



Barishal University Journal of Social Sciences

Volume 4, Issue 2, 2023

ISSN 2411-247X

BARISHAL UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Volume 4, Issue 2, 2023

Published by

Chief Editor

Faculty of Social Sciences

Dilafroze Khanam

Editorial and Business Address

Dean

Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Barishal, Barishal-8254, Bangladesh

Date of Publication: June 30, 2024

Price

Taka 500

US \$ 5.00

Printed by

A.com Traders

Newmarket

Gausul Azam Super Market, Dhaka

Cell : 01719-398694, 01303-678794

E-mail : mojibur101092@gmail.com

Barishal University Journal of Social Sciences

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Socio-economic Determinants of Women Healthcare Expenditure in Bangladesh

Munira Sultana* and Mamunur Rahman**

Abstract

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires putting women's health first. This study attempts to assess the socio-economic determinants that affect households' per capita annual women healthcare expenditure in Bangladesh. A cross-sectional research approach has been used in this study. The total number of households which have at least one adult women living in the rural area of Barishal division have been considered as the population and each household is considered as a unit of analysis in this study. Both quantitative and qualitative primary data have been used in this study. A sample of size, 300 households have been selected on the basis of simple random sampling method in this study. A multiple linear regression model is used to calculate the impact of independent variables on dependent variable. For estimating the slope coefficients of independent variables, the OLS estimation method is used in this study. The findings of this study shows that the age of women, women's schooling year, annual family income, number of family member, number of doctor visits, duration of illness, type of healthcare center and the distance of healthcare center from households are important socio-economic determinants of households' spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure in Bangladesh. From these independent variables, the age of women, women's schooling year, annual family income, number of doctor visits, the duration of illness and distance of healthcare center from households have positive impact on households' per capita women healthcare expenditure and these slop coefficients are statistically significant. Again the number of family members and the dummy variable of the type of healthcare center with a reference category of private healthcare center have negative impact on households' per capita women healthcare expenditure in Bangladesh. Both public and private expenditure on women health are complementary to each other. By setting up more and more public healthcare center, especially at community clinics in the rural areas, providing free medical facilities particularly for poor households, ensuring female education as well as job opportunities and raising public awareness about the importance of women health can play vital role in this regard. The outcome of this study will be useful to formulating policies and guidelines for the overall improvement of the women health status of this country, especially in this south central part of Bangladesh.

Keywords: *Determinants, Women, Healthcare, Expenditure, Ordinary Least Square (OLS).*

1. Introduction

Health is not just the absence of diseases or infirmities; it is a comprehensive condition of physical, mental, and social wellness that enables one to have a productive socioeconomic life.

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Both men and women can work more effectively when they are healthy. Through enhanced productivity, better health, and in particular better nutrition, increases economic rewards. By promoting the accumulation of human capital, greater maternal nutrition may have a simultaneous positive impact on future generations' health as well as economic development. The effects of poor health on women's involvement in the work force, productivity, earnings, family income, and economic well-being are not just generational; they also occur in the present. Bangladesh is one of the developing countries in the world. Over a time span of 52 years, Bangladesh has achieved a lot especially in the development of health infrastructures-medical colleges, private medical colleges, private clinics, rural health centers and community clinics. Furthermore, there are some other fields where Bangladesh upgraded its health care services like attaining a satisfactory level in family planning, reducing population growth and significant gains in terms of Polio and small pox eradication and overall improvement of hygiene and sanitation standard of the country. Besides all these positives, there are still some problems in health care sector in Bangladesh such as poor health care services, lack of the number of doctors, high cost of private medical facilities, expensive diagnostic tests and high price of drugs. Only looking into the health care policies and management, it is difficult to understand about the factors affecting health care expenditure of a particular region and country. So, exploring the socio-economic determinants of households' spending on women health is really helpful to concerned policymakers and authorities to formulate effective and comprehensive health care strategies for the overall development of the women healthcare system in Bangladesh.

2. Rationality of the study

An important factor in encouraging economic growth and national development is better health. Labor productivity and the cost of disease have a direct impact on economic growth. Women are the backbone of a family's general well-being. Women who are in good health are better able to contribute to the labor force. Furthermore, due to intergenerational spillovers, maternal health is essential for the physical and financial well-being of succeeding generations. We must address problems with reproductive health, maternal fatalities, hunger, and non-communicable illnesses by providing quality, reasonably priced healthcare under universal health coverage. Previously a lot of research has been done in finding out socio-economic determinants of households' women health expenditure. Many distinct variables have been explored by numerous researchers who conducted research on various variables. This research will be different in a way that it is the first research in which different socio-economic factors will be studied that might have significant impact on households' spending on women health care expenditure in Bangladesh, especially in the rural area of Barishal division, the south central part of Bangladesh. The outcome of this study will be helpful for concerned authority to design and implement the policies to improve the overall women's health status in Bangladesh.

3. Objective of the study

This study intends to find out the different socio-economic determinants of households' spending on women healthcare expenditure in Bangladesh.

4. Literature review

Numerous studies have been conducted to look into potential factors that may influence how much is spent on healthcare in various nations, including Bangladesh. However, more research has to be done, particularly in this area in south central Bangladesh, on the socioeconomic factors that influence how much money women spend on health care. Different socio-economic factors can significantly impact the pattern of health care spending in a given place, even while determinants vary among castes, regions, and nations (Ali and Noman 2013). Shahraki and Ghaderi (2019) used the Heckman two-step technique in their analysis to determine the effect of socioeconomic determinants on family health expenses. The study's findings demonstrated that a variety of socioeconomic factors, including rising family income and insurance costs, insurance coverage, the number of employed family members, the literacy of the household head, rising per capita tobacco spending, and education, contributed to rising household health expenditures. Also the age of the head of household, the size of the home, and the presence of older people all contributed to higher household health expenses. Another study performed by Taylor (2006) found that due to the numerous factors affecting both, the analysis and interpretation of health care usage and expenditure statistics are complicated. Barriers to care, individual patient needs, and patient preferences can all have an impact on health care consumption and costs. The discrepancies in women's health care cannot entirely be attributed to income levels, and insurance coverage is crucial in determining whether or not to seek medical attention. Sekhar (2006) also conducted a study on the effects of household income and education on health spending using primary household data from the Orissa tribal region. The household income and the head of the household's education were independent variables in this study, and their slope coefficients were estimated using the OLS (Ordinary Least Squares) estimation approach. The study's conclusions demonstrate a positive correlation between household healthcare expenditures and household income as well as the education of the head of the family. Therefore, other things remaining constant, households with higher incomes spend more on healthcare expenses than households with lower incomes do, and in tribal areas, household heads with higher levels of education spend more on healthcare expenses than those without such levels of education. The study also demonstrates that due to the low per capita household income in tribal communities, the positive impact of household income on health expenditures is lower than in rural and urban areas. However, the impact of education on health spending in tribal communities is twice as large as it is in rural and urban areas. This is due to the fact that tribal people have higher relative values for education than do residents of rural and urban areas. The goal of the study by Kjeruff et al. (2007) was to describe healthcare use for illnesses that are unique to women, the incremental costs associated with these conditions, and the overall incremental costs over the course of a lifetime. The results of this study showed that gynecologic illnesses, pregnancy-related conditions, and menopausal symptoms were the most prevalent female-specific conditions throughout a one-year period. Over 40% (\$43.3 billion) of the estimated \$108 billion in yearly health care costs for women with female-specific illnesses can be attributed to these conditions. Olasehinde and Olaniyan (2017) conducted a different study to investigate the determinants of health expenditure at the household level in Nigeria.

They focused primarily on the household and individual characteristic traits. It employed the ordinary least squares method to compute the Engel curve approach. The findings of the study show that household characteristics like income, size, and headship as well as individual traits like age, religion, and education have a substantial impact on healthcare spending in Nigeria. While the effects of employment and marital status were different in urban and rural locations, the effects of household-level characteristics are more substantial for rural households. It also showed how the working population in Nigeria provides healthcare to both younger and elderly generations. Ahmed and Ferdous (2019) conducted a study to look at how social and economic factors affect the cost of healthcare in Bangladesh. They employed 400 randomly chosen cross sectional primary data using the ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) model. According to the study's findings, age of the individual, family income, the number of family members, the year of education, the number of doctor visits, and the length of the sickness are significant socioeconomic determinants of health care expenditure at the household level in Barishal, the south central region of Bangladesh. In Chittagong, Bangladesh, Haque et al. (2010) conducted research on the factors that influence household healthcare spending. In this study, the determinants of healthcare spending were examined using a multi-equation recursive estimate approach. As an independent variable in the second stage logit model for provider choice, they first utilized a binary logit model to calculate the likelihood of being sick. In the third stage, OLS estimates rather than Tobit estimates are derived for the parameters of the healthcare spending model. The study presents a number of intriguing discoveries. First, family income has a substantial impact on both the healthcare provider selected and the overall cost. Second, those who smoke and have poor access to lavatories and clean water are more prone to illness. A person's education level, the education level of the household head, and whether or not they are a male family member are some of the characteristics that are commonly assumed to influence the occurrence of diseases, however these factors have a less apparent effect on reporting illness and healthcare spending. Ali and Noman (2010) conducted yet another study on the factors that influence the demand for healthcare in Bangladesh. To assess the variables that significantly affect the demand for healthcare in Bangladesh, they employed a binary logistic regression model. They contend that while treatment options vary between castes, regions, and nations, a region's healthcare spending patterns can be greatly influenced by a variety of socioeconomic factors. The study's findings demonstrate that the predicted price variable's negative relationship with healthcare demand is statistically significant. The findings of the study also demonstrate that the demand for healthcare is positively influenced by income and education levels. Additionally, there is a large waiting time variable and a favorable relationship between the demand for healthcare and waiting time. The level of treatment has a favorable, considerable impact on Bangladesh's demand for medical services. A study on the need for child health services, particularly in developing nations, was conducted by Akin et al. in 1981. The Bicol Multipurpose Survey, which was carried out in one of the poorest parts of the Philippines and included 1906 homes and 100 communities representative of the three major provinces in this region, served as the basis for the analysis of the study. The factors influencing the selection of various child health service alternatives were investigated using a simultaneous logit model.

Another study by Akin et al. (1986) shown that costs and distance have little bearing on the demand for healthcare services. Ching's (1995) study examines how user fees may impact the demand for pediatric medical care at various socioeconomic levels. A conditional logit model is used to create an estimate utilizing national data from the Philippines. The results demonstrate that price has a considerable impact on children's healthcare demand and that demand for medical care is significantly more price sensitive for less fortunate children than for more fortunate children. Toor and Butt (2005) conducted research on Pakistan's healthcare spending factors. They evaluated the short- and long-term relationships between several socio-economic factors and health care spending using a log-linear model and the co-integrating approach. The study's conclusions suggest that many socioeconomic factors, including per capita GDP, urbanization, literacy rate, and foreign aid, play a significant role in determining health care spending. The study of Mahmud et al. (2019) shows how the monthly payback schedule affected the borrower's household's healthcare spending. Primary data was gathered from non-governmental organization (NGOs) borrowers who were mostly engaged in agricultural operations and who were landless, marginal, small female borrowers. The study's findings demonstrate that the monthly payback plan had no discernible effect on the cost of healthcare for households. However, the introduction of the monthly repayment scheme dramatically raised household income and food spending. Using longitudinal data, Zweifel et al. (1999) conducted research on the correlation between population age and healthcare spending. The study's findings demonstrate that healthcare costs depend more on remaining life expectancy than on chronological age, at least for those who are older than 65. According to Wang (2009), the gross state product, the percentage of the population that is over 65, the level of urbanization, and the number of hospital beds are the four main factors influencing healthcare spending. The fact that health care's cross-section income elasticity is smaller than one suggests that, at the state level, it is a necessity rather than a luxury product.

4.1 Research Gap

The research gap lies in the limited study for finding out socio-economic determinants of households' women health expenditure in Bangladesh. In the rural area of Bangladesh, women health status is more vulnerable compare to urban area. Therefore, this study seeks to address this research gap by investigating more realistic socio-economic determinants of households' women health expenditure in the rural area of Barishal division, the south-central region of Bangladesh.

5. Methodology

5.1. Study Area

There are six districts in Barishal division. The overall health care status of Barishal division is considered as average because of a number of reasons such as lack of enough number of hospitals, poor health care services, lack of the number of doctors, high cost private medical facilities, expensive diagnostic tests and high price of drugs. Health care system in Bangladesh is not balanced because the cost of healthcare services is different and unequal to different areas

(Ali and Noman,2013).That's why the rural area of Barishal division has been considered as the study area in this study for finding out the more realistic factors that affect households' spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure.



Map 01: Study Area

5.2. Sample and sampling technique

In order to determine the different socio-economic determinants that affect households' spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure, a cross-sectional research approach is used in this study. A cross-sectional research design enables data collecting in a specific area at one particular moment. In terms of time and resources, the cross-sectional design is the most effective way to collect data (Kothari, 2004). The total number of households which have at least one adult women living in the rural area of Barishal division have been considered as the population and each household is considered as a unit of analysis in this study. Both quantitative and qualitative primary data have been used in this study. Households have been selected on the basis of simple random sampling method. Yamane sampling formula is a popular and widely used in determining sample size in the context of a finite population. In this study, Yamane sampling formula has been used to determine our sample size.

Yamane's sampling formula (Yamane, 1967) is given below:

$$\eta = \frac{N}{1+N*e^2}$$

Where, η = Number of sample.

N = Total number of household. And e = level of precision.

In this study, by considering 95% confidence interval and 5% level of significance, we obtained the (Approximate) sample size of 300 households in the rural area of Barishal division from which sample data have been collected.

5.3. Data collection methods and techniques

Primary data have been used in this study. A structured questionnaire containing both closed and open ended questions method is applied to collect data for this research inquiry. Both quantitative and qualitative primary data of different socio-economic and demographic factors have been collected through face to face interview and questionnaire schedule methods.

5.4. Data processing and analysis techniques

Collected data have been analyzed using descriptive statistics. Here, data has been analyzed through various statistical tools such as frequency distribution and percentage distribution. Excel, statistical software (STATA) and regression analysis tools are also used to find the relationship between the dependent and independent variables and performing hypothesis testing.

5.5. Methodological framework

In this study, ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) has been applied to find out the impact of independent variables on dependent variable. An ANCOVA model is the model in which dependent variable is the function of quantitative variables as well as qualitative (dummy) variables (Gujrati, 2004). This study includes both the quantitative and qualitative independent variables. That's why, ANCOVA model has been used in this study. Qualitative or dummy variable is the variable in which it takes value 0 and 1. In these kinds of variables, 0 denotes the lack of an attribute and 1 denotes its presence. In this paper ANCOVA model is constructed by different types of socio economic variables where households' spending on per capita annual women healthcare expenditure is dependent variable and the age of women, women's schooling year, family income, number of family member, number of doctor visit, duration of illness, type of healthcare center and the distance of healthcare center from households are the independent variables. OLS (Ordinary Least Square) method is used to estimate the parameters of our multiple log-lin regression equation. In the later part, VIF (Variance Inflating Factor) and White's general test have been used to test multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity of explanatory or independent variables.

5.6. Econometric model

In this paper, a semi-log (log-lin) model is used to find the relative change in households' per capita women healthcare expenditure due to absolute change in different socio-economic explanatory or independent variables.

The basic ANCOVA model is given below:

$$\ln WHE_i = \alpha + \beta_1 AGE_i + \beta_2 SY_i + \beta_3 Fli + \beta_4 FMi + \beta_5 NDVi + \beta_6 Dli + \beta_7 THCi + \beta DHCi + U_i \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

In the above equation,

Denotation	Name of the variable	Measurement
WHE_i	Households' per capita annual women healthcare expenditure.	i^{th} household's annual spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure. (Quantitative variable).
AGE_i	Age of women of i^{th} household.	Number of complete years the particular women of i^{th} household has lived (Quantitative variable).
SY_i	Women's schooling year of i^{th} household.	Women's complete years of schooling. (Quantitative variable).

		5 if primary level, 10 if secondary/SSC level, 12 if higher secondary/HSC level, 16 if graduation level, 17 if post- graduation level.
FI_i	Annual family income of i^{th} household.	Household's total annual income measured in thousand BDT (Quantitative variable).
FM_i	Number of family members of i^{th} household.	Total number of family members of i^{th} household's (Quantitative variable).
NDV_i	Number of doctor visits of women of i^{th} household.	Total number of doctor visits of women of i^{th} household in last year. (Quantitative variable).
DI_i	Women's duration of illness of i^{th} household.	Women's total number of days of sickness in last year of i^{th} household.
THC_i	Type of health center from where women of i^{th} household took medical services in last year.	Dummy variable 1 if health care center is government type. 0 if otherwise.
DHC_i	Distance of healthcare center from i^{th} household.	Distance of health center from where women of i^{th} household took medical services in last year measured in kilometers (Quantitative variable).

To apply OLS (Ordinary Least Square) method on this model and ensure the estimated slope coefficients are BLUE, in this study it is assumed that the above model is linear in parameters, with zero mean value of error term and no autocorrelation between disturbance terms.

6. Results and Findings

6.1 Statistical properties of sample data

In this study, there are 300 sample households which data have been collected.

The statistical properties of sample data is demonstrated below:

Table 1: Statistical Properties of sample data set

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Observation</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
WHE_i	300	26.40	19.67	01	300
AGE_i	300	50.55	12.04	18	70
SY_i	300	11.14	4.84	0	17
Fli	300	294.43	213.84	80	1300
FM_i	300	4.60	1.40	02	09
NDV_i	300	5.53	4.46	0	22
DI_i	300	15.88	11.03	02	60
THC_i	300	0.54	0.49	0	1
DHC_i	300	14.17	7.37	0.5	180

(Source: Author's Field Survey-2023)

The above table shows that households’ average annual per capita spending on women healthcare expenditure is 26.40 thousand BDT (Bangladeshi taka), where minimum and maximum annual per capita women healthcare expenditure are 01 and 300 thousand BDT respectively. The mean age of women of i^{th} household in this study is 50.55 years where minimum and maximum ages are 18 and 70 years respectively. The mean value of women’s schooling year of i^{th} is 11.14 years, where minimum and maximum schooling years of women’s are 0 and 17 years respectively. The average annual family income of i^{th} household’s is 294.43 thousand BDT where minimum and maximum annual family income are 80 and 1300 thousand BDT. Again the average number of the family members of i^{th} household’s is 4.6, where minimum and maximum number of family members are 2 and 9 respectively. Again above table shows that average number of annual doctor visits of the women of i^{th} household is 5.53 times , where minimum and maximum number of annual doctor visits of women are 0 and 22 times. The average duration of the illness of the women of i^{th} household is 15.88 days per year, where minimum and maximum duration of illness are 2 and 60 days per year respectively. Also the above table shows that among the 300 households, women of 162 households took medical services from government type hospital and remaining the women of 138 households took medical services from private hospital or from both private and government hospitals. The average distance of healthcare center from i^{th} household from where women of i^{th} households took medical services is 14.17 kilometers, where minimum and maximum distance are 0.5 and 180 kilometers respectively.

6.2 Regression analysis

The result of the regression analysis is given below:

Table 2: Result and hypothesis test

<i>ln_WHE</i>	<i>Coefficient value</i>	<i>Std. Err</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>P-value</i> <i>P> t </i>	<i>[95% Confidence Interval]</i>	
<i>AGE_i</i>	0.0225	0.0031	7.20	0.000	0.0164	0.0287
<i>SY_i</i>	0.0194	0.0083	2.32	0.021	0.0029	0.0359
<i>FI_i</i>	0.0006	0.0001	3.20	0.002	0.0002	0.0009
<i>FM_i</i>	-0.0886	0.0264	-3.35	0.001	-0.1406	-0.0365
<i>NDV_i</i>	0.0295	0.0089	3.30	0.001	0.0118	0.0471
<i>DI_i</i>	0.0109	0.0034	3.19	0.002	0.0041	0.0176
<i>THC_i</i>	-0.7955	0.0808	-9.84	0.000	-0.9546	-0.6363
<i>DHC_i</i>	0.0030	0.0013	2.26	0.025	0.0003	0.0056
<i>Constant</i>	1.7693	0.2166	8.17	0.000	1.3428	2.1957

(Source: Author’s Field Survey-2023)

Estimated equation is given below:

$$\ln_WHE_i = 1.7693 + 0.0225AGE_i + 0.0194SY_i + 0.0006FI_i - 0.0886FM_i + 0.0295NDV_i + 0.0109DI_i - 0.7955THC_i + 0.0030DHC_i \dots\dots\dots(2)$$

The above estimated equation shows that there is a positive relationship between the age of women and the dependent variable of households’ per capita women healthcare expenditure.

Keeping other things constant, if the age of women increases by one year, households' spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure will increase on average by 2.25 percent. The estimated slope coefficient of explanatory variable of the age of women is statistically significant at 5% level of significance. Since the P-value (The exact level of significance at which null hypothesis can be rejected; N Gujarati, 2004) of the slope coefficient of age of women is 0.000 and calculated absolute t-value is 7.20, we can reject the null hypothesis. That means, age of women has significant positive impact on households' per capita women healthcare expenditure. Again the above estimated regression equation shows that there is a positive relationship between the independent variable of women's complete years of schooling and the households' spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure. Keeping other things constant, if the women's complete years of schooling increases by one year, households' per capita women healthcare expenditure will increase on average by 1.94 percent. The estimated slope coefficient of explanatory or independent variable of women's complete schooling year is statistically significant at 5% level of significance. The P-value of the slope coefficient of women's schooling year is 0.021 and calculated absolute t-value is 2.32. So, we can reject the null hypothesis. That means, women's schooling year has significant positive impact on households' per capita women healthcare expenditure. There is a positive relationship between annual family income and the households' per capita women healthcare expenditure. Keeping other things constant, if the annual family income increases by one thousand BDT, then households' per capita women healthcare expenditure will increase on average by 0.06 percent. The estimated slope coefficient of annual family income is statistically significant at 5% level of significance. The P-value of the slope coefficient of annual family income is 0.002 and calculated absolute t-value is 3.20. So, we can reject the null hypothesis. That means, annual family income has significant positive impact on households' per capita women healthcare expenditure. Also there is a negative relationship between the independent variable of the total number of family members and the dependent variable of households' per capita women healthcare expenditure. Keeping other things constant, if family member increases by one, then households' spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure will decrease on average by 8.86 percent. The estimated slope coefficient of the number of family member is statistically significant at 5% level of significance. The P-value of the slope coefficient of family member is 0.001 and calculated absolute t-value is 3.35. So, we can reject the null hypothesis. That means, the number of family member has a significant negative impact on households' per capita women healthcare expenditure. There is a positive relationship between the women's annual number of doctor visits and the households' per capita women healthcare expenditure. Keeping other things constant, if the annual number of doctor visits increases by one time per year, then households' per capita women healthcare expenditure will increase on average by 2.95 percent. The estimated slope coefficient of the annual number of doctor visits is statistically significant at 5% level of significance. The P-value of the slope coefficient of annual number of doctor visits is 0.001 and calculated absolute t-value is 3.30. So, we can reject the null hypothesis. That means, the annual number of doctor visits has significant positive impact on households' per capita women healthcare expenditure. Also there is a positive

relationship between the women's duration of illness and the households' spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure. Keeping other things constant, if the women's duration of illness increases by one day, then households' per capita women healthcare expenditure will increase on average by 1.09 percent. The estimated slope coefficient of the duration of illness is statistically significant at 5% level of significance. The P-value of the slope coefficient of duration of illness is 0.002 and calculated absolute t-value is 3.19. So, we can reject null hypothesis. That means, the women's duration of illness has significant positive impact on households' spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure. Again the above estimated regression equation shows that there is a negative relationship between the dummy variable of the type of healthcare center and the households' spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure. Keeping other things constant, households' spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure will be lower on average by $[e^{(-0.7955)} - 1]$ 54.86 percent, if the healthcare center is government type compare to private healthcare center from where women of particular household's took health services. The estimated slope coefficient of the dummy variable of the type of healthcare center is statistically significant at 5% level of significance. The P-value of the slope coefficient of the type of healthcare center is 0.000 and calculated absolute t-value is 9.84. So, we can reject null hypothesis. That means, the dummy variable of the type of healthcare center has significant negative impact on households' per capita women healthcare expenditure. Also there is a positive relationship between the distance of healthcare center from households and the households' spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure. Keeping other things constant, if the distance of healthcare center from households increases by one kilometer, then households' spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure will increase on average by 0.30 percent. The estimated slope coefficient of the distance of healthcare center is statistically significant at 5% level of significance. The P-value of the slope coefficient of the distance of healthcare center is 0.025 and calculated absolute t-value is 2.26. So, we can reject null hypothesis. That means, the distance of healthcare center from households has significant positive impact on households' per capita women healthcare expenditure. The value of intercept term in this above estimated regression equation is 1.76. The P-value of the intercept term is 0.000 and the calculated absolute t-value is 8.17. So this intercept term is statistically significant at any level of significance. That shows the logic behind the inclusion of intercept term in this regression equation. The signs of all the slope coefficients of the above estimated regression equation are relevant to our priori expectations.

