and social support influence women's capacity to build a valid identity of a leader. Their most critical contribution was detailing on how to employ 360-degree feedback⁶ and teaching on networking, bargaining, leading change, and managing career transitions wherein hurdles are imposed by unseen gender bias (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013). Echoing their view Ely, Ibarra, and Kolb (2011) express that the subtle gender bias obstructs women's efforts to step into senior leadership roles and interferes in women's ability to feel themselves as leaders and to be seen as such by others.

³ "Brick walls on the other hand are horizontal barriers that keep women within particular types of employment (Samaraweera, 2006, para. 5)".

⁴ "Glass ceiling refers to the fact that a qualified person wishing to advance within the hierarchy of his/her organization is stopped at a lower level due to a discrimination most often based on sexism or racism. The glass ceiling refers thus to vertical discrimination most frequently against women in companies (Babic & Hansez, 2021, p. 2)."

⁵ Tokenism refers to the practice of including one or a few members of underrepresented groups in a company or organization to create an illusion of diversity (Mahtab, 2007).

⁶ 360-degree feedback is a type of performance appraisal that includes feedback from various sources such as superiors, subordinates, peers, and customers.

Indeed, the above discussed literatures focused on the status of women in their respective organizations and how indirect biases in work settings can affect women's career. However, these literatures left unexplored the interaction between and among the cultural factors that are responsible to generate unseen gender bias in organizations.

b) Culture: National and Organizational cultures

Culture is the unwritten book of rules of social game that its members pass on to newcomers, embedding itself in their minds (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Individuals' behavior in society can be influenced, developed, and vary according to the unwritten rules they experience at both macro and micro levels of the societies. Hence the logical next step is to define national (macro) culture and organizational (micro) culture.

Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov (2010) explained that individuals are not the focus of national culture; national societies are. Individuals learn their customs, traditions, values, beliefs, and lifestyles from birth onward which is nested in a large national setting. They carry these values with them and sometimes modify them based on their new experiences at different times, places, and in the presence of other forces. In each society, for instance, there is a men's culture that differs from the women's culture and vice-versa. However, how, and why they differ can be explained through the lens of national culture but partly. Therefore, gender bias one of the aspects of gender culture should be investigated in their own terms based on specific studies (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). This is the stance, where the concept of organizational culture crossroads in the present study.

Organizational culture can generally be defined as deep-seated assumptions, values, and beliefs that are enduring, often unconscious, and difficult to change (French & Bell, 1999). But Cleland's (1994) definition of organizational culture is more relatable to the present study. According to him, organizational culture is "shared explicit and implicit agreements among organizational members as to what is important in behavior, as well as attitudes expressed in values, beliefs, standards, and social and management practices (p.2)."

Organizational culture affects how particular acts produce bias in a given workplace (Hulin, & et al., 1996). For instance, a behavior associated with sex segregation and marginalization may be discriminatory, whereas the same behavior may produce little gender exclusion due to differences in perceptions which depends on the expose to a particular culture (Robinson, 2008). Also, participants in the interactions may experience the same conduct differently, depending on their position concerning the conduct, power, gender, mobility, support networks, and degree of cross-gender interaction.

It is expected that the gender biases cannot be reduced if cultural aspect of bias is ignored since socio-cultural factors are the core of unseen bias (Sturm, 2001). In this regard an important point is that the behavioral practices cannot be emerged only from a given organizational environment rather it can emerge as the outcome of an interaction between values and norms at both national and organizational settings respectively.

3. Theoretical Note: Force Field Analysis (FFA), Informal Cultural Forces and Unseen Gender Bias

Force Field Analysis framework has been employed to understand which informal cultural factors creates unseen gender bias in the organization. Force Field Analysis or in short FFA which was originally developed by German-American psychologist Kurt Lewin, is a tool that is often used to help identify factors or forces that influence, drive, or impede change (Toves, Graf & Gould, 2016). In FFA, a force is defined as "any influence acting in an organization such that the organization's state is changed by the presence of that factor (Schwerling, 2003, p. 361)." Again, a force field is the sum of all the forces acting on or in an object, and whatever is happening right now- is the result of forces pushing in opposing directions (French & Bell, 1999; Smartt, Casey & Ferreira, 2018). It is also useful to identify the major forces that make up the status quo of a gender biased working environment (Nyakora & et al., 2018). For our study, the current state of undetected gender inequality in the workplace can be described as a consequent equilibrium point in a field of forces, with some forces pushing for non-gender biased practices and others pulling for gender biased practices.

Previous studies had little room for discussion on the informal cultural forces that restrain understanding the indirect gender bias in the organization. The present study addresses this gap by specifying an investigation of informal cultural forces. Because as social members individuals obtain understandings through an informal communicative system and being a part of society, organizations consist of individuals are no exception in this case (McNeill, 2013; Sims & Stephens, 2011). It is also natural that employees would carry many stereotyped notions of gender which they learn from everyday life. So, it is kind of inevitable that informal communication and interaction have a deep connection with the forces that motivate unseen gender bias in the organization. This paper explores those forces from both macro (external) and micro (internal) levels that are combined generates informal practices (see, figure 1).

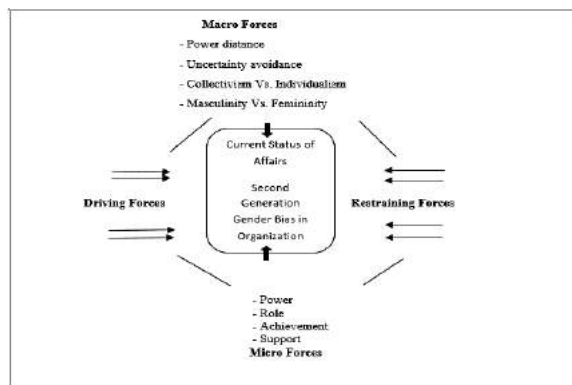


Figure 2.1 Integration of Socio-cultural Forces in Force Field Analysis Framework

The macro forces also known as external forces or national culture include power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and collectivism vs. individualism and masculinity vs.

femininity. According to Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010), power distance is the degree to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country anticipate and accept unequal power distribution. Uncertainty avoidance is the degree to which members of a culture perceive unknown situations as threatening. Moreover, individualism refers to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose, as opposed to collectivism, in which people are born into cohesive in-groups. Masculine nations tend to maintain different standards for men and women, whereas feminine nations advocate for both men and women to undergo change (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Hofstede (1993) asserts that organizational and national cultures overlap and influence the individuals' state of mind.

Consequently, it is essential to consider the other set 'micro forces' or 'organizational culture'. According to Harrison and Stokes (1992), within the power culture, people use organizational resources to influence the behavior of others. In these types of organizations, there is a high likelihood that women will be dominated by male coworkers, as women are already outnumbered due to direct gender bias (Harrison and Stokes, 1992). Women can face the challenge of implicit gender bias when an informal practice of role and role expectation supersedes the existing rules and processes, as opposed to role-oriented organizations, where employees must focus less on themselves and more on their (Wiseman, Ngirande, & Setati, 2017) job descriptions, which are more important than the individual who fills the position (Manetje & Martins, 2009). For instance, when women in traditionally male roles are viewed as conforming to feminine stereotypes, they are typically liked but not respected (Rudman & Glick, 2001).

McGuire (2002) stated that the third social factor, 'support,' manifests a trustworthy, caring, and friendly working environment for all employees, regardless of their gender, race, or color. The lack of informal networking opportunities for women impedes their access to information, emotional support, advice, and feedback. Men's network connections provide more informal assistance than either white or black women's (McGuire, 2002), and men's mentors are more likely to get them promoted than women's (Ibarra & et. al., 2010). On the other hand, powerful, high-status men tend to support and channel career advancement opportunities to male subordinates, whom they judge to have a greater likelihood of success than women (McGuire, 2002).

Indeed, analyzing gender biased behavior in organizations from an amalgamation of macro and micro-socio-cultural forces has three implications to advance the Force Field Analysis theory: First, it reveals how macro and micro forces are working together to maintain the status quo of gender bias. Second, driving and restraining forces can be found in either micro or macro forces, resulting in four different types of forces in a force field: micro driving forces, macro driving forces, micro restraining forces, and macro restraining forces. Kurt Lewin mentioned the status quo as an equilibrium point in a field of forces and which is fairly constant, but the theoretical framework employed in this study disagree with Kurt Lewin.

Further it expects that an equilibrium point in a field of forces, herein the status quo of unseen gender bias in organizations actually is the result of continuous interaction between different forces which indicates that the status quo is not a changeless equilibrium when the desired goal is "change". This aspect of organizational change has not been addressed in prior research.

4. Research Methodology

The current simplest multiple-case study is chiefly based on the primary source of data. The secondary data source was examined as well, which includes past research findings on gender bias at the workplace published in prestigious social scientific publications, media, and internet journals. Two academic institutions as research cases: The University of Dhaka and the University of Rajshahi were selected based on the replication logic which reflects theoretical interests (Yin, 2018). Researchers' personal connection in choosing these academic institutions as research cases facilitated doing interview for data collection. The cases were most similar regarding their contextual characteristics such as both are public institutions, similar in recruiting and promoting employees and providing services to the stakeholders as well.

Data were collected through interview method and interviews were semi-structured based on a guide. Twenty-eight randomly selected respondents were interviewed and initially recorded. Among them, 17 were female, and 11 were male; they were all faculties of their respected universities. Independent checks with external scholars were followed to reduce researchers' bias in interviewing participants. Before conducting interview, participants were provided with an information letter which sought their consent and illustrated that their participation was voluntary, all identifying information about them would then be made anonymous and the collected data would be stored on an encrypted way.

Following the framework analysis method, data were coded and analyzed into major themes. Factors constituted the primary themes of labeling as driving and restraining socio-cultural factors that influence gender bias behavior in organizations.

5. Results and Discussion

Twenty-eight participants currently employed at public universities were interviewed. Among them 10 were from Dhaka University and 18 from Rajshahi University. They are different in gender identity, career levels, designations, and working experience too. Focusing on sociocultural forces that influence existing implicit gender bias in organizations, two overarching themes and several subthemes are presented (see figure 4.1). These include 1) Driving socio-cultural forces for changing unseen gender bias in organization 2) Restraining socio-cultural forces against the change of unseen gender bias in organization.

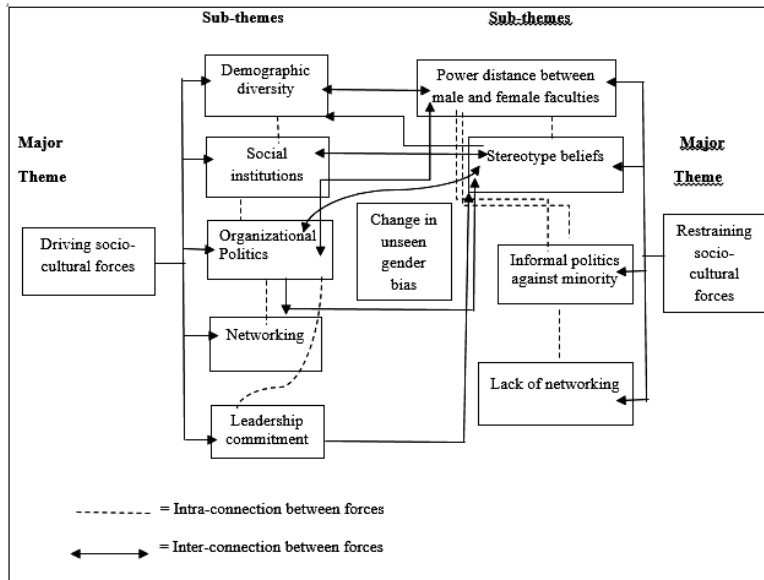


Figure 4. 1 Thematic map of socio-cultural forces (developed by the authors)

a. Driving socio-cultural forces for change of unseen gender bias

The iterative process of identifying forces that can change the status of gender bias at the two public universities yielded the following driving forces (see figure 4.1).

i. Equality in Demographic Diversity

Inclusion, acceptance and emphasizing the importance of demographic diversity such as individuals from different sexes in institutions can bring changes in the employee's perspectives and stereotype behavior. Over half of the interviewees reported that equality of male and female teachers in universities can be a driving force for combating gender bias in their institution. A, one of the faculties from University of Rajshahi, clarified how large number of female employee's recruitment can reduce gender bias:

More recruitment of female employees in universities is highly required because it will impact the informal culture within the institution by importing feminine values and replacing patriarchal communication at workplace that affects women. I think this patriarchal communication in everyday practice hinder female employee to put her opinions in decision making at a formal meeting later on.

ii. Resocialization and Social Institutions

Public universities are academic workplace, usually perceived as a workplace having the intellectual environment. But like other organizations, herein, women face the challenge of implicit gender bias in different ways such as unheard voice of female co-worker in decision making in academic committee, preference for male leadership in academic work, avoidance of female faculties opinion and priority to male's opinion over them. Respondents opined this type of discrimination appears through the socialization of organizational members over time, which underlies regular interactions. In this regard, B, another

participant who has been teaching for more than twenty years in University of Dhaka, mentioned,

Even though it is difficult and it requires long time, if the established norms of behavior which unconsciously pass trends of treating women colleagues as less competent can be replaced by the code of conduct, at the center of which values of equality lies, then unseen bias can be resisted at workplaces. Colleagues, who show invisible biases towards their colleagues, carry these norms of behavior rooted in two sources: observational learning⁷ and gender roles that social institutions⁸ reinforce.

It is noteworthy that the observational (social) learning is highly related to the stereotype behavior of unseen gender bias (see figure 4.1). The role of stereotype beliefs as a resistant force will be discussed in the coming section. In academic organizations, there is social environment where new colleagues have opportunities to learn the discriminatory behavior implicitly and act towards other colleagues, likewise, their other parts of job such as teaching, evaluating student's performance, and traditions of participation in academic functions. Yet, it is unavoidable that each colleague bears his/her cultural values from macro environment particularly their previous experience in other spheres of lives. But scholars (for example, Bandura & Huston, 1961; Bandura & McDonald, 1963) of social learning pertinently conclude that behavioral change can and does occur through observation, even when such observation is incidental, occurring in the context of other activities. Thus, it is important to ensure equity values in roles, norms, and behavior practices in organizations to eradicate unconscious gender bias.

iii. Organizational Politics

Organizational Politics (OP) within the workplace has been identified as counterproductive for employee's performance in previous research. However, faculties from the highest echelon of the education institutions in this study disagreed with that. They rather recommended 'organizational politics'⁹ as a driving force to eliminate unseen bias towards female employees since it can organize the staffs irrespective of gender and race who believe in equality, develop them into a group and outline the tactics of fighting against gender inequalities in organization. A male participant, K, argued in this aspect and said,

Decisions in universities are primarily made based on rules, procedures and also to some extent on traditions. Therefore, doing direct discrimination to co-worker is difficult. But indirect discrimination is quite easy and a byproduct of organizational politics as well. In fact, organizational politics works as a double-edge-sword in case of gender bias at workplace. It can be utilized for implementing gender equality in both formal and informal

⁷ Social (or Observational) Learning Theory posits that individuals can learn novel responses by observing the behavior of influential others (Bandura, 1977).

⁸ According to Dyson and Moore (1983) social institutions can be seen as long-lasting norms, values and codes of conduct that find expression in traditions, customs and cultural practices, informal and formal laws. They are at the bottom of gender roles and the distribution of power between men and women in the family, in the market and in social and political life (Dyson & Moore, 1983).

⁹ Organizational politics consist of deliberate acts or influences designed to advance or defend the self-interest of individuals and groups (Allen, & et. al., 1979).

aspects of organization behavior and reduce unseen gender bias. For instance, when a female colleague makes a point and provide significant opinion during decision making, other colleagues should provide support by acknowledging her. Inevitably, it should come first from other female colleagues which will show their 'sisterhood'. It also can be used as 'amplifying their voice'.

This amplification of voice can be a helpful approach to prevent unseen gender bias in an office with a leader prone to addressing only men. But 'amplifying' can fail due to the resistance from domineering leadership and stereotype behavior (see figure 4.1), which are elaborated in following discussion.

iv. Networking

In organizational settings, a network usually involves contacts with a variety of colleagues for the purpose of mutual work benefits (Linehan & Scullion, 2008). It also depends on informal interactions involving favors, persuasion, and connections to people who already have influence (Henning & Jardim, 1977). According to the participants, professional network offers benefits in terms of information, strategic and technical insight. Another opinion from D, one of the faculties of University of Rajshahi appeared as,

Preventing discrimination is a collective action. Female employees in universities need to develop their web of relationship with other colleagues alongside their departmental ones to make other conscious about unconscious gender bias. On this purpose, they must provide emotional, and associational support to each other. For example, sometimes, we provide reference of other department's experience to solve a problem, it is possible when we get information from our network members. It also can strengthen one's mobility against informal discrimination by encouraging adopting legal interventions.