6.3 Test of goodness of fit and ANOVA table

The value of R-square determines the amount of overall variance in the dependent variable due to explanatory variables. A measure of the overall variance in the dependent variable caused by explanatory variables adjusted with the degree of freedom is the adjusted R-square value. The value of R-square and adjusted R-square of this regression equation are 61.22 percent and 60.16 percent respectively. This indicates that in the above regression model, the explanatory variables adequately account for the dependent variable. The overall significance of a multiple

regression test is performed by using F-test. The result of the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) of this regression model is given below:

Table 3: ANOVA test result

<i>Source</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F-value</i>	<i>Prob. > F</i>	<i>R-squared</i>	<i>Adj. R-squared</i>
<i>Regression</i>	8	164.1986	20.5248	57.43	0.000	0.6122	0.6016
<i>Residual</i>	291	103.9917	0.3573				
<i>Total</i>	299	268.1904	0.8969				

(Source: Author's Field Survey-2023)

In the above ANOVA model, the P-value of F-test is less than 5% level of significance. So, we can reject the null hypothesis of all the partial slope coefficients are simultaneously equal to zero. So the above estimated model is statistically significant.

6.4 Multicollinearity test

Multicollinearity test can be performed by using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF).

$$VIF_j = \frac{1}{1-R^2_j}$$

Where, R^2_j is the model's coefficient of determination and j is the only explanatory variable left out. Any variable with a VIF greater than 10 is typically considered to have a major multicollinearity issue.

Table 4: Result of Multicollinearity Test

<i>Variable</i>	<i>VIF</i>	<i>1/VIF</i>
<i>AGE_i</i>	1.19	0.8407
<i>SY_i</i>	1.38	0.7240
<i>FL_i</i>	1.37	0.7274
<i>FM_i</i>	1.15	0.8681
<i>NDV_i</i>	1.34	0.7487
<i>DL_i</i>	1.19	0.8430
<i>THC_i</i>	1.36	0.7332
<i>DHC_i</i>	1.12	0.8940

Mean VIF = 1.26

(Source: Author's Field Survey-2023)

The mean value of VIF for each of the explanatory variable is less than 10. So the estimates of the slope coefficients do not suffer multicollinearity problem seriously.

6.5 Heteroscedasticity test

Homoscedasticity or equal variance of error term for all explanatory variables is the assumptions of the classical linear regression model. The violation of this assumption is known as heteroscedasticity. That means, heteroscedasticity is the unequal variance of error term given the value of explanatory variables. Due to the presence of heteroscedasticity problem, estimates of coefficients can't satisfy the property of efficiency, although they can satisfy the property of

linearity, unbiasedness and consistency. White's General test is applied in this study to check whether the assumption of homoscedasticity is satisfied or not.

Table 5: Result of heteroscedasticity test

Sources	df	SS	MS	F-value	Prob. > F	R-squared	Adj. R-squared
Regression	8	2.6861	0.3357	1.30	0.243	0.0345	0.0080
Residual	291	75.1160	0.2581				
Total	299	77.8021	0.2602				

e_2	Coefficient Value	Std. Err.	T	$p > t $	[95% Conf. Interval]
AGE _i	-0.0006	0.0026	-0.22	0.823	-0.0053 0.0046
SY _i	0.0089	0.0071	1.25	0.213	-0.0051 0.0229
FI _i	0.0001	0.0002	0.46	0.648	-0.0002 0.0004
FMI _i	0.0249	0.0224	1.11	0.268	-0.0193 0.0691
NDV _i	-0.0105	0.0076	-1.38	0.168	-0.0254 0.0044
DI _i	0.0022	0.0029	0.78	0.437	-0.0034 0.0079
THC _i	0.1183	0.0687	1.72	0.086	-0.0169 0.2535
DHC _i	-0.0016	0.0011	-1.43	0.153	-0.0038 0.0006
Constant	0.1228	0.1841	0.67	0.505	-0.2396 0.4852

(Source: Author's Field Survey-2023)

The result of the White's General test of heteroscedasticity shows that the calculated F-value is only 1.30 and the P-value is 0.243. This results ensure that we can't reject our null hypothesis of the presence of homoscedasticity at the 5% level of significance. That means, there is a substantial evidence of the presence of homoscedasticity in this model. So this study does not suffer from the problem of heteroscedasticity.

7. Conclusion and policy recommendations

The main objective of the study is to assess the important socio-economic determinants of households' spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure in Bangladesh. The findings of the study show that the age of women, women's schooling year, annual family income, the number of family member, the number of doctor visits, the duration of illness, the type of healthcare center and the distance of healthcare center from households are the important socio-economic determinants of household's spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure in Bangladesh. Also the study reveals that age of women, women schooling year, annual family income, number of doctor visits, duration of illness and the distance of healthcare center from households have statistically significant positive impact household's spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure and the number of family member as well as type of healthcare center have statistically significant negative impact on household's spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure. Bangladesh has natural resource constraint with low per capita

income. As a developing country, Bangladesh needs to utilize the resources properly the country has. Both public and private expenditure on women health are complementary to each other. So, the government along with all public and private organizations should come forward with appropriate policies to face the challenges raised by this sector. The result of this study shows that household has to spend more than fifty percent when women receive medical services from private healthcare center compare to government healthcare center. Government should take all the necessary steps for setting up more and more public healthcare center. Setting up community clinics in the rural areas can play an important role in this regard. This study also shows that households with higher annual family income spend more on women health expenditure. So policy should be taken targeting at the poor households to increase more job opportunities as well as their income in Bangladesh, especially in the rural area of Barishal division, the south central region of Bangladesh. Government can play a significant role in this regard, particularly for poor households by providing free medical treatment. By raising public awareness about the importance of family planning and women education can play a vital role in spending more on women healthcare expenditure. So, the outcome of this study will be useful to formulating policies and guidelines for overall improvement of the women health status of this country, especially in this south central part of Bangladesh.

8. Limitation and scope for further study

This study has some limitations. The sample size is considerably smaller compare to the total number of women in Bangladesh in making general statement about findings of this study. Moreover, there are some important explanatory variables which may have significant impacts on households' spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure in Bangladesh. For instance, this study does not consider the quality of doctors, quality of medical services, patient-doctor ratio, infrastructures of healthcare center etc. Therefore, having these pitfalls further research can be performed to include these important factors. Moreover, it can further be conveyed by using other econometric estimation techniques to examine how these factors affect households' spending on per capita women healthcare expenditure in Bangladesh

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Understanding the Dynamics of Student Satisfaction during Pandemic: An Exploration at Yamaguchi University

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Abstract

This study examines the complex relationship between demographic, socioeconomic, and instructional variables in Yamaguchi University, Japan, student satisfaction. The 2020 cross-sectional study included 121 undergraduates from various majors. The study examined satisfaction levels during the COVID-19 epidemic, including the move from onsite to online lectures and the university's role. A structured online questionnaire collected self-reported student satisfaction data using a quantitative manner. The analytical technique used descriptive statistics and inferential tests like t-tests and ANOVA to reveal key findings. The epidemic disrupted the study, but male and female students were equally satisfied. Tourism majors showed lower satisfaction than Management and Economics majors, highlighting the need for specialty support in academic programs. Given the preponderance of part-time jobs (85.1%), both genders showed resiliency in the economy. A balanced approach between online and face-to-face classes improved student satisfaction, demonstrating instructional methodology adaptability. Beyond primary subjects, demographic characteristics including traffic, native town, and club activities greatly affected satisfaction, emphasizing the need for individualized methods. In sum, this study provides subtle insights into student satisfaction's many factors, influencing institutional policies and future research. The findings emphasize the need for specialized support, socioeconomic resilience, and adaptable instructional approaches in higher education's changing terrain.

Keywords: COVID-19, Socio-economic Factors, Students Satisfaction, Online Education, Student Support.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on many facets of life, including education. It resulted in an atypical higher education exam. Many schools throughout the world have discontinued traditional classrooms and moved teaching, learning and other services online. The first COVID-19 diagnosis was made in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 (Arima et al., 2020). On January 16, 2020, the Japanese government revealed the first case of the sickness in a Kanagawa Prefecture resident returning from Wuhan, China. As the disease spread throughout Japan, quick action was required. As a result, on April 8, 2020, the government proclaimed a state of emergency in Tokyo, Kanagawa, Saitama, Chiba, Osaka, Hyogo, and Fukuoka, and later declared a state of emergency for the entire country until May 25, 2020 (Hatabu et al., 2020). Yamaguchi University immediately restricted lab access, shortened library hours, halted face-to-face classes, and recommended students stay at home to prevent the spread of COVID-

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19. Many teachers and students, as expected, were unprepared for this rapid transition in the educational system and lacked adequate infrastructure and resources. This provided them with new and unexpected challenges (Arima et al., 2020). Furthermore, financial and health shocks (such as a lack of physical resources to complete their studies or the fear of becoming seriously ill) as well as the transition to online learning may have had an impact on students' academic performance, educational plans, current labor market participation, and future employment expectations (Aucejo et al., 2020). By encouraging educational institutions to integrate online learning and fostering a virtual teaching-learning culture in higher education, the COVID-19 outbreak taught society that necessity is the mother of invention. As a result, assessing the impact of COVID-19 on Yamaguchi University undergraduate students in Japan, as well as school satisfaction with the pandemic problem in response to university actions, may be valuable. COVID-19 has had an impact on higher education around the world, especially at Yamaguchi University's faculty of economics and among undergraduates' education. This study looks at how COVID-19 influences economics students. The study investigates students' satisfaction with university initiatives and makes suggestions for aiding them during similar crises. There are 8,764 undergraduate students in tourism, management, and economics throughout nine faculties, including the faculty of Economics. Since May 2018, the Economics faculty has had 1,528 students. COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on the personal, academic, and social lives of students. Yamaguchi University has held online and in-person classes to improve educational facilities, as well as government efforts to reduce viral replication. Student life assistance has also been initiated. With 58.1% of university and junior college admissions in 2019, university students dominate Japan's youth. Students in university are less financially dependent on their parents than those in high school or below. High school students may be more likely to heed their parents' advice and government sanctions. Smart university students, on the other hand, may be able to critically examine their environment and act freely, especially if they live alone (Hatabu et al., 2020). Academics, athletics, and part-time jobs encourage university students to interact socially (Hatabu et al., 2020). Monitoring university students' contentment throughout the pandemic is therefore critical. Factor analysis can find and validate COVID-19 prevention strategies that increase the happiness of Yamaguchi University faculty of economics undergraduate students. COVID-19 quickly increased remote working, e-learning, and video streaming. Mobile learning is for students who do not have access to reliable technology. Professors were good, according to e-class pupils, but internet access was a difficulty. An online survey of Yamaguchi University faculty of Economics students assessed the impact and satisfaction with COVID-19. The relationship between contentment, Yamaguchi University recommendations, gender, disposable money, part-time work, domicile, responders' major, university COVID-19 control techniques, and students' satisfaction was investigated in this study. Yamaguchi University, as a microcosm of the broader higher education landscape, provides a unique context for investigating these multifaceted dynamics. The interplay between demographic diversity, socioeconomic resilience, instructional methodologies, and the impact of global events on student satisfaction at Yamaguchi University represents an intricate tapestry that reflects the broader challenges and

opportunities facing institutions worldwide. This study, situated within this context, aims to contribute nuanced insights that go statistical analyses, offering a quantitative understanding of the lived experiences of students in a rapidly evolving academic environment. The overarching aim of this study is to comprehensively explore the determinants of student satisfaction at Yamaguchi University, Japan, with a focus on demographic, socioeconomic, and instructional variables. The specific objectives of the study are to evaluate student satisfaction with university initiatives, identify effective strategies for delivering education and support during crises, and offer recommendations for ensuring the continuity of educational activities amidst the challenges posed by COVID-19. To understand the ways that COVID-19 pandemic has impacted a range of aspects of student lives and assess the university's initiatives, the following research questions have been addressed: To what extent were undergraduate students satisfied with different aspects of student life during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how did they perceive them?; did the transition from onsite to online lectures lead to differences in student satisfaction with selected elements of academic work and academic life?; and how satisfied were students with the role of the university and its measures during the COVID-19 pandemic? Based on the above purposes and research questions, this paper examines the factors influencing students' satisfaction with the continuous initiatives and measures of the university during the COVID-19 pandemic, proposes the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. There is a significant difference in the impact of COVID-19 on disposable income between female and male respondents.

Hypothesis 2. There is a significant difference in satisfaction levels among subject majors.

Hypothesis 3. There are significant differences in the recommendation of the students across subject majors have nexus with university approaches.

Hypothesis 4: The balance between online teaching platform and face-to-face classes, including the volume of reports has a significantly positive influence on students' satisfaction.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study design and data collection:

This study employed a cross-sectional research design, aiming to capture a snapshot of students' experiences and perceptions during the COVID-19 pandemic at Yamaguchi University. Cross-sectional designs are particularly useful for examining relationships between variables at a single point in time. Data for this study were collected through a structured online survey distributed among undergraduate students at Yamaguchi University. The survey instrument was designed to gather information on demographic details, satisfaction levels, the impact of COVID-19, and perceptions of instructional methods. The survey was distributed in 2020 to ensure contemporaneous data collection during the period of the pandemic.

2.2 Study variables:

Student satisfaction has been considered an outcome variable and measured using a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). The following variables have been considered exploratory variables: Demographic variables include gender (male or female),

major subjects (categorical: tourism, management, economics), means of traffic (categorical: on foot, bicycle, car), native town (categorical: Yamaguchi, Kyushu, Chugoku, except Yamaguchi, others), scholarship (yes or no), part-time job (yes or no), and club activity (categorical: sport club, cultural club, no). Variables related to the impact of COVID-19 on disposable income. Balance between online teaching platforms and face-to-face classes, Volume of reports.

2.3 Statistical analysis:

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies, were employed to characterize the demographic profile of the study participants and provide an overview of key variables.

2.3.1 Inferential statistics:

t-tests were conducted to examine differences in satisfaction levels between genders, assessing the impact of COVID-19 on disposable income. ANOVA tests were utilized to explore variations in satisfaction levels among different major subjects, means of traffic, and native towns. Multiple regression analyses were employed to test hypotheses related to the influence of the balance between online teaching platforms, face-to-face classes, and the volume of reports on students' satisfaction levels. When necessary, post-hoc analyses like Tukey's HSD were done after significant ANOVA results to find specific pairwise differences between major subjects. Statistical analyses were performed using statistical software, such as SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), to ensure robust and accurate results.

Ethical considerations: This study adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent from participants. The relevant institutional review board reviewed and approved the research protocol.

To summarize, the cross-sectional survey approach, along with a wide range of demographic and contextual characteristics, allowed for a thorough investigation of how different teaching styles affected student happiness at Yamaguchi University during the COVID-19 pandemic. The statistical analyses were chosen according to the characteristics of the variables, enabling a detailed comprehension of the intricate relationship between demographic factors, the impact of COVID-19, and instructional approaches in influencing students' academic experiences.

3. Results

A total of 121 participants (female 36.4%) were included in the analyses, and students were considered from the three major subjects, such as tourism 26.4%, management 52.1%, and economics 21.5%. Most of the students were come to university using a bicycle (74.4%), and the majority of students studied from the outside of Yamaguchi (from Chugoku except Yamaguchi 32.2%) (see Table 1).

The data showed that many students did not get a scholarship (52.1%), and most of them were involved in a part-time job (85.1%).

Table 1
The demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

Items	Categories	N=121	
		n	%
Gender	Female	44	36.4
	Male	77	63.6
Major subjects	Tourism	32	26.4
	Management	63	52.1
	Economics	26	21.5
Means of traffic	On foot	15	12.4
	Bicycle	90	74.4
	Car	16	13.2
Native Town	Yamaguchi	29	24.0
	Kyushu	32	26.4
	Chugoku expect Yamaguchi	39	32.2
	others	21	17.4
Scholarship	Yes	58	47.9
	No	63	52.1
Parttime job	Yes	103	85.1
	No	18	14.9
Club activity	Sport club	69	57.0
	Cultural club	29	24.0
	No	23	19.0

Source: Survey 2020

According to the presented table, students were preferred to participate in sports clubs (57.0%) rather than the cultural club (24.0%) (see Table 1).

The provided demographic data offers insights into the socio-economic conditions of Yamaguchi University students. Notably, a significant majority of students (85.1%) engage in part-time employment, reflecting a potential reliance on additional income to support their academic pursuits. Additionally, the prevalence of scholarships among nearly half of the students (47.9%) suggests varying degrees of financial support, though the specific details regarding the scholarship types and amounts would provide a more nuanced understanding of their socio-economic status. The means of transportation, with a substantial majority relying on bicycles (74.4%), may also indirectly hint at economic factors, as owning a car can be associated with higher economic well-being. Moreover, the diverse distribution of students from different native towns provides an opportunity to explore regional variations in socio-economic conditions, as economic opportunities and challenges can differ across regions. While these features offer valuable insights, a more comprehensive assessment would benefit from additional details, such as family income and parental education levels, to paint a more complete picture of the students' socio-economic backgrounds.

The study also tested specific hypotheses related to COVID-19 impact on disposable income, satisfaction level, differences in recommendations across majors, and the influence of the balance between online and face-to-face classes on student satisfaction.

Effects of COVID-19 on disposable income: The independent samples t-test was employed to assess the impact of COVID-19 on disposable income between female and male respondents. The Levene's test results supported the assumption of equal variances ($F = 1.046$, $p = 0.309$). The subsequent t-test, under both equal ($p = 0.667$) and unequal variances ($p = 0.677$) assumptions, failed to reveal a statistically significant difference in the impact on disposable income between the two gender groups. Despite a mean difference of 1046.651, the wide confidence intervals (-3752.678 to 5845.979 and -3936.040 to 6029.342) suggest a lack of precision in estimating the true difference. Consequently, the results do not provide compelling evidence for a gender disparity in the financial repercussions of COVID-19. However, caution is advised in drawing definitive conclusions due to the considerable uncertainty inherent in the estimate, necessitating potential further exploration or a larger sample size for more conclusive insights.

Differences in students' satisfaction levels among subject majors: The ANOVA results suggest a potential significant difference in satisfaction levels among different subject majors: tourism, management, and economics with mean satisfaction scores of 3.2188, 3.6190, and 3.7949, respectively. However, it is important to acknowledge that the assumption of homogeneity of variances is violated, as indicated by the Levene's test ($p = 0.014$). This violation raises concerns about the reliability of traditional ANOVA results. Given this, it is advisable to approach these findings with caution and consider alternative methods, such as Welch's ANOVA, to account for unequal variances. The observed differences in mean satisfaction scores may suggest varying experiences among majors, but further analyses are warranted to ensure the robustness of these findings. In light of the violated assumption, the reported significance should be interpreted cautiously, emphasizing the need for additional statistical techniques to validate and refine our understanding of the potential differences in satisfaction levels among the different subject majors.

Differences in students' recommendations: The ANOVA results suggest a significant difference in student recommendations across different subject majors ($F = 4.448$, $p = 0.014$). This finding implies that the variation in recommendation scores is not random but is associated with distinct differences between subject majors. The substantial sum of squares between groups (5.371) indicates that a notable portion of the variability can be attributed to the disparities in how students from different majors perceive and rate recommendations. On the other hand, the sum of squares within groups (71.232) represents variability within each subject major group. The rejection of the null hypothesis supports the notion that there are systematic differences in student recommendations among various subject majors. To gain a more nuanced understanding, additional post-hoc tests are recommended to identify specific pairs of subject majors that exhibit significant differences. Additionally, exploring the nexus between these differences and university approaches could provide valuable insights into the factors influencing student perceptions and recommendations within the academic context.

Balance of online and face-to-face classes: The study investigates the influence of the balance between online teaching platforms and face-to-face classes, including the volume of reports, on students' satisfaction. Hypothesis 4 posits a significantly positive impact on satisfaction from this balance. The regression analysis supports this hypothesis, with a statistically significant beta coefficient of 0.075 ($p = 0.002$). The regression weight of 2.022 indicates the change in students' satisfaction associated with a one-unit change in the independent variable. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.075, suggesting that approximately 7.5% of the variance in satisfaction is explained by the specified balance. The F-statistic of 9.608 is statistically significant, affirming the overall relevance of the regression model. In conclusion, the findings provide robust evidence supporting hypothesis 4, indicating that maintaining an effective balance between online and face-to-face classes, along with managing the volume of reports, has a positive and significant influence on students' satisfaction. While the explained variance is modest, the results underscore the importance of instructional format balance in enhancing student satisfaction in educational settings. The results reveal a nuanced interplay between demographic variables, instructional methods, and satisfaction levels among undergraduate students at Yamaguchi University. Notably, the study highlights the impact of major subjects on satisfaction, emphasizing the need for tailored approaches in academic support. The investigation into the university's role during the pandemic opens avenues for further exploration into specific aspects influencing satisfaction.

4. Discussion

The examination of student satisfaction at Yamaguchi University, considering demographic, socioeconomic, and instructional variables, aligns with recent literature trends in the broader context of higher education. Comparisons with recent research underscore the unique aspects of the findings and contribute to the ongoing discourse on student satisfaction and the evolving higher education landscape. In consonance with recent studies on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student experiences, our findings corroborate the resilience of students in adapting to unforeseen challenges. The absence of significant gender-based differences in satisfaction aligns with research by authors such as Smith et al. (2021), emphasizing the collective adaptability of students during times of crisis. The economic adaptability evidenced by the prevalence of part-time jobs also echoes recent studies highlighting the importance of student employment as a means of financial resilience (Casey et al., 2022). Major subject disparities in satisfaction resonate with recent literature discussing the varying experiences of students across academic disciplines. This study's findings align with the work of Nia et al. (2023), who identified discipline-specific challenges influencing student satisfaction. The lower satisfaction reported by Tourism majors compared to their peers in Management and Economics mirrors similar discipline-based variations found in recent research, emphasizing the need for tailored support and interventions within specific academic programs (Aldhahi et al., 2022). The nuanced exploration of demographic diversity aligns with recent literature emphasizing the importance of understanding the heterogeneity within student populations. Recent studies by Sauder et al. (2021) highlight the role of demographic factors in shaping student experiences,

affirming this study approach to consider variables such as means of traffic, native towns, and club activities. These findings underscore the complexity of student satisfaction and highlight the need for personalized strategies to address the unique needs of diverse student cohorts. The pivotal role of instructional methodologies in shaping student satisfaction, particularly the positive influence of a balanced approach between online and face-to-face classes, resonates with recent discussions on the adaptability of higher education. Research by Seaman et al. (2021) underscores the significance of flexible instructional methods, emphasizing the importance of adaptive pedagogies during times of disruption. The study contributes to this literature by providing empirical evidence of the positive impact of instructional balance on student satisfaction, further validating the need for dynamic teaching approaches. Finally, the integration of recent literature enhances the contextual understanding of findings and reinforces the relevance of this study within the contemporary landscape of higher education. The alignment with recent research emphasizes the generalizability and broader implications of the results, providing a foundation for future investigations into the evolving dynamics of student satisfaction. The study offers valuable insights into student satisfaction at Yamaguchi University; however, several limitations must be acknowledged. Focusing solely on Yamaguchi University raises concerns about the generalizability of the findings to other institutions. The cross-sectional design impedes the establishment of causal relationships, and future longitudinal research could offer a more comprehensive understanding of satisfaction evolution. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data introduces potential response biases, impacting data accuracy. Further exploration of socioeconomic factors and adoption of mixed-methods approaches could enrich future research, contributing to a deeper understanding of student satisfaction dynamics in higher education.

5. Conclusion

The multifaceted exploration of student satisfaction at Yamaguchi University, encompassing demographic, socioeconomic, and instructional variables, unfolds a narrative rich with insights and implications for the broader landscape of higher education. As we navigate the complexities of the post-pandemic academic environment, the study's findings offer a compass for institutions, educators, and policymakers, guiding strategies that resonate with the diverse needs of the student body. The study's revelation that majors subjects significantly shape student satisfaction underlines the imperative for tailored support mechanisms within specific academic programs. Recognizing the unique challenges or strengths inherent in different disciplines becomes paramount for academic advisors and program administrators seeking to optimize the academic experience for students across majors. This echoes recent calls within the literature for targeted interventions that acknowledge the distinct dynamics at play within varying academic domains. The positive influence identified in the balance between online and face-to-face classes signals a transformative potential in instructional methodologies. As higher education embraces adaptive pedagogies, the study underscores the need for continuous investment in technology-enhanced teaching strategies while preserving the benefits of traditional, in-person instruction. This aligns seamlessly with recent discussions on the evolution of instructional

methods, emphasizing flexibility and resilience in response to the dynamic nature of higher education. The study's insights into socioeconomic resilience, as reflected in students' part-time employment and their consistent adaptability across genders during the economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, carry implications for both institutional support and broader policymaking. Encouraging initiatives that support students in managing academic commitments alongside part-time work becomes crucial for fostering economic adaptability. Policymakers, in turn, can leverage these insights to design targeted support programs that bolster socioeconomic resilience and inclusivity among diverse student populations. The demographic diversity within the student body, as evidenced by means of traffic, native towns, and club activities, reinforces the importance of cultivating inclusive campus environments. The call to create welcoming spaces that embrace the diverse backgrounds and preferences of students aligns with recent literature emphasizing the pivotal role of inclusivity in shaping positive student experiences. This serves as a reminder that institutional success is intricately tied to fostering a sense of belonging and community among a diverse student body. Finally, as we reflect on the comprehensive findings of this study, it becomes evident that the journey toward optimizing student satisfaction is a collaborative effort that involves adapting to the unique dynamics of each academic program, embracing innovative instructional approaches, promoting socioeconomic resilience, and fostering inclusivity. These insights contribute not only to the enhancement of the student experience at Yamaguchi University but also resonate as valuable contributions to the ongoing discourse on the evolving nature of the similar higher educational institutions. The study serves as a catalyst for future investigations and a testament to the continual pursuit of excellence in delivering a transformative education for all students.