Having a network composed of diverse and powerful members is critical for employees' acquisition of resources and power in organizations (Brass, 1985; Higginbotham & Weber, 1999). Still and all, a change agent during making an action plan to illuminate gender bias should remember that workers' structural location also affects others' desire to help them by influencing workers' ability to reciprocate (McGuire, 2002). Because workers who have limited resources to trade are likely to be seen by others as undesirable network members (Blau, 1964; Cook, 1982).

v. Leadership

As discussed earlier, 'gender diversity' and 'resocialization' by virtue of changing organizational members' values and personalities to better match the organization's equality values are two important forces for changing unseen gender bias in organizations. According to the majority of respondents, 'leadership' is another important driving force. The extract from the responses of interviewees B, E, and F appears as,

Despite having everyone's role in introducing new employees to the organization's culture, leadership has a deep impact on facilitating this process. The way, the Chairman (Leader) of the department perceives and practices his/her authority, evaluates other's opinion and engagement in departmental tasks; in particular, whether s/he upholds feminine or masculine values; whether s/he intends to support or control- conveys informal messages

about gender equality or inequality to all the co-workers. So, unlike a leader who believes in power and control, a leader who emphasizes more on task completion and considers social relationships within the department is more significant for materializing gender equality.

b. Restraining socio-cultural forces against the change of unseen gender bias

Attaining the goal of 'reducing the unseen gender bias in academic institutions requires removing restraining forces as much as it requires the support and encouragement of driving forces. The findings of the current study show following restraining forces behind the unseen gender bias in universities are identified by the participants.

i. Power Distance

Power, one of the socio-cultural factors that play an influential role in maintaining equality and inequality in a society, highly depends on its usages. As a social system, the organizational setting of university also experiences power and conflicts because of heterogeneous beliefs, scarcity of resources, and interdependency of its human resources. Talking about the issue why do they think practice of power is responsible for the current state of informal gender discrimination in universities, interviewee P, said,

If you look at the career positions of man and women in universities, you will find scarce number of women at the top of the hierarchy. For which very often male colleagues show up with authoritative attitude to female colleagues. Another issue is that male teachers outnumber the female in vivid involvement with formal politics of teachers' association which further stems the difference in amount of power that male and female teachers uphold. Compared to male, female teachers are reluctant to undertake the political alliance that affects their workplace positions. Over and above, those few female faculties raise at the top of the hierarchy are more visible and subject to the criticism. Many times, these criticisms come from both male and female colleagues.

From the above discourse it can be assumed that gender bias behavior towards women in workplace is the output of cultural dimension, namely 'Power distance'¹⁰ which resists exercise of equality values in organizations. It imposes impediments to female workers to reach at leadership and affect their everyday negotiations at job. These findings are consistent with those of Reskin & Ross (1991) who mentioned men and women seldom hold similar amounts or forms of authority.

ii. Stereotype beliefs

Gender stereotypes not only describe the general cultural assumptions and create behavioral norms about how men and women are (descriptive) or should be (prescriptive), they also establish implicit (and explicit) boundaries for how men and women should not behave (proscriptive) (Filut, Kaatz, & Carnes, 2017). The results show that stereotype

¹⁰ Power distance is a construct developed by Hofstede (1980, 2001) concerning the perceived relationship between dominants and subordinates; it represents “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 2001, p. 98).”

belief¹¹ is the principal factor strongly related to other negative forces that resist gender equality in recruitment, leadership commitment for equality values, and resocialization of new employees (see figure 4.1). Simultaneously, its presence promotes implicit exercise of power and control, encourages informal politics and impedes women's networking. According to the participant H,

I think stereotype beliefs of individuals in organizations leads to the implicit bias. It is difficult to change an individual's conventional view about man and women's traits, role, and behavior because they start learning these gender stereotypes after their birth and it continues throughout life. This stereotype beliefs can reflect in employee recruitment, such as opening a new university department with recruiting male teachers first. Consequently, gender role gets priority over the meritocracy.

Previous scholarships on gender discrimination identified stereotypic bias is more likely to occur where the gender composition of the workforce is lopsided or where a few individuals have been placed in token positions. The stereotype behaviors come from both sides: men and women in their workplace. For example, female workers abide by gender roles, represent the "good girls" less likely to open their mouth against discrimination, uphold tolerance to the hostile sexism, and diminish their work performance. They fear the backlash of raising their voice. While male counterparts support this "good girls" image as the ideal state for women in organization.

iii. Informal Politics

Understanding the reasons for gender inequality in academic institutions under the lens of force field analysis explored the analytical relationship between informal bias and informal politics.¹² Several respondents from both University of Dhaka and University of Rajshahi agreed that the interplay between informal politics and formal organizational politics has cumulative effect on gender inequality in organizations. The extract from their statements indicated:

Organizational politics in workplace is undeniable and sometimes it is gendered. Compared to male, female counterparts are unwilling to get instrumental benefits within the organizational environment. To benefit from and exercise dominance typically over a minority group (women or an outlier), they (who are involved with the politics) attempt to maintain a connection among themselves by ignoring differences in their political ideologies.

iv. Lack of networking

Most of the participants in the study agreed that women lack networking than men. They put their finger on two reasons and described,

¹¹ A stereotype is a learned set of associations between a characteristic or behavior and any social group (Filot, Kaatz, & Carnes, 2017).

¹² Informal politics, as defined by Radnitz (2011), refers to the unwritten, unenforced status of institutions; more generally, informal politics describes how informality underlies and influences political behaviors and outcomes.

As a result of their greater domestic responsibilities, working women have less opportunity to network. Secondly, family members frequently dislike career-focused women, whom they refer to as highly ambitious.

Reskin, (2000) and Ridgeway (1991) have arguably elaborated that network members take each other's gender into account regardless of their structural positions. One of the ways that workers make sense of each other is by categorizing each other according to their gender. These categorizations are based on polarized, stereotypical notions about men and women that draw boundaries, and define relations, between men and women (Tilly, 1998). Status characteristics theory, also implies worker evaluate each other based on resources their gender is assumed to have – the more resources a group is assumed to possess, the more competent its members are assumed to be (Ridgeway, 1991; Thye, 2000). This explanation leaves rooms for future research on evaluating women's networking from resource perspective.

In a nutshell, the present study under Force Field Analysis (FFA) approach focuses on two significant aspects: Firstly, cultural values are deep rooted and influence how people behave and relate to each other. Secondly, interactional encounters of micro and macro forces are responsible for creation and re-creation of gender inequality in organizations. Findings shows that macro forces, especially, high power distance between men and women is responsible for unseen gender bias whereas micro forces include female employees' power achievement and support from both leaders and peers in an organization can help eradicate unseen gender bias against female employees. Last but not least, the interesting finding is that uncertainty avoidance was not visible in anywhere in the study findings, making it a mystery factor in researching gender bias.

6. Conclusion

Gender bias is one of the most discussed research areas for at least a century. Certainly, in organizations gender bias behaviour is unexpected but it is ubiquitous because it arises from cultural stereotypes about various social categories—including men and women (Filut, Kaatz, & Carnes, 2017). This study aims to identify the socio-cultural forces of indirect gender bias, which is also known as unseen bias, second generation gender bias or informal bias. It is different from direct gender bias because it refers to the manifest form of discrimination against women in the society and workplace that are "intentional" in nature (Rifkin, 2015).

Following rigorous qualitative methods this study investigated and extended knowledge on two major categories of forces including driving and restraining forces that produce the status quo of unseen gender bias in paid organizations like universities. Its empirical findings enhance our understanding of several points: firstly, macro forces such as, culture of power distance with micro forces such as individuals stereotype belief and organizational leadership are combinedly responsible for gender inequality at workplace. Secondly, these forces have hybrid nature, for example, leadership commitment and re(socialization) are mainly micro forces but influenced by the national (macro) cultural

values such as power distance. It is the point at which the interaction between micro and macro forces, as well as driving and constraining factors, has been identified. However, organization politics has both type of positive and negative implications for changing gender inequality.

In order to ensure gender-neutral behaviour within the organizations, the findings of this study strongly suggest focusing on informal practices in addition to formal rules and policies. It also recommends that organizational leaders and co-workers must replace authoritative practices with supportive and collaborative approach for everyone for every day.

The findings in this study are subjected to certain limitations. For instance, it is based on a small number of participants, and it mainly focus on socio-cultural factors for gender bias whereas, economic and political factors should also get attention in research. Finally, we conclude that this research has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation. Such as, which one is more dominant force, economic or cultural to recreate gender bias in organizations. It also would be interesting to explore a comparative study on informal bias between two groups- employed and non-employed women in Bangladesh.

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Perception of Citizens on the Development Achievements, Future Prospects, and Challenges of Bangladesh

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Abstract

Bangladesh aspires to become a developed country within 2041 and is expected to graduate to a developing country officially in 2026. To sustain this development journey, the Government of Bangladesh has articulated its long-term goals in 'The Perspective Plan 2021-2041'. Understanding citizens' perceptions about government policies, strategies, and actions are crucial. This study attempted to explore the citizens' attitudes towards the future status of the country, and to investigate the opinion of the citizens about the performance of education, health and economic sector of Bangladesh, and to identify the prospective challenges of Bangladesh in the path of becoming a developed country. This study was conducted following a qualitative approach with employing multi-method data collection methods and techniques. Both primary and secondary sources were used to collect the required data and information; a semi-structured interview schedule and Key Informants Interviews (KIIs) were employed as data collection tools. Thematic analysis has been followed to analyse the data with four significant themes - the future status of Bangladesh, attitudes towards the achievement of socio-economic development, views on the performance of health, economic, and education sectors, and key challenges to becoming a developed country. Findings showed that though Bangladesh made significant progress in various socio-economic indicators of development; lack of good governance, absence of sustainable human development policy, backlash of COVID-19 on economy, mismanagement, moral degradation and limited export baskets are the key pressing challenges which need to be addressed meticulously for becoming a developed country. Citizens of Bangladesh are cautiously optimistic about the future status of Bangladesh and the extent of development is subjected to address the challenges; the study explored.

Keywords: Citizen Perception, Socio-economic Development, Prospects of Bangladesh, Development Challenges, Bangladesh.

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1. Introduction

Bangladesh achieved independence 50 years ago; considering its age, the country has made remarkable progress, such as eliminating poverty, access to education-both primary and secondary, providing better healthcare facilities to rural areas, and increasing shared wealth during the last five decades (The World Bank, 2023^a). Likewise, least developed countries (LDCs) Bangladesh aspired to become a middle-income country and earned the status of a lower middle-income country in 2015 and will officially transition to developing country status in 2026 (Mahmood, 2022). To sustain this development journey, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has articulated its long-term goals in 'The Perspective Plan 2021-2041', in which the institutional foundation consists of four components: good governance, democratization, decentralization, and capacity building. The people of Bangladesh will be the primary beneficiaries, and they will be the main impetus for advancement and transformation (General Economics Division, 2020).

Consequently, Bangladesh has commenced several development projects to address its economic, social, and environmental issues. Notably, the country's recent economic development has gained immense appreciation from international organizations; for instance, the World Bank stated that despite high global uncertainty, Bangladesh maintains a good track record of growth and development (The World Bank, 2023^b). Bangladesh Economic Review (2022) showed that Bangladesh's GDP had grown steadily throughout the last decade, reaching 7.0 per cent in the fiscal year 2015-16 and 8.0 per cent in the fiscal year 2018-19. The COVID-19 pandemic, on the other hand, diminished growth to 3.45 per cent in the fiscal year 2019-20. However, in the fiscal year 2020-21, the GDP expanded by 6.94 per cent. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) reported that GDP growth in the fiscal year 2021-22 was 7.25 per cent, 0.05 percentage points more than the anticipated rate and 0.31 percentage points greater than that of the year prior (Bangladesh Economic Review, 2022).

Along with economic development, Bangladesh has made significant progress in the health sector over the last few decades. Improvements have been made across the health sector, which incorporates introducing the fundamental provision of health services for citizens-both urban and rural and expanding access to primary healthcare services with a significant political commitment (Joarder, Chaudhury & Mannan, 2019). It is noteworthy that government achievements include lowering the maternal mortality rate to 173 in 2016 and the child mortality rate to 1.9% in 2019, increasing life expectancy from 52 to 72 years and improving healthcare infrastructure and services, such as mHealth and eHealth initiatives. Another commendable success is the inauguration of almost 15,000 community and satellite clinics for primary, child, and maternity healthcare (Imdad & Saif, 2021). Despite the scarcity of resources, mismanagement, urban-rural divide, and corruption during the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF evaluated Bangladesh's vaccine diplomacy and vaccination rate, resulting in the country ranking 5th on 'Nikkei's Covid-19 Recovery Index' which is undoubtedly a great achievement of the government ("Bangladesh 5th in World in

Covid Recovery Index”, 2022). Although GoB, in partnership with development agencies and NGOs, has taken initiatives to ensure primary healthcare services, there is a dire need to assess the progress of the rural health system across the previous fifty years. Most of the country's citizens live in rural areas, and only one-third reside in cities; the modern healthcare system is city-centric (Imdad & Saif, 2021).

The post-independence era of Bangladesh was faced with numerous challenges, one of which was the dire state of education, with only 18 per cent of the population being literate. However, through the pursuit of policies that provided education on a mass level, as well as subsequent efforts by successive governments, education in Bangladesh has made significant progress, including an increase in school enrollment and the establishment of private universities (Hussain, 2022). The literacy rate is a crucial indicator that GoB is pledged to achieve for achieving SDGs. Recent data shows that Bangladesh's literacy rate has remained nearly constant - about 75 per cent, with an increase of 12 per cent in the last 12 years. However, the Primary and Mass Education Ministry estimates that 4.2 crore people in the country are still illiterate (Jasim, 2022).

Development plans and programs are undertaken for citizens; therefore, understanding citizens' perceptions of government policies, strategies and actions seems pivotal (Van Ryzin, 2007). Citizens' perceptions are significant in determining development achievements, given that they offer details about how the government's initiatives for advancement are perceived and experienced by the people government intends to support (Aitalieva & Morelock 2019). Therefore, in this study, researchers have focused on citizens' perceptions of the current government's development achievements, prospects and challenges the GoB is experiencing; this research has emphasized three prime areas: economic growth, health, and education.

2. Literature Review

Considering the three essential areas of development- economic, health and education this section has reviewed available literatures.

To begin with the advancement in the economic sector, the World Bank praised Bangladesh for its inspirational changes in development as well as identified a number of daunting tasks to address for future development-declining export volume due to backlash of COVID-19, eradication of poverty, lower private investment, ensuring better jobs for youth, supply of reliable and affordable energy, rapid urbanization and climate change (“GDP is projected to grow despite COVID-19”, 2020). Alam (2018) stated that Bangladesh surpassed economic development in social achievement defying numerous odds and made remarkable progress; the economy is near to take-off; reaping demographic dividend, improving investment climate, diversifying export baskets, ensuring quality education, injecting technology and innovation, addressing inequality and governance issues are the key challenges ahead (Alam, 2018). Bangladesh is celebrating its 50 years of independence, with its economic achievement in many respects; the backwardness of its democratic journey

remains big challenge (Riaz, 2021). In addition, Hossen and Anwar (2011) identified that corruption, non-accountability, abuse of rule of law, politicization of administration, and tumultuous politics are striking challenges in the path of ensuring democracy and governance.

The demand for education in Bangladesh is rapidly growing. Haider who is a researcher and educationist suggest for clear roadmap with development of curricula for long term training to get full benefits of demographic dividend in achieving 2041 vision of the country. 34 per cent people are youth while only 5 per cent are aged 65 and older (Haider, 2019); 65 per cent people are in working age. Though we have achievement in many fronts; the country has mounting challenges ahead—a. one in four people lives in poverty with growing inequality b. education system is not pro-poor and far from standard; The World Bank (WB) reports that only 4 per cent working people have higher than secondary education while Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) reveals in 2015 that 70 per cent children are unable to read and write properly c. exceptionally the country sees slow in job growth, between 2013 and 2017, while our average GDP growth is 6.66 per cent but job growth is merely 0.9 per cent; overall, employment elasticity declined in respect to GDP from 0.54 (1995-2000) to 0.25 (2010-2018); Haider (2019) continued in his article. He ended up with caution that in spite of having phase of demographic dividend, it could turn into demographic disaster if Bangladesh fails to take effective measures for timely needed education, improved health system, adequate infrastructure, favorable environment for foreign investment and, good governance. 37 public universities and increasing in number, 18 new universities established in the last decade including 6 Science and Technology University and the number of students rose around 3 times in the last decade, and 95 private universities are providing higher education in Bangladesh; the number of students 36,06,137 and 3,54,333 respectively (UGC, 2018). Though the number of universities, student's enrolment and graduates are increasing; the country is lagging behind to ensure quality education (Haider, 2019); according to Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) report in 2014, 47 per cent graduates considering all kinds of graduate are unemployed in Bangladesh (Rashid, 2019).

Speaking of healthcare in Bangladesh, Joarder, Chaudhury & Mannan (2019) argued that the health sector of Bangladesh is still in progress; there are challenges, specifically scarcity of public finance and shortages in the health sector, such as human resources, political interference, and inadequate monitoring and evaluation (Joarder, Chaudhury & Mannan, 2019). Mahmood (2012) concluded that good governance, policy shift, adequate training and monitoring, public-private partnership in health sector, informal sector involvement, and strong leadership are fundamentals to meet up the challenges- inefficiency and mismanagement, corruption, shortage of doctors and nurses especially in rural area and, absenteeism in the health care delivery services in Bangladesh. In the path of sustainable development of Bangladesh, it has a number of pressing constraints- deficiency in good governance, insufficiency in various physical and social infrastructures, income inequality and so on (Barai, 2020). Degradation of morality is triggering need and greed driven

corruption in health administration of Bangladesh and often it is colluded with political connections causing immense suffering for common people (Quddusi, 2008).

Jansen (2020) stated that though Bangladesh has tremendous prospects and opportunities for prosperous future, it has also some mounting challenges ahead. Climate change and its impact, political system, and widespread corruption are great challenges for Bangladesh; Jansen argued in his article. Less diversified economy, governance failure, inequality, illicit transfer of money, and lack of consensus in political sphere (Chowdhury, 2013) made the tasks for development frightening. Enjoying full benefits from the Demographic Dividend is the automatic and granted; it might be disaster if we fail to make them able while the economy is not creating enough jobs instead of economic growth (Haider, 2019). Alam (2018) mentioned a number of concerns- our education system is undergoing still in experiments yet to ensure quality education, lackluster private investment, challenged health sectors, and creating more jobs for reduction of unemployment.

Rahman (2018) asserted that the notion of democracy could not be separated from understanding development achievements as they relate to citizens' lives and the freedom they experience. Development can be measured in terms of more than GDP growth. It's worth is determined by how it influences the life and freedom of citizens, which is vital to the concept of development; he added. Moreover, democratic rights and political freedom must be regarded as the 'constituent components' of development (Rahman, 2018). Quddusi (2008) delivered that accountability has been regarded as the bedrock for democracy, whereas Bangladesh is practicing democracy and facing challenges to ensure accountability to its citizens. Rahman (2022) stated that one of the essential criteria of democracy is being accountable to the country's citizens. Accountability to citizens largely depends on the checks and balances between the three branches of government-legislative, executive and judiciary which is challenging to achieve (Rahman, 2022). Riaz & Parvez (2021) affirmed that though Bangladesh has made immense progress in socio-economic indicators, the country has failed to deliver democratic governance (Riaz & Parvej, 2021).

Overall, analysis of existing literature suggests that, despite rapid development in economic, health and education sectors, significant challenges persist in all three areas. However, these studies have mainly concentrated on the general aspect of development initiatives and achievements of the GoB; the authors noticed a notable lack of studies that emphasize citizens' opinions on these achievements, the impediments they are facing and their future aspirations from the government. People's attitudes have implications for evaluating development triumphs because they give a comprehensive picture of the outcome and efficacy of development programs. Therefore, this rigorous study will assist policymakers in assessing their endeavors, determining areas for further development, and ensuring that development projects are accessible, transparent, and responsive to the necessities and expectations of citizens.

3. Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study were-

- 3.1** To explore the citizens' attitudes towards future status of the country and peoples' perception about the socio-economic achievements of Bangladesh;
- 3.2** To know the citizens' opinion about the performance of education, health and economic sector of Bangladesh towards development;
- 3.3** To identify the prospective challenges of Bangladesh in the path of becoming developed country.

4. Methods and Materials

The location of the study was the different public and private universities of Bangladesh, a South Asian emerging country. The study has been conducted following qualitative approach. It employed multi-method data collection methods and techniques. Both primary and secondary sources were used to collect required data and information for serving the study purpose. Primary data has been collected from the field through interview method, a semi-structured interview schedule was used as data collection tool. Key Informants Interviews (KIIs) were also used as data collection method where guideline was used as data collection tool. The interview schedule was transformed into a Google Form for convenience of the researcher because conduction of face to face interview was not possible due to pandemic. The interviews were conducted through using multiple tools and techniques such as- social media platforms, e-mail, and phone interviews due to the COVID-19 pandemic; the data collection procedure was progressed in October-November, 2020. Books, journals, research articles, opinion, news, reports, websites, etc. were the secondary source of essential literatures. Both probability and non-probability sampling technique were applied in the study. A total 95 university students, who are studying in graduate and postgraduate level in the different public and private universities of Bangladesh, fulfilled semi-structured interview schedule via online where everyone had equal chance to participate. 10 KIIs were taken through following purposive sampling technique for identifying right persons who have expertise in the study area; key informants were university professors, youth leaders, and activists. Researchers took recording and field note while conducting KIIs. After essential coding and recoding the collected data, the researchers compiled the study findings in thematic way. Data triangulation has been done for avoiding duplication, for synchronization of the findings and for doing cross examination. The study complied the social science research ethics and guideline from data collection to compilation. Oral and written consents were taken from the respondents after informing the objectives of the study.

5. Results and Discussion

This study followed thematic analysis where the transcription of records and notes (interviews and KIIs) were coded and finalized four key themes that are opinions on the future status of Bangladesh, attitudes towards the achievement of socio-economic development, views on the performance of health, economic, and education sector, and key challenges to the path of becoming a developed country.

5.1 Opinion on the Future Status of Bangladesh

Majority of the key informants, university teachers and youth representatives agreed that Bangladesh is going to be a developed country in the coming decades. Besides, few key informants offered cautious optimism aligning with various conditions about future status of the country. A youth mentor opined that-

“In future, we will be developed country but we need solid distinct Bengali philosophy; without own philosophy or direction, the country will be derailed merely by following borrowed directions.”

A senior professor remarks in this regard-

“Yes, but we need support from people; we are on the right track of development but we need good leadership; and the development depends on numerous challenges; it is not for granted.”

Participants are optimistic about the tangible development of the country and are hopeful for the future but they are concerned on the extent of morality in the society; the common values are facing constant challenge from various fronts. A key informant, faculty of a public university, opined his skepticism in such way –

“Though we made more progress in visible development but we are lagging behind very badly in crucial invisible development like negligence on developing morality; that’s why I am suspicious on the sustainability of the development achievements.”

Youths identified a number of factors like toiling mass in here abroad, remittance, garments sector, blue economy and opportunity to extract renewable energy, which are caused for marching towards a developed country. One of the youths expressed his optimism in such a way-

“There are so many reasons why I thought Bangladesh is a country of countless prospects. We have hardworking people. People of both rural and urban areas are very industrious. Luckily, we are also blessed with plenty of natural resources that allow us to meet our needs. Our new generation youth have got improved mindset as they can explore around the world through internet. Actually, it opened a new era that allow them to be better and better comparing our previous generations.”

Blue economy, huge population considered as potential human resources, mineral resources and unremitting flow of remittance are the key sources this ambitious aspiration. A university student commented that-

“My own notion is that population is the most prospect for Bangladesh although someone wants to say that population is a curse for our country. Blue Economy can be another important prospect for our country. Mineral and other renewable resources are also important prospects for our country.”

With exuberance on the future position, there has also concern in some respects especially on quality and invisible side of development. A youth’s perception is –

“Bangladesh is getting remittance from Emigrant workers. Garments industry is relentlessly contributing to our economic development.... but we must check our development what we mean. It’s not just economic development; Government should emphasis on moral development which fosters to become Strong base.”

5.2 Youths’ Level of Satisfaction on Socio-economic Achievements of Bangladesh

Respondents offered their satisfaction on the achievement in socio-economic progress of the country while they are cautious about the sustainability of the development. A key informant, university professor of the Department of Public Administration, opined on the socio-economic development of the country-

“Tremendous economic development had been occurred in the last decade though the country aspired for comprehensive development; we are still in lag behind on account of sustainability.”

Another key informant, university teacher and youth mentor, thanked to the hardworking people along with robust role of NGOs in the development trajectory of Bangladesh; farsightedness of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, though less synchronization being entertained from her teammates and comparative less dominant role of governance, had big role in championing development achievements of Bangladesh. A youth representative, Hasan, a masters level varsity student, expressed his views in such way-

“Remittance warriors, government economic friendly policies and role of NGOs were three key determinants in steering socio-economic development in Bangladesh.”

On the other hand, a number of participants showed their dissatisfaction on the achievements of the country in social and economic sector so far which very negligible part of the respondents is. A university teacher expressed his concern in this respect that-

“We failed to ensure optimum level of socio-economic development rather routine responsibility has been done by the government through exploiting cheap and avoiding innovation and technological development.”

5.3 Views on the Prospective Status of Education, Economic and Health Sector

Key informants, university teachers and youth representatives, demonstrated mixed reactions on the status of these three crucial socio-economic sectors. They offered cautious optimism in some respects depending on conditions- government measures, quality of governance, policy framework; while few key informants showed vigorous skepticism considering present scenario. Categorized opinions are presented in the following boxes.

Box 1: Opinions on the future status of Education of Bangladesh

“Standing on the present situation of our educational system, merely I see gloom picture and no development I see in future because of numerous prolonged problems and

contradictions along with absence of vision.”

“We need changes badly in our education system; 50 years have been elapsed though we have been undergoing experimentations- do we spend our whole life for experiment? We need specific plan with avoiding trial and error process. Now, we are creating millions of unemployed graduates, it will bring social disorder.”

“I am hopeful if the initiatives taken by the government get success. Therefore, current scenario remains haphazard; I am urging for unitary approach as well as mainstreaming of our varied streams.”

“Though many people are pessimistic but I am optimistic on our education system if we can introduce research and practical oriented education system embracing cutting edge technologies. Tools of Fourth Industrial Revolution should be integrated in our education which will play as catalyst in coming days.”

People are happy with the overall development in various development indicators but optimism was split up when they were asked to respond on the present performance and future expectation, Box 1, 2, and 3 reveals their mixed attitudes towards the Bangladesh’s education, health and economic sector.

Box 2: Opinion on Health Sector

“The present condition of health sector is frustrating but it might be improved if changes occurred in future, if brain draining can be stopped.”

“COVID-19 unravels how our health sector is poor; my experience is very bad during pandemic; we have to do more such as- increasing budget allocation, ensuring good governance, and system development.”

“Considering present situation, I am not hopeful; we need restructuring the health sector, adequate foreign investment, and quality improvement.”

Box 3: Views on Economy

“It is progressing but we need forward and backward linking; now, we are dependent on mostly China and India for raw materials; for sustainable development, we have to decrease dependency.”

“We have entered in industrial period passing agricultural period. It is required shifting from labor intensive towards technology-based production system. We have huge

deficiency in skilled human resources while we are heavily dependent on the service sector; its contribution in GDP is more than 50%. COVID-19 is the big lesson for our economy that it is not strong enough; we need policy move from over dependency of service sector to production orientation as well as we need to explore unconventional sectors.”

“We have huge development in economy so far but there has uncertainty, and prone to vulnerabilities ahead. Time is demanding for alternative economy.”

“Two leading sectors- remittance and garments are sharing largely lacking with timely asked innovation. Existing trickle-down approach in economy is merely creating discrimination between rich and poor; the gap is widening day by day though some people are arguing that standard of living has been development due to economic development.”

University teachers and students, regarded as critical mass, are critically positive about the long- term impact of current philosophy of economic development. Apparently, people are disgruntled on the performance of health sector which is beset with governance crisis. Though citizens have concerns on quality of education but they are conditionally optimistic about the future.

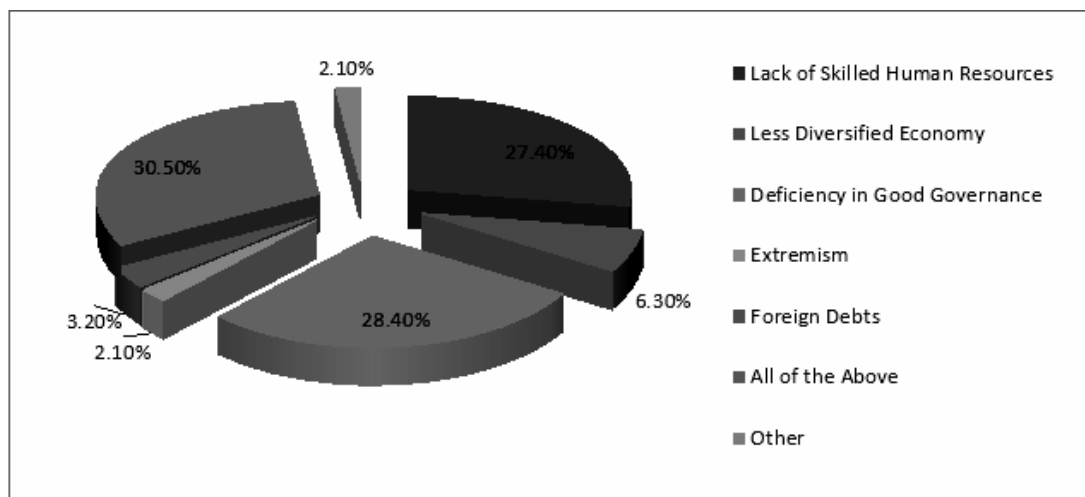
6. Key Challenges of Bangladesh towards the Path of Developed Country

Deficiency in good governance will remain one of the leading constraints in the path of becoming developed country; chart 01 shows that 28.40 per cent university students are worried about the quality of governance. Secondly, nearly quarter of the respondents (27.4 per cent) reckons that lack of skilled human resources will be the big challenges in the days ahead. Only 6.30 per cent opined as less diversified economy will also be key problem in coming future. Very insignificant portion (2.10 per cent) expressed that extremism will be the major challenges. 30.5 per cent youths ticked all of the above options meaning that aforementioned challenges will create hindrance simultaneously in the trajectory of becoming developed nation.

The research found additional crucial challenges from the key informants’ interviews. A university teacher, Assistant Professor of the Department of Local Government and Urban development articulated his frustration in such way-

“Absence of solid objective, no distinct Bengali philosophy, and no culture of our own are the key challenge.”

Chart 01: Dominant Challenges of Bangladesh in the Path of Developed Country, (N=95).



Source: Developed by authors from the collected data from the field.

A Professor of the Department of Public Administration argued that based on the present economic prowess we can move on but COVID-19 is the big issue, will be the game changer; if our private sector collapse anyway, external power potentially China will exert influence development economy and there will be calculation of political economy. In depicting the concerns of Bangladesh, a youth mentor, Mr. Islam (pseudonym), opined that-

“Translating a humanistic, civilized society will be the daunting task ahead for the country. We need comprehensive overhaul in our education, health, and governance system; where corruption remains big threat; large population and deficiency for skilled human resources will also be pressing challenges in future”.

A youth representative, Mr. Hasan (pseudonym), postgraduate student of the University of Dhaka argued that sense of injustice and insecurity are pushing people for committing corruption; rule of law will be the panacea for all diseases. Summary of the key findings has been mentioned; see table 01, in bullet points.

Table-01: Challenges of Bangladesh traced from interviews and opinion of the respondents.

- Corruption	- Unemployment
- Challenged Political Culture	- Less Diversified Economy
- Degradation of Morality	- Food Production & Agricultural Development
- Digital Illiteracy	- Incapacity to Use Demographic Dividend
- Poor Quality of Education & Lacking in Research Based Education	- Economic Inequity
- Large Population	- Environmental Pollution & Natural Calamity
- Foreign Debt	

Source: Developed by authors from the collected data from the field.