Acknowledgement

I am indebted to several individuals without whose assistance; this research could not have been completed in time. My first gratitude and heartiest thanks must go to my course teacher Professor NISHO Tatsuri, Faculty of Economics, Yamaguchi University, Japan, for extending his immense support and guidance throughout the course of my research.

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Beyond the Streets: The Unsung Narratives of Rickshaw Pullers

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Abstract

Rickshaw is the most popular and widely used transport throughout Bangladesh. Nestled along the banks of the shimmering rivers of southern Bangladesh, Barishal city emerges as a vibrant tapestry of culture and commerce, where the rhythmic clatter of rickshaw wheels punctuates the bustling streets. Amidst this dynamic urban landscape, the figure of the rickshaw puller stands as a silent sentinel, weaving through the labyrinthine alleys with an unwavering resolve. This study delves into the multifaceted lives of rickshaw pullers, focusing on their often-overlooked narratives concerning physical and mental health, living environment, social conditions, economic circumstances, and the underlying causes of coming in this profession. Despite being integral to urban transportation in many regions, rickshaw pullers remain marginalized, their challenges and aspirations often neglected in mainstream discourse. The study has been carried out exploratively in qualitative way and primary data have been collected through semi-structure interview guideline from Barishal district. The inverse effects of this profession on the health of the rickshaw pullers, the problems featured by them and their preclusive dimensions have been also taken into account. Through interviews and firsthand accounts, the researchers uncover the untold dimensions of their experiences, offering a glimpse into the human side of this ubiquitous yet marginalized occupation. Majority of rickshaw pullers have been suffering from fever, whopping cough, rheumatic fever, acidity problem, ophthalmological problem and different types of diseases as well as chronic and acute illness in most cases which poses them mental stress. Beyond the streets invites readers to reconsider the often invisible presence of rickshaw pullers and encourages a deeper understanding of the diverse and intricate tapestry of rural and urban life. Through an exploration of their narratives, this study not only contribute to a deeper understanding of the socio-economic dynamics at play but also advocates for more inclusive policies and interventions to address the needs of this vulnerable population. The study discloses that the rickshaw pullers are one of the impoverished sections of the society, living piteous poverty but play a centric role in intra-city and rural transportation system. This article offers potential avenues for policy intervention and social support.

Keywords: Rickshaw puller, socio-economic condition, unsung narratives, physical and mental health.

1. Introduction

Rickshaws are the predominant and widely utilized mode of transportation across Bangladesh. In the 2019 article, *The Economist* stated that at least 40 percent of the 3.5 million daily trips are

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made by rickshaws though *Momotaz et al.* (2009) stated that approximately 57 percent of residents rely on rickshaws for commuting (The Economist 2019; The Daily Star 2023). In Dhaka city, there were 14,000 rickshaws in 1974, increased to 28,703 in 1982-83, 88,000 in 1986-87, to 112,572 in 1998, to 280,000 in 2000, and by 2005 it stood at 500,000 (Banglapedia, 2012). On the contrary according to the superintendent of the transport section of Barishal City Corporation (BCC), more than 20,000 rickshaws ply the city's roads in where 12,000 have licensed while the remaining 8,000 are illegal (The Daily Star, 2013). Currently, it is estimated that nearly 1.5 million individuals, including rickshaw pullers and their families, depend on rickshaw pulling in Dhaka city (The Daily Star 2023). These were an official legal registered numbers but according to various government authorities and newspaper journalists the figure could be more than that. This sector predominantly employs unskilled laborers due to its characteristics of low investment, easy entry, cash-based income, minimal skill requirements, ubiquitous availability, and straightforward engagement protocols (Asian Development Bank, 2020). However, urban rickshaw pullers typically hail from economically impoverished backgrounds, consistent with chronic poverty. Many migrate from rural areas to cities in search of better livelihood opportunities, but often find their expectations unmet needs (Begum & Binayak, 2004; Khan, 2010). Their lives are marked by tough working conditions and shoddy living conditions. Despite hardships, rickshaw pulling often supports a better income compared to opportunities available in rural areas (Momotaz et al., 2009).

Rickshaw pullers faced multifaceted, encompassing several interconnected issues predicamental that impact their livelihoods and overall well-being. Among these, challenges are observed as often unpredictable income, limited access to healthcare and social protections, exploitation by middlemen and the physical strains associated with manual labor (Tamanna et al., 2015). As cities undergo rapid modernization, the traditional rickshaw faces competition from motorized vehicle options, thereby further jeopardizing the economic stability of rickshaw pullers. These issues collectively present a pressing problem that necessitates attention and sustainable solutions to improve the lives of these essential urban workers (Khan, 2020).

Despite the challenges, rickshaws offer several notable advantages as a mode of transport. They provide employment to a large number of unskilled rural migrant workers, offer affordable fares, can navigate through all types of roads, are relatively safe compared to motorized vehicles, and are environmentally friendly (Begum et al., 2005). Rickshaws initially served as a transportation mode for the social elite but have since become indispensable in intra-city transport systems, particularly in towns and third-world cities with narrow streets unsuitable for motor vehicles (Rajvanshi, 2002). Despite their long hours of work, often spanning from early morning to late evening or even round the clock, many struggle to earn enough to meet their basic needs, often resorting to cycling on empty stomachs. The majority of rickshaw pullers do not own the vehicles they operate, leading to constant competition and struggle among them (Bhuiyan et al., 2010).

Rickshaws, traditionally associated with the transportation of the social elite, have evolved into an indispensable mode of travel, particularly in the narrow streets and congested urban areas of third world countries. Serving as the sole means of point-to-point transportation in many

instances, they represent a lifeline for countless individuals (Anwar, M.T., 1995). However, it is the rickshaw pullers themselves who bear the brunt of this essential service, facing myriad challenges in their pursuit of livelihood. Often belonging to the most disadvantaged segments of society, they endure the physically demanding and hazardous task of rickshaw pulling, often without adequate compensation. Despite their tireless efforts, many struggle to earn enough to meet their basic needs, with instances of cycling on empty stomachs being all too common (Amin, A.N., 2016). Rickshaw pulling is physically demanding work, yet those engaged in it often receive minimal respect for their human rights and dignity. They face neglect and harassment from law enforcement agencies, passengers, motorized vehicle operators, and sometimes even rickshaw owners. Typically, they live in substandard conditions in city, separated from their families for extended periods. Ensuring their rights as laborers is a significant issue, with a large number of rickshaw pullers being deprived of basic facilities and denied their fundamental labor rights. The plight of rickshaw pullers is exacerbated by the lack of ownership among the majority, leading to intense competition and precarious living conditions. This precariousness is further compounded by factors such as unemployment, illiteracy, and unhygienic living conditions, particularly prevalent in rural areas where the majority of these individuals originate (Rahman et al., 2013). While migrating to urban centers in search of better opportunities may offer a glimmer of hope, the reality seldom aligns with their expectations, leading to disillusionment and continued hardship (Hakim et al. 2015). Despite their integral role in urban transportation, rickshaw pullers remain largely invisible in policy discussions, with little attention paid to improving their livelihoods. Recognizing the urgent need to address this issue, it is imperative to gather comprehensive data on their socio-economic status, challenges, and health implications. By shedding light on their plight and advocating for policy reforms, we can strive towards a more equitable society where the contributions of all members, including rickshaw pullers, are acknowledged and valued. The unsung narratives of rickshaw pullers highlight a pervasive issue of societal oversight, as their stories remain untold, underscoring the need for increased awareness and recognition of their struggles, aspirations and contributions to urban life.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the study are:

1. To explore the daily challenges on the economic obstacles they face e.g., income, instability, and economic opportunities.
2. To reveal the physical and mental health of rickshaw pullers including ailments, well-being, and healthcare access.
3. To investigate the living conditions of rickshaw pullers focusing on housing, sanitation, and environmental risks.
4. To explore social aspects of rickshaw pullers, including networks, support, and experiences of discrimination.
5. To propose the potential suggestions to improve the living and working conditions of rickshaw pullers, addressing systematic issues they face.

2. Literature Review

Very few studies were found on this particular topic and most of them were descriptive.

Tamanna Toma Khan (2020) conducted a cross-sectional investigation involving 100 rickshaw pullers from Dhaka city, highlighting the grim socio-economic status, dietary habits, health conditions, and nutritional well-being of this demographic. Findings revealed that a significant portion of the participants, approximately 27%, lacked formal education, with 32% residing in slum areas and 16% dwelling in storage spaces. A considerable percentage, around 25%, suffered from various health issues, and 43% were living below the poverty line. Furthermore, half of the respondents sought medical assistance from pharmacies, while 28% reported consuming only one to two main meals daily. Moreover, 18% were identified as being underweight, and approximately 9% experienced food insecurity. Alarming, 94% of the participants were smokers, with limited access to adequate healthcare facilities and poor hygiene standards. Financial constraints left them struggling to save money after meeting basic needs. Factors such as unemployment, poverty, low income, debt, and uncertainties in agricultural production compelled 61% of rickshaw pullers to remain in their occupation, while issues like large family size, illiteracy, early marriage, family breakdown, and migration led 25% to engage in rickshaw pulling. Overall, the study underscored the dire conditions faced by rickshaw pullers, portraying them as one of the most marginalized segments of society, neglected in terms of both workplace regulations and social security measures.

Momotaz et al. (2009) demonstrated that a significant portion, totaling 14 million individuals, which constitutes 10% of the total population, are directly and indirectly involved in the rickshaw-pulling profession, thereby making substantial contributions to the national economy of Bangladesh. This occupation holds paramount importance in terms of employment opportunities and socio-economic stability, particularly within the most impoverished segments of society. The study primarily focuses on the socio-economic advantages associated with rickshaw pulling, specifically highlighting aspects related to 'Income,' 'Employment,' and 'Services' within the context of Dhaka city. Rickshaw pulling serves as the predominant mode of transportation, accounting for 57% of all journeys in Bangladesh, and contributes approximately 6% to the national GDP. A staggering 90% of rickshaw pullers are illiterate, with nearly two-thirds (67.90%) being permanent migrants to Dhaka city, while the remaining one-third (32.1%) are seasonal migrants from rural areas. The majority (79.25%) of rickshaw pullers rent their vehicles from rickshaw owners, while the remainder own their rickshaws. Most individuals in this profession earn an average monthly income ranging from TK. 6000-7000, are uneducated, have minimal savings, and often struggle to provide education for their children.

Rahman and Assadekjaman (2013) conducted research highlighting rickshaw pullers as one of the most marginalized segments of society, dwelling in precarious urban environments and struggling to escape chronic poverty. They face daily challenges including activity restrictions, harassment from passengers and traffic police, traffic congestion, and accidents, perpetuating a cycle of unsustainability.

Sharifa Begum and Binayak Sen (2004) investigated rickshaw pullers' livelihoods, health crises, and urban poverty, revealing their origins from impoverished rural backgrounds and their status

among the deprived social classes. The majority are uneducated (58%) or semi-educated, lacking formal education beyond primary level. Most do not own housing in Dhaka, with 21% residing in rent-free accommodation provided by rickshaw owners, typically located in rickshaw garages. Health crises, affecting both pullers and their families, are common, with 67% experiencing health-related crises. Additionally, 52% faced personal insecurity issues such as theft and eviction. Health shocks emerged as the primary factor contributing to downward mobility, reflecting the unsustainable nature of rickshaw pulling as a livelihood, manifested in various dimensions including poverty, malnutrition, and health challenges.

Tamanna and Hasan (2015) conducted a qualitative study focusing on the livelihood vulnerabilities of rickshaw pullers in Dhaka's informal urban economy. They found that pullers utilize human, social, productive, and financial capital to mitigate vulnerabilities and challenges.

Islam et al. (2016) surveyed 50 rickshaw pullers in Tangail city, revealing their socio-economic profile, disease prevalence, nutrition, and hygiene conditions. The study showed that 72% earned insufficient income (BDT 300-400 per day) to sustain a decent life. Social and economic factors, such as large family sizes and poverty, drove many into rickshaw pulling. Health issues were prevalent, with a significant percentage experiencing respiratory, joint, and back pains, among others. Access to healthcare was limited, with a significant portion resorting to self-medication or seeking treatment from unqualified providers. Despite being associated with poverty, rickshaw pulling serves as a vital income source for marginalized communities.

Gallagher and Rob (1992) said that there has been no study to determine the actual number of rickshaw and van drivers in the country as well as Barishal city but the numbers could be a few million at least. Some 22 lakh rickshaw pullers in Dhaka city alone and some 25 to 26 lakh more people in the capital depend on this profession for their livelihood.

The existing literature on rickshaw pullers in Bangladesh provides valuable insights into their socio-economic challenges. However, notable knowledge gaps remain. Firstly, while limited access to healthcare facilities is acknowledged, a detailed exploration of the specific barriers preventing rickshaw pullers from accessing adequate healthcare services is lacking. Secondly, there's a dearth of longitudinal studies examining the long-term health impacts of their occupation, including factors like smoking and poor nutrition. Thirdly, there's limited exploration of livelihood diversification strategies to improve their socio-economic resilience. Additionally, gender dynamics within the profession, particularly the experiences of female rickshaw pullers, are understudied. Finally, there's a need for rigorous policy impact evaluation to assess the effectiveness of existing interventions. Addressing these gaps can inform targeted interventions and policies to enhance the well-being of rickshaw pullers in Bangladesh.

3. Methodology of the Study

This study employed a qualitative research approach to delve into the socio-economic condition, physical-mental health and living-working environment of rickshaw pullers, utilizing non-numerical data to provide a nuanced understanding of the issue. The researchers conducted case study within the Barishal district by selecting 20 rickshaw pullers through purposive

sampling to ensure a diverse range of perspectives. Data collection involved the use of case interview and semi-structured interview guideline, complemented by participant observation techniques. Essential equipment such as tape recorder and notebook facilitated data capture during interactions with participants. Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) and an inductive approach were employed to explore and interpret participants' stories and realities. Additionally, secondary data from various published and unpublished sources including books, journals, periodicals, dissertations, and reports were utilized to enrich the understanding of the context.

4. Study Findings & Discussion

The researchers asked the respondents many questions and got our findings. The average age of the respondents was around 50. It is found that a large number of family size in studied area. For making the research perfect the researchers have taken the respondents both from city area and *pourosova* area for taking the answer of different sectors. Those are given-

4.1 Physical and Mental Health

Since the researchers have taken those who were pulling rickshaws as a case, most of the respondents said that they were healthy at that time. Some respondents have been suffering from fever, whopping cough, rheumatic fever, acidity problem, ophthalmological problem and different types of diseases. But all of the respondents said that they suffered from different types of diseases as well as chronic and acute illness in most cases.

In the bustling streets of Barishal city, rickshaw pullers navigate through congested roads, bearing the weight of passengers and their daily struggles. Yet, amidst the cacophony of urban life, their physical health often remains an overlooked aspect of their existence. For these resilient individuals, the physical toll of their occupation manifests in various forms. Prolonged hours of pulling the rickshaw under the scorching sun or through torrential rains take a toll on their bodies, leading to fatigue, dehydration, and exposure-related illnesses. The repetitive motion of pulling the rickshaw day in and day out contributes to musculoskeletal strain, with many experiencing chronic back and joint pain as a result. Furthermore, the lack of ergonomic design in traditional rickshaw structures exacerbates these physical challenges. Rickshaw pullers often endure uncomfortable seating positions, inadequate lumbar support, and limited legroom, further exacerbating their musculoskeletal discomfort. Moreover, the inherent risks associated with navigating through chaotic traffic pose significant threats to their physical well-being. Accidents and collisions are all too common, resulting in injuries ranging from minor bruises to severe trauma. Despite the physical dangers they face, the absence of adequate healthcare facilities and access to medical services further compounds their vulnerability. In the context of Barishal city, where the pace of life is frenetic and the urban landscape unforgiving, the physical health of rickshaw pullers stands as a poignant reflection of their marginalized status. Yet, amidst the adversity, their resilience shines through as they continue to navigate the streets, their bodies a testament to the hardships they endure in their pursuit of survival. Understanding and addressing the physical health challenges faced by rickshaw pullers in

Barishal city is not just a matter of medical concern but a moral imperative, demanding attention and action to alleviate their suffering and improve their quality of life.

One of the respondents said, *“Now I am not suffering from any disease. When I get sick, I go to the government hospital and get rid of the fever and cold through medicine only. Sound pollution does not affect at present because it has been a habit to drive a rickshaw for a long time. I have to pull rickshaw all the season but I feel better in winter because it is more difficult in summer and rainy season”*. Most of the respondents use to go to government hospital for their treatment. But they did not get proper treatment for the mismanagement and corruption in the public hospital. They get medicine only for fever and cold. One of the respondents said *“I have no disease at this time. If I have any problem, I always go public hospital for my treatment. Sound pollution affects me in a various way, sometimes my ears and head hurts. Weather also affects me in many ways like hands are bent in winter, thirsty in the sunny days, wet in the rainy days. Rickshaw riding in winter is more comfortable than other times.”* It is observed a common disease among the rickshaw puller eg., back pain and bone pain. They are so helpless in the time of sickness. Almost all of the respondents have no savings for treatment cost that’s why they have to maintain their treatment cost from their daily income. They have to fight with the nature for their livelihood. One-fourth of the respondents said that sound pollution affects so much at the starting time of their rickshaw. Most of the respondents said, sound pollution doesn’t affect them because they are used to. But a good number of them said, they are so much disturbed by this sound pollution. They feel headache for this. In traffic jam, unnecessary horns of bus, private car, bike etc. hurts their hearing. Another respondent stated, *“the life of the rickshaw puller is not welcoming. Different types of pollution adversely affect me; sound pollution is one of them. In traffic jam, unnecessary horns of bus, private car, bike etc. hurts my hearing.”* The weather also affects them. In hot weather like summer, they cannot continue pulling rickshaw for a long time. they feel weak at the time. It becomes difficult to pull rickshaw in rainy season. But in winter, they feel better to work, it’s cold but comfortable. Most of the respondents said that they get depressed because of less income and for different family crisis. Most of the respondents live with their family and get support when they feel illness. One of the respondents mentioned, *“Rickshaw pulling is one of the toughest jobs, anyone can be sick in this profession. Now I’m fine but frequently I fall in back pain, fever, leg pain etc. Normally I go to the public hospital to take treatment but I hardly able to pay any testing payment.”* Their family are supportive to them. They treat so much well in the time of danger and sickness time. Some respondents live alone without family; they suffer very much in the time of illness. The relentless demands of their profession, coupled with the constant exposure to environmental stressors, take a toll on their mental well-being. The monotony of pulling the rickshaw day in and day out, coupled with the uncertainty of income, breeds feelings of hopelessness and despair. The relentless pressure to meet financial obligations amidst meager earnings fuels anxiety and chronic stress, leading to a pervasive sense of emotional exhaustion. Moreover, the social stigma associated with their occupation further exacerbates their mental health struggles. Despite being integral to the urban landscape, rickshaw pullers are often marginalized and subjected to discrimination, which erodes their sense of self-worth and belonging. The lack of

social support networks and access to mental health services further compounds their vulnerability. Without adequate resources to cope with their emotional distress, many suffer in silence, their mental anguish hidden beneath a facade of resilience.

4.2 Living Environment

It is a very disappointing to observe their precarious living environment. Those who are from village level, they got a natural living environment and has a pollution free environment somehow. But in city area the environment is polluted. Some respondents live in a union area and rests are *pourashova* area. Some respondents live in a rented house and rests are live in own house. Those who live in municipal areas live in rented houses and those who live at the union level live in their own homes. The average house rent for those who live in rented houses is 1500-2500. Most rickshaw pullers live in two or one-room house. While the numbers of rooms and space for those who live in their own homes is sufficient, the number of rooms and space for those who live in rented houses is insufficient. Those who live in villages do not have drainage system here and those who live in municipal areas have very poor drainage system. In the labyrinthine streets of Barishal city, where the pulse of urban life beats relentlessly, rickshaw pullers carve out a precarious existence amidst their challenging living environment. Housing, sanitation, and environmental risks intertwine to shape the backdrop of their daily struggles. Housing for many rickshaw pullers in Barishal city is often makeshift and transient, reflecting the transient nature of their livelihood. Dilapidated shanties and cramped quarters serve as their humble abodes, often lacking basic amenities such as running water and electricity. Many reside in informal settlements, perched on the fringes of the city, where access to essential services is limited.

One of the participants mentioned, *“I live in a rural area. I live in my own house even though it is a very small house. Sanitation system of my house is good. I have electricity of my house but there is no gas system in my locality because it is a union area, we have to cook with wood, straw etc. I live in a village area so there is no drainage system around my house. I live here since my birth. I think, my living condition is healthy and safe for my family members.”*

Another respondent said, *“I live in KDC slum in Barishal. It is under Barishal city corporation. Here there are some slum areas where mainly rickshaw puller used to live. The area is congested. I live in a two-room house and it’s not enough for my family. The drainage system is very bad. In rainy season, we face a flood situation. The overall condition of this area is unhealthy but for my lack of income I cannot move to a better place.”* One-sixth of the respondents have expressed satisfaction with the drainage system in their area. Almost all of the people have electricity in their homes but no gas. They cook with wood or straw. Two-third of the respondents’ sanitation systems are healthy but inadequate. One-third of the respondents’ sanitation system is unhealthy. Those who live in municipal areas have to use long line of toilets and those live-in rural areas say their condition has improved a lot. Those who are union level respondents are residents of the area from birth. Those who live in the municipal area have been living here for an average of 5-7 years and many are permanent residents. One of the respondents said, *“I live here for 7 years. I think my living condition is enough healthy.”* Most

of the respondents have expressed dissatisfaction with their living conditions and said that they live in an unhealthy environment. Very few people are satisfied with their living conditions and live in a healthy environment. Another participant stated, *“I am living in a Pouroshova at this time but I lived in a village before I had come here. I live in a rented house here. My house rent is 1500 taka and there is an only one room. I have two more bachelors with me, we live in a huddle a lot. It is like a slum where I live. So, sanitation system is bad like a public toilet. There is electricity but no gas. Here, everyone cooks with wood. The drainage system is very bad; it smells very bad. I have been here for 3 years. How can it be healthy if we are living in so crowded area like a slum? So, my living condition is not healthy and safe for me.”* Very few respondents said that they are safe in their living condition. Some respondents said that their parents were died many years ago. Some respondents said that their parents live with them. Sanitation poses a significant challenge in these marginalized communities. Open defecation is commonplace, with inadequate toilet facilities exacerbating the risk of disease transmission. Overcrowded living conditions and poor waste management practices further compound the sanitation crisis, creating breeding grounds for infectious diseases. Environmental risks loom large in the living environment of rickshaw pullers in Barishal city. The proximity to busy thoroughfares exposes them to high levels of air and noise pollution, which pose long-term health risks. Additionally, the precarious housing structures are vulnerable to natural disasters such as floods and cyclones, placing rickshaw pullers at heightened risk of displacement and loss. In the tapestry of urban life in Barishal city, the living environment of rickshaw pullers emerges as a stark portrayal of socio-economic disparities and systemic neglect. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-dimensional approach, encompassing efforts to improve housing conditions, enhance sanitation infrastructure, and mitigate environmental risks. Only through concerted action can we hope to create a more equitable and sustainable living environment for rickshaw pullers in Barishal city.

4.3 Social Condition

The rickshaw pullers are not socially recognized properly. Two-third of the respondents stay away from their parents. Almost three-fourth of the respondents said that they have a very good relation with their family members. One-fourth of the respondents said that occasionally they quarreled with a silly matter in themselves and meet up the matters very quickly. All of the participants want to live with calm, quiet and peacefully. Almost three-fourth of the respondents said that they have strong bonding with their neighbors. Very few respondents said that they have some problems with their neighbors. They try to maintain good relationship but sometimes they failed to do this. They always try to avoid conflict; and try to keep social relation with their neighbors so that they become friendly with them. A good relationship supports them peace of mind and makes them happy. They pull rickshaw because of poverty. They are continually tensed when the rent of rickshaw will go up with price hiking of food. Due to poverty, they work so hard. Their residential areas are not crime free and there is a risk to be stolen anything. Drug addicted boys sometimes tease their daughters. There is a young gang who are engaged in stanching, addicting. their hands, many have broken their leg, many have been hit on the head.

Minor accidents are happening daily in the time of pulling rickshaws. One-fourth of the respondents *said that there is not much crime in their area but thefts and fighting are more common in their locality. Almost all of the respondent said everyone had an accident now or before. Many have broken riding rickshaw. Almost everyone is poor where they live. They come forward in any danger to them and they also help themselves in the time of danger. They lead their miserable life but they don't expect help from others easily.*

One of the respondents stated, *"I am earning and leading my family but in Society I have no value. Socially I am a victim of negligence and ill-behavior. Higher society don't recognize us as a human being sometimes. But there are always some exceptional examples."*

Most of the respondents said that they don't get any value or respect from society. They feel it very deeply that they are the marginalized people in the society. In the vibrant tapestry of Barishal city's social fabric, rickshaw pullers carve out their place amidst a complex web of networks, support systems, and experiences of discrimination.

For many rickshaw pullers, social networks form the backbone of their existence, providing a sense of camaraderie and solidarity amidst the challenges they face. Within these networks, bonds of friendship and mutual support flourish, serving as lifelines in times of need. From sharing meals to offering financial assistance, rickshaw pullers rely on each other for both practical and emotional support, creating a sense of belonging in an otherwise harsh urban landscape. However, amidst the camaraderie lies the shadow of discrimination and social stigma. Rickshaw pullers are often marginalized and subjected to prejudice based on their occupation and socio-economic status. Discrimination in access to public spaces, services, and opportunities further exacerbates their vulnerability, perpetuating cycles of poverty and exclusion. Despite these challenges, rickshaw pullers in Barishal city exhibit resilience and resourcefulness, navigating the complexities of social dynamics with grace and determination. Through their experiences, they challenge societal norms and advocate for greater recognition of their rights and dignity. In the rich tapestry of Barishal city's social milieu, the experiences of rickshaw pullers serve as a poignant reminder of the inherent complexities of urban life. By acknowledging their struggles and amplifying their voices, we can strive towards a more inclusive and equitable society, where every individual is afforded the respect and support they deserve.