7. Discussion

The study attempted to explore the youths' outlook on the future status of the growing country-Bangladesh, steady performing in socio-economic indicators, and to know the youths', university students, extent of readiness to confront the future challenges in the trajectory of becoming developed country. It found that majority of the youths is optimistic about the tomorrow's Bangladesh as the country is going to be developed nation in future. Therefore, significant differences were seen on the degree of satisfaction when they were asked to judge the performance of education, health, and economic sector. While, the key informants showed cautious optimism (conditional) in every respect but they weren't utterly pessimistic about the previous achievements in social and economic indicators and the future endeavor having the present deficiencies. Bangladesh made tremendous advancement in economy, 30th largest economy in the world on the basis of public private partnership (PPPs), while the experts warn on the backbone where RMG and flow of remittance are two leading contributors in economy, less diversification of export items posing fragility. Alam (2018) observed that diversification of export baskets, development of technology and innovation, and providing quality education will be the major challenges ahead for Bangladesh. Though the people of the country are cautiously optimistic on the path developed nation, they put some pre-conditions need to be addressed properly. Bangladesh is enjoying demographic dividend steering development; will be continued to the next 30 years; but it is underutilized, it could turn into disaster (Haider, 2019).

The findings of the study indicate that a number of governance issues- poor quality of governance leading corruption and mismanagement, moral degradation, deficiency in democratic practices, absence of distinct Bengali philosophy or ideals, inequity, poor state of health and educational sector will be the major concerns. In addition, vulnerability is

looming large in economy due to COVID-19 pandemic; university professors warn that tackling post pandemic situation will be the real test for this burgeoning economy. Barai (2020) delivered similar findings that corruption, deficit of governance, inequity, and underdeveloped infrastructure are building constraints for sustainable development. For stable development, good governance must be ensured (Hossen, & Anwar, 2011).

Though the country elapsed 50 years of independence, developed its geographic importance in the meantime, developed its size of economy and made huge achievement in socio-economic indicators; its continued democratic degradation, regarded as basic pillar of its independence struggle, remains big challenge for upholding human rights, press freedom, right to express, and political rights (Riaz, 2021). Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) conducted a research on 'Graduate Unemployment in South Asia' in 2013-14; the study revealed that around 47 per cent Bangladeshi graduates are unemployed (Rashid, 2019). The present research identified a number of pressing constraints in the higher education of Bangladesh which are lower quality of graduates that insufficient monetary allocation, inadequate facilities for teachers and students, insignificant attention by the state towards research and innovation; in fiscal year 2020-21, 11.68 per cent of total budget which is only 2.10 per cent of GDP was allocated in education sector (Alamgir, 2020); deficiency in good governance in the management of higher education is caused for less conducive environment for providing quality education in the universities.

8. Concluding Remarks

Bangladesh has been growing steadily; progresses are seen in the performance of various socio-economic indicators, for the last three decades. Exports, social progress, and fiscal prudence act as key pillars of economic growth (Sharma, 2021). Relentless pursuit of toiling mass, contribution of immigrants, and role of RMG sector has been playing as driving forces for this boom as well. Majority of the youths are optimistic about the country's future prospects putting a number of serious concerns as well to flourish. Experts are cautiously hopeful on the future status of this growing nation; identified few dominant challenges. Continued moral degradation—perpetuating corruption, lack of good governance, absence of sustainable education policy, backlash of COVID-19 on economy, democratic backwardness, mismanagement and corruption in health sector, and limited export baskets are the key pressing challenges; need to be addressed meticulously. Increased monetary allocation in education and health sector in line with global standard, restraining undue political influence towards stakeholders of higher education management authority with applying good governance mechanisms, providing adequate facilities, and research oriented higher education are significant factors to increase the graduates' readiness to confront the future uncertainties and to meet the future needs in the trajectory of becoming developed country.

Bangladesh needs to deal with utmost prudence to ensure good governance and to build capable institutions to confront the challenges ahead. Without moral development of the people and human resource development, the country's development will not be sustainable; Bangladesh should double down its efforts for developing ethically spirited skilled human

resources. Increased investment in health and education sector align with effective policy measures will play critical role towards development; both sectors need to be taken due care of. Prudent macroeconomic policy and sound management are essential for diversification of the country's economy as well as for its export baskets; proper actions are highly recommended for sustainable economic development. Towards the trajectory of becoming a developed country, Bangladesh has to be well equipped in numerous ways to confront the present as well as future challenges. Towards the path of sustained development, it needs continuous adjustment with the cutting-edge emerging technologies and fullest use of its untapped resources for building knowledge economy, for harnessing innovation and developing a connected society.

Acknowledgement

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Student's Perception on Environmental Knowledge, Behavior and Attitude: A Study at Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University, Mymensingh, Bangladesh

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Abstract

This study attempts to examine in what manner students have environmental knowledge and explore their behavior and attitude towards environmental issues in Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University campus, Mymensingh, Bangladesh. It also tries to find out the role of university authority to make a pollution-free clean and green campus. Environmental knowledge helps the citizens to live and sustain society properly. This is a mixed method study which is basically focused on quantitative and qualitative methods. In the quantitative method, a total of 390 face-to-face survey is conducted in Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University campus which is located in the north-central of Bangladesh. This survey has been conducted with the students of 24 departments in this university in July 2019 and March 2022. The respondents are selected by using a random sampling technic from 24 departments of this university. On the contrary, in the qualitative method, five Focus Group Discussions (FGD), five Key Informant Interviews (KII) and participatory observation methods are conducted in the university area. The both male and female students from the selected departments are the respondents of FGD and the experts, faculty members, head of the departments, provost of residential halls and officers are the respondents of KII. This study covers the entire scenarios of the student's environmental knowledge, behavior and attitude as well as the role of university authority with regards to make a pollution-free campus. It helps the university authority to find out their limitations and realize the student's perception and behavior of environment to take actions and strategies.

Keywords: Environment, Pollution, Climate Change, Bangladesh

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1. Introduction

Bangladesh is a country that is affected much by natural disasters. The purpose of environmental education is to have environmental knowledge and to learn attitudes and behaviors towards environmental issues and to give shape suitable problem-solving methods (Minhaz et al., 2018). The environment is a complex totality of many surrounding things and has a great influence to an individual's life. The environment has many impacts on a person's personality, attitude, ways of thinking, behavior, character, status, lifestyle, and many others things. Environmental issues help to shape one's mind, and behavioral structure. A perfect environmental nature can grow a good mentality in a student's whole life; so, environmental fairness is important for every person to develop in the future and for a better life. A good nature or environment affects students' education and future generation socialization too. Again, students also need to know about environmental issues and knowledge for a behave in good manner so that together can make a sustainable campus. Knowledge about environmental things plays an active role in the sustainable improvement of climate change and helps to maintain clean, green surroundings. In this method, environmental attitudes have cognitive, effective, and behavioral components. However, contemporary theorists tend to hold that cognition, affect, and behavior are, in fact, the bases on which the general evaluative summary of a particular psychological object is derived, instead of being the constituents of attitudes (Fabrigar, L. R., MacDonald, T. K., & Wegener, D. T., 2005). Aware of the seriousness of environmental problems, academics, intellectuals, scientists, policy makers and governments around the world are concerned and committed to finding solutions, which is reflected in a growing scientific output on different environmental issues (Sousa, S., Correia, E., Leite, J., & Viseu, C., 2020). By conducting this study, current students will have a great impact on the future state of the environment; and will have major importance in understanding the attitudes, and behavior of students towards the nature and environment.

1.1 Background of the Study

Environmental knowledge, behavior and attitude are highly interconnected. Having proper environmental knowledge and behavior, students become more protective and careful towards the environment. This article is based on the student's perception of environmental issues, problems, behavior, and attitudes that impact our environment directly or indirectly. Climate change is one of the big issues in the present world, environmental pollution mostly impacts on climate change; environmental knowledge is a must to develop the health of nature and the environment. We live in the earth which consist of unlimited natural and man-made ingredients. Proper use of these components maintains a fair and fresh environmental nature, but when opposite deeds are done by man, many degradations occurred to the environment. Basically, it happened because of lacking environmental knowledge and related ideas. Excess harms nowadays get exposed mostly for the limitation of environment-related knowledge, finally, nature also delivered harmful react to man. So, environmental knowledge and the proper behavior and attitudes are a must to save future nature and our surroundings. In this backdrop, this study is significant to conduct in Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University Campus. The students who knows well or own a lot of knowledge about the environments, have a positive attitude towards the entire climate. Environmental

education or knowledge is very important for students because they have a very clear and conscious idea about the environment. This study is required to find out the environmental knowledge, behavior and attitude among the students of the mentioned university campus. Moreover, this study is also significant to reveal the scenarios of the entire environment in this university. It would help the readers and university authority to make a environment-friendly sustainable campus.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study is focused on two specific research objectives, which are given below:

- a) To investigate in what manner students have environmental knowledge and explore their behavior and attitude towards environmental issues in Kabi Nazrul University campus, Mymensingh.
- b) To find out the role of university authority to make a pollution-free clean and green campus.

1.3 Climatic Conditions in Mymensingh, Bangladesh

Climate change is one of the serious worldwide problems currently and it is happening mainly for harmful activities of humans toward the environment. However, Mymensingh city is the capital of Mymensingh Division, Bangladesh which is located on the bank of Brahmaputra River, about 120 km (75 mi) north of the national capital Dhaka. It is a major financial center and educational hub of north-central Bangladesh. The city was constituted by the British East India Company on 1 May, 1787. In Mymensingh, the wet season is hot, oppressive, and mostly cloudy and the dry season is warm and mostly clear. Over the course of the year, the temperature naturally varies from 55°F to 92°F and is rarely below 51°F or above 98°F (Weather Spark).

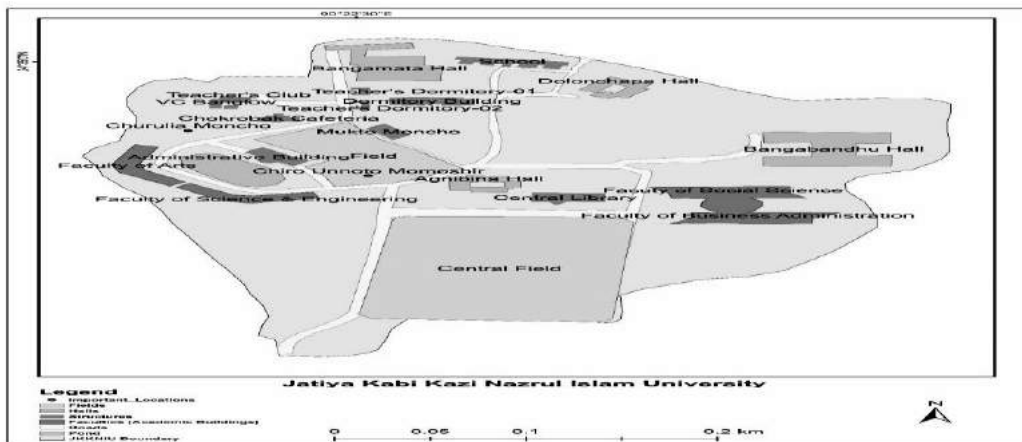


Figure 1: The map of Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University²

² Md. Zaoad Uddin, designer and a graduate student of Environmental Science and Engineering Department, Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University.

The climatic condition of Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University campus is almost same as the Mymensingh city. In figure 1, it shows the map of the university campus where the academeci building, residential areas, play grounds and other locations are identified.

2. Literature Review

This study found several kinds of literature related to environmental knowledge, behavior, and attitude among students both nationally and abroad. But in most cases, this study found a gap between the current study and the previous studies. Some literature found the exact knowledge on environmental issues but it is not satisfactory. To fill up the gap and explore the students' perceptions, some relevant literature is significant. Over recent years, various research findings have affirmed that the greater the level of information held by consumers on environmental matters, the greater their concern over adopting proenvironmental behaviours (Seth et al., 2011; Misra and Panda, 2017). Harun et al. (2011) pointed that high level of knowledge on the environment will create positive attitude towards the environment (Murphy, T.P., 2002) referred to (Kogan, N., 1961) as a belief and feelings that individual have for the environment. Student's attitude towards the environment is conceptualized as their verbal and actual commitment, motivation and effect concerning nature and environmental issues (Aminrad, Z., 2009). According to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), better known as the Earth Summit, environmental education is a process to build the world's population who are aware and concerned about the environment and all the problems associated with it, and people who have the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior, motivation and commitment to work together, both individually and collectively, in order to solve the current problems, and prevent the emergence of new environmental problems (Ajzen, I., 1985). Uddin, M., (2018) also conducted a study at Bangladesh Agricultural University to investigate the responses of university students related to environmental issues.

Generally, the most important dimensions of an individual's environmental awareness appear to be environmental knowledge, values, attitudes, willingness to act, and actual behaviors (Ajzen, I., 1985). Boeve-de Pauw and Van Petegem (2010) illustrated that the social background explains variation in the environmental attitudes of children as well: children with a more advantaged economic background hold less pro-environmental attitudes; on the other hand, children from families with a high cultural capital hold more pro-environmental attitude. Several studies have shown that residence in an urban area is generally associated with greater environmentalism (Buttel, F. (1992). A review by Rickinson (2001) revealed that the factual environmental knowledge levels of students are generally low. Educational interventions may, at least, have a short-term positive effect on students' environmental knowledge (Rickinson, M. 2001).

Among university students, (Kagawa, 2007) found that having a favorable attitude towards the environment and sustainable development was a far more important determinant of behavior than knowledge. The involvement of youth in environment and development decision-making and the implementation of programs is critical to the long-term success of Agenda 21 (UNCED, 1992). If the people's attitudes and responses toward environmental

issues are enriched, it means that the people's environmental literacy rate is high. The university has a vast number of students from different parts of Bangladesh which provide a good scope to study the student's environmental knowledge and command of environmental issues (Minhaz et al., 2018). Many natural problems happen due to a lack of knowledge about environmental behavior, and attitude.

As a result of the increasing environmental problems, environmental concerns have dramatically increased among the public over the last few decades (Minhaz et al., 2018). There exists a gap between the conceptual knowledge of the environment and the motivation to participate in environmental conservation. A positive attitude towards the environment includes the protection of the environment and also an individual's positive opinions, feelings, and behaviors towards the functions of living creatures in their lives (Turkum A.S., 1998). The behavior of students proves to be most strongly shaped by stimuli arising from the immediate environment (Lukman, R., Lozano, R., Vamberger, T., Krajnc, M., 2013). Attitudes apply to general feelings toward ecology and the environment, feelings, and concern for specific environmental issues, and feelings toward acting to remedy environmental problems (Goldman Daphne, Sara Pe'er, and Bela Yavetz, 2013). Knowledge of the environment not only includes knowledge about problems and consequences but also about how to take action (Hines, J. M., H. R. Hungerford, and A. N. Tomera., 1987). Effectiveness knowledge includes knowledge about the specific impact and effectiveness of a particular action or option in comparison to another (Kaiser, F., N. Roczen, and F. Bogner., 2008). As students progress through the university, it is hoped that they become more knowledgeable and more critically aware of their surroundings (Benton, Raymond, 1994). However, the student's knowledge about environmental problems was fragmentary and often incorrect. Similarly, the environmentally responsible behavior of many of the students was inadequate (Lagerweij, Nijs, Hans Kuhlemeier, Huub Van Den Bergh & et al. (2010). Therefore, students' environmental knowledge and attitude is an important issues for our healthy ecosystem. We need to think about curriculum content and structure, teaching methods, and the development of suitable resources regarding environmental issues (Hossen & Khatun, 2017).

Environmental education should be a lifelong process and environmental awareness among the students is highly influenced by their background knowledge, attitude, and sensitivity towards the environment (Hossen et al., 2017). The more people are concerned about the environment, the more they have knowledge about the impact of their behavior on the environment and the more they are aware of the consequences. The main aim of environmental education is to develop concern and awareness about the total environment and its problems. The commitment to work individually and collectively towards solutions for the current environmental problems and their prevention also falls among the most important aims of environmental education. Environmental knowledge and an ecological worldview (as an environmental concern) are the outcomes of environmental education, and thus can be shaped through educational means (Liobikienė, G., & Poškus, M. S., 2019).