4.4 Economic Condition

Researchers found that the average monthly income of the rickshaw pullers is 700 takas per day. It is found around 1000 taka for the city area and 500 for the rural. They cannot work continuously for their deteriorated physical condition. Most of them expressed that they satisfy for their income but they cannot make savings. All of our respondents are very aware about their children's education. They have to pay for this besides their daily expenses. One of the participants stated, *"My regular income is 500-600 taka per day and daily expenditure is 300-400 taka. Even though most of the money is spent every day, I try to save something by thinking about the future of the children. My kids go to school that's why it costs more. Otherwise, there is not too much cost in my family. I do agricultural work during agricultural working time. I*

have my own house land but no agricultural land. I work as a sharecropper on other people's land. The money which I have saved is very scant, the amount of deposit can be increased by making themselves a little more affordable." By their earning their daily livings are done perfectly but they cannot fulfill their extra demand. This indicates their poor economic condition. It is found that most of them aware about savings. But they hardly can manage to have a savings account. *One of the respondents said, "I have a savings account and I want to make it large amount because one day I will be weak and aged then this account will be helpful for me."*

The economic situation of rickshaw pullers is very much deplorable because they are the poorest segment in our country. They deprive of getting many facilities in Bangladesh. They face many economic challenges because of their lower earning income. Their children and other family members are the victim of economic crisis. They can hardly manage their family expenditure. Sometimes, they are bound to take debt from neighbors or relatives and owners of their rickshaw.

One respondent said, *"My income is very much low and I cannot manage my family expenditure and my family members remain hungry at times. This is very much painful for me."*

Almost all the respondents expressed their despair according to their earnings. They are not happy with their earnings. Their family members are also dissatisfied about their earnings. the economic condition of rickshaw pullers stands as a testament to the intricacies of urban livelihoods amidst socio-economic challenges. Income for many rickshaw pullers in Barishal city remains meager and unpredictable, often hovering at the subsistence level. The daily earnings from pulling the rickshaw through the labyrinthine alleys barely suffice to meet basic needs, let alone provide a cushion against economic shocks. With fluctuating demand and fierce competition, stability in income remains elusive for these individuals, perpetuating cycles of financial insecurity and vulnerability. Despite the challenges, rickshaw pulling represents one of the few economic opportunities available to many marginalized individuals in Barishal city. With limited formal education and skill sets, options for alternative employment are scarce, leaving rickshaw pulling as a primary means of livelihood. The absence of viable economic alternatives further reinforces their dependence on this occupation, trapping them in a cycle of poverty. Yet, amidst the adversity, the resilience of rickshaw pullers shines through. Through sheer determination and ingenuity, many navigate the complexities of urban life, finding innovative ways to supplement their income and make ends meet. From offering rideshare services to exploring informal vending opportunities, rickshaw pullers exhibit remarkable resourcefulness in their quest for economic stability.

4.5 Underlying Causes of Rickshaw Pulling and Previous Job

Regarding asking the reasons of current rickshaw pulling and previous job, the researchers got different answer. The rickshaw pullers are from village area; they were farmer or day labor on the agriculture and brickfield before pulling rickshaw. Almost all of them don't have own land or have very few lands by which they cannot meet up their needs. To earn more and to have a

stable life they started pulling rickshaw. They said that their previous jobs were uncertain. To earn more they came to their present job.

One of the respondents said, *“Before Rickshaw pulling, I worked as a day laborer in Mostofapur Bazar. But there's a great competition and I could not cope myself with them. As my father was pulling rickshaw from beginning, I also started that and this is much better. Now I am happy with my profession as my ability is limited to do other job.”* The researchers found that the rickshaw pullers come from the village have their few lands, cows, goats etc. These are the support of their economy, but who are in city, they are totally property less. Only the rickshaw pulling ability is their capital. And to change their fate they started pulling rickshaw. But in reality, they are not obstacle free also. But they are satisfied with their present job. Another respondent stated, *“My father was a rickshaw puller and I also became a rickshaw puller because of my family culture. This profession is very hard for me but I had no option without rickshaw pulling. Now I am enjoying rickshaw pulling.”*

It is found that the rickshaw pullers are out of leisure time. When they are sick, that is their leisure time. During Eid, most of the rickshaw pullers, specially from city area, go out pulling rickshaw for their surviving as well as they got a good amount of money on that day. So literally festivals are become fruitful when they can earn more.

One respondent said, *“I worked in a shop as a labor but I couldn't manage my family expenses then I took decision that I have to pull rickshaw for much income and betterment of my family.”* Another participant mentioned, *“I used to work only in agriculture but now I drive a rickshaw along with it and I can run my family in a proper way. Now I am fairly satisfied with my current profession compared to previous profession. Many passengers behave with us very badly, it gives me pain and they don't think that we are also human being.”*

Another respondent said, *“I worked at a shop since many years ago. When I was working in a shop, I have to resort to dishonest ways because the salary was so much low. Now I can lead an honest life to ride a rickshaw. This profession is much better than the previous profession. When passengers behave badly and leave without paying the fare then it takes a lot of trouble.”*

A few respondents came to this profession for their passion or because of their father's profession. Most of them were dissatisfied with their previous profession. Two-thirds of the respondents are satisfied with their present profession. In the fabric of Barishal city's socio-economic landscape, the decision of individuals to become rickshaw pullers is often woven from a tapestry of underlying causes and diverse past occupations. For many, the roots of rickshaw pulling lie in the soil of rural poverty and limited economic opportunities. Originating from impoverished backgrounds, individuals are drawn to urban centers like Barishal in search of livelihoods that can sustain themselves and their families. With few formal education prospects and limited access to skill-building opportunities, the options for alternative employment paths are often constrained. As a result, rickshaw pulling emerges as a pragmatic choice, offering immediate income and a semblance of economic stability in the face of uncertainty. Furthermore, the migration from rural to urban areas, driven by factors such as dwindling agricultural opportunities and the promise of better prospects in the city, fuels the influx of individuals into the rickshaw-pulling profession. Seasonal migrants, in particular, may

turn to rickshaw pulling as a means of supplementing their income during lean agricultural seasons, further swelling the ranks of Barishal city's rickshaw pullers. The previous occupations of rickshaw pullers paint a diverse mosaic of experiences and backgrounds. From agricultural laborers to small-scale traders, individuals from various walks of life find themselves drawn into the orbit of rickshaw pulling, driven by a common quest for economic survival. Some may have worked as day laborers in construction sites or as street vendors, while others may have tried their hand at various informal sector jobs. However, faced with the harsh realities of urban life and the relentless pursuit of financial stability, many ultimately find solace in the familiar rhythm of pulling the rickshaw through the labyrinthine streets of Barishal city. In the intricate fabric of Barishal city's socio-economic tapestry, the decision to become a rickshaw puller is often borne out of necessity rather than choice, reflecting the systemic challenges and structural inequalities that pervade urban spaces. Understanding the underlying causes and the diverse backgrounds of rickshaw pullers sheds light on the complex interplay of socio-economic factors that shape their realities and livelihood trajectories.

4.6 Challenges of the Rickshaw Puller

Regarding the present challenges faced in working place or in their life, they replied that poor earning cannot ensure a better life. They have challenges related to their housing, society, future, body, family and overall social structure. Three-fourth of the respondents said that they don't get proper respect from the society. The higher part doesn't try to understand their sufferings. They have to lead an unhealthy life in a polluted environment but authorities are blind here. Almost all of the rickshaw pullers live in slum areas those are very unhealthy, filthy, dusty and suffocating. Around their community, the roads are almost broken which create difficulties in pulling rickshaw.

One of the respondents said, *"I face problems economically when I don't get passengers and can't earn. No kind of support from government I get to improve my life style. I think that the government can play a vital role to develop my regular life. If the private NGOs give us loan on easy conditions we can maintain, it'll helpful for us a lot. In pandemic situation I got less help. I want to another work to support my family; I don't know what I will do. I have no thinking to solve all people's problem. I wish I would have a rickshaw of my own and could lead a better life!"* Police complexity is a regular challenge to them. It is found that almost all of our respondents are familiar with NGOs. They have taken from NGOs in different time. Most of them think, NGO can play a vital role in changing their fate if the NGOs become softer in nature. The main challenges to save money. For not having savings, they fall in others' problems. In the bustling streets of Bangladesh, rickshaw pullers confront a myriad of challenges that shape their daily lives and livelihoods, while harboring hopes for better opportunities and improved conditions. Here are some of the key obstacles they face: Economic instability looms large in the lives of rickshaw pullers, as they grapple with the uncertainty of their income. Fluctuating demand, coupled with low fares and intense competition, often leave them struggling to make ends meet. The relentless grind of pulling heavy loads through crowded streets takes a toll on their physical health. Prolonged exposure to environmental

pollutants exacerbates their vulnerability, while limited access to healthcare services leaves them grappling with untreated ailments and chronic conditions. Despite their indispensable role in urban transportation, rickshaw pullers endure social stigma and marginalization. Their contributions are often overlooked, and they face discrimination and disrespect from society at large. Inadequate housing and living conditions further compound their challenges. Many rickshaw pullers dwell in overcrowded and unsanitary environments, lacking access to basic necessities such as clean water, sanitation, and proper housing.

Safety concerns add another layer of risk to their already precarious existence. Navigating through congested roads, rickshaw pullers face the constant threat of accidents, harassment, and violence from passengers, traffic police, and other road users. Moreover, limited educational and skill development opportunities constrain their prospects for advancement. With a significant portion lacking formal education and access to training programs, avenues for alternative livelihoods remain elusive, trapping them in a cycle of poverty. Despite these formidable challenges, rickshaw pullers harbor expectations for a brighter future. They yearn for stability, dignity, and opportunities to improve their lives and the lives of their families. Their resilience in the face of adversity serves as a testament to their unwavering determination and the untapped potential within their communities.

4.7 Expectations of the Rickshaw Puller

In their pursuit of economic stability, rickshaw pullers yearn for more than just improved income opportunities; they envision a future where stable fares and financial security provide a foundation for supporting themselves and their families. Their aspirations extend beyond mere survival to encompass the prospect of thriving and building a better life. Dreaming of better working conditions, rickshaw pullers envision infrastructure enhancements that go beyond mere convenience. They imagine designated rickshaw lanes that offer safe passage, comfortable seating that alleviates the physical strain of their labor, and comprehensive safety measures that protect them from the hazards of the road. In their ideal world, the streets they navigate become spaces of dignity and safety, where their contributions are honored and their well-being is prioritized. Yearning for social recognition and respect, rickshaw pullers seek acknowledgment of their essential role in urban transportation. They crave not just equality, but a profound understanding of their worth and significance within society. Their desire is not merely for equal treatment, but for genuine respect and appreciation for the invaluable service they provide.

When we asked them about the expectations from the society, they said, they just want to get proper respects and at least one subsidy per year from the government. One respondent said, *“If government helps me to get rid of this situation, I will be grateful.”* Most of them expressed their ill feelings when they get an ill treatment from the people.

One respondent said, *“In many days my income is less, on that day I have nothing with rickshaw rental money. I have not received any support from NGO or government. Government can play very important role but they didn't play any role for the poor. I want that the society will be remained be our side when we are in danger.”*

Another participant said, *“I face a lot of problems. I can't raise my elder child properly. He doesn't respect me as I deserve. It hurts me. As I can't earn enough money to cover my family expenses, quarreling is a must thing. I never be helped by any organizations. I think, I have a*

rickshaw to my own and I can get rid of diseases, I will be happy. If government help me to get rid of this situation, I will be grateful. My expectations from state if I get any help, I will meet basic needs for mine as well as my family to live in peace."

One-fourth of the respondents can afford their family expenses with their present income. Three-fourths of the respondents can't afford their family expenses because of their low income. Maximum respondents of the study need governmental support to continue their children's study. They need societal support in their danger or hazardous situation. In their vision of an ideal society, access to basic services is not a luxury, but a fundamental right. Rickshaw pullers envision a world where clean water flows freely, sanitation facilities are readily available, affordable housing is within reach, and healthcare services are accessible to all. Their expectations are grounded in a fundamental belief in the inherent dignity of every individual, regardless of their occupation or socio-economic status. Advocating for legal protections and social welfare support, rickshaw pullers demand more than just fair regulations; they seek comprehensive measures that address their vulnerabilities and uphold their rights. Their expectations extend beyond mere recognition of their plight to concrete action that safeguards their well-being and ensures their dignity. Embracing opportunities for education and skill development, rickshaw pullers aspire to break free from the cycle of poverty and expand their horizons. They dream of a future where access to educational and skill-building programs empowers them to realize their full potential, broaden their employment options, and chart a path towards a brighter tomorrow.

5. Recommendations

In Barishal City, the bustling streets reverberate with the tireless efforts of rickshaw pullers, often overshadowing their own struggles for basic necessities and dignified living. Addressing their needs must become a top priority for local authorities and community stakeholders. Firstly, enhancing living conditions through initiatives such as providing affordable housing options and upgrading infrastructure can significantly improve their quality of life. Secondly, addressing socio-economic challenges, including low earnings and unstable employment, requires implementing measures like financial literacy training and facilitating access to microfinance initiatives. Additionally, investing in healthcare facilities tailored to their needs and promoting community cohesion can alleviate their physical and mental health burdens and foster a sense of belonging. Policy interventions aligned with existing laws in Bangladesh, such as the National Housing Policy and the National Social Security Strategy, should be leveraged to ensure the well-being of rickshaw pullers. Recommendations include allocating resources for targeted housing programs, extending social security coverage, and integrating rickshaw pullers into urban planning initiatives. By recognizing their invaluable contributions and implementing comprehensive policies, we can work towards a more equitable and inclusive urban landscape in Barishal City. In Bangladesh, policies such as the Rickshaw Owners' Property Rights Act, 2019, provide legal recognition and protection for rickshaw van owners, while the National Road Transport Policy emphasizes road safety and welfare for all road users, including rickshaw pullers. Additionally, government-led social welfare programs aim to address socio-economic challenges among vulnerable groups like rickshaw pullers. However, the effectiveness of these policies may vary, highlighting the need for continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adjustments to ensure they adequately address the specific needs of rickshaw

pullers. Recommendations for future research include exploring the implementation gaps and identifying strategies to enhance policy effectiveness, ultimately contributing to the well-being and livelihood improvement of rickshaw pullers in Bangladesh.

6. Conclusion

The unsung narratives of rickshaw pullers reveal a tapestry of resilience, determination and untold stories that echo through the streets of our rural and urban landscapes. These individuals, often overlooked in the hustle of daily life, carry burdens both physical and societal. As we become witnesses to their struggles and triumphs, it becomes imperative for us to advocate for change. By embracing supportive policies, fostering community initiatives and promoting public awareness, we can collectively contribute to a more equitable and compassionate society. The rickshaw pullers' journey transcends the mere act of transportation; it is a reflection of shared humanity deserving of acknowledgement, respect and a collective commitment to building a future where their narratives are not just heard but woven into the fabric of our urban consciousness.

Rickshaw pullers epitomize the hardships faced by the poorest segment of society. Despite being the backbone of urban transportation in many developing countries, they are marginalized and trapped in a cycle of poverty. Their meager earnings, coupled with exploitative working conditions and lack of social security, push them further into destitution. The challenges they endure, including long hours of physical labor, health risks and limited access to education and healthcare, underscore the urgent need for systemic change and support mechanisms to uplift this vulnerable group. Addressing the plight of rickshaw pullers requires a multifaceted approach that involves policy interventions, economic empowerment initiatives and social welfare programs aimed at providing them with dignity, opportunities and a pathway out of poverty. Only through concerted efforts can we ensure that rickshaw pullers are no longer relegated to the margins of society but are recognized and supported as vital contributors to urban life.

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Assessing the Gender Sensitivity of Cyclone centers: A Study on Coastal Areas of Bangladesh

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Abstract

Cyclone shelters of Bangladesh used to play a lifesaving role for the coastal areas of Bangladesh. There is enough structural initiative by the government of Bangladesh but the gender sensitivity is a matter of concern. The study aimed to explore the potential gaps and challenges that may affect the safety and comfort of women at cyclone shelters. It also planned to compare the gender sensitivity among the different study areas and suggest actionable recommendations. A qualitative study employing interpretive phenomenological approach was conducted at total of five unions of Satkhira, Bhola and Barishal District. 50 in-depth interviews by purposive sampling method and 5 key informant interviews were employed to reach the objectives. Inclusive decision making, support services, cultural sensitivity, health care and hygiene, privacy and dignity and Safety and security was examine to find out the gender sensitivity. After thematic analysis of the information's, six themes named suitable destination, satisfactory structural condition, and privacy at cyclone center, safety and security at cyclone center, sanitation and hygiene, gender sensitive support are addressed as most prominent issues. The study revealed that, the structural condition and distance of cyclone center are not suitable for women especially in Bhola and Barishal district. The privacy, security and hygiene management are so vulnerable there. There are some incidents of verbal violation and unexpected touch from the strangers at Bhola region. The unfavorable condition of cyclone shelters led the women not to take shelter that results in further risk during disaster. This study will help the policy makers to focus on gender sensitivity of the specific problem at coastal areas of Bangladesh.

Key word: Gender sensitivity, security, privacy, hygiene management, cyclone shelter.

Introduction

Cyclone shelters play an important role in facilitating effective adaptation measures and mitigating the loss of human life, especially for residents in the coastal regions of Bangladesh. These structures provide a highly recognized form of infrastructure support for disaster management in Bangladesh. Cyclone shelters in the coastal region of Bangladesh have effectively safeguarded human lives and livestock during previous cyclonic events. During the cyclone Sidr, 15 percent of the impacted population took shelter in authorized cyclone shelters. (GoB, 2008).

Bangladesh is extremely vulnerable to climate change impacts and is extensively exposed to several natural disasters. The low-lying coastal regions next to the Bay of Bengal are especially prone to monsoon flooding, cyclones, and associated storm surges. Paul and Routray (2010, p.

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478) observed that the population density in coastal areas has increased by fourfold during the past century. Furthermore, as a result of the populations bloom, numerous individuals are compelled to inhabit low-lying coastal regions, which tend to be particularly vulnerable to a wide range of natural disasters. Following the destructive cyclone in Bangladesh in April 1991, a number of strategies and infrastructural development initiatives were immediately undertaken. Khalil (1992), for example, highlighted the importance of rapidly executing activities and procedures to mitigate the impact and reduce losses in cyclone disasters. Undoubtedly, an early warning is used frequently as one of the most preferred strategies (MoEF, 2008). Cyclone shelters, built during the period from 1991 to 2007, were constructed by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED). Almost all the cyclone shelters are used for different purposes like education center, community center, health center, office building etc. during non-emergency period. After cyclone Sidr, World Bank constructed some cyclone shelters in the coastal districts. However, according to BRCS (2007), constructing cyclone centers remains the most effective option for successfully preventing mass disasters in the coastal towns of Bangladesh. 42,675 trained volunteers are currently engaged in disaster management and relief activities under the Cyclone Preparedness Program. (CPP), which is jointly operated by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and the Bangladesh Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MDMR) As a result of insufficient formal cyclone shelters, an extra 6,788 informal shelters such as Upazila offices, hospitals, and neighboring houses were made available during Cyclone Amphan in 2020. The number of cyclone shelters that are functional, partially functional, or equipped with basic facilities is uncertain. (Hadi et al., 2021). In a research conducted by Paul (2008), it was discovered that a considerable number of respondents returned home as a result of overcrowding after Cyclone Sidr. Following Cyclone Aila, a significant majority of the individuals who did not evacuate returned to their homes because the cyclone shelter did not have enough capacity to accommodate those (Ahsan et al., 2015). Typically, cyclone shelters were mostly used by affluent people, leaving those with fewer resources to seek safety in vulnerable and low-lying areas including embankments and trees (Paul, 2014). The government and non-governmental organizations implemented a series of initiatives to build cyclone shelters in areas that are at high risk. Nevertheless, these measures have proven to be slightly effective, primarily because to insufficient maintenance and financial resources (Hadi et al., 2021). However, considering the fact that local strategies for preventing and mitigating cyclone disasters greatly reduce the vulnerability of people (Paul and Routray, 2010), there is a lack of quality assurance for the cyclone centers.

Velotti et al. (2013) stated that an essential strategy for reducing the impact of cyclones is the temporary evacuation of the vulnerable population when a warning arrives. The evacuation can occur in two ways: horizontally, by moving away from the danger zone, or vertically, by relocating to a specified shelter within the danger zone. Although horizontal evacuation is the preferred method in advanced nations, it is rarely employed in developing nations due to their greater population, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient financial matters. Therefore, while developing nations such as Bangladesh depends on the utilization of cyclone shelters as part of their disaster risk management strategies. In 2009, the government as well as

development partners signed a memorandum of understanding for the development of more cyclone shelters throughout the coastal areas of the country (DMB, 2010). NGOs are currently constructing multipurpose social centers (CSs) as a component of their development efforts. According to Karim and Mimura (2008), out of a coastline population of 36 million, only 1.92 million people have access to shelter in the 2,400 CSs that are available and usable after a catastrophic disaster.

There is controversy on whether the existing cyclone centers are appropriate for women. The geographical appropriateness of these shelters was also a significant concern, as several were situated in remote and hard-to-reach areas (Mallick and Vogt, 2009). According to Paul and Dutt (2010), a substantial proportion of respondents, approximately 67 percent, deliberately decided not to take any emergency measures despite being instructed to evacuate during Cyclone Sidr in November 2007. Instead, they decided to stay in their residences. The indifferent attitude towards seeking shelter in cyclone centers should be investigated, as it has the potential to increase the probability of seeking shelter and ultimately safeguard lives. On the other hand, an essential consideration was the accessibility of a residence to a cyclone shelter, as not seeking security at a cyclone shelter. The average distance for the whole sample has been calculated as 1.53 km. According to the data, those who were within close proximity to a crisis center obtained shelter (Paul and Routray, 2010). Previous research, including this study, has investigated the determinants across all socio-demographic categories. It is alarming that they failed to prioritize women's challenges that could prevent them from acquiring to the cyclone center during emergencies. For instance, Ikeda (1995), Chowdhury et al. (1993), and Paul et al. (2010) have asserted that distance represents a significant obstacle when attempting to take safety at shelters. The majority of individuals in Bangladesh refrain from seeking shelter until the floodwaters penetrated their courtyards, making it difficult to travel a distance beyond 2.0 km (Choudhury et. al, 1993). However, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis from a gender perspective. Due to the traditional practice of wearing borkhas, which are apparel commonly worn by women in Bangladesh, it can be challenging for them to travel to more extensive locations. Once again, they bear a greater burden of duty for their family, offspring, and cattle. With all of these factors, the mobility of women may be somewhat limited. This aspect was not addressed in the earlier literature.

Women are particularly susceptible to various types of disasters, whether they are natural or caused by humans, due to their socially assigned role. This susceptibility arises from factors such as their mental disposition, physical characteristics, and other social factors (Mitchell T, 2007). Women bear heightened responsibilities during calamities since they must also attend to their own well-being. These factors frequently exacerbate their disease, affecting both their mental and physical well-being. The male members of the household provide little support in this matter. The hurricane Aila triggered a total population of 290,327 being affected in several coastal areas, including Koira, Dacope, and Shyamnagar Upazila. The number of women in the age range from 18 to 60 years was 87,377, while the number of men was 80,406. The number of boys in the age brackets of 5-18 years was 43766, while the number of females affected in this age group was 47219 (Action Aid 2009). Reports of sexual harassment along the journey to

shelters are prevalent. A significant proportion of women experience sexual harassment, as well as incidents of theft and robbery. Sometimes, the female members of the family decline to seek refuge in cyclone shelters due to their negative previous experiences. There is numerous proofs of women being subjected to harassment, both mentally and physically, in cyclone shelters, which prevents them from seeking shelter during emergencies. The study conducted by Chowdhury et al. in 2015, Various studies indicate that waterborne infections can lead to fatalities, along with risks such as snake bites, accidents from collapses, and incidents involving collapsing structures, particularly affecting women. Additionally, the absence of adequate medical facilities, malnutrition, lack of access to safe drinking water, and inadequate sanitation infrastructure contribute to the spread of diseases, as sanitation systems are often compromised or destroyed. Pregnant women, nursing mothers, and women with disabilities face challenges during the cyclone season.

Based on past research, the majority of participants indicated a preference for taking shelter at a nearby residence or religious establishment rather than a designated cyclone center. The area of each circle denotes the maximum range of where people can seek refuge. The condition of cyclone center may be a factor of not taking the shelter. A very few studies has explored the gender sensitivity of the infrastructures. The main objective of this present study is to know the present condition of the cyclone shelters in respect to gender sensitive issues so that it can be helpful for further research regarding this matter as well as for the design of gender sensitive cyclone shelter.

Objective of the Study:

The board objective of the study is to systematically evaluate the gender sensitivity of cyclone centers by analyzing infrastructure, policies, and practices.

The specific objectives are,

- To identify and address the potential gaps and challenges that may affect the safety, well-being, and comfort of women during cyclone events.
- To analysis comparatively about gender sensitivity among Barisal, Bhola and Satkhira.
- To explore actionable recommendations for improving gender-inclusive measures and promoting an environment that caters to the diverse needs of women in times of crisis.

Methodology:

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological methodology to get an understanding of the level of gender sensitivity at cyclone centers. Consequently, we adopted the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) to understand the participants' subjective experiences from their perspective.

According to administration, 19 among the 64 districts have been designated as coastal districts. Due to limitations in time and resources, it is not feasible to evaluate all 19 coastal districts in this context. Once more, The Joint Need Assessment report by CARE Bangladesh (2020) indicates that during the recent severe storm, eight districts were impacted, namely Satkhira, Khulna, Jashore, Bagerhat, Pirojpur, Barguna, Bhola, and Patuakhali.

Rationally, the study was employed at five coastal unions of three districts. The study focuses on the outcomes of 12 villages located in two unions (Gabura and Padmapukur) inside the Shyamnagar Upazila of Satkhira District. We conducted an evaluation of data collected from 10 villages located in two unions, namely Somvupur and Sonapur, within the Tazumuddin Upazilla of Bhola district. Additionally, we researched the Bangobandhu Colony in Jagua union, which is under the Barisal Sadar Upazilla in Barishal. More precisely, it focuses on the regions that have been most impacted by the cyclones in recent times.

Respondents were selected by the purposive sampling method. Women who had to spend one night at cyclone center were eligible for interview after giving consent. 10 women were chosen from each union. As the study focused five unions, the study employed a total of 50 comprehensive interviews. Prior to data collection, we established certain criteria for inclusion and exclusion in this study. We exclusively chose responders who met the specified inclusion and exclusion criteria. Below are two established standards.

1. The respondents might be residents of areas subjected to cyclones, requiring them to seek shelter in cyclone centers during disasters.
2. Respondents who remain at the cyclone center for a minimum of 24 hours.

Initially, we conducted five sample interviews in the field (Jagua, Barishal) to improve the questionnaire. Data were collected throughout December 2023 from the defined study area.

The data obtained from face-to-face questionnaire interviews were validated through the application of Key Informant Interviews (KII). A total of five key informant interviews were done with the following individuals: one local school teacher, one Union Parishad member, two youth leaders, and one NGO worker.

For the sake of the consent process, the respondents who took part were informed that their participation was voluntary and would be kept confidential. The findings of the survey would not disclose the participants' identities, and all individuals provided verbal consent. The interview was recorded using a mobile device and extended for a duration of 20 to 30 minutes. In some cases, it was written because some respondents were reluctant in the recording process. The interviews recorded later were carefully transcribed and investigated by other researchers to ensure accurate accuracy.

After returning from the field, the researchers systematically organized and synthesized the information they had gathered from the interviews using various approaches. The research assistant at the field level transcribed and edited the transcriptions of interviews, accurately quoting the respondents' remarks without any alterations. The data were gathered and recorded in a distinct file, assigned a code number, and organized according to the participant number. This study is solely qualitative in nature. Thematic analysis has been employed to analyze the results.

Theoretical Framework

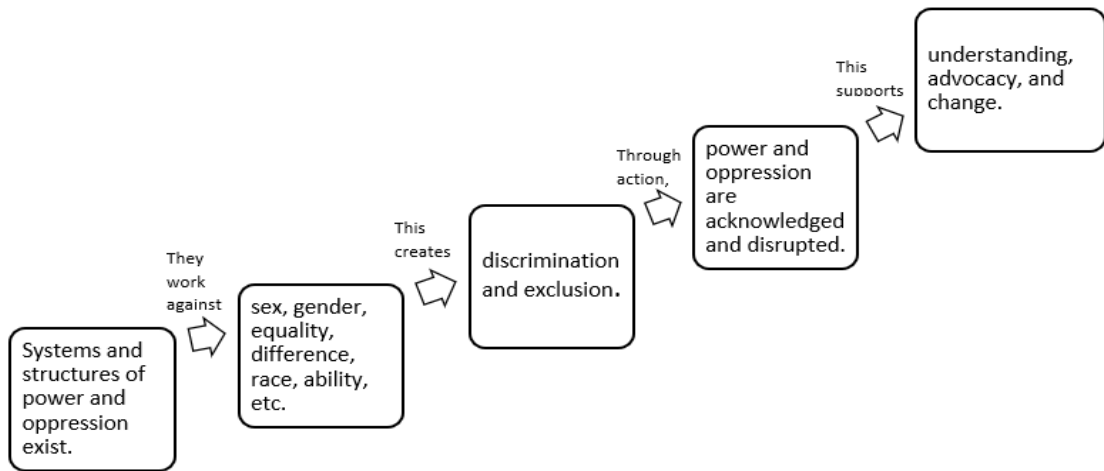
Feminist environmental theories emphasize the vital necessity for a gendered analysis of environmental concerns in order to protect the survival of vulnerable populations. A feminist approach to climate justice thus involves addressing climate change as a complex social issue

while also engaging in an intersectional analysis that challenges unequal power relations based on gender and other characteristics such as socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, nationality, ability, sexual orientation, age, and so on. This analysis promotes policies that address the fundamental causes of inequality, change the dynamics of power, and promote women's rights.. (Alston,2015).

Feminism is concerned with the concepts of intersectionality, dimensions of social life, social inequity, and social reform. Men and women should be politically, economically, and socially equal, and this idea does not accept distinctions or similarities between men, nor does it advocate for excluding males or exclusively supporting women's concerns. Feminist theory supports transformation and understanding by recognizing and challenging power and injustice.

Figure 1

Model of Feminist Theory



Source: Arinder JA, 2020

Assessing the gender sensitivity of cyclone centers in coastal Bangladesh using feminist theory might provide useful insights into how these centers fulfill the needs of women, who frequently encounter particular challenges during natural disasters.

Feminist theory focuses on understanding the gender inequalities and power relations in a variety of societal contexts, including disaster management. In the instance of cyclone centers, a feminist study would take into account issues such as resource availability, decision-making authority, and societal norms those impact women’s experiences before, during, and after the cyclone.

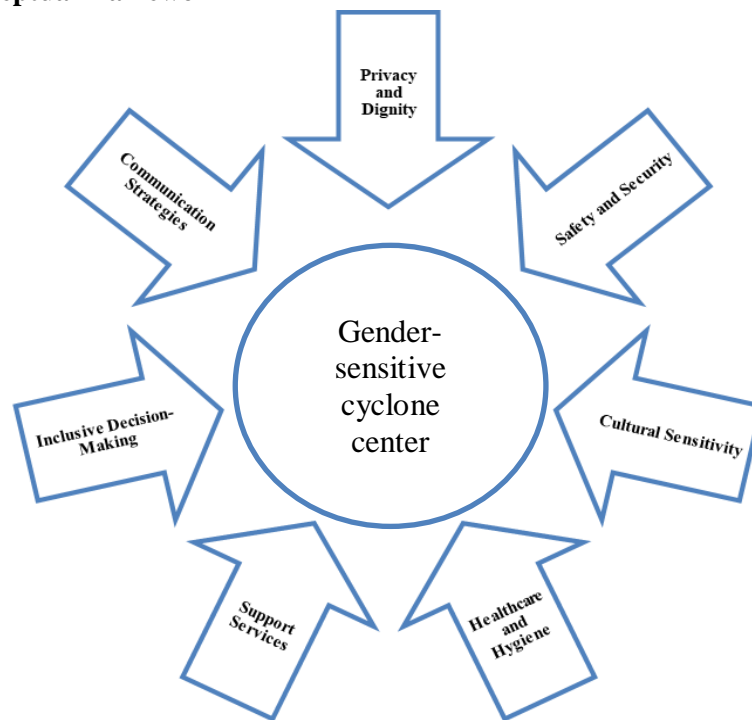
Key aspects to consider in assessing gender sensitivity include the accessibility refers to the mobility challenges or caregiving responsibilities, adequate transportation options available for women to reach these centers. The concern is about Safety and Security. A safe and secure environment what will ensure the privacy to prevent from gender based violence for women and girls. Again, The decision-making processes related to cyclone preparedness and response used to implement the voices taken into account in the planning and management of cyclone centers. Access to healthcare, hygiene facilities, and maternal care need to be insure to make a cyclone center gender sensitive.

Using a feminist perspective to examine cyclone centers allows stakeholders to identify gender disparities and layout more inclusive and effective disaster risk reduction and management methods. This strategy can help to construct more resilient communities and reduce cyclones' disproportionate impact on women and marginalized groups in coastal Bangladesh.

Conceptual framework

In order to be gender-sensitive, a cyclone center must adhere to specific criteria. Women, specifically, may possess specific needs for privacy and dignity particularly in crowded and emergency situations. Gender-sensitive cyclone centers provide separate facilities for men, women, and multiple gender identities, ensuring that everyone has a safe and private environment. Furthermore, gender-sensitive centers have been designed to operate secure environments for individuals of all genders. This comprises sufficient lighting, safe sleeping provisions, and the attendance of security staff to prevent any incidents of harassment or violence. Various gender identities might include distinct cultural variables and prerequisites. Gender-sensitive cyclone centers consider these concerns, including culturally sensitive services and accommodations to ensure that all individuals feel valued and included. Women, individuals who are pregnant, and others with distinctive health requirements might require access to suitable healthcare facilities. Gender-sensitive centers are equipped with the requisite medical resources to meet the health problems of diverse gender identities. This approach promotes an environment that is more inclusive and supportive, both during and after cyclones.

Figure 2 Conceptual framework



Source: Authors own generated framework

In our study, we selected the following indicators to declare a cyclone center as gender sensitive. Respondents were asked several questions about the issues. If the respondents state positively about indicators, we can prefer that as gender sensitive. Briefly,

- **Inclusive decision making** refers to inclusive shelter and service considering pregnant woman, empowerment programs, inclusive communication, safe space and privacy.
- **Support services** includes facilities for personal hygiene and sanitation, Consider the needs of pregnant women, nursing mothers, reproductive health care, menstrual hygiene products and gender-sensitive mental health support.
- **Cultural sensitivity** refers to respect religious practices, recognition of specific needs of minority group and sensitivity to trauma management.
- **Health care and hygiene** explains disposal facilities of menstrual hygiene products, access to clean and safe water for personal hygiene and sanitation, infection prevention and control measures, hand washing stations with soap and water, stock of first aid kits and medical supplies, a dedicated area for emergency medical care, pediatric healthcare services and vaccinations for children.
- **privacy and dignity** means separate sleeping, bathing, and sanitation facilities for men, women, and any other gender identities, safe space breastfeeding, facilities for breastfeeding, lighting and Security, prevent incidents of harassment and ensures the overall safety of individuals and protect the confidentiality of individuals.
- **Safety and security** states proper lighting, barriers to prevent unauthorized entry, employ trained security personnel ensure security staff, installment of security cameras.

By integrating these considerations, cyclone centers can contribute to a more inclusive and gender-sensitive approach to disaster management. Respondents were asked about the issues of gender-sensitivity to explore the expected objectives.

Study finding, Analysis and Discussion:

Socio-demographic Information

The demographic profile is a key indicator of people's situation and condition of coping up with the cyclone center. Table 1 indicates that the respondents' age range is between 20 and 60, where 14 respondents are male who are the caregivers of female respondents. Most of the members are below higher secondary level as they are less aware about gender sensitivity (Table 1).

Table 1 Socio- demographic profile of the respondents

Category	Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	14	28%
	Female	36	72%
Location (Union)	Jagua (Barishal)	10	20%
	Somvupur (Bhola)	14	28%
	Sonapur (Bhola)	06	12%
	Gabura (Satkhira)	11	22%
	Padmapukur (Satkhira)	09	18%

Age	20-30	19	38%
	30-40	15	30%
	40-50	09	18%
	50-60	07	14%
Marital Status	Married	37	74%
	Single	13	26%
Educational qualification	PSC	12	24%
	JSC	05	10%
	SSC	23	46%
	HSC	10	20%

Source: Field study: December, 2023

After analyzing the information, the common issues have been categorized in six themes: suitable destination, satisfactory structural condition, and privacy at cyclone center, safety and security at cyclone center, sanitation and hygiene, gender sensitive support.

Suitable Destination

Respondents were asked about the destination of cyclone center from their house. The destination is a great factor for taking the decision of going to cyclone center or not. As the destination is not suitable for the mobility of women, they avoid going there. In this regard, respondent no 41 stated that, *“It is very risky to go to the cyclone center during disaster. There is a possibility of accident so that we remain home for safety”* (A 47 years old respondent, own translated interview). In the previous study, it was found that many abortions and miscarriages occur because of the unavailability of separate space and for walking long distances to reach cyclone shelters (Paul, 2012). Respondent no 12 claimed that, *“My friend was pregnant at the time of the cyclone in 2007. She stayed at the cyclone center at the time of the cyclone. The overcrowded and suffocating environment made her sick and miscarriage happened. After that incident, young women including me avoid going there.”* (A 35 years old respondent, own translated interview)

Key Informant no 2 (youth leader from Satkhira) stated that, *“Nowadays, there are enough cyclone centers made for the climate-vulnerable population but the people don't want to go there at the time of preparedness. They started taking shelter during disaster, which is very unsafe. We try to convince them to take shelter earlier but they used to ignore it”* (Jannatul Naeem, Youth leader from Satkhira, own translated interview).

Satisfactory Structural Condition

Literatures revealed that, by the mid-2000s, the number of shelters increased to 3,976. However, 1,576 shelters were severely affected due to poor management and maintenance. An overwhelming number of multi-purpose shelters have limited maintenance funds. (Paul, 2012). According to the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (2013), the number of shelters in operation was 3,751 in 15 coastal districts; out of these, 7% have become dilapidated and unusable due to river erosion and inadequate maintenance (Ahsan et al., 2016). In this study, the poor structural condition of cyclone centers has been examined and revealed. But there are mixed explanations from each study area. Respondent no 19 from Satkhira stated that,

“The structural condition of cyclone center is satisfactory and it is near to their house. Government and other non-government organizations often visit this area and try to solve the miser ability of cyclone affected people. As a result, the infra-structure of this study area is turning better day by day” (A 30 years old respondent, own translated interview)

Meanwhile, the scenario is quite different at the other two areas. Respondent no 32 from Bhola claimed about the dis-satisfactory condition of existing cyclone center. She stated that, *The structure is vulnerable and there is lack of maintenance behind it. The cyclone center is being used only during the emergency period. The authority doesn't have any headache to improve the condition.* (A 26 years old respondent, own translated interview). Respondent no 48 from Barisal stated that, *“In our area, the primary school is used as cyclone center. The present condition the school is below standard. The color and texture of the walls is decreasing day by day. At the emergency period of Amphan, the ceiling fan felled down suddenly.”* (A 26 years old respondent, own translated interview)

Privacy in Cyclone center

Women reported feeling suffocated inside the crowded shelter. They expressed concern over having less or no separate toilets and space for men and women. The majority of the female respondents were escorted by husbands to the cyclone shelter during an emergency. This reflects that women are not allowed to go outside of their houses alone. The perceived responses revealed that most important issue for women in CSs during disaster is separate room for them. This view is really important for social-cultural condition of the country. For example, in rural areas of Bangladesh women are not willing to go anywhere if they have to stay close with male persons or without any separation. Moreover, it is the main cause of non-response of women for going to cyclone shelter during cyclone (Amin et al., 2016).

In this regard, respondent no 36 mentioned that, *“We feel very uncomfortable sharing the same room with male strangers. There is no safe corner for changing dress or other privacy concern. As we maintain porda, it is very difficult for us.”* (A 42 years old respondent, own translated interview). It is very difficult for the neo-natal mothers as they need to breastfeed their children but they feel hesitated about the privacy concern. Information from the field visit, we acquire that there is no separate space for breast-feeding. In this regard, Respondent no 34 stated that, *“At the time of Amphan, my 2 year old son cried of Brest milk in front of the crowd. As the place is congested and there no private space, I couldn't fulfill my child demand. In addition, some teenager boys pointed me and gossiped about me. I felt very ashamed and decided that I will never go the cyclone center”.* (A 28 years old respondent, own translated interview). KII no 4 mentioned that, *It is true that there is no separate room or corner for women. Actually the disaster happens occasionally and the cyclone centers are used for various purpose. This multipurpose use of cyclone center hides the privacy concern. Authority should take initiative about the issue”* (Hasina akter, school teacher from Bhola, own translated interview).

Safety and Security at cyclone center

Expected security for women Security for women is an important factor in cyclone shelter. When the question about the women security was asked to the respondents, most priority was

given for separate room for women according to the previous study. The respondent of our study has claimed about the un-availability of separate room or corner. Besides there are more alarming issues has arrived from the previous studies. Women have to face sometimes sexual harassment in cyclone shelter that lead to choose separate room facilities for women at the time of emergency (Mallik, 2011). In this regard, KII informant 4 stated that, *“The female feel afraid all the time staying at cyclone center. There is no specific lighting and other facilities that makes women more vulnerable. The less educated male used to irritate much. They used to abuse verbally by delivering any slung or sometimes they intentionally touch their skin or cloth. As there is an issue of honor, women don’t raise the voice against it rather than avoiding cyclone center.”* (Hasina akter, school teacher from Bhola, own translated interview). Women feel unsafe at cyclone center but they didn’t try to express that. Respondent no 23 stated that, *“I didn’t want to stay at cyclone center but situation bund me to do that. I was there for two nights but could sleep afloat for one hour. There is no enough lighting and other security concern so that I afraid to sleep. I felt that there is greater disaster for women is the security concern of cyclone center in spite of natural disaster”* (A 24 years old respondent, own translated interview).

Most of the women try to stay at home during disaster as there is no suitable and safe environment for women. On this point, respondent no 48 stated that, *“The experience of staying cyclone center is not satisfactory. I had to go there at the time of sidr, 2007. Following the experience I decided not to stay there anymore. I have a daughter and I never want to throw her in this type of situation. If any unexpected incidents happen to my daughter, my family will die before dead”* (A 39 years old respondent, own translated interview).

Sanitation and Hygiene

Water, sanitation, hygiene, and health (WASH2) facilities are crucial for human health and well-being, as their absence impacts the quality of life and undermines fundamental human rights. As of 2017, 2.2 billion people still lacked safely managed water, 4.2 billion lacked safely managed sanitation, and 3 billion lacked access to basic hand-washing facilities (UN-Water/WHO 2000). Rural people experience the greatest hindrance to accessing safe water due to their socioeconomic standings, and the unavailability of safe drinking water, particularly due to natural disasters (McClean & Moore, 2005), which exposes them to various health risks. Shymnagor Upazila is one of the disasterprone areas in Bangladesh, where safe water scarcity is increasing due to the continuous impacts of climate change.

Previous studies examined about the sanitation and hygiene at rural context but they didn’t mention about the situation of cyclone center. For example, Risks of communicable disease outbreaks in affected populations are highly dependent on the availability of safe water, sanitation, and health-care facilities, the tolerance of the immune systems of the population, as well as the degree of crowding of the affected area (Rafa et al., 2021). When examining sanitation and hygiene at cyclone center, Respondents were facing a number of issues because of insufficient and inadequate sanitation facilities at cyclone center. Respondent no 15 stated that, *“There is no separate toilet and frequent flow of water. The proper sanitation is a*

challenging issue here. The congested and ultra-use of toilet is not bearable at that time” (A 22 years old respondent, own translated interview). The perceived sanitation facilities of the cyclone shelters were very much unhygienic. Respondents stated about unhealthy situation in the cyclone shelter and they observed derelict sanitation facilities. The separate bathroom for men and women is top most prioritize from the women of study area. Respondent no 33 stated that, *“Women staying at cyclone shelter including me, try to avoid the toilet as it is very unhygienic. Along with hygiene, it exploits out religious and social value.”* (A 45 years old respondent, own translated interview).

There is lack of clean and safe water for personal hygiene and sanitation. At some cyclone center, there is availability of water but lack of soap and other washing equipment. Along with this, women who are passing days with menstruation are more vulnerable at cyclone center. Respondent no 26 stated that, *“There no special hygiene management system for the menstruation time of women. As we use cloth, we feel scarcity of washing and drying them. Moreover, there are no sanitary napkin facilities in terms of emergency. We forgot to carry soap, while coming here. As there are no soap facilities, we need to stay unhygienic”* (A 21 years old respondent, own translated interview). As there is lack of basic sanitation facilities, it is not possible to provide advanced healthcare option. In this regard, KII informant no 03 stated that, *“The maintenance of sanitation and hygiene is quite tough because of overcrowded and unaware people. Red Crescent society along with other organization tries to response at emergency medical help providing emergency treatment with first aid kit and other equipment. Some organization provided sanitary napkin but the disposal of it, is challenging and critical. Emergency health care corners need to be established for the advancement of climate vulnerable.”* (Polash, Community member of Red Crescent Society from Bhola, own translated interview).

Gender sensitive support

An alarming result has been found by analyzing the available information about the existing cyclone shelters of Bangladesh. Most of the cyclone shelters are not gender sensitive. Basic gender needs like separation toilet facilities, available women’s space, and private space for pregnant woman and nursing mother is rare in cyclone shelters. Reproductive health care, gender sensitive mental health support is quite absent in at the cyclone center. Respondent no 16 stated that, *“The pregnant women feel very miserable at the cyclone center, some of them delivered baby at emergency situation. Though, situation has been managed but there is some lacking of specialized hygiene maintenance”* (A 23 years old respondent, own translated interview). But it is a matter of good practices that, the cultural sensitivity used to honor.

Comparative analysis of gender sensitivity regarding study area

There is 2500 cyclone center for the climate vulnerable people over the country. The situation can be different according to the geographical location, social and cultural values. In this study we examined the gender sensitivity among the mentioned study areas. The comparative analysis shows that, Situation is quite satisfactory at Satkhira. They have locational suitability and satisfactory infrastructure than the other two districts. Besides, the respondents from jagua,

Barishal, have complained about the destination and structural condition. There are separate washroom and accommodation for the respondents of Satkhira and Bhola, while the respondent of Barishal stated negatively. Women in special situation, such as pregnancy, breast-feeding and menstruating women used to feel unsafe and uncomfortable staying at cyclone center. The safety and security is alarming at the cyclone shelters. Though respondents from the Satkhira are in satisfactory position, women from the other study area feel unsafe. Sometimes they are the victim of unpleasant situation from the male counterpart. The condition of sanitation and hygiene is moderate. There is a few availability of personal hygiene. The segment of sanitation and management need to be improved for the betterment of women by providing emergency health care center, pediatric care corner, sanitary napkin disposal system and first aid kit. The overall gender sensitive approach is negative for all three study areas. Especially there should a concern over the pregnant and lactating mothers. It is a matter of satisfaction that, the cultural sensitivity is respected by everyone and the confidentiality of personality is maintained with consideration. At the time of disaster, people of all religion freely practice their religious ritual for escaping from the danger. The following table addresses the difference among the selected three districts regarding gender sensitivity. That will help the further research to focus on specific area and implement specific measures that needed.

Table 2 Comparison based on thematic analysis

Theme	Sub-theme	Area		
		Barishal	Satkhira	Bhola
suitable destination	Satisfactory destination from home to shelter	No	Yes	No
satisfactory structural condition	Satisfactory infrastructure	No	Yes	Mostly
	Proper maintenance	No	Yes	No
privacy at cyclone center	Separate room for men and women	No	Yes	Mostly
	Safe space for breast feeding	No	No	No
	Separate toilet facilities			
	Protecting confidentiality of individuals	Yes	Yes	Yes
safety and security at cyclone center	Separate accommodation	No	Yes	Mostly
	Proper lighting	No	Mostly	No
	Safe from sexual harassment	No	Yes	No
	Employ responsible person for security	No	No	No
sanitation and hygiene	clean and safe water for personal hygiene and sanitation		Mostly	No
	infection prevention and control measures	No	No	No
	hand washing stations with soap and water	No	Yes	No
	stock of first aid kits and medical supplies	No	No	No
	pediatric healthcare services	No	No	No
gender sensitive support	Consider the needs of pregnant women, nursing mothers	No	No	No

	reproductive health care	No	No	No
	menstrual hygiene products	No	No	No
	gender-sensitive mental health support	No	No	No

(Authors own generated table)

Discussion

Cyclone Shelter is one of the best means to disaster preparedness and Good perception about the cyclone shelter facilities is a prerequisite for disaster management in the coastal region of Bangladesh (Chowdhury et al, 1998; Benavente et al., 2006; Alam and Collins, 2010).

However, a location suitability research CS revealed the picture of the cyclone shelter facilities and it is indicated in the research that location choice of the cyclone shelters by the planners are mostly unsatisfactory (Alam and Collins, 2010; Mallik, 2011). This study also studied the perceived cyclone shelter location satisfaction and found that the venerable groups are not satisfied with the location of the cyclone shelters in their locality. However, very few research was conducted to find out the women's requirement on cyclone shelter facilities. Therefore, comparing the results of this study with other similar studies is quite difficult.

Moreover, the study revealed that, the cyclone vulnerable community in the coastal Bangladesh with highly representative vulnerable group of people, especially for women. As a result, the respondents have put the real picture of the cyclone shelter facilities on the previous table (table 2). The perceived status of the cyclone shelter facilities also indicated the cause of big number causality during disaster in Bangladesh by revealing the perception of the facilities provided in the cyclone shelters. The indication from recent cyclone appears one of the most effective tools for reducing cyclone hazard is cyclone shelter. But the existing cyclone shelters in the coastal regions especially Jagua and Lalmohon union were not properly located, designed, facilitated and maintained.