Thus, relevant knowledge about the environmental crisis and the environmental outcomes of various behaviors should be presented in a framework that strives to create an

environmental citizen (ENEC, 2018). Global warming and other environmental destruction actions involve important consequences for human health, ecosystems, and many social and economic sectors, such as energy production, tourism, and agriculture (WIR, 2008). Kaplowitz and Levine (2005) concluded from their research concerning the level of environmental knowledge of university students that increasing the level of environmental knowledge and fruitful to help improve environmental education efforts (Kaplowitz, M. D., & Levine R., 2005). Sousa et al. (2020) found some recent studies on environmental knowledge, behavior and attitudes in last five years in table 1.

Table 1: Some Research Study on Higher Education Students' Environmental Behavior, 2015–2020 (Sousa, 2020)

Author(s) and Year	Country	Methodology	Sample	Environmental items analyzed
Izagirre-Olaizola et al., 2015	Spain; USA	Questionnaire survey	1237	Psychology; Recycling; Behavior
Cortes, Dias, Fernandes, & Pamplona, 2016	Brazil; Portugal	Questionnaire survey	1035	Attitudes; Concerns; Behavior; Green consumption
Bozdogan, Sahinler, & Korkmaz, 2016	Turkey	Questionnaire survey	1310	Awareness; Attitude; Educational status
Tuncer & Sahin, 2016	Turkey	Narrative inquiry	9	Sustainability; Higher Education
Hamid, Ijab, Sulaiman, Anwar, & Norman, 2017	Malaysia	Literature Review and online data	----	Sustainability; Awareness; Social media
Chakraborty, Singh, & Roy, 2017	India	Questionnaire survey	332	Behavior; Normative concerns
Fu, Zhang, Xiong, & Bai, 2018	China	Questionnaire survey	885	Behavior; Awareness; Cultural norms
Mohiuddin, Mamu, Syed, Masud, & Su, 2018	Malaysia	Questionnaire survey	200	Green vehicles; Knowledge; Awareness; Intentions
Janmaimool & Khajohnmanee, 2019	Thailand	Questionnaire survey	----	Knowledge; Behaviors; Attitudes; Political ecology; Sustainable development
Kyriakopoulos, Ntanos, & Asonitou, 2020	Greece	Questionnaire survey	190	Sustainability; Behavior; Sensitivity; New ecological paradigm
Shafiei & Maleksaeidi, 2020	Iran	Questionnaire survey	310	Attitude; Efficacy; Vulnerability; Severity; Behavior

3. Materials and Methods

This is a mixed-method study which includes both qualitative and quantitative methods. In the quantitative method, a total of 390 face-to-face surveys are conducted in Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University campus which is located in the north-central of Bangladesh. This survey has been conducted with the students of 24 departments in this university. A group of research assistants conducted the survey with eight students from each department in July 2019 and March 2022 separately. The respondents are selected by using a convenient sampling technic from 24 departments of this university. On the contrary, in qualitative method, five Focus Group Discussions (FGD), five Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Participatory Observation methods are conducted in the university area. The both male and female students from several departments are the respondents of FGD and the experts, faculty members, head of the departments, provost of residential halls and officers are the respondents of KII. The quantitative data is analyzed by the using SPSS software and presented graphically. The qualitative data is also analyzed descriptively. Both the qualitative and quantitative data makes this study strong and representable. The limited data and the convenient sampling process can be the major limitations of this study.

4. Results and Discussion

This study reveals actual scenarios of environmental knowledge, behavior and attitude among the students from different contexts. The entire findings would reflect in this study. In this study, respondents has different demographic background. In table 1, this study reveals scenarios of the demographic characteristics of the university students at Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University. Nearly half of the respondents (45%) are male and more than half of the students (55%) are female in this study. Among the total students, four-fifth of the students (80%) are from the undergraduate level and, on the contrary, one-fifth of the students (20%) are from the graduate level.

Table-2: Demographic characteristics of the students surveyed (n= 390)

Characteristics	Categories	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	45
	Female	55
Academic year	Undergraduate	80
	Graduate	20
Religious status	Islam	89
	Hinduism	07
	Buddhism	02
	Christianity	02
Residential area	Rural area	45
	Urban area	55
Parental educational status	Below SSC/SSC	35
	HSC	40
	Graduate/Post-graduate	25

Source: Field data, 2019 and 2022

With regards to religious status, a majority of the respondents (89%) are from Islam, less than one-tenth (07%) of the students are Hindu, and very few (04%) of them are from both Buddhism and Christianity. Table 2 also shown that nearly about half of the respondents (45%) are from rural areas, and more than half of the respondents (55%) are from urban areas. Additionally, among the parents of the respondents, more than one-third (35%) of them has completed their SSC, and nearly half of the respondents (40%) has completed their HSC, again, a quarter of the respondents (25%) has completed their graduate or post-graduate degree. However, this demographic scenario is reflected in the entire study.

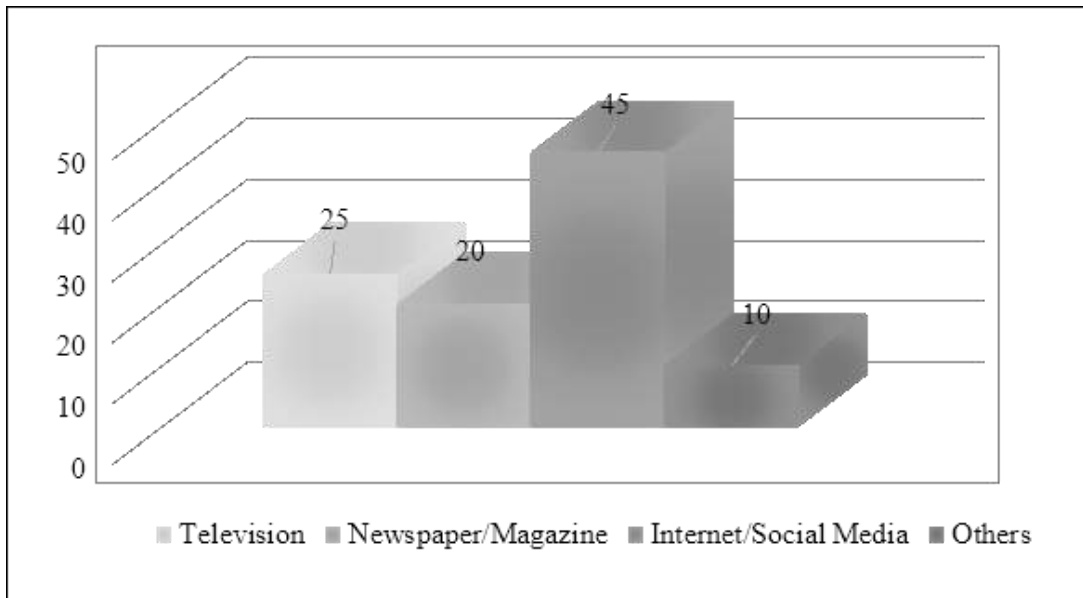


Figure 2: Major sources of environmental knowledge

Figure 2 illustrates the information about the sources of environmental knowledge among the students. Here, near about half of the respondents (45%) received various environmental knowledge from the ways of the internet and social media platforms. On the other hand, a quarter of the respondents (25%) received their environmental knowledge or news from television. Figure 2 also revealed that one-fifth of the respondents (20%) received much environmental knowledge from newspapers or magazines. Besides, one-tenth of the respondents (10%) claimed that they receive their environmental knowledge from the other various sources.

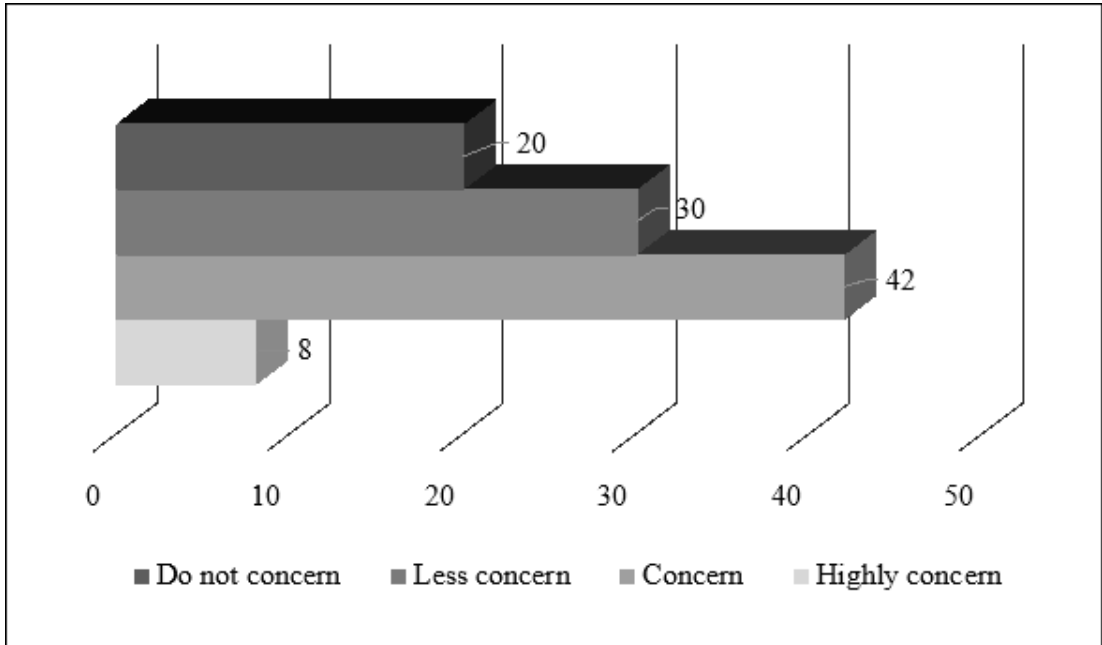


Figure 3: Student's concern level about environmental issues

Environmental knowledge is very important for every individual and also needs a high concern level among the students. According to Figure 3, near about half of the respondents (42%) are concerned about environmental issues. Additionally, among the respondents, nearly one-third (30%) are less concerned about environment-related issues and their outside surroundings. Besides, one-fifth of the respondents (20%) are not concerned about nature or environmental based issues, factors, problems, etc. On the other hand, only near one-tenth (10%) of the respondents are highly concerned about various environmental issues or things, which is relatively very low. Nonetheless, this is shocking that less than half of the students are concern about the environmental issues and climate changes.

Table 3: Student's perception on some Environmental issues

Is there any environmental voluntary organization in this campus?	Yes= 100% (only one, 'green campus, clean campus)
Are you aware about pollution?	Yes=85%, No=15%
Pollutions are causes for fatal diseases?	Yes= 100%

Source: Field data, 2019 and 2022

Environmental voluntary organizations promote long-term processes to build awareness on environmental issues or other various things among the community which help to make a sustainable world. This voluntary work deeply for a clean and perfect planet and are also

good for our health too. In table 3, it reveals that only one voluntary organization named, 'Green campus, Clean campus' is present at the Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University campus and all students (100%) know about this environmental voluntary organization in this campus. In the campus area, nearly almost all of the students (85%) in this university are conscious about the environmental issues including pollutions. Moreover, it shows that all of the students (100%) know about the pollutions which are caused for different fatal diseases.

Table 4: Condition of dustbin use in campus

Condition of dustbin use in campus	Student's Perception	
	Yes (%)	No (%)
Availability of dustbin in Campus	37	63
Tendency of uses of dustbin among students	38	62

Source: Field data, 2019 and 2022

A proper system of maintenance is more important to keep fit the environment neat and clean, such as a dustbin is one of them. A dustbin in a university area is one of the helpful tools for a healthy and clean campus. Table 4 illustrates a piece of information about the availability of dustbins in the campus area and also the uses of dustbins among students of this university. Here, nearly two-third of the respondents (63%) claimed that there is no availability of dustbins in the Kabi Nazrul University campus area. Again, upper to one-third of the respondents (37%) claimed that there is the availability of dustbins in the campus area of Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University. Additionally, it shows that more than half of the respondents (62%) do not use the available dustbin in the campus area and only one-third of the students (38%) use the dustbins in the university region. Nonetheless, the availability of dustbins in the campus area is lower than the need and student's concern about the use of dustbins is also not good enough as per requirement. A quote of a KII respondent is relevant here:

There are some ongoing construction projects in this university. That's why tree lantation is not possible yet before completing the projects. Moreover, some trees had cutted down by the authority from the construction areas. So the greening is hampered by it.

There are four residential halls in the Kazi Nazrul Islam University. Agnibina hall and Jatir Jonok Bangobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman hall are the two boy's hall; on the contrary, Dolonchapa hall and Bangomata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib hall are the two girl's hall. Almost all the basic facilities are available in these residential halls. In this study, the respondents who live in those halls were asked several types of questions based on environmental issues.

Table 5: Scenarios of Environmental Issues at University Residential Halls (n=390)

Major Environmental Issues	Boy's Hall		Girl's Hall	
	Agnibina Hall (%)	Bangabandhu Hall (%)	Dolonchapa Hall (%)	Bangomata Hall (%)
Is there enough dustbin?	Yes=24 No=76	Yes=45 No=65	Yes=38 No=72	Yes=44 No=66
Do you use dustbin regularly?	Yes=54 No=46	Yes=60 No=40	Yes=70 No=30	Yes=75 No=25
Is there enough green trees nearby hall?	Yes=45 No=55	Yes=05 No=95	Yes=20 No=80	Yes=25 No=75
Is there enough open space inside/outside of hall?	Yes=55 No=45	Yes=75 No=25	Yes=28 No=72	Yes=60 No=40
Is there enough water and sewerage system?	Yes=10 No=90	Yes=55 No=45	Yes=35 No=65	Yes=60 No=40
Is the condition of dining/canteen hygienic?	Yes=25 No=75	Yes=80 No=20	Yes=37 No=63	Yes=72 No=28

Source: Field data, 2019 and 2022

With regards to availability of dustbin, table 5 displays, different hall has different scenarios. One-fifth of the respondents (24) shared that there is available of dustbin in Agnibina hall; near half of the respondents (45%) opined there is available of dustbin in Bangabondhu hall; on the contrary, below two-fifth of the respondents (38%) shared that there is enough dustbin in Dolonchapa hall and below half of the respondents (44%) shared that there is enough dustbin in Bangomata hall. This study asked to the students whether they use dustbin regularly or not. More than half of the respondents (54%) use dustbin regularly in Agnibina hall, three-fifth of the students (60%) use dutbin in Bangobondhu hall, a majority of the students (70%) use dustbin in Dolonchapa hall and three-fourth of the students (75%) use dustbin in Bangomata hall. In this case, girls students use dustbin more than the boys in the university residents. In this case, an important KII respondent from university authority opined:

In case of the Bangabondhu hall, we have tried to provide enough dustbin in the hall but it is still not enough in this big hall. Inspite, we (authority) have not capacity to provide dustbin to room by room. It's almost same for the Bangomata hall. However, we (authority) try to keep the hall cleen and peaceful.

Additionally, with regards to green trees, more than half of the respondents (55%) opined that there is not enough green trees nearby the Agnibina hall and almost all of the students (95%) said there is no green trees nearby the Bangobondhu hall. On the other hand, in girl's

residents, a majority of the respondents (80%) in Dolonchapa hall and three-fourth of the respondents (75%) in Bangomata hall said there is not enough green trees nearby the hall. Furthermore, more than half of the respondents (55%) of Agnibina hall and three-fourth of the respondents (75%) in Bangobondhu hall opined that there is enough open spaces inside/outside of the hall. On the contrary, only 28% of the respondents in Dolonchapa hall and more than half of the respondents (60%) in Bangomata hall shared that there is enough open spaces inside/outside of the hall. Here, the open spaces are available in the newly established two halls (Bangobondhu and Bangomata) rather than the old two halls (Agnibina and Dolonchapa). Besides, more than half of the respondents (55% in Bangobondhu hall and 60% in Bangomata hall) shared that the water and sewerage system is enough, and, in contrary, majority of the respondents (90% in Agnibina hall and 65% in Dolonchapa hall) argued that the water and sewerage system is not enough in these two halls. Lastly, the respondents of Agnibina hall (75%) and Dolonchapa hall (63%) opined negatively that the condition of dining/canteen is not hygienic. On the contrary, the respondents of Bangobondhu hall (80%) and Bangomata hall (72%) opined positively that the condition of dining/canteen is clean and hygienic. In this case, one of the FGD respondents of Agnibina hall opined that:

The facilities of the two old halls are not satisfactory rather than the new two halls. We have no open spaces inside the hall (old two halls) and the dining and washroom is totally unhygienic. This need to take in consideration.