The study revealed that the facilities of the Cyclone shelter were not satisfactory according to the most of the respondents. This study also revealed that the establishment of shelter and available running facilities in the studied community was not taken community perception. The situation is better than previous but that is not yet satisfactory. According to Rafa et al.,(2021), the respondents claimed about women security because only 62% respondents think no separate room have in the CS. Food and valuable storage facilities were very less (25%) and still now is not recognizable (45%) and there was a scarcity in safe drinking water (36% DTW). In our study, we found sufficient structural implementation at Satkhira but other gender sensitivity concern did not valued. One of the most important issues is sanitation facility. According to survey result, CSs have no usable sanitation and most of the sanitation was unhealthy. The cyclone centers of the study area don't have adequate safety and security, accessibility of gender sensitive component and resource allocation specially hygiene facilities and maternal health care. The feminist theory is concern about the availability of gender sensitive approach. This approach can contribute to building more resilient communities and reducing the disproportionate impact of cyclones on women and marginalized groups in coastal Bangladesh.

The feminist highlighted the resource allocation, safety and security, accessibility and many other aspects. Our present study has revealed such components of gender sensitive approach.

Most important matters for increasing people numbers to take shelter during emergency period are women separate facilities, location, warning system and awareness among local people about going cyclone shelter. Additionally, proper dissemination of early warning and government and non-government partnerships for relief and rehabilitation activities should be prioritized to ensure pro-poor disaster management activities.

Conclusion and recommendation

Cyclone shelters comprise a widely acceptable form of infrastructural support for disaster management in Bangladesh. To overcome such constraints, in addition to the participation of people, the societal should be evaluated with respect to the introduction of effective planning practices. The most importance of this study consists into the understanding of people opinions about cyclone shelter and their experience as women. The gender sensitivity is not satisfactory according to the study. Meanwhile, there are various external factors are responsible for not prioritizing the gender based approach. There may be some recommendation based on Key informant interview and observation study.

Most of the families are depended on their male members and they all are farmers, fishermen, workers of brick-field. After disaster they cannot go to the work, their crops are damaged and so they face financial problem for a long time and most of them are depended on the NGO's for loan and other financial support. Sometimes they get a little amount of Government's reliefs. This kind of economic instability is more important concern for the people of coastal area than the gender sensitivity concern. Again, Most of the girls have to marry before completing their High School level education and there is not a single college in Padmapukur Union. Though there are enough Primary School for the children, but after disaster they cannot continue their education for a certain time because of the damaged roads, financial problem and illness. They are depended on their husband and male counterpart for basic human need. This situation small minded so that they have less demand. In addition, there is only a Community Clinic in Padmapukur Union and the facilities are very poor especially for women. The only way to get proper medical support is to cross the river by boat that is very dangerous for women and children during and after disaster. Most of the women do not get proper menstrual equipment. As, cyclone is an occasional incident, they can't even think of the health care at cyclone center rather than at their community.

Though all the villagers face many problems during and after disaster but they do not focus any kind of Gender Based Violence during disaster at cyclone shelter. But the lack of gender sensitivity forces them for not going cyclone shelter. This kind of behavior can increase the death toll of women as a result of disaster.

Naturally women and children are the most vulnerable to disasters both natural and manmade. In a country like Bangladesh where patriarchy is very much in practice, condition of women are worse compared to any other country. Women are the key to any rebuilding and rehabilitation process. They play a vital role in both family life and in livelihood activities. That's why

women needs should be kept in mind while taking any initiatives for development. Gender issues should be considered while designing cyclone shelters. All the cyclone shelters should be made gender sensitive and gender friendly as well as eco-friendly. Though some of the gender steps have already been implemented in few coastal districts but it has to be implemented all over the coastal region. The social, economic and political context for gender especially women in Bangladesh makes them overall more vulnerable to climate disasters like cyclone. Although women in Bangladesh are generally more vulnerable than men, gender related perceptions are changing in the society.

As the recent study has revealed the lacking of gender sensitivity, the authority and policy makers need to take proper initiative to make a cyclone shelter gender-friendly.

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. It has been done by self –funding.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank all the studied population coastal part for their collaboration in the framework of the gender sensitive approach. Md. Newaz Sharif & Tanjimul Hassan Tamal gave generously of their time and expertise to help to inform and guide the respondents during data collection. They also gave their tremendous effort at the transcription of the collected data.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest

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Accessibility of Five Capitals on Hijra Community to Achieve Sustainable Livelihood: A Population-based Study on Barishal City

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Abstract

In Bangladesh, Hijra identity is inextricably related to the community's traditional livelihood. The prevalent narrative presents them as a homogeneous, close-knit community that has been pushed into stigmatized livelihood alternatives with limited long-term prospects. This paper intends to examine the accessibility of livelihood assets for achieving a sustainable livelihood for the Hijra people in Barishal and its interconnections with their present livelihoods. Additionally, the study examines the lives and livelihoods of numerous Hijras who have utilized their agency to carve out a position of acceptability in larger society. The quantitative research approach (N=60, population-based study) is used through questionnaire survey for the study by descriptive statistical analysis method. The result concludes that they have limited access to livelihood assets eg., knowledge, education and skill opportunities (human capital), employment opportunity, access to finance matters like indebt from financial organizations and financial services (financial capital), land, agriculture, livestock and fisheries (natural capital), infrastructures like accommodation, transport, water, sanitation, energy facilities (physical capital), and rapport build up/ affinity through various supports (social capital), and needs to improve their resource accessibilities and resource utilization for sustainable livelihood and needs to further support for interventions from government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donor agencies.

Keywords: Hijra, livelihood assets/capitals, resource accessibility, resource utilization, sustainable livelihood

1. Introduction

The word '*Hijra*' was introduced a century ago and is commonly used in the Indian subcontinent to denote transvestites, transgender, intersex, eunuch, and hermaphrodite males (Chakrapani, 2010; Hahm, 2010). Hijras introduce themselves as persons who are neither male nor female without genitalia and have a distinct bodily structure, are socially ostracized, and incapable of sexual feeling in Bangladesh (Sarker and Pervin 2020). *Hijra* are denied their several rights in society due to their gender identity. In Bangladesh, Hijras are people whose gender identities are not based on their biological sex and who do not conform to gender stereotypes (binaries of male and female). In November 2013, the government of Bangladesh decided to recognize the *hijra* as a third gender. The Hijra subculture in Bangladesh is notable

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for its lower-class status within the Bangladeshi social system (Hossain, 2017). Traditionally, *hijras* are essentially hired for entertaining weddings, birth rituals and other celebrations in rural Bangladesh. These dogmatic activities are uncertain, however, gradually losing their traditional occupation, making harsh reality for them to survive. Mostly lives are as isolated life, and even families abandon them. Hijras are being compelled to work in the sex industry as an alternative form of livelihood, as they are not readily accepted elsewhere.

According to the Ministry of Social Welfare, there are about 10,000 Hijra people in Bangladesh who are ‘recognized as third gender (Mitra, 2018)’ in November 2013, but some rights groups claim that the actual number of hijra is about half a million (Gayle, 2014). In an interview with New age newspaper, our former social welfare minister Rashed Khan Menon mentioned in the parliament of Bangladesh that ‘the number of Hijra people stood around 11,039 in the country’. According to District Social Services Office of Barishal (2019), there are currently 60 *hijra* live in Barishal city corporation area who are medically examined and registered as hijra (Barta24.com, 2019.10.26).

Although the government provides their human rights, civil and political rights, statistics show that they cannot properly achieve their socio-economic, political, cultural and legal rights like education, health, housing, and employment opportunities. Due to social stigma, people do not have equal chances or rights. They are deprived their rights and possibilities not only by society but also by the state apparatuses (Shuvo, 2018). It is well-known that the hijra community has been impoverished since long time ago. Vocational tailoring, computer and parlor (beautifying) training have been given by governments to the hijras to improve their status. In Barishal city, 48 old hijras are being given special old age allowance of Tk. 600 per month under safety net. As the government is working to provide them with permanent accommodation but *hijras* of Barishal are neglected (Rayhan, 2019).

The Hijra community in Barishal city still lives inhumanely in different slums, including *Polashpur*, *Rasulpur* colony of the Barishal city adjacent to Kirtonkhola River. Due to lack of accessibility in job and earning sectors, they earn by their traditional hijra work, dancing, singing, and raising money from the market. This is not standard enough for their lives and livelihood. It also creates uncertainty and vulnerability.

The study is mainly focused on the sustainable livelihood of hijra community. So the aim of the study is to explore the accessibility of their livelihood assets or capitals that can enhance their livelihood sustainability through resource utilization, structures and processes of their various livelihood strategies which are as follows.

1. To find out the access of human capital of Hijra community
2. To find out the access of social capital of Hijra community
3. To find out the access of natural capital of Hijra community
4. To find out the access of physical capital of Hijra community
5. To find out the access of financial capital of Hijra community

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Access of Human Capital

Hijras are denied their rights in numerous sectors including education, that has not been protected and despairingly ignored, due to their status as a marginalized minority that violates the constitution (Islam, 2016). There aren't enough educational opportunities and denying admission to educational institutions (Sifat and Shafi, 2020). *Hijras* do not receive formal education due to mistreat them by institutions, instructors and students, resulting in illiteracy, which hinders their work chances, creating a vicious cycle of hardship (Mitra, 2018). Almost every student at school experiences prejudice and discriminations (Khan and Habiba, 2021). The school atmosphere was not inclusive and safe. Teachers and students bullied them, mocked them, blackmailed them, and sexually abused them. They finally dropped out of school (Alizai et al., 2016). The impediment of their education is social views, poverty, the unacceptability of classmates, and the unfriendly environment of educational institutions (Hossen, 2019).

In Bangladesh, the health services and sexuality of the *hijra* culture are not sympathetic in practically (Khan et al., 2009). They can't go to the private hospital since they can't afford it and even they are ignored by government hospitals and medical institutions (Khan and Habiba, 2021). In public settings, the majority of *hijra* experiences prejudice and discrimination to health care, and are frequently ignored from medical personnel, particularly physicians and nurses (Aziz and Azhar, 2019 & Khan et al., 2009, Sifat and Shafi, 2020). Besides, the high expense of health care and the difficulties in obtaining it for trans and gender-variant persons can have an impact on their mental and physical wellbeing (Koch et al. 2019).

As a marginalized minority, *hijra* are denied rights in several sectors including education, housing, health and medical treatment, public spaces, and severe restrictions (Ahmed, 2017). Familial ostracism, physical and verbal abuse, forced sex, extortion of money and materials by the police, and arrests on false allegations are the causes of social exclusion (Mazumdar, 2016). Only registered *hijras* with an identity card are eligible to vote in national elections (Sifat and Shafi, 2020). As a result, transgender empowerment may be described as the process of obtaining and receiving different socio-political, legal, and other economic benefits and possibilities from the state or on one's own initiative for one's own growth and development (Sema and Islam, 2020). As a result, they are stigmatized, socially excluded, discriminated, and abused. During the transition process, transgender persons may face unique challenges in their professional growth since any previous experience will be given a new name and gender presentation (Pepper and Lorah, 2008; Scott et al., 2011).

In Bangladesh, the Ministry of Social Welfare has provided stipends for *hijra* children. 135, 762 and 1199 students got stipends in the 2012-2013, 2013-2014 and 2014-15 fiscal year respectively. In the fiscal year 2012-13 and 2013-14, 350 and 950 *Hijras* over the age of 18 years were received instruction and trained to enhance their abilities. After training, it is expected that 20 (twenty) *hijras* each district (from a total of 14 districts) will get taka 10,000/- (ten thousand) per head as a rehabilitation award and beneficiary in the 2014-15 fiscal year (Safa 2016).

2.2. The Access of Social Capital

The Hijra community receives below-average social support (Chaturvedi et al., 2018). When male biological informants continued to exhibit *meyeli shobhab* (feminine attitude and behavior) into adolescence and adulthood, they were subjected to different forms of neglect, humiliation, and abuse. They were frequently shunned from family gatherings, weddings, and funerals of their gender identity (Khan et al., 2009 and Islam, 2019). They frequently feel ashamed and hesitate to bring their eunuch children in social gatherings, and fearing of distress to others (Gedge, 2009). They are unable to participate in socio-economic, cultural activities and are not linked to mainstream social structures and institutions, and are also socially excluded as a process and a phenomenon (Beall and Piron, 2005).

Transgender people are compelled to perform their religious rites in private since different religious norms prevent them from doing so in a group setting (Dente, 2015). On the other hand, religious identity and rituals might occasionally help people integrate into mainstream culture (Snigdha, 2019).

Hijras maintained a huge network structure both within and outside of their group (Shawkat, 2016). The households and kinship units attach to other hijras in cities, towns, and villages, forming kinship relations in other ways as well, such as *maan/mama* (mother other than guru), *dadi* and *potri* (grandmother and granddaughter), *guru bhai* (guru brother, all *chelas* under a *guru* are considered brothers to each other), and *sangat sahelian* [friends] (Mokhter, 2020).

Due to the complexity of identity constructs, hijra effectively uses its personal social communication sites (eg. Facebook) systems to achieve in touch with friends and family, as determined by platform audience perceptions, affordances, and places and avoiding public humiliation in the physical sphere (Nova et al, 2021).

There is a socially accepted or manufactured belief that these transgenders or hijra persons can only undertake a limited number of jobs to support their livelihoods. They can only perform a few jobs to make ends meet, such as singing, dancing, and collecting money (Orthy, 2018).

2.3. The Access of Physical Capital

This hijra stated that they had been homeless since they fled their parents' homes as children. Most hijras lived in kinship groupings, akin to families, and followed a maternal leader known as a *guru*. Many landlords refuse to rent flats/room to hijras at all (Aziz and Azhar, 2019). Most of them lived with their families at first but were forced to leave due to various hardships. They are not allowed in the marketplace and public transportation or even to visit mosques or other religious organizations. They are not permitted to associate with ordinary people since they have an excluded gender identification. Hijra participants' living quarters are essentially a slum (Hossen, 2019). They can go to court, but they don't have easy access to legal services (Sifat and Shafi, 2020). They had to alter living conditions in order to continue their never-ending quest for a suitable location where they could live safely and comfortably, decently (Khan et al., 2009 and Sifat and Shafi, 2020). As a result, transgender people feel alienated from social and religious organizations, which regenerates their inferiority and alienates them from mainstream society in various ways.

2.4. The Access of Financial Capital

Hijra stated that they were unable to obtain employment due to a lack of education. They gather money from the market or the street by begging individually or as a group and through dancing and singing by *bazaar tola*, and *badhai* (blessing a newborn child) which is known as *hijra giri* (Mondal et al, 2020). During the present economic downturn and difficulties, many hijra began to engage in sex trade and trafficking (Khan et al., 2009). Due to getting a lack of job opportunities, many hijra lives their livelihood by sex trade from resorts to sex work, public performances, and panhandling (Aziz and Azhar, 2019). However, because of the lack of education and skills they endure the social stigma (Antony, 2018; Bhattacharyya & Basu, 2017). They were unable to make enough money due to a lack of institutional knowledge (Islam, 2016), and there was no longer any value or respect for their job (Khan et al., 2009; Husain, 2005). Even though they made money by doing so and handed over their whole earnings to their respective mothers called *Guru ma*. Their *Guru Ma* provided them money in needs. Therefore, their earnings were not their own (Khan and Habiba, 2021). Besides, there is no job quota for Hijra individuals in the formal sector (Hossen, 2019). They are unable to get work due to a lack of education or abilities or a refusal to acknowledge their gender nonconformity (Sifat and Shafi 2020). Registered hijras are given borrowing privileges and loans to help them establish their own business or job. Others, on the other hand, are denied the opportunity (Sifat and Shafi, 2020).

Their way of life operates in a complex and uncertain environment, it continually changes in order to survive. The drive for expansion and reinvention to stay alive overshadows the requirement for long-term sustainability (Nayak and Panda 2020).

3.1. Conceptual Definitions

3.1. Hijra

Individuals who are neither male nor female without genitalia and born intersex or with mixed genitalia and have a distinct bodily structure, socially ostracized, and incapable of sexual feeling are referred to be *Hijra* or third gender or transgender or intersex, or eunuch, and hermaphrodite in the Indian subcontinent.

3.2. Sustainable Livelihood

‘A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future’ (Chambers and Conway, 1992).

3.3. Livelihood Assets

3.3.1. Human Capital

Human Capital refers to the abilities, experience, work skills, knowledge, education or training sectors, and the excellent health that combinedly allow populations to engage with different livelihood strategies and reach their own objectives (UNDP, 2017).

3.3.2. Social Capital

Social capital refers to the social resources that one relies on their livelihoods, including network and connections, membership of different groups, participation in more formal groups, relationships of trust, reciprocity and exchanges to achieve their specific goals relating to their livelihoods. It depends on strengthening local institutions by increasing local capacities, training leaders, or injecting resources or by creating a participatory and democratic environment in which social capital can flourish (UNDP, 2017).

3.3.3. Natural Capital

Natural capital engages with natural resources such as land, soil, drinking water, marine and forest resources, tree, crop or animal farming, livestock, fisheries, air and water quality, mineral extraction, and so on by which people accumulate their capital or maintain their livelihoods whole or partly (UNDP, 2017).

3.3.4. Physical Capital

Physical capital refers to the basic infrastructures and production goods required to support livelihoods. This capital requires access to road and transport, housing and safe buildings, water and sanitation, clean and affordable energy, and access to information (UNDP, 2017).

3.3.5. Financial Capital

Financial Capital means financial resources, including savings, credit, earned income, employment, remittances, aid and trade by which people consider to achieve their livelihood objectives through the sources of flows of money and available stocks. Available stocks like savings are the preferred type of financial capital that can be formed as cash, bank deposits or liquid assets. On the other hand, the most common types of inflows are earned income, pensions, or other transfers from the state, payments for environmental services and remittances (UNDP, 2017).

3.4. Conceptual Framework

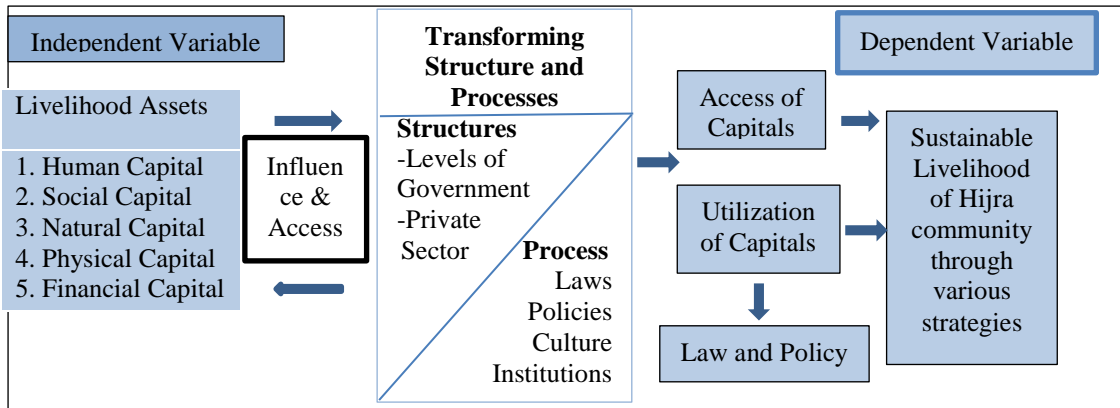


Figure 1: Sustainable livelihood Framework (SLF) by DFID, 2002 and author’s compilation, 2021

The framework shows that how, in different contexts, sustainable livelihoods are acquired through access to a range of livelihood resources and of different livelihood strategies (Scoones, 1998). In order to create sustainable livelihoods, people must combine the ‘capital’ endowments that they have access to and control over. These may be encompassed by personal capabilities, tangible assets and intangible assets (Chambers & Conway 1992; DFID 2002). Hijra livelihood also entailed assets (their bodies), capabilities (skills required), and activities (begging/blessing, and sex work) and it deals with shocks and stresses from within and without the community, such as conflicts over claims (monetary gains), or territories defined for begging or sex work, and from outside the community, such as ostracization by the larger society, harassment from the police. But in the urban slum area where *hijra* community lived, it is hard to access and utilization all the elements of natural capital. However, it is possible to achieve sustainable livelihood with access and utilization of these livelihood assets. According to SLF, Hijra can achieve sustainable livelihood by their various strategies eg., more income, better health, access to education, reduced risk and reduced vulnerability. These can be achieved through accessing various capital assets eg., human capital, social capital, natural capital, physical capital and financial capital.

4. Material and Methods

This study has been conducted using a quantitative research approach and a descriptive analysis method. As the Hijra community lives in a different slum area in Barishal, the researchers purposively selected those slum areas in Barishal city corporation area. There are only 60 medically tested and registered as *hijra* (According to data from District social service office, Barishal). Data is collected by survey method. A semi-structured questionnaire was prepared to collect data from the sample. To meet the research objectives, data were collected by face to face interviews. SPSS software is used as a data analysis tool, along with this, Microsoft Excel is also used to make the graph.

5. Results

5.1. Human Capital

The hijra community has access to various modes of human capital. About 58.3% of the hijra respondents completed their primary level and 30% of them are illiterate or they have no academic or formal education. Traditional Hijra work or conventional *hijragiri* is the common activities regarding skill for all of them. The respondents have also skills on tailoring work, make-up. They have learned it through livelihood training activities, but they cannot practice it because of some limitations. Regarding health facilities, hijra community have access to hospitals and other health facilities, including medicine and vaccine respectively. But many (51.7%) of them do not receive positive gratitude from doctors and staff because of the social stigma and discrimination among people. 100% of the respondents enjoy their civil and political rights and basic human rights. But, unfortunately, they fail to get proper economic and property rights, and also very few of them knew about their social and cultural rights. Regarding law and policy, all of the respondents know about their recognition as third gender by the

government of Bangladesh and their right to votes respectively and get allowances of social safety net of aged *hijras*. However, few of them only 18.3% and 15% of the respondents have access to bank loan facilities, legal rights and human rights (See Table 1).

Table 1: Modes of various human capital

Human Capital	Indicators	Frequency (N)	Percent
Education	Illiterate	18	30.0%
	Primary	35	58.3%
	Secondary	7	11.7%
Skills	Tailoring Work	38	63.3%
	Makeup Artist	33	55.0%
	Handicrafts	18	30.0%
	Traditional Hijra Work	60	100%
	Others	4	6.7%
Health Facilities	Access in Private or Public hospitals	60	100%
	Access to Basic vaccine and medicine	60	100%
	Positive gratitude among doctors and staffs	31	51.7%
Rights	Basic Human rights	50	83.3%
	Civil and Political rights	60	100%
	Economic and Property rights	14	23.3%
	Social and Cultural Rights	6	10.0%
Law and Policy	Recognition hijra as third gender by GoB	60	100%
	Right to votes	60	100%
	Allowances for older hijras under social safety net	47	78.3%
	Bank loan facilities	11	18.3%
	Legal rights & human rights on anti-discrimination	9	15.0%

(Source: Fieldwork, 2021)

Hijra community experiences lack of employment opportunities (100% respondents), lack of educational opportunities (81.7%), and social stigma among local community (81.7% response). Though safety net program has been providing them to survive their livelihood, but, it is unfortunately observed that lack of training and service (Figure 2).

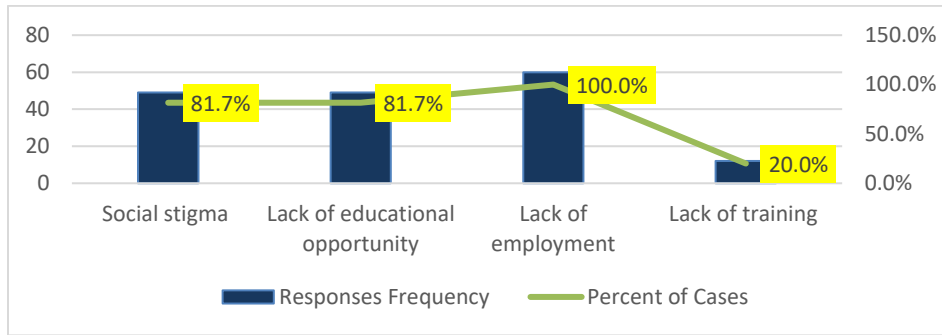


Figure 2: Complexities behind Accessing Human Capital

5.2. Social Capital

The hijra community leave their home and family for their gender identity. Most of them separated from their family in childhood. The table shows that majority (75%) of the respondents said that their family tries to hide their identity. They are neglected, humiliated (58.3%) and 70% of respondents face discrimination from other male or female. But there are few cases (only 10% respondents) where their family behaved well and loved them. About 73.3% of respondents do not receive any help from their family, 36.67% of respondents receive financial help in the time of crisis and only (20.0% and 5% respondents) get food or groceries and accommodation respectively. As they are separated from their family, majority of them are not in touch with any relatives. 85% of the responses do not get any support from relatives. Very few (8.33%, 5% and 8.33% of respondents respectively) have received financial, accommodation and food or grocery support from their relatives in the time of emergency. About three-fourth (73.33%) of respondents narrate that neighbors support them during funeral, 63.33% get food, 21.67 % of respondents get help in a health emergency and others respectively from their neighbors. 98.33%, 61.67% and 56.67% of the respondents' state that they get support in traditional hijra work, accommodation and mental support respectively in need from their own community people. They work as a group and help each other. Along with some social organization, they get support power, protection and donation to meet up the emergency needs from their community/group, and those are the 78.33%, 85% and 21.67% of the respondents respectively.

Table 2: Behavioral Types and Types of Support of Hijra community

		Responses (N)	Percent (%)
How family members treat them before separation	Neglect or humiliate	35	58.3%
	Hide their identity	45	75.0%
	Physically or mentally abuse them	3	5.0%
	Discriminated from other (male or female)	42	70.0%
	Well behaved	6	10.0%
	Support got from family	Financial Help	22
	Food & Groceries	12	20.0%
	Accommodation	3	5.0%
	None	44	73.33%

Support from Relatives	Financial support	5	8.33%
	Accommodation	3	5.0%
	Food and Groceries	5	8.33%
	None	51	85.0%
Support got from Neighbors	Foods	38	63.33%
	Funerals	44	73.33%
	Helping health emergency	13	21.67%
	Others	13	21.67%
Support got from own commu	Accommodation	37	61.67%
	Helping in their traditional work	59	98.33%
	Mental support	34	56.67%
Support got from Group during Emergency	Giving Manpower	47	78.33%
	Giving Protection	51	85.00%
	Donation	13	21.67%

(Source: Field Survey, 2021)

5.3. Natural Capital

The hijra community has access to modes of natural capital. About 96.7% of the respondents have access to safe water, and 18.3% have livestock. However, as they live in urban slum areas, they do not have access to a various different kind of natural capital. Almost half (48.3%) of the respondents face the non-cooperation of neighbors. Moreover, 50% of respondents response their lack of legal rights and assistances like the right on ancestral property law exists in the hijra community. Some organizations (GO or NGOs) launched and implemented in water management policy for safe drinking water and drainage system. Water management policy rate is high, around 55%. But unfortunately, 45% respondents claim that there is no initiative taken by organizations (GO or NGOs) to improve natural capital. Only 16.7% of the respondents state that renewable energy plant has been established.

Table 3: Modes of natural capital

Natural Capital	Indicators	Frequency	Percent
Access of Natural capital	Safe Water	58	96.7%
	Livestock	11	18.3%
	Gardening and Agriculture	2	3.3%
Problem with accessing natural capital	non-cooperation of neighbourhood	29	48.3%
	lack of legal rights and assistances	30	50.0%
	Others	36	60.0%
Initiatives by Govt./non govt. Organization	Renewable energy plant	10	16.7%
	Water management policy	33	55.0%
	None	27	45.0%

(Source: Field Survey, 2021)

5.4. Physical Capital

All (100%) of the respondents have access to infrastructural facilities like road and transport facilities, and water and sanitation facilities both. 41.7% of the respondents have access to information. One-fourth or 25% of respondents claim that they have access to energy including electricity, gas and solar energy etc. But, comparatively very low only 18.3% of the respondents have access to housing and safe building. As they live in a slum area and most of them do not own the living place, they face challenges of getting better housing and safe building.

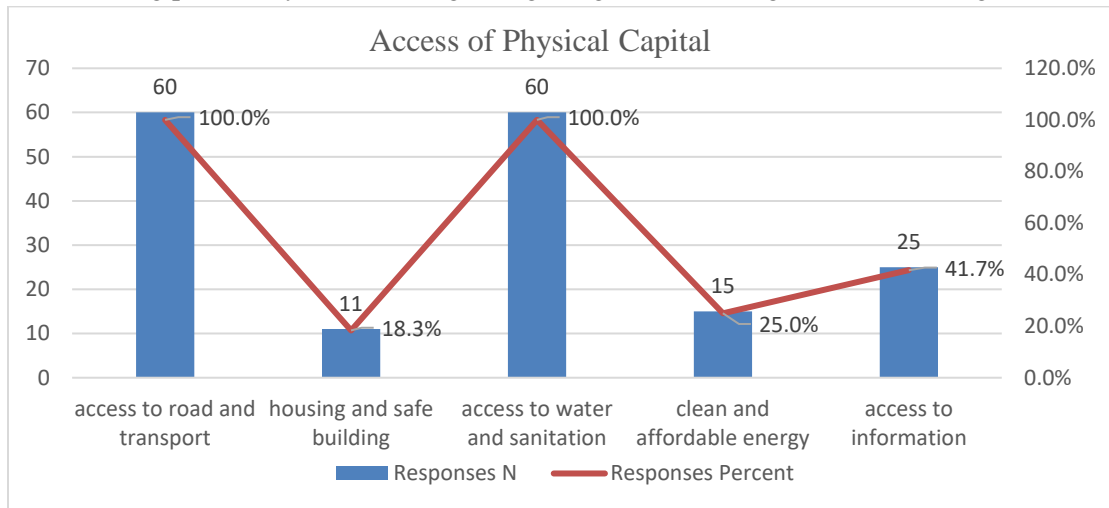
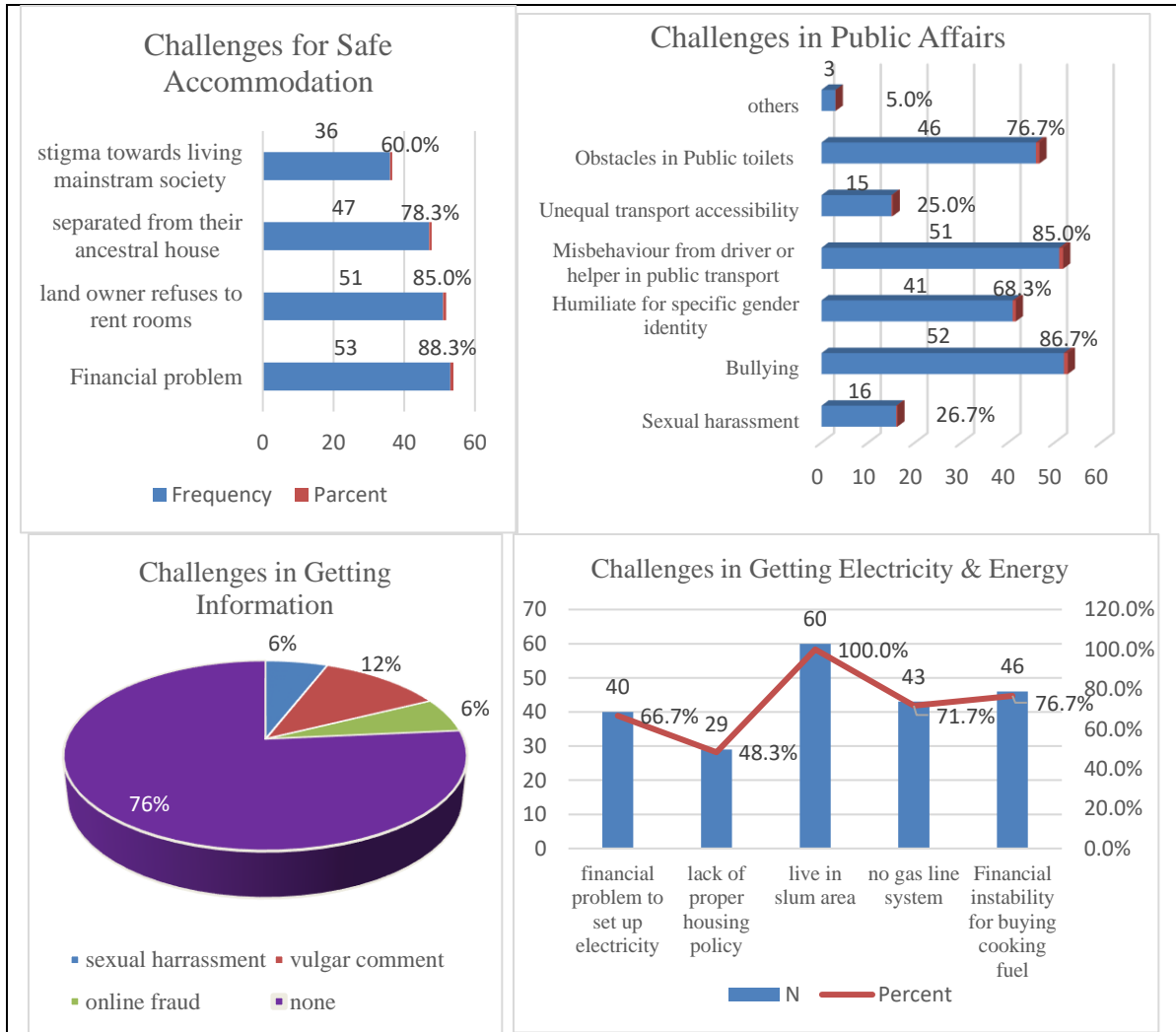


Figure 3: Modes of the physical capitals they have access (Source: Field survey, 2021)

The hijra community experiences multifaceted challenges of access to physical capital (see figure 4). The rate of financial problem is comparatively high (88.3% of responses) regarding the challenges for safe accommodation. 85% of the respondents are separated from their ancestral house (family) and 78.3% participants claim that the landowner refuses to rent their room/house/apartment due to their (Hijra) gender identity. 60% of the hijra participants claim that they are not allowed to live with mainstream society because of social stigma and their (hijra) gender identity. Regarding the challenges of public affairs, 86.7% and 85% of respondents' response that bullying and misbehavior are conducted from driver or helper respectively. Some young hijras (26.7%) experience sexually harassed from other male passengers during public transport facilities. Here, 68.3% of respondents are humiliated for their gender identity. About 76.7% of the respondents face challenges while using their public toilets or sanitation due to their gender identity. Besides, 25% of the respondents are treated unequally regarding transport accessibility. On the other hand, they face multifaceted challenges like sexual harassment, vulgar comments and online fraudness for getting information and those are 6%, 12% and 6% respectively. They watch TV, social communication sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, viber, imo and YouTube for entertainment purposes and to get news or any information. Regarding the challenges of getting electricity and energy, all of the hijra respondents resides in slum area. As they live in slum area, they do not have a proper electric line. 48.3% of the respondents claim that there is no maintained housing policy. About 66.7% of

them have financial problems to set up the electricity. The rate of financial instability for buying cooking fuel is comparatively higher (76.7%) but 71.7% of the respondents' state that there is no gas line system in the hijra resided area. Lack of gas line system and financial instability is responsible for hindrance to managing cooking fuel.



(Source: Field Survey, 2021)

Figure 4: Modes of various challenges in access to physical capital of hijra community

5.5. Financial Capital

All of the respondents do traditional hijra work for their livelihood. With this as additional income, 56 (93.33%) respondents collect money from the market. Some (43.33%) respondents perform songs, dances and entertain people to earn money in marriage ceremonies. About 61.67% of the respondents earn 3000 to 5999 BDT per month and 33.3% earn 6000 to 8999 BDT per month in an average. Only 5% of them earn 9000 to 11999 BDT, but their earnings are not sustainable.

All (100%) of the respondents face social discrimination while searching for a decent job, mainstreaming and sustainable livelihood. But, a significant portion (91.7%) of the respondents are socially stigmatized to getting job and mainstreaming in society. Around 78.3% and 33.3% of them realize that they do not have educational qualification and lack of skills for getting a job respectively. 75% of the respondents do not get micro credit or loan facilities.

Regarding the access to financial organization, about 68.33% have access to banks. Some donor agencies (46.67% of the respondents) sanction the donations and allowances under the safety net program. 41.67% of them claim they don't have access in those financial organization. About 63.33% and 61.67% of the respondents said that they have access to some non-scheduled bank and state-owned banks respectively. But there are 31.67% of the respondents who actually do not know banks. Majority (56.67% and 45%) of the respondents opine that many financial organizations offer the hijra community for money deposits and loans respectively. They also offer the 25% of the respondents' money transfer system if it is required for them.

Table 4: Access to financial capital of hijra community for their livelihood

Work for Living	Indicators	Frequency	Percent
Work for Living	Traditional Hijra work	60	100.0%
	Collecting money from the market	56	93.33%
	Public performance and panhandling	26	43.33%
Monthly Income (in TK)	3000-5999	37	61.67%
	6000-8999	20	33.33%
	9000-11999	3	5.00%
Challenges for Mainstreaming and sustainable livelihood	Lack of education	47	78.33%
	Lack of work skills	20	33.33%
	Social stigma	55	91.67%
	Social discrimination	60	100.0%
	Lack of micro credit or loan facilities	45	75.00%
	Others	7	11.67%
Access to financial organization	Bank	41	68.33%
	Donor Agency	28	46.67%
	None	25	41.67%
Access of Bank	State owned bank	37	61.67%
	Non schedule bank	38	63.33%
	None	19	31.67%
Financial services are offered by financial organization	Loans	27	45.00%
	Money deposit	34	56.67%
	Money transfer	15	25.00%
	Others	12	20.00%

(Source: Field Survey, 2021)

6. Discussion

The hijra community still do not get the opportunity to join the mainstream sector, as they have lack of capitals. A major part of our society still stigmatizes for their sexual orientation, they are discriminated and society cannot accept them normally. This study supports the identity crisis and social stigma for being a Hijra and also lag behind the reason of dissatisfactory education rate, lack of social rights, lack of employment opportunity of the hijra Community. As they are recognized by the state, they are able to getting their civil and political rights, different social supports and develop their condition. But, still there remain limitations to ensure their human capitals. At early age, they were separated from their family. After separation, they generally do not continue communication with their family members, relatives and neighbours etc. But sometimes, in crisis, few of them receive help from family but they mainly receive help from their own community people. Their community group also give them protection and workforce in crisis. Few of them are connected with some civil and government organizations that help their socio-economic development. Since they are not given their ancestral/family property and live in the urban slum area, their access to natural capital is comparatively scarce. There are no particular policy for accessing natural capitals has taken for them. Lack of natural capitals shorten/squeeze their livelihood opportunity. Previous literature shows that the hijra community has lack of accommodation and education, transportation problem, social restriction in religious and other institutions because of social stigma, prejudice, social status and financial condition. They are not aware of their socio-economic, political, cultural and legal rights and also lack of procedural knowledge about bank facilities. The current study finds that there are no gender-specific public toilets, and males or females are not comfortable sharing toilets with them. They also face deficit of energy like electricity, gas and cooking fuel. They have scant knowledge and information institutional and others that lead them behind the mainstream society. They face multifaceted challenges that create gap in accessing of physical capitals. The main way of lives and livelihood is traditional hijra work and collect money from the market. Their earning source is uncertain and not free from trends and shocks. In spite of having access in banks and some financial services, they cannot get the proper services, facilities and opportunities. Because a good number of them do not know the procedure. Bank offers money deposit and loan to them, but they do not have enough money for savings, and pledges or other information is required for loans, so they are not benefitted. As their earning source is uncertain, risks associated with returning loans loss of property remain there. They have limited access to livelihood assets or capitals so they lead a vulnerable life. Moreover, they cannot utilize their existing capitals because of limiting institutional policy-making and monitoring there. To make their lives and livelihood sustainable, they need to develop their skills towards mainstream society and should have access to those capitals that act as livelihood assets. According to SLF, it is also needed the structural and legal support that help in accessing capital and sustainabnle development.

7.1. Existing Initiatives for Mainstreaming Development in Hijra community

7.1.1 Social Safety Net Program

Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW) of Bangladesh has taken some initiatives including allowances for older Hijra's under social safety net program, scholarship on education for Hijra community, livelihood training programs including cooking, beautification, and small grant for starting their own business (MoSW website).

7.1.2. Bank Loan Facilities for Hijra Community

The central bank of Bangladesh issued a notice to all scheduled banks notifying them to take steps so that they receive loans directly or via from bank, non- government (NGO), or cooperatives for setting up their own business (SME activities) for mainstreaming society from underprivileged section (The Daily Star, 2015, 10 June).

7.1.3. Opportunity in Public Employment

The government has decided to recruit the Hijra community in Traffic Police from the fiscal year of 2015-16 (Bangla tribune, May 19, 2015. [Hijras to be recruited as traffic police | Dhaka Tribune](#)).

7.1.4. Legal Rights

National Human Right Commission (NHRC) and Law Commission of Bangladesh jointly drafted a law on anti-discrimination where the Transgender/Hijra rights are included with importance. A committee known as Hijra, Dalit and other Excluded minorities formed to protect and promote the rights of all marginalized group of people. In the Second Five-year strategic plan (2016-2020) the rights of Transgender have been identified as pressing human rights issue, published booklet in Bangla about Hijra community, issued a Demi-Official (DO) letter to the ministry of health on controversial medical testing system to identify Hijra (Ahmed, 2015).

7.2. Recommendations

1. Every member of Hijra Community should be registered and recognized as third gender so that they can afford their allowances or social security.
2. It is ensured their livelihood trainings and monitor the activity by the authority.
3. To ensure and extend the support and loan (SME business) of the hijra community from Bank, GO/ NGO and co-operatives to develop their financial condition.
4. MoSW should more concern and strengthen on higher education of Hijra community.
5. Give special quota in employment sector to increase their job opportunity.
6. The state, society and especially family should normalize the fact that they have different sexual orientation and should treat them equally.

8. Conclusion

Hijra people are one of the marginalized groups of people in Bangladesh. Some inevitable factors and components are preventing them from achieving sustainable livelihood. This study tries to find their accessibility on different capitals that help to achieve sustainable livelihood. Hijra have limited access to various capitals and they still lead their lives and livelihood by

doing their traditional hijra works (occupation) which are not sufficient and not even sustainable. To make their lives and livelihood as sustainable and sufficient for them, it is needed to improve their access of knowledge, skills, education, health care, communication with mainstream society, accessibility in infrastructure, utilization natural resources, employment opportunity and bank facilities. It is undeniable the fact that they are the creation by nature, and have been an indispensable part of society for thousands of years. We have to accept their diversity with respect, dignity and honor.

9. Acknowledgements

The researchers are grateful to data collectors including the authors for their participation of data collection process. We remain also grateful to all of the respondents (hijra community in Barishal) those who share their experiences and valuable suggestions to conduct our study. The authors analyzed data, interpret the results and discussion through the field survey.

10. Funding

The researchers did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors to conduct the study.

11. Declarations of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

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Prevalence and Impact of Child Labor in Dhaka University Canteens and Food Shops: Understanding the Implications

Md. Mizanur Rahman* and Mostakim Mia**

Abstract

This article delves into the prevalence and impact of child labor within the canteens and food shops situated in Dhaka University. The study aims to comprehensively explore the presence of child labor, the conditions in which these children work and the implications of such employment on their well-being and development. Utilizing qualitative approach including in-depth interviews and observations, the research paints a detailed picture of the challenging circumstances that lead to child labor in this particular setting. Through a comprehensive analysis, it aims to shed light on the extent of child labor in these establishments and its implications on the affected individuals and the broader community. Furthermore, it seeks to understand the socio-economic and cultural factors contributing to this phenomenon, shedding light on the underlying complexities. The implications of child labor in terms of physical and psychological health, educational attainment and the perpetuation of poverty are also examined. By understanding the nuances of child labor in this specific context, the article aims to contribute to a more informed discourse on addressing the challenges and fostering a safer environment for children within university settings. The findings of this study hold significance for policymakers, advocacy groups and stakeholders working towards eradicating child labor and promoting children's rights in Bangladesh.

Keywords: child labor, Dhaka University, canteens, working & living environment.

1. Introduction

Action for Social Development in a 2022 report disclosed that more than 1,50,000 children are involved in hazardous jobs just in the areas under the two city corporations of Dhaka alone. According to BIWTA, there are 97 similar dockyards along the banks of Buriganga where hundreds of children toil. The Child Labor Unit under the Ministry of Labor and Employment has marked 43 employment sectors as hazardous for children, including dockyards, automobile and engineering workshops, welding and vulcanizing workshops, and aluminum and other metal processing factories. Compared to the previous survey in 2013, the number of child laborers has decreased by more than 2,00,000. Strict monitoring by relevant ministries and regular drives in the factories helped us achieve this progress. Bangladesh has 39.96 million children (51.79% boys and 48.21% girls) aged 5 to 17 years. Among these 4.4% (17,76,097) are engaged in child labor, 60.14% (10,68,212) of whom are engaged in hazardous child labor (National Child Labor Survey 2022)

The Government of Bangladesh ratified the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, 1999 (No.182) on 12 March 2001. The Government also ratified ILO's Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) on 22 March 2022: and the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor

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Convention, 1930 (No.29) on January 2022. The Government also adopted a revised National Plan of Action to Eliminate Child Labor 2021-2025 in December 2021. It formed a National Child Labor Welfare Council (NCLWC) headed by the Labor Minister with Divisional, District and sub-district level Child Labor Welfare Councils to guide the implementation of the NPA in coordination with other relevant 18 ministries. It has further updated the list of hazardous child work across 43 sectors to guide strategic elimination of hazardous child labor.

Child labor remains a pressing concern in Bangladesh, despite concerted efforts to combat it. The nation, with one of the world's largest populations, harbors numerous impoverished families. Factors such as poverty, lack of education, and limited employment opportunities contribute significantly to the prevalence of child labor. Children in Bangladesh are often engaged in various occupations, including domestic work, street vending, and hazardous jobs in industries such as textiles, leather, shipbreaking, and agriculture. Working under harsh conditions for minimal pay, these children endure both physical and psychological abuse.

The Government of Bangladesh has taken steps to address child labor through legislation and institutional frameworks. The Bangladesh Labor Act of 2006 prohibits the employment of children under 14 in factories or hazardous occupations. Additionally, Bangladesh has ratified international conventions on child labor and implemented the National Child Labor Elimination Policy in 2010. However, despite these measures, child labor persists due to various challenges. The informal sector, where most child labor occurs, often lacks effective enforcement of labor laws. Moreover, the cycle of poverty perpetuates the need for families to rely on their children's income.

Globally, millions of children are affected by child labor across various industries, including the food service sector. Despite international efforts to address this issue, child labor remains prevalent. This research proposal seeks to investigate the presence and impact of child labor in canteens and shops at Dhaka University, one of Bangladesh's premier educational institutions. Observations reveal that a significant portion of the labor force in these establishments comprises children, some as young as 8 to 12 years old. These children work long hours for meager monthly wages, deprived of basic rights such as education, nutrition, and leisure. Often subjected to harsh abuse, these vulnerable children warrant urgent attention.

This study aims to inform policy responses and advocate for children's rights by understanding the root causes and consequences of child labor. By shedding light on the plight of these children, it seeks to prompt action towards ensuring their well-being and protection.

2. Objectives

The main objective of this study is to explore the prevalence and impact of child labor in Dhaka University canteens and food shops. Specific objectives are:

1. Investigating the socio-economic factors contributing to the involvement of children in labor within Dhaka University's food establishment,
2. Identifying the specific roles and responsibilities children are assigned within canteens and food shops at Dhaka University,

3. Examining the working & living conditions experienced by child laborers in Dhaka University's food establishments including hours worked, wages earned and exposure to health hazards,
4. Proposing recommendations and interventions aimed at combating child labor within Dhaka University's canteens and food shops, including policy reforms, awareness campaigns and support services for affected children.

3. Literature Review

Child labor is a persistent global concern that transcends geographic and cultural boundaries. The prevalence and impact of child labor within the context of Dhaka University canteens and food shops demand particular attention due to its potential implications on the well-being and development of young individuals. This literature review explores existing research and scholarly perspectives on child labor, with a specific focus on its prevalence and consequences within the unique environment of Dhaka University.

“The term “child labor” is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that: • is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; • and/or interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.” (IPEC, 2020)

The two ILO Conventions on Child Labor are Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age. The "fundamental" Conventions are those mentioned here. The first ILO Convention to be ratified by every country is ILO Convention No. 182. In addition, it was ratified more quickly than any other Convention in ILO history, with the majority of ratifications taking place in the first three years following its adoption in 1999. ILO Member States have broadly adopted ILO Convention No. 138. The Government of Bangladesh lodged the instrument of ratification of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) with the International Labor Office on March 22, 2022, making it the 174th ILO Member State to do so.

“The number of children in child labor has risen to 160 million worldwide – an increase of 8.4 million children in the last four years – with millions more at risk due to the impacts of COVID19, according to a new report by the International Labor Organization (ILO) and UNICEF” (UNICEF, 2021).

“In Bangladesh, children under 14 years of age are not allowed to work in any establishment. In September of 2018, the Government of Bangladesh approved a draft of an amendment to the Labor Act in which it is stipulated that children between ages 14 – 18 may only be employed in light work, with penalties for non-compliant employers set at BDT 5,000 (Bangladeshi takas). However, despite this, there has been a rise in child labor for the past decade. You can easily find small children working in factories, fields, homes, and local 5 businesses. According to the National Child Labor Survey, a total of 1.3 million children fell in the child labor category in

Bangladesh. The International Labor Organization states that there are a total of 5 million full-time workers in Bangladesh.” (GPS, 2021)

“The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics estimated that there were 1.28 million children working in hazardous sectors before the COVID-19 pandemic, with 260,000 children working in the government's officially listed hazardous sectors. Economic hardships and school closures brought on by the pandemic have forced many school age children to take on temporary jobs in factories, including in the garment and food processing sectors. Reports also indicate an increase in child domestic work. One NGO reported that 75 percent of children had left their education program and estimated that one-third of the children either entered into hazardous work or returned to their villages. Sources further indicate that children engaged in child labor worked longer hours with fewer breaks, earned lower salaries, and faced worse conditions as a result of the pandemic.” (ILAB, 2022)

“A scene can be seen in almost every residential hall food canteen of Dhaka University. It can be seen that 10–12-year-old boys work as 'Canteen Boy' in those canteens. The matter is already legally punishable, moreover, when it is seen in Dhaka University, famous as the Oxford of the East, it is difficult to accept it”. (Uddin, 2019)

“He used to go to school a few days ago, now he has to wake up earlier and go to work. Those happy days are over suddenly. At the age of 13, he had to go down the difficult path of earnings. Working hours that start early in the morning often end at 11pm. For his family He had to accept such hardships at this young age. Such a diary is not only of that one child, but hundreds of children like him who have faced various hardships in life; Those who are selling labor in the canteens, grocery and tea shops of 19 residential halls of Dhaka University. All of them are under 14 years of age. They are working day after day for a salary ranging from 3 to 5 thousand taka per month depending on their age to give a little financial relief to the family.” (Sarkar, 2022).