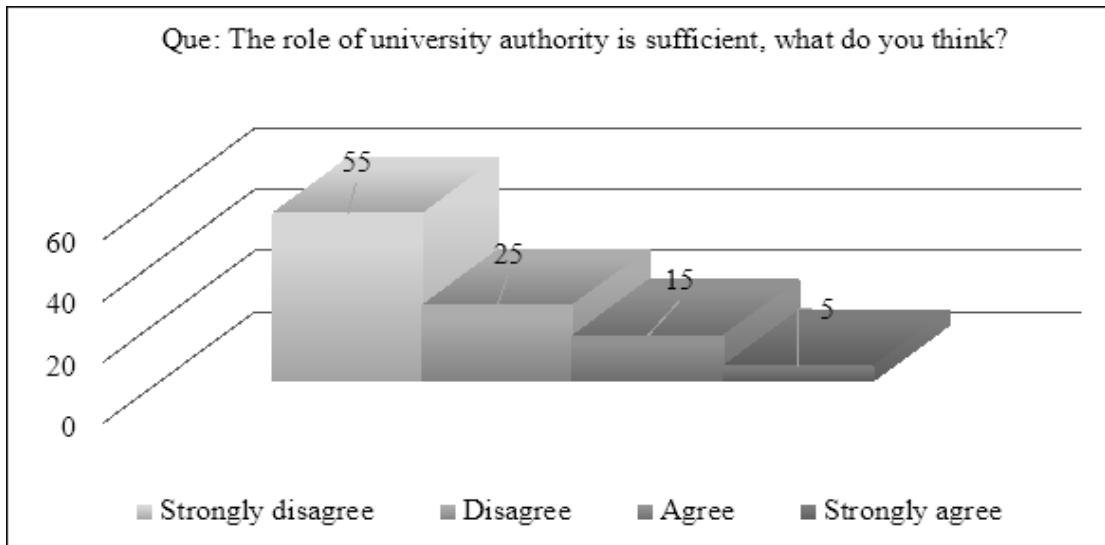


Figure 4: Student's perception on the role of university authority

The role of a university authority is one of the main bodies on environmental-related things and criteria. A well-systemized authority can bring changes in the environmental sector of a university which can help the campus a lot in the fields of natural factors or environmental change. In this study, the students of the university were asked several questions about the

sufficient role of authority in the university, then they answered in various ways. Figure 4 illustrates that more than half of the students (55%) strongly disagree that the role of university authority is sufficient for environmental-related issues. Again, a quarter of the respondents (25%) disagree that the role of authority is enough for the environmental factors. Figure 4 also spectacles that only a small number of the respondents (15%) agree that the role of the university authority is sufficient and only several respondents (5%) strongly agree that the role of authority is well enough to solve environmental issues or problems. At last, the authority has some limitations because the they are yet to plan to make a environment friendly campus after finishing the constructions of some academic buildings. A significant KII respondent opined:

University authority has a megaplan to build a beautiful academic campus, some projects are going on too. With regards to environmental isse, this university area is quite and beautiful. We have plan to plant more trees in specific greenery sections besides the roadsides and the buildings. It is not still a complete green campus, I agree.

Nevertheless, the students has the different knowledge level about the environmental issues and they behave accordingly. Student's knowledge reflect on their entire behavior and attitude towards their campus. To make a sustainable environment friendly campus, the knowledge about climate is must.

5. Conclusion

Environmental knowledge is associated with their behavior and attitudes towards the environmental issues. Students are the large stakeholders in any educational institutions, that's why the environmental knowledge among them isnecessary to keep and make a sustainable environment-friendly campus. This study is found some significant results which indicates that they have sufficient knowledge but need to be aware more to make the climate as well as the university campus green and clean. The university authority has some limitations to overcome in this regards. Nonetheless, knowledge is power even in the environmental issues. Environmental knowledge can influence the behavior and attitudes among the students. This study recommends some issues that could be taken in consideration.

- University students need to be more conscious about the climate change and environmental issues in this campus.
- University authority should concentrate on making sustainable environment-friendly campus so that everyone get a quite and peaceful ecademic atmosphere.
- Researchers should conduct further study to find out more relevant findings which would help to the authority to take cecessary steps in future.

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**Predicting Antecedents for Seeking Alternative Jobs by the
Private University Academics of Bangladesh:
An Exploratory Study**

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Abstract

Since the academics of the private universities of Bangladesh get handsome salary as well as work in comfortable work environment, literature suggests that most of them frequently search for alternative jobs i. e. having the switching tendency of jobs. This study aims to identify the true causes/reasons for which the private university academics look for another jobs. The study follows the exploratory factor analysis technique to identify the behind their looking for alternative jobs. Among the 25 items/reasons based on the earlier studies, the study found 20 are influential under five extractible factors namely: Job security and nature of supervision, Payment and work environment, Supervisors and work pressure, Promotion system and work location and Person to job fit. The findings of the study will help the private university authorities to develop and design appropriate career development strategies for their faculty members and to adopt suitable policies to retain them.

Keywords: Private University, Academics, Alternative Jobs, Career Development.

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1. Introduction

Knowledge, skills, competence and quality of academic staff of universities are crucial in developing human capital which is the prerequisite for the development of any nation, and therefore academic staff is considered as the heart of any university. But, Turnover tendency of academic staff, a serious problem, has become a major concern for the higher educational institutions over time (Kebede & Fikire, 2022). Tendencies of searching alternative jobs are morally labeled as turnover intention or the intention to quit. Turnover intention of academics in private universities hampers capabilities, productiveness, and increases the costs resulting in endangering the long-term survival in the (Ramasamy & Abbudullah, 2020). Turnover intentions result in loss of intelligent manpower, loss of organizational capital, and experience (Addae et al., 2006). Turnover intentions may have both visible and invisible impacts; visible effects include new costs for advertisement, hiring, selecting, training and development, placement, and invisible impacts involve losing efficiency and productivity (Aamodt 2015). Due to such detrimental effect of turnover intentions, it has become important researched factor worldwide.

Turnover tendency among the faculty members has also become a crucial issue in higher educational sector in Bangladesh (Joarder & Sharif, 2011). They also emphasized that this turnover rate is at alarming situation especially for private universities in comparison to public universities. Therefore, more comprehensive effort is required for better understanding the problem. Moreover, several prior studies focused turnover intentions of employee on different industries of Bangladesh, Islam et al., 2019 on telecom industry, Hossain & Mahmood, 2018 on garments industry, Hossain et al., 2017 on Banking industry. Very few studies regarding turnover tendencies of academic staff are conducted on private universities in Bangladesh which demand a comprehensive study on why faculties in private university of Bangladesh seek alternative jobs.

Besides, the several past studies centered on specific indicators such as dissatisfaction (Delfgaauw, 2007; Mkulu, 2018; Ainer et al., 2018; Ramasamy & Abbudullah, 2020), perceived job alternatives (March and Michael, 2008; Manogharan et al., 2018; Ashraf, 2019), money and money related matters (Shoaib *et al*, 2009; OKETUNBI & OSHINYADI, 2019; Mgaiwa, 2021), interpersonal relation (Ferreira et al., 2007; Michael, 2008; Kristanti et al., 2021), supervisors (Claydon et al., 2007; Michael, 2008; Indra et al., 2023), remote work location (Alam and Bhuiyan, 2015; Alam and Hasan, 2015), poor working conditions (Li et al., 2022, Selim & Kee, 2023) and the nature of the jobs (Talukder et al. 2014; Alam and Bhuiyan, 2015). Through analysis of these factors we categorize them into major five dimensions to fit into our study such as Job security and nature of supervision, payment and work environment, supervisors and work pressure, promotion system and work location, person to job fit.

2. Objective of the Study

The main aim of the study was to explore reasons for seeking alternative jobs by the private university academics of Bangladesh.

3. Research Question

What are the factors for seeking alternative jobs by the private university academics of Bangladesh?

4. Literature Review

Turnover intention, a central issue of human resource management, has been researched extensively by the researchers for decades to decades. Different researchers attempted to identify the real cause behind the switching tendencies of employees worldwide. The following section provides details about underlying causes of job turnover from prior works.

Mkulu, (2018) pointed out that poor remuneration, delay in salary payment, lack of job security, lack of desired leadership in administration, lack of job security and less scope of career development are the prime reasons of low retention of private university academic staff in Southern Highlands Zone in Tanzania. Ainer et al., 2018 concluded that role ambiguity, work-overload, work family conflict, co-workers warmth, co-workers competence greatly influence on turnover tendencies of academic institutions. Manogharan et al. 2018 pointed out new elements such as task and work load, conflict of role, underpaid along with other intrinsic factors. Inability of the academic staff to deal with the international students was identified as one of the new additions as cause of turnover.

Besides, Ashraf, (2019) have identified that congenial working environment is crucial to retain faculties and ensure quality education in private universities of Bangladesh. OKETUNBI & OSHINYADI, 2019 blamed worse working conditions, excess workload, extra worktime, demotion, poor relations with boss, subordinates and colleagues, office politics, and financial difficulties as leading reasons for job stress among academic staff of private universities. Reyes et al., 2019 conducted a case study on a private institution of higher learning to find the reasons why employees leave. They found three dimensions of “push” factors such as organizational, personal and psycho-social as reasons of leaving the institution. Ashraf, 2019 revealed close association between faculty retention and quality education and showed partial mediating influence of faculty retention on quality education in private higher education institutes. Similarly, Selvanathan et al., (2019) showed that salary and benefits issues, job insecurities and work-life imbalance influenced strongly on the job-hopping in Private University. Ramasamy & Abbudullah, (2020) used seven constructs such as cyber bullying, employer brand, perceived job alternative, work overload, job security, perceived procedural justice and distributive justice on turnover intention to predict job turnover of academics of private universities. They found that employer brand, perceived alternative job, job security and work overload influenced turnover intention among academics with different levels of magnitude. Mgaiwa, 2021 revealed that freedom in academic works, collaborative decisions, team efforts, supervision, and resources notably explained job satisfaction and reduced turnover intention among academics of private higher institutes. Kristanti et al., 2021 tested the mediation effect of job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment on the relationship between financial rewards and turnover intentions of lecturers of private universities and disclosed that financial rewards don't

directly contribute to reduce turnover intentions until such rewards are tailored to enhance job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment.

Similarly, Li et al., (2022) examined the relationship between teacher burnout and turnover intention in higher educational institutions with mediating role of job satisfaction and moderating effect of proactive personality. The results indicated that burnout has remarkable positive influence on turnover along with partial mediation effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between burnout and turnover and strong moderating role of proactive personality on the relationship between job satisfaction and job turnover. Kebede & Fikire, (2022) marked that pay and benefits, working environment, and ethnicity are main influencing factors for academic staff turnover intention. ABOUDAHAB et al., (2022) focused on talent management, work overload, leader member interchange, organizational commitment, work life balance, and incentive system as major independent variables to effect on job turnover intentions. Maseri et al., 2022 also showed effect of job demand and resources on turnover intentions with mediating effect of burnout.

Serin et al., (2022) examined the relationship between job satisfaction and job turnover of private university academicians by considering eight dimensions of job satisfaction viz; payment, promotion, supervision, benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, relationship with co-workers, nature of the work, and organizational communication. The result indicted that employees who are less satisfied in respect of these dimensions are more likely to switch from their current job and vice-versa. Selim & Kee, (2023) showed that work life balance of private university staff is affected by the emotional demands and supervisors supports during the covid-19 period and suggested that private university authorities should provide more job resources and personal to the academicians for supporting their job. Indra et al., (2023) showed that affective commitments of employee are high when they are given high supervisor support that result in lower turnover intentions among employee.

Almost all of the above-mentioned studies the researcher so far reviewed are conducted in the developed countries. Study regarding the regarding the antecedent of alternative job searching among the private university academics of Bangladesh is scarce. Moreover, the prior studies on the reasons behind the alternative job seeking intentions of private university academic staff still lack of more conclusive evidence.

So, this research will bridge the gap of the literature by finding out the true empirical reasons for which the private university academics search for alternative jobs or possess the turnover intention in Bangladesh.

5. Materials and Methods

5.1 Data collection; Tools and Respondents

The data for this study were collected through a questionnaire survey which was administered among faculty members of two randomly selected private universities of

Bangladesh. A well-structured questionnaire with five-point Likert-type scale, where 1= Strongly Disagree and 5= Strongly Agree were used for the questions. The questionnaire was delivered to the respondents through hand to hand and through mail.

Constructs Development 25 items were considered as reasons of seeking alternative job in the questionnaire that was sent to the respondents. Items such as job security, extreme monitoring, limited opportunity of growth and career progress, lack of sound retirement benefits (pension/gratuity etc.) plan, and passion for government job were adopted from Mkulu, 2018; Ainer et al., 2018. Expectation of high salary, lack of specific salary structure, poor working environment, unsound administration and management were adapted from Li et al., 2022; Selim & Kee, 2023. Excessive work pressure and stress, inflexible work schedule in the job, inhuman behavior by the supervisors or bosses, the improper valuation of dignity, not enough time for the family because of high work load and working hours, biased and unfair promotion and growth system, improper performance appraisal system, distant work place (office), were taken from Alam and Hasan, 2015; Kebede & Fikire, 2022.

5.2 Data Analysis Tools

To analyze the collected data from the respondents SPSS software and several sets of statistical analyses were used such as descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis using Principal component Analysis along with the Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

5.3 Reliability and validity of Data

The reliability and the validity of the data were assessed by measuring the Cronbach's alpha and the validity of the data was ensured by conducting a pilot survey before going for the final survey of the study. The alpha value for 25 items scale was found .888 from the data of this survey.

5. Findings of the Study

This study follows the exploratory factor analysis technique to identify the factors that cause the ground for searching alternative jobs of the private university faculty members in Bangladesh. Following are the necessary tools of the exploratory factor analysis technique with their obtained values and interpretations.

6.1 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test

The KMO measures the sampling adequacy which should be greater than 0.5 for a satisfactory factor analysis is to proceed (Alam and Hasan, 2015). The table 1 below shows the KMO measure is 0.778. The value 0.5 for KMO test is minimum and barely accepted, values between 0.7-0.8 are acceptable, and values above 0.9 are superb (Alam and Hasan, 2015). Bartlett's test measures the firmness of the relationship among the factors. It is also seen from the table 1 that the Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant. So, it can be concluded that the strong relationship among the variables is established.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.778
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1.019E3
	df	290
	Sig.	.000

6.2 Descriptive Statistics and Communalities

Following table 2 shows the descriptive statistics and communalities (variances) of all of the items used in this study for factor analysis. The table shows that the item 'Extreme monitoring' has the highest mean value (3.74) whereas the item 'the dignity is not valued properly' has the lowest mean value (2.32). Standard deviation measures the variability of data. Following table 2 shows that the item 'Extra work load and stress' has the highest variability of responses (1.50) on the other hand the item Inhuman treatment by the supervisors/bosses has the lowest variability of responses (1.03).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and Communalities

Variables	Descriptive statistics		Communalities	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Initial	Extraction
Expectation of high salary	Mean	Std. Deviation	1.000	.663
Lack of specific salary structure	3.5385	1.17162	1.000	.552
Biased and unfair promotion system	2.3462	1.38961	1.000	.672
Less secured job	2.5256	1.34620	1.000	.704
Extra work load and stress	3.3526	1.50185	1.000	.793
Extreme monitoring	3.7436	1.17430	1.000	.628
Poor working environment	3.7115	1.14164	1.000	.668
Colleagues are not so much helpful	3.1923	1.33497	1.000	.729
Unsound administration and management	2.3590	1.22842	1.000	.688
The institution is less renowned	3.5064	1.22604	1.000	.632
Limited opportunity of growth and career progress	3.1859	1.21179	1.000	.643
Inflexible work schedule in the job	3.6538	1.30336	1.000	.636
Inhuman treatment by supervisors/bosses	3.3910	1.03221	1.000	.737
Lack of sound retirement benefits (pension/gratuity etc.) plan	2.8782	1.23049	1.000	.614
Job challenges and dynamism	3.7308	1.46065	1.000	.661
Availableness of alternative jobs	2.7949	1.17894	1.000	.798
Performance is not properly recognized and appraised.	2.6731	1.21901	1.000	.731
Distant work place(office)	3.7949	1.06388	1.000	.715
The dignity is not valued properly	2.3269	1.19225	1.000	.816

Reluctance of the authority to approve the leave of term vacation	3.4744	1.23104	1.000	.703
Discontinuance for family stress	3.2179	1.30653	1.000	.769
The job does not suit my passion and ambition	2.3462	1.21099	1.000	.621
Dissatisfied with the job	2.3974	1.29853	1.000	.709
Lack of enough time for my family due to excess workload and working hours.	2.9872	1.21277	1.000	.744
Pasion for government job.	2.9872	1.30501	1.000	.754

The communalities are commonly used in factor analysis to show how much of the variance in the variables has been accounted for by the extracted factors (Alam and Bhuiyan, 2014). The above table 2 shows that, about 80% of the variance in ‘Availability of alternative jobs’ and ‘Extra work load and stress’ is associated.

6.3 Number of Factors to Extract

Total variance explained and the scree plot is commonly used to identify the number of factors extractable from the analysis. The factor (component) which has the eigen value (the scree plot in the Appendix I shows all the components with their eigen values in a single graph) more than 1 is normally considered to be extracted as factor (Alam and Bhuiyan, 2014; Talukder et al, 2014). The total variance explained in the table 3 below shows that only 7 of the factors have the eigenvalues over 1 and all other remaining are not significant (<1). So, 7 factors can be extracted in this study.

Table 3: Total variance explained.

Factors (Components)	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4283	29.133	29.133	3.857	29.133	29.133
2	2.753	11.013	40.146	2.550	11.013	40.146
3	2.118	8.472	48.619	2.528	8.472	48.619
4	1.660	6.639	55.258	1.90	6.639	55.258
5	1.365	5.460	60.718	1.318	5.460	60.718
6	1.243	4.970	65.688	1.166	4.970	65.688
7	1.052	4.208	69.897	1.038	4.208	69.897
8	.890	3.559	73.456	.728	29.133	29.133
9	.905	3.015	83.694			

6.4 Factor (Component) Matrix

The table 4 below shows the loadings of the 25 variables on the 7 factors extraction is presented. The higher the absolute value of the loading, the more the item contributes to the

factor. The gap on the table represents loadings that are less than 0.5, that are suppressed by the researcher to have the highest loadings value only. The table shows that eight items are loaded in the factor 1, six items are loaded in factor 2 and 3, and four items are loaded in the factor 4 and 5. Since factor 6 has only two loaded items and factor 7 has three but two of them are negative so, these factors are not extracted or considered as factors. The table also shows that some of the items are loaded in several factors such as Excessive work pressure and stress is loaded in both the factors 1 and 3; item Excessive supervision is loaded in both the factors 1 and 2. These types of items are extracted based on their highest loaded value in a particular factor. For example, the item Excessive work pressure and stress has the higher loading value in the factor 3, so it is extracted as an item of the factor 3.

Table 4: Component (Factor) Matrix

Items	Factors (Component)						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Expectation of high salary		0.826					
Lack of specific salary structure		0.793					
Biased and unfair promotion system				0.641			
Less secured job	0.748						
Extra work load and stress	0.531		0.608				
Extreme monitoring	0.681	0.661					
Poor working environment		0.778					
Colleagues are not so much helpful				0.734			0.753
Unsound administration and management		0.724					
The institution is less renowned						0.689	
Limited opportunity of growth and career progress	0.788						
Inflexible work schedule in the job	0.543		0.604				
Inhuman treatment by supervisors/bosses			0.745				
Lack of sound retirement benefits (pension/gratuity etc.) plan	0.72	0.596					
Job challenges and dynamism							-.516
Availableness of alternative jobs						0.832	
Performance is not properly recognized and appraised.				0.593			
Distant work place(office)				0.774			
Improper valuation of dignity			0.550				

Reluctance of the authority to approve the leave of term vacation			-.706				
Discontinuance for family stress					0.80		
Not matching with the passion and ambition					0.538		-.536
Dissatisfied with the job	0.717				0.757		
Lack of enough time for my family due to excess workload and working hours.			0.662		0.624		
Pasion for government job.	0.777						
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.							
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.							
a. Rotation converged in 17 iterations.							

6.5 Naming of the Factors

Based on the factor matrix in the above table 4 the researchers categorized the factors into five headings considering the loaded items in each of the factors. The researchers named the first factor ‘Job security and nature of supervision included the items: less secured job, extreme monitoring, limited opportunity of growth and career progress, lack of sound retirement benefits (pension/gratuity etc.) plan, passion for government job. Second factor ‘Payment and work environment’ includes the items: expectation of high salary, lack of specific salary structure, poor working environment, unsound administration and management based on their respective loaded items and similar for the rest of the factors. The third factor explored through the factor analysis named Supervisors and work pressure which includes the items: excessive work pressure and stress, inflexible work schedule in the job, inhuman behavior by the supervisors or bosses, improper valuation of dignity, not enough time for the family because of high work load and working hours. The fourth factor heading ‘Promotion system and work location’ covered biased or unfair promotion and growth system, performance is not properly recognized and appraised, and distant work place (office). Finally, the fifth factor named ‘Person to job fit’ involves discontinuance for family stress, not matching with the passion and ambition, and dissatisfied with the job.

7. Practical and Managerial Implications

The study marked major five factors along with the corresponding loaded items in each factor that induce the private university faculties in searching the alternative jobs. From practical perspective, the findings of this study will add values to different stakeholders. Firstly, antecedents identified in the study will benefit the private university authorities, candidates seeking job as faculty in private universities, current faculties in the universities, University Grant Commission (UGC) to know the real cause of job turnover of private university faculty members. Secondly, the concerned authorities will be aware of factors

influencing the faculty members in seeking alternative jobs that resulted in lower turnover and lower costs of recruitment, training and development costs of university. Thirdly, it will help the prospective candidates and current faculties in selecting suitable job. Finally, the study findings will theoretically contribute to the existing literature of educational development.

8. Conclusion, Limitations and Recommendations

This study tried to identify the factors for which private university faculty members search for alternative jobs in the job market. Findings of the study suggest that there are many prominent causes for which private university academics search for alternative jobs. The most common of them are the job insecurity, work pressure and stress, nature of supervision and supervisors or the limited scope of growth and development. These findings are consistent with Mkulu, 2018; Ainer et al., 2018; Selvanathan et al., 2019; Ramasamy & Abbudullah, 2020; Mgaiwa, 2021; Kebede & Fikire, 2022; and Serin et al., 2022 meaning that academic staff want to search the new job where they will have job security, limited working pressures, friendly supervision, ample opportunities for professional growth and development.

Despite its significance, the current study is still has some limitations. Firstly, we identified those dimensions which are limited to internal working environment of the university. So, it is recommended that future study may consider personal and family related issues of the academicians. Secondly, our effort is confined to respondents of two private universities only. Further study can be conducted by extending sample size from other private universities of Bangladesh because there might be variations in the job benefits in different universities depending upon ranking level. Thirdly, we considered only private university which can be extended by including public university faculties also for comparative study by the future researchers

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Decentralization of Power and Authority to the Municipalities in Bangladesh: A Comparative Study on Selected Municipalities of Pabna District

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Abstract

The term decentralization is regarded as the panacea which has caught the insight or attention of academics, donors, and various agencies. In recent decades, due to globalization, digitalization, marketization, and liberalization built an idea for strong and efficacy local democracy and governance system instead of clients or subordinates of central governments. As a result, the local government bodies are being considered as an indispensable part of governance. Therefore, for the sake of good governance, a stable and fruitful decentralized local government system has to be ensured. The purpose of this study was to examine the present state of decentralization at the local government units in Bangladesh with a special focus on municipalities. This study also tries to point out the major challenges towards the process of decentralization. At the same time, there will be an attempt to provide some recommendations in order to overcome those challenges.

Keywords: power, authority, decentralization, local government, municipality, Bangladesh.

1. Introduction

The local Government system in Bangladesh bears the British Colonial legacy undoubtedly. Since Bangladesh was a portion of the British Empire for almost 200 years. In 1947, before the departure of the British Raj from the Indian Subcontinent, India had been separated into two states based on so-called religious grounds. These two states were India

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and United Pakistan at that time. Therefore, Bangladesh in the name of East Pakistan was a part of United Pakistan. Eventually, on 26 March 1971, Bangladesh emerged as an independent state through a bloody war with the occupying Pakistani Military. However, it is quite evident that the local government system in Bangladesh has a long historical backdrop. It is observed that in the British period, the local government system was recognized as an effective and strong tool for performing activities at the grassroots levels since there was no visible self-government either at the central or provincial (state) levels. Consequently, local government in South Asia is widely regarded as local self-government. It is quite evident that the British rulers used this apparatus as a means of consolidating and perpetuating their unjust dominant position in British India. Similarly, Ayub Khan late former president of the then United Pakistan followed in the same footsteps as like as the British Empire and as a result used local government as a means to seek his political legitimacy and make his political career long-lasting. As a consequence, he introduced basic democracy at the local level in 1959. The main focal point behind this initiative was to intensify and ingrain his political power from top to bottom. Evidently, he was a military bureaucrat, who captured state power by force. Therefore, he sought his political legitimacy that result in introducing the basic democracy idea that was completely eyewash. However, there was no actual dispersal of political and administrative power and authority to the local level where the ultimate power rest with the president (Siddique, 2005).

Decentralization means power and authority to be disseminated from the central strata to the grassroots levels (Ahmed, 2014). The main objective of decentralization is to strengthen and make local government bodies effective in the context of decision-making and revenue collection by giving them the necessary power and authority to meet the needs and demands of citizens. Additionally, decentralization can be considered as an effective strategy to make the overall administrative system service-oriented and people-oriented.

In this study, the decentralized local government system and practice in Bangladesh were pointed out. Undoubtedly, the term “Decentralization” is not a new word or idea in Bangladesh at all. The main focal point of this study is to explore the existing situation of decentralization in the local government institutions. Some attempts have been made to overcome the problems that exist in the path of decentralization. Also, some theoretical concepts of decentralization, local government institutions, and relevant issues are discussed in this study.

1.1 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to explore the decentralization of power and authority to the municipalities in Bangladesh.

- a) To find out the existing impediments in the way of the actual decentralization process at the local government units.
- b) To prescribe suggestions in order to make the decentralization process a strong, consolidated, and effective manner.

1.2 Research Questions

This paper is an attempt to answer certain research questions which are pointed out below:

- a) What is the present status of decentralization process at municipalities in Bangladesh?
- b) What are the existing challenges of decentralization of power and authority to selected municipalities in Bangladesh?
- c) How to overcome the existing anomalies and make decentralization process more effective to municipalities in Bangladesh?

2. Literature Review

A number of researches have dealt with the decentralization process at local government institutions in Bangladesh. Some relevant literatures on the issue are as follows:

In a study, Uddin (2019) observed that participation of community people in local government institutions is not only an opportunity for them but also an instrument of empowerment. The research argued that the process of empowerment is enshrined in the idea of participation. The paper found that the people at grass root level have been participating in union parishad (UP) in diverse arrangements, but the effectiveness of these participations in terms of empowerment is still very limited (Uddin, 2019). Besides, Panday (2017) in his study “*Decentralisation without decentralisation: Bangladesh’s failed attempt to transfer power from the central government to local governments*” found that the reform of the UZP was seen as a potential way to increase local involvement and create more responsive local action. Unfortunately, the UZP has not been able to meet the expectations that were set for it. The paper also showed the reasons behind the inefficiencies of decentralization process which include the lack of transfer of power and responsibility to the elected representatives, the centralized administration and planning, and the excessive involvement of politicians and bureaucrats. To make the UZP a successful form of local government and governance, it is necessary to reduce the central control and restructure local action.

A research by Islam et al. (2019) has pointed out some barriers of local government institutions which include excessive central government control, colonial legacy in administration, lacked budget, and poor participatory tools. The paper identified that a significant number of elected members of local government lacked minimum knowledge regarding the laws and regulations thus failed to manage things accordingly. Similarly, a study titled “*Decentralization of Local Government in Bangladesh: Issues and Practices*” explored on whether much authority and power has been granted in the decentralization process in local government bodies in Bangladesh. The paper also observed some major anomalies in realizing real decentralization of local government in Bangladesh that include inefficient political leadership, too much dependence on central government,

lack of power and authority, insignificant political will, and lack of skilled personnel (Khan and Ferdous, 2017).

Another study conducted by Hossain and Habib (2018) argued that irregular elections in local government tiers, anomalies regarding devolution of power and authority, domination of central level political leaders, and control of the administration made the local government functioning less effective. Respectively, Islam (2013) conducted a study on “*Urban governance in Bangladesh: Post independence scenario*” which argued that urban local government institutions seriously suffer from limited autonomy and financial power. However, the paper revealed that participation of new stakeholders has been increased than before in urban governance process but coordination among these bodies is still a far cry. The study also suggested that effective leadership of the elected representatives of municipalities with independence must be in place to ensure good urban governance.

Moreover, a study by Huq (2014) mainly focused on the political economy of democratic decentralization and manifestations in the urban local institutions. In the study, the author tried to critically depict the central-local relationships, internal autonomy and power structure of municipalities and city corporations, and their intra-institutional relations.

Hossain and Habib (2021) conducted a study on “*Decentralisation and Democratisation in Local Government Focusing Key Development Programs in Bangladesh*” that focused on the process of decentralization and strengthening of the local government system through development interventions. The paper argued that several national and international development parties had implemented different projects to strengthen and decentralize the local government entities which enhanced the peoples’ participation but the issue of autonomy has remained a far cry. In a 2019 study, Panday (2019) argued that despite the Bangladeshi constitution's guarantee of a clear division of power between the central and local governments, politicians still fail to honor the intention of decentralizing power to the local level. This is a rare issue that both the ruling and opposition parties can agree on, and could lead to citizens having a greater role in local governing processes.

2.1 Literature Gap

Few studies have so far been conducted in Bangladesh regarding decentralization of power and authority in the local government of Bangladesh. These aforementioned findings of the studies reveal that most of them are mainly focused on overview of the generalized problems with local government decentralization. But none of them has focused particularly on the ground of decentralization at municipalities in Bangladesh. Hence, to plug this gap in literature, this study will primarily attempt to look into the state of decentralization of power and autonomy at municipal level and try to identify the particular anomalies of decentralization process at urban local government in the context of Bangladesh.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Study Area and Sampling

The study area included two municipalities out of 8 municipalities of the Pabna district. One is Pabna Sadar Pourashava another is Ishwardi Pourashava. The targeted population for the study include mayor, councillors, former members, officials, and academicians from the selected areas. Altogether two different municipalities were surveyed in this study. A purposive sampling method was followed to collect primary data from 50 respondents.

Table-1: Sampling Frame at a glance

SL. No	Category of Respondents	Total
1	Mayor	2
2	Councillors	18
3	Former Members	20
4	Academicians	10
Total		50

3.2 Study Methods

In this case, primary data were collected from the respondents through a face-to-face interview following semi-structured interview protocol. In the analysis of the interview transcripts, at first, the transcripts were thoroughly studied to get an initial impression on the data. The authors tried to comprehend an overview of the collected data through taking some notes. After that, work was done on the coding of the data by highlighting words and sentences from the transcript.

A code was created when a pattern or theme is repeated throughout the interview. Then, categories and themes were developed through narrowing down the codes. Besides, the authors combined several codes in a single theme and omitted irrelevant codes to focus on themes which are more useful for the analysis. In this process, a deductive coding approach was followed to keep the potential themes through filtering and sorting which makes the analysis more credible. After developing themes, a comparison of the transcripts was done to assess whether the themes are really present in the data. Then the researchers defined the themes and came up the final list of themes that were generated from the interviews.

Secondary data was comprehended from various sources like the websites, newspapers, books, and journal articles etc. to interpret the findings of the study in a better way.

4. Findings of the Study

The study followed the qualitative methodology of data analysis. In this regard, data has been collected through a semi-structured interview protocol as well as secondary data analysis including Books, Journals, Articles, Newspapers, etc. However, the objective of this study was to find out the challenges of decentralization of power and authority to the municipalities in Bangladesh. At the same time, there were a few efforts to find out some major recommendations to overcome those challenges. Therefore, this study covered two municipalities area namely Pabna Sadar Municipality, and Ishwardi Municipality. The respondents of this study were the mayor, councillors, functionaries as well as former members of the municipality. Thus, the primary data has been presented with the support of coding tools. Finally, the empirical data has been discussed in the light of theory and previously developed analytical framework in order to answer the research question of this study.

In Bangladesh, Local government institutions are established into three different flows including rural, urban, and local government for the special areas like Chittagong Hill Tracts (Siddiqui, 2005). Hence, Municipality is treated as the section of the urban local government institution. However, the study asked the respondents regarding the activities of this institution. In this regard, the majority of respondents replied the same answer which was: “construction and maintenance of roads; collection and disposal of wastes; providing and maintenance of street light; management and maintenance of water and sanitation; registration of births, deaths, and marriages; and settlement of local disputes, etc.”

4.1 Views on the Decentralization Process

During interviews, all respondents were asked on the process of decentralization and functional mandates of municipality, also known as *Pourashava*. In this regard, most respondents, especially those in the positions of running municipalities-elected representatives and officials, replied in confused and vague manner.

It was observed that the elected representatives have no better idea about the decentralization process due to their lack in academic qualification. To be a public representative, they need to have minimum educational qualifications. But in our country, there are no strict bars in this regard. Consequently, the less educated person can be elected easily only because of his or her popularity and party backing that results in poor service delivery to the inhabitants of municipality.

Besides, they are not well acquainted with the constitutional arrangements regarding decentralization and rules of business in terms of their responsibilities that are enunciated in the constitution of Bangladesh. The study observed that they don't even know about their respective functions efficiently let alone their functional jurisdiction. In addition, most often the elected members of the selected municipalities consider themselves as the subordinate of the central government. Due to this factor, they do not recognize their role as a significant part of the total administrative system as well.

4.2 Status of Central Government Control

The authors asked the respondents about the extent of central government control over the activities of the selected municipalities. Though the constitutional arrangements (article-11, 59, 60 of the constitution of peoples' republic of Bangladesh) provide functional autonomy and power from central to local government bodies but it was found that in most cases if not all the central government exert strict control over the activities of municipalities. The majority of respondents replied that they do not think these constitutional guarantees are enough to ensure a better decentralized local government in the existing situation at municipal level.

In this regard, a respondent's view can be quoted as, *"A Municipality has not been given sufficient power and authority in the context of making a decision, and a development program as well as preparing a final budget for this institution independently. Hence, there must be needed to follow the relevant provision of the Municipality Ordinance 2009."*

Similarly, another respondent commented that *"Paurashavas are obliged to submit all reports, returns, and proposals to the concerned ministries."* In this matter, another respondent added that, *"Central governments determine the functional jurisdiction, and sources of income as well as appointing the functionaries of the local government bodies. So, municipalities are not exceptional from this situation."*

4.3 Level of Administrative Control

The study found that the relationship between administrative head and elected representatives at municipal level is not aiding rather antagonistic. It was evident that the two parties blame each other for any inefficiency in any development works at municipal jurisdiction. The respondents of the study were enquired whether they feel pressure of local administrative bodies in conducting any function in their elected jurisdiction. In response to this question, one view of several interviewees could be mentionable that sums up the extent of administrative control over the selected municipalities. The comment follows as *"A municipality cannot hold magistracy power to manage their respective functions. As a result, civil servants or bureaucrats get the opportunity to influence the activities of the municipalities."* Similarly, another respondent also commented, *"Due to the politicization of bureaucracy, local government institutions are facing a vulnerable situation at all spheres."*

In other words, an elected Councillor commented, *"he cannot do anything outside the provision. He is bounded by the laws. He also said, if someone did anything contradictory to laws then he/she will lose his/her position undoubtedly. In addition, if he/she became the opposition party man then the removal process for mistake would be faster."*

4.4 Status of Financial Control

The paper observed mixed opinions in terms of financial autonomy of municipalities as an important urban local government unit. During interviews, most participants argued that the municipalities enjoy certain autonomy on the ground of collection of taxes or

revenues but they face less independence in the expenditure from the earning. It is important to note that, some interviewees opined that as elected representatives they fail to utilize their earning for development purposes in their jurisdiction due to excessive check and control over the expenses of the municipalities.

In this regard, the respondents' viewpoints can be articulated in a single quote that says, *"Most of the time, the municipality cannot collect an adequate amount of taxes due to the political facts. For instance, during the election time, political leaders committed the voters that, the tax rate would not be raised after assuming the position. Nevertheless, if any municipality tries to break this commitment as per urgent need and to raise the tax rate, as a result, the concerned Municipalities have to face numerous restrictions from the civil society, dominating class, and opposition leader."*

Similarly, another respondent said, *"As an elected representative, he cannot prepare a final budget for his constituency. Obviously, there need to be central government's consent,"* In this matter, a Mayor also commented, *"Budgets are enough for the development work. But, the main problem is the shortage of competent and honest leaders to implement those budgets."*

But a Councillor commented in a different voice, *"As an elected representative, he could not provide the minimum services to his constituency due to financial crisis extremely. Even, he did not get minimum funds in order to provide basic services such as spreading pesticides at the breeding grounds of Mosquitos timely."*

4.5 Level of Political influence

The study attempted to explore the level of political intervention in the internal matters and activities of selected municipalities in Bangladesh. The authors enquired the respondents whether they had to discuss any policy decisions or had to comply with local Member of Parliament (MP) in any important matter. In this regard, most of the respondents echoed same voice and they responded in negative manner that most often they had to listen to suggestions or orders of the local MP in critical matters which curtail the decision making autonomy of majority elected members of the municipalities.

One opinion of an elected representative that says, *"We cannot perform our duties and responsibilities properly and cannot adopt any decision freely due to the influence of local MPs to a large extent particularly in the case of development programs. However, it is not easy to go in conflict with MPs as they are in the government."* In this matter, another elected representative said, *"MPs are always afraid of losing their power and control over the local politics if they cannot interfere in the functions of LGIs."* In this regard, a Mayor also commented, *"MPs can play a positive role when the local government representative is close to him or belong to the same political party. Otherwise, they don't pay any attention to carrying out the task for their areas."*

An official also said, *"MPs intervention in the tendering process of development projects or programs is a very common scenario."* A Councillor also commented, *"If MP and Mayor belong to the same political party. Consequently, Paurashava became the*

mayors' institution. In this situation, Mayor is not interested to listen to the voice of Councillors and only determine to his own decision."

4.6 Status of Municipal Election

The research also tried to shed light on the present status of municipal election which plays a crucial role in reflecting the views of local dwellers. Interestingly, the study observed different notions regarding municipal election from the respondents. The elected mayors, councillors and other members of the selected municipalities opined that they are holding the office through a free and fair election. However, the academicians shared that the local government elections are not holding in due time which make the local government institutions dysfunctional and raised questions of free and fair elections which are crucial in terms of citizens' credibility.

In this regard, the respondents commented from their viewpoint that speaks, *"A leader with strong personality and courage would only be possible when the free, fair, and credible election will be held. Otherwise, a leader will not be able to work for the general people independently."*

Similarly, another representative commented, *"Without a credible election system, accountability and transparency of the leader towards their voters could not be ensured. Instead, they would be eager to follow the guideline of government officials including DC, and UNO. Because, during the election time, they got help and support from that official into manipulating the voting system,"*

4.7 Level of Skills and Ability

The authors asked the interviewees to find out the level of occupational and technical skills of both elected members and officials of the selected municipalities. The paper comprehended that most of the elected representatives had to rely on the official persons in carrying out routine functions due to lack of technical knowhow. This indicates that most often the elected authorities just carry out signature work while the officials do the paperwork. Some respondents uttered, during the interviews, that this practice can make the mayors and councillors dependent on their secretaries or official personnel.

In this regard, a respondent speaks as, *"in most of the cases, the available resources have not been utilized in the best possible way due to lack of skills and required competence."* Similarly, an elected Councillor also commented, *"He is a new elected Councillor thereby he could not know the relevant rules and regulations until now for conducting his respective function properly because there is no adequate scope of getting training facilities in order to know the relevant rules and regulations."*

4.8 Level of people's participation

The paper also made an attempt to measure the extent of people's engagement in different programs and decision making processes of the selected municipalities. It was captured that in most cases the representations of different segment of the society such as women, children, destitute, and disabled are not incorporated enough in development

programs undertaken by the municipalities. However, in some cases, participation was ensured but which are customary in real sense.

In this issue, a quote from the respondents' opinions could be mentionable that speaks, "*general people cannot provide their opinion in the process of decision-making and budget preparing period. Even, in most cases, Councillors' opinions are not being adopted in the decision-making process. Therefore, most of the time, decisions and budgets have been made by the head of that institution through influenced by local MP explicitly or implicitly,*"

5. Discussion of the Study

From the above results, the study has found some major challenges in the context of ensuring decentralization of power and authority for carrying out respective functions to the local government bodies. In this regard, the central government control, financial crisis and control, administrative control, political influence and undue intervention, manipulate the election system, shortage of sufficient skilled and trained personnel as well as lack of knowledge and experience of the elected local representatives, and absence of citizen's engagement in decision making and open budgeting system are the main barriers to make the decentralization process strong and substantial. Therefore, the constitutional guarantee, strong financial condition, reduce political influence and interference, ensure magistracy power of the local government bodies, especially for municipalities, adequate skill and knowledge of the personnel as well as the elected representatives, ensure accountability and transparency of civil servants and politicians, especially for local MPs, reduce corruption practices, and make the democracy strong must be needed in the way of ensuring better decentralized local government system. Some of the major analyses from the findings are discussed below.

5.1 Constitutional guarantee to the LGIs

The constitution of People's Republic of Bangladesh clearly spells out about the local government system by incorporation of the article 11, 59, and 60 (Siddiqii, 2005). But it is a matter of fact that, until now it remains unclear or ambiguous on its operational directions. As a consequence of this, all the functional jurisdictions, functionaries and sources of income are determined by the incumbent governments. So it is clear that, this undermined the independence of local government where freedom of local government institutions entirely depending on the willingness of Central Government so far (Ahmed, 2014).

Therefore, these issues have to be explicitly pointed out in the constitution in terms of an effective and stable local government system in the country.

5.2 Uniform legal system and decentralization policy

In general local government institutions in Bangladesh are embedded into three different floors, which includes rural local government urban local government and also local government for the special area like heel tracks does to administrator these three types

of local government bodies, there are provision for different types of rules and regulations. We know that elected representatives and functionaries in local government units, most of the cases are not so well educated or have lacking in proper training sessions to understand the complex rules and regulation to ensure proper functioning of these institutions. So for the smooth functioning of the local government units a standard and uniform system of financing, accounting, auditing and procurement of rules must be needed. A uniform and single “Mother Law” for LGIs have to be formulated which will help in determining the structure and activities as well as other basic requirements such as election procedure, tenure of the elected representatives, functionaries, etc., in order to bring harmony discipline, and efficiency in the LGIs (Ahmed, 2014).

5.3 Strong local government finance

There is no existence of clear budgetary system in the LGIs for proper distribution of resources. The development and revenue grants which are given by the central governments to the LGIs are not sufficient enough to manage public expenditure (Panday, 2011). Moreover, in most cases, local government institutions rely on lobbying, and personal connections between elected local representatives and local MPs to get adequate funding for various developmental programs. Already it is clear that LGIs themselves have been suffering from various problems viz. poor management capacity, having unskilled personnel, and financial indiscipline. As a result, they cannot collect revenue from taxes, rents, fees, tolls, etc. at the desired level (Ahmed, 2014). However, there needs to be scrutinized and reformulated the existing financial system in order to bring financial discipline within the LGIs.

5.4 Procedural improvement in planning and budgeting

The LGIs are legally obliged to prepare and pass their annual budgets although the final budget relies on the central government’s approval. According to the new LGIs laws passed in 2009, formulating a five-year plan is necessary for all bodies, and then Annual development plans would be built into the divide of a five-year plan (Ahmed, 2014). Therefore, the plans and budgets of the LGIs will have to be integrated in line with the national budget and plan.

5.5 Freedom and autonomy of local government

Autonomy and freedom is considered as an important element for a well-functioning local government units. When an organization is able to take its own decision independently is called its autonomy (Verhoest et. al. 2004). Along with formal decision making power or autonomy, the de facto independence or actual autonomy of the LGIs is also important to its proper administrative functioning (Maggetti, 2007). As local government is an important part of governance (Siddiqi, 2005), that's why local government should be considered as the Government of a small terrain instead of Agent or client of Central Government (Ahmed, 2014).

Therefore, the current structure, jurisdiction, and legal framework of the local government bodies should have to be scrutinized and reshuffled with an aim of ensuring an autonomous body (Barkat et. al. 2015).

In this regard to carry out their assigned tasks effectively and efficiently, the LGIs should be allowed to the necessary freedom and autonomy within their function of jurisdiction.

5.6 Uniform local government service structure

Local government institutions in Bangladesh in a true sense, have been suffering from lack of sufficient skilled and competent personnel support. As a result, they (LGIs) are facing difficulties in dealing with their technical, financial and other service management activities (Ahmed, 2014). Therefore local government service structure needs to be reviewed closely and speedily to address the existing problems and anomalies. At the same time, a long-term vision will have to be taken in the context of sustained professionalism within the LGIs.

5.7 Permanent local government commission

Since 1990 all the committees and commissions related to LGIs had recommended the formation of an independent and permanent local government Commission to strengthen the system of LGIs. Consequently, a permanent local government Commission was constituted and started functioning for the first time in November 2008 under an Ordinance issued by the then caretaker government. But subsequently, the incumbent government did not endorse the local government Commission Ordinance 2008 (Ahmed, 2014).

The establishment of an independent Local Government Commission is an urgent need in the context of the distribution of funds, auditing, overseeing, and settlement of any conflict within LGIs (Barkat et. al 2015). However, the permanent Local Government Commission will have to be revived in line with the recommendations of all committees and commissions for strong and effective local government bodies in providing expert support and assistance.

5.8 Skilled and competent personnel

One of the big reasons why local government institutions are unable to perform their functions efficiently and effectively is the lack of adequate skilled and competent personnel to maintain tremendously (Barkat et. al 2015). In this regard, the issue should be resolved firmly and expeditiously by recruiting sufficient relevant skilled personnel in LGIs. And the only way to solve this problem is to devolve the recruitment authority from the central government to the local governments, so that they can recruit their workers freely as per their needs.

5.9 Handsome salaries and remunerations

The number of salaries and allowances of elected local representatives is very low which opens the door for unethical practices. It is therefore high time that the number of

salaries and remuneration of elected representatives should be taken up as an important issue. As they have to spend more time in the office or Parishad, as a result, they cannot do other work to earn money. Therefore this issue should have to be considered seriously in redesigning their remunerations and privilege packages. It is also believed to be an antidote to reduce corrupt practices among representatives of LGIs.

5.10 Citizen's involvement in decision making

According to academicians, donors, NGOs, and UN agencies, decentralization is being considered a better way to ensure good governance (Ahmed, 2014). In this regard, people's participation is considered the most inevitable factor in ensuring good governance. In the context of Bangladesh, the majority of the population is poor. As a result, special attention is required to ensure their active participation in the decision-making process at the local government institutions. It is notable that, the majority of elected representatives of local government bodies have come from the affluent section of society. Hence, in many instances, LGIs are captured by the elite. Consequently, the poor, disadvantaged, and marginalized people are being excluded from participation in the decision-making process usually (Barkat et al. 2015). However, people's participation at the various levels including planning, making-decision, and budget-making period, and finally at the implementation stages must be ensured significantly.

6. Conclusion

After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, through the local government reform policy, several governments have taken initiatives at various levels to bring sustainable and effective changes in local government bodies, but unfortunately, nothing has happened so far. The so-called decentralization system in Bangladesh has made it clear that the sustainability, relevance, or substantiality of local government largely depends on the political ideology and perspectives of successive regimes. In Bangladesh, local governments undertook various reforms for the personal benefit of the ruler rather than to increase the effectiveness of the government as a whole (Jahan, 1997). In other words, various forms of decentralization are not being implemented due to various constraints such as the colonial governance model, the patron-client relationship between the ruling elite and the local dominant class, and scarcity of revenues and resources which resulting heavy dependency on central government, etc. (Panday, 2011). However, appropriate corrective actions must be taken to ensure that the decentralization process would be substantial and not become insignificant or rhetorical in terms of meeting public needs.

A strong, adequate or substantial local government unit is required for sustainable development, eradicating desired levels of poverty, and receiving a quality level of democracy at the grass root level. Since national leaders come from the grassroots level in most developing countries, that's why LGIs are facing numerous challenges that lead to ineffective local government systems. Bangladesh is not an exception here. However, among those various challenges, some main challenges are insufficient resource allocation to local government, lack of capacity of the local elected representatives to act their respective

activities including decision making and budget preparing. At the same time, the level of citizen engagement in decision-making is very poor as well (Ahmed, 2014).

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