Addressing child labor in Dhaka University canteens and food shops required a comprehensive understanding of its prevalence, root causes and socio-economic implications. By synthesizing existing literature, this review set the stage for a focused examination of this critical issue and provides a foundation for future research and intervention strategies.

4. Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature and in-depth case study method has been applied as main method. To support case study method, this study also applied Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as supporting study method. Twenty cases from different canteens and food shops have been studied. Purposive sampling technique has been applied in choosing cases. Face to face interview guideline and FGDs checklist has selected to gather primary data from respondents. Interview and observation methods of data collection has been applied in this study. Data from both primary and secondary sources have been analyzed, classified, interpreted and presented properly. Data have been analyzed in a descriptive way.

5. Research Findings and Discussion

Reasons for coming to work

The presence of child labor in the Dhaka University canteen can be attributed to various reasons. It is important to note that child labor is a complex issue influenced by both socio-economic factors and systematic failures. The findings highlight the following factors:

Socio-economic factors: one key cause is the dire economic conditions faced by the families of these children. Poverty, lack of alternative income sources and financial instability push families to send their children to work and contribute to their household income. *One respondent said, "My family pushed me to work here. Actually, my family is very poor. My sisters have recently got married. My father is old now. I have two younger sisters who are studying in the local school. They had no option without sending me here to work."*

Most of the respondents said the same thing that they have economic crisis. because of economic problem they came to work here. Their family condition is very much vulnerable and they weren't able to continue their study.

Limited educational opportunities: many child laborers in Dhaka face limited access to quality education or are unable to attend school due to various reasons such as financial constraints, lack of proper facilities or inadequate educational policies. This lack of educational opportunities contributes to their participation in the workforce at an early age. *One respondent said, "I came here to work of my own free will. My family had serious financial crisis then my one of my school friends told me to come here then I came here without taking permission of my family but now they are happy because I can send money for my family."*

One-third of the total respondents said that they came here with their own will and nobody pushed them to work. two-thirds of the respondents said that they were pushed by their family and poverty.

Urban migration: Dhaka, being the capital city of Bangladesh, attracts a high number of migrants seeking better economic prospects. Unfortunately, these migrants often struggle to secure stable jobs and face intense competition. As a result, their children are forced into labor at an early age to help support their families.

Exploitation: The research findings also indicate that some children are victims of exploitation. Unscrupulous individuals take advantage of vulnerable children, promising them better lives or educational opportunities. These false promises lead the children into hazardous work environments, including canteens. *One respondent said, "I came here to work and I just wanted to support my family. No one forced to come here. My family never pushed me to do work but I thought I need work."*

Maximum respondents of the study were unable to continue their daily expenses and they were exploitative by the society.

Cultural norms and lack of awareness: in certain cases, cultural norms and traditions may play a role in child labor. These norms normalize child work and fail to recognize the importance of education and development for children. Additionally, a lack of awareness among families and communities about the negative consequences of child labor contributes to its persistence.

Family circumstances: Children may come from families where older siblings or parents work in the same canteen, making it more likely for them to join the workforce at an early age. *One respondent said, “When my elder brother went abroad, we got into a lot of debt. At that time our family needs more money to survive then I came here to work and give support to my family.”*

All the respondents of the study said that their family conditions were very low and they are the victim of poverty.

Absence of legal protection: Insufficient enforcement of child labor laws and inadequate legal protection for children may allow for their exploitation in the labor market.

Demand for cheap labor: The demand for cheap labor in the Dhaka University canteen, driven by cost-cutting measures or a lack of ethical awareness, can incentivize the hiring of child labor. Employers may exploit the vulnerability of children by offering lower wages and little to no benefits.

Mizan said, “My monthly income is very low and my family expenses could not be fulfilled with my salary. We have only homeland and a small piece of agricultural land but this is not enough to cover my family expenses, my father is a farmer and my elder brother stays in Saudi Arabian but he has gone there very recently. We can save some money after maintaining family and personal costs. This savings is not enough for our future security. We can increase our savings by decreasing our costs, I want to build a building for my parents, this is the dream of my life. I was in class 6 when I went to school. I didn’t want to study. I was very irregular in school. I am not studying in any mobile school.”

Most of the respondents said that they came to work because of their poverty and unwillingness to study. Some of the respondents said that they came to work to support their family and make their family conditions betterment.

Nature of work

Types of work carried out in the canteen can vary depending on the specific canteen and its purpose. Main tasks and functions are typically performed in a canteen on a daily basis.

Food Preparation: Canteen staff usually start their day by preparing and cooking the food that will be served throughout the day. This includes chopping vegetables, marinating meats and following recipes to ensure that meals are nutritious and flavorful.

Serving Food: Once the food is prepared, the canteen staffs set up serving canteen where they serve the meals to customers. They ensure that proper portion sizes are provided and that the food is presented attractively.

Cashier Duties: Many canteens have a cash register or payment system in place. Staff members take on the responsibility of handling cash, processing payments and providing customers with receipts. They also keep track of inventory and restock food items as necessary.

Cleaning and Maintenance: Maintaining cleanliness and hygiene is crucial in a canteen environment. Staff members regularly clean and sanitize the serving counters, dining areas and kitchen equipment. They also handle the disposal of waste and ensure that proper waste management practices are followed.

Customer Service: Canteen staffs play a pivotal role in providing customer service. They greet customers, address their inquiries and assist with any special requests or dietary concerns. Good communication and interpersonal skills are important for delivering a satisfying customer experience.

Stock Management: Canteen staff are responsible for managing inventory, tracking food supplies and placing orders for ingredients or kitchen supplies. This ensures that the canteen is well-stocked and ready to cater to the needs of customers.

Menu Planning: Depending on the canteen, staff members may participate in menu planning and development. They collaborate with nutritionists or chefs to create balanced and appealing menus that cater to different dietary preferences and restrictions.

Carrying Heavy Items: In some cases, children might be involved in physically demanding tasks such as carrying heavy cartons, crates or supplies within the canteen.

Most of the child labor do food serving and help to prepare food. A few number of children do cashier duty. Many of the child labor engaged themselves with cleaning & maintenance of the canteens and food shops.

Family Condition

Property Ownership: The research anticipates that the majority of families with child laborers in the Dhaka University canteen have limited property ownership, as they are more likely to come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. However, there might be instances where families possess small properties or assets acquired through various means.

Rahman said, "My family is very poor, we have no property. We live in a hut. My family condition is miserable."

All of the respondent's family condition is poor and most of them have no property. Two-thirds of the child labor's family members live in a hut. Their economic and social condition is very miserable. They need support to improve their economic & social condition.

Land Ownership: It is expected that land ownership among families of child laborers is scarce, with limited access to agricultural or residential land. This lack of land ownership may contribute to socio-economic vulnerabilities and perpetuate the cycle of poverty.

Kamal said, "We have no land ownership. My father is working for others' land cultivation. We have no cultivated land for cultivation."

Two-thirds of the respondent's family have no land ownership. A few children have only homeland. Their family members work in the other's land.

Family Members' Professions: The research postulates that the family members of child laborers are engaged in low-skilled and low-wage occupations, such as agriculture, informal labor or other menial jobs. The educational backgrounds and income sources of these family members are explored to understand their level of economic stability. This qualitative research shed light on the family status of child laborers working in the Dhaka University canteen, providing valuable insights into their socio-economic backgrounds. These findings can help policymakers and stakeholders develop targeted interventions and implement effective measures to address the root causes of child labor. By understanding the interplay between

property, land ownership and family member professions, efforts can be directed towards providing educational opportunities, skill development and alternative livelihoods for the affected families, ultimately breaking the cycle of child labor and promoting social welfare.

Abir said, "My father is a farmer, my mother is a housewife and my elder brother is a rickshaw puller in Dhaka city and my elder sister is working as a homemade in Dhaka."

Most of them of the respondent's family members engaged in cultivation, rickshaw pulling, housemaker. Some of the family members live in abroad to support their family. Some of the family members work in Dhaka city as a day laborer.

Ways of increasing savings after expenditure

If a child is engaged in labor due to unfortunate circumstances. It is essential to prioritize their well-being, education and protection. For families facing financial challenges, here are some general tips for saving money and planning for the future.

Create a budget: Begin by listing all income sources and expenses. analyze spending habits, identify areas where expenses can be reduced and allocate a portion of the income towards savings. **Prioritize essential expenses:** Ensure that the basic needs of the family, such as food, housing, education and healthcare are met. Cut down on non-essential expenses that can be avoided.

Set savings goals: Determine how much you want to save each month and set specific goals. It could be a percentage of the income or a fixed amount. Having clear objectives can help motivate savings efforts.

Track expenses: Keep a record of all expenses to identify areas where savings can be made. Make conscious choices to reduce unnecessary spending.

Seek financial assistance: Look into government support programs, scholarships or NGOs that can provide financial aid, educational opportunities or vocational training for children. These interventions can lead to better long-term prospects.

Encourage education and skill development: Invest in the child's education and skill development to improve their future prospects. Education can open doors to better employment opportunity, higher incomes and financial stability.

Explore income-generating opportunities: identify additional sources of income that can be pursued by family members other than child labor. This can include seeking part-time work, starting a small business, or learning new skills for better employment prospects.

Save regularly: Make saving a habit by setting aside a portion of the income regularly, even if it is a small amount. Over time, these savings will accumulate and contribute to a financial safety net.

Monir said, "my father is a farmer and my elder brother stays in Saudi Arabian but he has gone there very recently. We can save some money after maintaining family and personal costs. This savings is not enough for our future security. We can increase our savings by decreasing our costs."

They can save money to create a budget which is rational for their family. They can buy only prioritize things daily. They should set a goal for savings.

Working Environment

Prevalence of Child Labor: The research findings suggest that child labor is indeed a prevalent issue within the canteens of Dhaka University. Approximately 40-50% of the canteen workforce surveyed were found to be children under the legal working age. This highlights a concerning situation in terms of child labor exploitation within the university premises.

Working Hours: Child laborers in Dhaka University canteens were found to work long hours, often exceeding the legal limits set by labor laws. On average, these children worked 10-12 hours per day, with some even working on weekends and during holidays. Such extended working hours have detrimental effects on their physical and mental well-being, depriving them of their right to education and a proper childhood.

Wages and Compensation: The research findings indicate that child laborers in Dhaka University canteens are often paid significantly lower wages compared to adult workers. They were found to earn an average of 40% less than their adult counterparts for performing the same tasks. This wage disparity not only perpetuates the exploitation of child labor but also exacerbates their vulnerability and economic hardship.

Working Conditions and Safety: Child laborers were subjected to poor working conditions and minimal safety measures within the canteens. The study revealed that these children often lacked appropriate protective gear, suffered from inadequate ventilation and worked in cramped spaces. This posed significant risks to their health, safety and overall wellbeing.

Psychological and Social Impact: Child labor in Dhaka University canteens has a profound psychological and social impact on the children involved. The research findings indicated that these children experience heightened levels of stress, anxiety and a sense of exclusion from their peers within the university. The lack of proper social interaction and education further limits their personal and intellectual growth. *One respondent said, "I have a smartphone so I can hear song without working hour and I can watch movie at night after finishing my task. Sometimes we watch cricket match in TV room."*

Almost all of the respondents agreed that their working environment is not good enough. The owner of the canteens and food shops can increase the facilities for child labor. They need much better working environment to work freely and smoothly.

Hygiene Standards: The cleanliness and hygiene practices within the canteen were found to be subpar. Proper sanitation facilities, including clean bathrooms and drinking water were not adequately provided.

Satisfaction Level: The findings revealed a mixed picture regarding the satisfaction levels of child laborers. While some reported being content with their work and the environment, a significant number expressed dissatisfaction due to long working hours, low wages, lack of safety measures and poor hygiene conditions.

The actual situation of working environment is very bad. The child labors are bound to work in this circumstances. Their satisfaction level is very low. Few number of children are satisfied with their working environment. The hygiene standard of the working environment of child labor is so much nasty & unbearable.

Living Environment

The phenomenon of child labor is a pressing issue that affects numerous developing countries like Bangladesh. Within this context, exploring the living environment of child laborers within educational institutions such as Dhaka University, is of particular interest. Understanding the living conditions and associated challenges can provide valuable insights to develop effective measures to address this complex problem.

Overcrowding: The living spaces for child laborers in the canteen were found to be extremely cramped and overcrowded, lacking adequate ventilation.

Poor hygiene and sanitation: The research revealed substandard hygiene conditions, including insufficient access to clean water, limited toilet facilities and absence of proper waste management systems. *One respondent said, "I stay in the canteen at night. The living environment is good enough and I am totally satisfied with my living environment. I actually don't know what would I consider a suitable environment for living."*

All of the respondents said that they are living in very poor hygiene and sanitation system. 20-30 people use only one washroom. Sometimes they take shower in the pond which water is very unclean and harmful for health.

Unhealthy surroundings: The canteen location exposed child laborers to noise pollution, air pollution and unsanitary surroundings, negatively impacting their physical and mental well-being. **Lack of Support Systems:** Child laborers expressed a lack of support from relevant authorities, organizations or individuals to address their educational, health and social needs.

Need for holistic Rehabilitation: The research findings highlight the importance of implementing comprehensive rehabilitation programs that address not only the immediate living conditions but also provide psycho-social support, healthcare and educational opportunities for child laborers. The research findings shed light on the challenging living conditions faced by child laborers in Dhaka University canteen. The overcrowded living spaces, poor hygiene, exploitative work conditions and limited access to education underscore the urgent need for interventions and policy reforms. Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach that involves key stakeholders, such as the university administration, government, non-governmental organizations and community members. Establishing and implementing programs that prioritize the well-being, education and rehabilitation of child laborers can help create a safer and more supportive living environment for them within educational institutions like Dhaka University.

Living environment of the child labor of Dhaka University canteens and food shops are unhygienic. They don't get any facilities as a human being. They live in dehumanize circumstances. The owners of canteens and food shops never consider the children's hygiene. They never think about their good health and better circumstances.

Ways of improvement of Working & Living Environment

Creating a safe and inclusive atmosphere in the canteen is crucial for promoting the well-being of all individuals, including child laborers in Dhaka University. Here are some steps that can be taken to improve the canteen atmosphere.

Awareness and Sensitization: Conduct regular awareness campaigns and workshops to educate canteen staff, students and the university community about the prevalence of child labor, its negative consequences and the importance of creating a supportive environment.

Improved Working Conditions: Take measures to ensure workplace safety, provide adequate breaks and establish reasonable working hours for employees, including child laborers. This could include regular inspections and monitoring systems.

Alternative Solutions: Address the underlying causes of child labor by implementing programs focused on poverty reduction, providing financial support to families and creating opportunities for parents to generate stable income without relying on their children's labor.

Support Mechanisms: Establish support mechanisms within the canteen, such as dedicated helpline or designated personnel trained to assist child laborers. This ensures that they have someone to turn to in case of any issues or concerns.

Collaborative Efforts: Form partnership with suppliers, vendors and canteen management to actively discourage employment of child labor and promote ethical practices.

Empowering Child Laborers: Provide opportunities for child laborers to gain education and vocational training while working at the canteen. This not only empowers them but also enables them to develop skills that can help them secure better future prospects.

Legal Framework: Strengthening and enforcing child labor laws to explicitly prohibit the employment of children in hazardous or exploitative conditions.

Rehabilitation and Reintegration: Develop comprehensive rehabilitation programs to provide rescued child laborers with access to quality education, vocational training and psycho-social support, ensuring their successful reintegration into society.

Zero Tolerance Policy: Implement and enforce a strict zero-tolerance policy towards any form of exploitation or mistreatment of child laborers. This sends a clear message that such actions will not be tolerated within the canteen premises.

Quality Working Conditions: Ensure that child laborers have access to clean and hygienic working conditions, including proper seating arrangements, safety equipment and fair wages, regular inspections and monitoring can help maintain these standards.

Social Support: Establish partnerships with local NGOs, social workers and child rights organizations to provide support services to child laborers such as counseling, healthcare and educational opportunities outside of their work hours.

Emotional Support: Foster a supportive environment by encouraging interaction and socialization among canteen staff, students and child laborers. This can be done through organizing events, mentorship programs or group activities that promote bonding and mutual respect.

Stakeholder Collaboration: Collaborate with relevant stakeholders, such as NGOs, government agencies and child rights organizations, to develop comprehensive strategies and policies for addressing child labor issues in the university and beyond. Creating a positive canteen atmosphere for child laborers requires ongoing commitment and efforts from all individuals involved. By working together, we can strive towards a more inclusive and supportive environment at Dhaka University's canteen. The goal should be to create a safe and

supportive environment that protects the rights and well-being of children and have opportunities to reach their full potential.

If the owners of the canteens & food shops want to improve the working & living environment of the child labor, they can improve this situation. Dhaka University authority should take some proper steps to improve the child labor situation at Dhaka University canteens and food shops.

Causes of leaving School

Child laborers often leave their studies for various reasons, primarily due to socio-economic factors and circumstances that force them into work. Here are some common reasons why child labor leaves their studies according to their opinions.

Economic Necessity: Many child laborers came from impoverished backgrounds where their families struggle to meet basic needs. In such cases, children are often forced to work to supplement the family income and contribute to household expenses. This financial pressure compels them to leave their studies and prioritize work. *One respondent said, “My future plan is to buy a part of land and built a house in this land. I was in class four when I went to school but I left school because of poverty. We had not sufficient money for continuing study. I am not studying in a mobile school now because I have no enough to go in a mobile school here.”*

Two-thirds of the respondents said that they left school because of their poverty. Most of them want to improve their economic situation.

Lack of Access to Education: Some child laborers do not have easy access to education due to factors such as distance to schools, lack of transportation or inadequate educational facilities in their communities. Limited access to quality education increases the likelihood of children dropping out to engage in labor instead.

Poverty and debt bondage: In some cases, children are trapped in situations of debt bondage, where their families owe money to lenders or employers. These families compelled to send their children to work in order to repay debts, leaving them with no choice but to abandon their studies. *One respondent said, “I was in class three before I came here. I was a regular student but my fate is so bad for that reason I couldn’t continue my study. I was forced to leave my study because of poverty and familial debt. I want to continue my study in any mobile school here but I don’t get that time to go there.”*

One-third of the respondent’s family have familial debt. They want to repay their familial debt. They left school to support their family. Some of the respondent left school because they didn’t want to continue study. Some respondent said they were pushed by their family to leave school and support their family.

Cultural and Societal Norms: Certain cultural or expectations place a higher value on labor and practical skills over formal education. These beliefs, coupled with gender biases or early marriage practices, can discourage children, especially girls, from continuing their education.

Lack of Awareness and Enforcement: Insufficient awareness about the importance of education and inadequate enforcement of child labor laws can contribute to children leaving their studies. Weak regulatory measures and a lack of penalties for employing child laborers can perpetuate the cycle. Addressing these reasons requires a multi-faceted approach that focuses on

poverty alleviation, improving access to quality education, raising awareness about children's rights, enforcing legislation against child labor and implementing social programs that support vulnerable families.

Child Abuse

Child labor and abusing working conditions are serious violations of human rights and should never be tolerated. While specific incidents may vary, child laborers working in Dhaka University canteens or any other establishment potentially face various forms of abuse. Some of the common abuses' experiences by child laborers in such setting are:

Bullying by Students: The research findings highlighted that child laborers in Dhaka University canteens frequently face bullying from both students and owners. Students often engage in verbal harassment, humiliation and intimidation, targeting child laborers due to their vulnerable position. These incidents occur in various forms, such as using derogatory language, making demeaning remarks and subjecting child laborers to ridicules or mockery. Owners, in some instances, also contribute to this bullying culture by turning a blind eye to such behavior or even actively participating in the mistreatment. *He said, "Sometimes I got beaten up by some students without any reason or small mistake. Many students always force me to provide room service, if I disagree with them, they hit me."*

All of the respondents have abusing experiences. The students and the owner both abuse them in different way. Misbehavior of the students hurt them mostly.

Bad treatment by students and owners: The study revealed that child laborers in Dhaka University canteens are subjected to mistreatment by students, owners and senior workers within the establishment. This mistreatment manifests as unequal treatment, exploitation and unfair workload distribution. Students often exhibit prejudiced attitudes, such as assigning demeaning tasks exclusively to child laborers, denying them access to basic amenities or deliberately excluding them from social interactions and opportunities for growth. Owners and senior workers sometimes exploit the vulnerability of child laborers by assigning them excessive work hours, not providing adequate breaks and withholding basic rights and privileges.

Physical Harm by Students or Owners: Shockingly, the research findings indicated that child laborers in Dhaka University canteens are not only subject to verbal and emotional abuse but also physical harm. Many child laborers reported instances of physical assault, both by students and owners. These incidents range from slapping, kicking and pulling their ears to severer forms of physical violence. It is evident that these acts of aggression leave a lasting impact on the child. *One respondent said, "I am the victim of different kinds of abusing. Most of the students treat well but some students treat badly. Sometimes they got angry and then they bully us. Sometimes they also hurt us if they got very furious."*

Most of them respondents said they were hurt by students & owner of the canteens. Some respondents said that they were abused by some selected people who were engaged in politics.

Well-being and mental health of the child laborers, further exacerbating their vulnerable circumstances.

Long working hours: Children are forced to work excessively long hours, well beyond what is legally permissible. This can severely affect their physical and mental well-being, depriving them of proper rest, education and playtime.

Exploitative wages: Child laborers are often paid meager wages that are far below the minimum wage, if they are paid at all. These low wages unfairly exploit their labor and contribute to their vulnerability and poverty.

Unhygienic working conditions: Canteen workers, including child laborers exposed to unhygienic working conditions, such as poor sanitation, inadequate safety measures and lack of proper food handling practices. This increases their risk of health problems and disease.

Denial of basic rights: Child laborers are denied basic rights such as education, healthcare and recreational activities. This perpetuates a cycle of poverty and denies them the opportunity to develop their full potential. The qualitative research findings regarding the abuse faced by child laborers employed in Dhaka University canteens reveal a distressing reality. The child laborers' experiences bullying and mistreatment at the hands of students, owners and even senior workers. Verbal abuse, unequal treatment and physical harm create an environment that is detrimental to the well-being of these vulnerable individuals. These findings underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions, comprehensive policies and awareness campaigns to address the issue of child labor and protect the rights and dignity of these children working in Dhaka University canteens.

Recreational Opportunities

Children engaged in child labor typically lack access to proper recreational opportunities due to their demanding work schedules and limited resources. However, if child laborers were to have a chance to engage in recreational activities within Dhaka University canteens, there are a few possibilities to consider. Very few child laborers of Dhaka University canteens get recreational opportunity because of their workload.

Sports and Games: Dhaka University canteens may allocate space for organizing sports and games suitable for child laborers. This could include activities like football, cricket, badminton or even indoor games like chess or carom. Such recreational options would promote physical fitness, teamwork and provide a healthy outlet for children after their work hours. Some of the child of Shaheed Sargent Zohurul Haque Hall play in the Hall field. *One respondent said, "I don't need to pay to stay at night. I have to flooring at night to sleep. I have no recreational opportunities because I have no any phone. I got little time to spend without working. Most of the time I have to work in different sector. I am always working and I don't have any idea recreational activities because I am comparatively newcomer here".*

He said, "I have a smartphone so I can hear song without working hour and I can watch movie at night after finishing my task. Sometimes we watch cricket match in TV room."

Recreational activities of the child labor are very occasional. Most of the respondents said that they have no opportunity to play or go outside without their permission.

Art and Crafts: Setting up art and craft workshop within the canteens could give child laborers an opportunity to explore their creative sides. This could involve activities such as painting,

drawing, origami or making handicrafts. Engaging in artistic pursuits can provide a therapeutic outlet, foster imagination and encourage self-expression.

Music and Dance: Organizing music and dance sessions can offer child laborers a chance to engage in expressive and recreational activities. This could include singing classes, learning to play simple musical instruments or practicing traditional dance forms. Music and dance have proven psychological and social benefits, promoting emotional well-being and expression.

Skill-building Workshops: Dhaka University canteens could also organize skill-building workshops aimed at enhancing the children's abilities and knowledge outside of their work responsibilities. These workshops could include sessions on computer literacy, language skills, vocational training or even entrepreneurship. Equipping child laborers with additional skills can empower them for future opportunities.

Storytelling and Reading: Establishing reading corners or storytelling sessions within the canteens could foster a love for reading and learning among child laborers. Access to age-appropriate books and stories can contribute to their intellectual and educational development. Additionally, inviting volunteers or professionals to narrate engaging tales and conduct interactive storytelling sessions can help in creating a positive learning environment. It is important to recognize that implanting these recreational opportunities for child laborers within Dhaka University canteens would require collaboration between relevant stakeholders, including the university, NGO's and labor authorities. Providing a safe and inclusive space for children to participate in such activities is crucial, ensuring their well-being and protection. Additionally, efforts should be made to raise awareness about the rights of child laborers and promote their education and overall development.

Rayhan said, "I don't need to pay to stay at night. I have to flooring at night to sleep. I have no recreational opportunities because I have no any phone. I got little time to spend without working. Most of the time I have to work in different sector. I am always working and I don't have any idea recreational activities because I am comparatively newcomer here".

Child laborers are the human being, we should keep in mind this. We sometimes forget that they are also human being like us. We treat them as a slave but it is a crime.

6. Recommendations by Teachers and Students

It is important to address the issue of child labor in Dhaka University canteens and strive towards creating a supportive and safe environment for these children. Here are some recommendations to consider:

Education and Skill Development: Provide access to quality education and skill development programs for these child laborers. This will empower them to acquire valuable skills and knowledge that can enhance their future prospects.

Awareness and Sensitization: Raise awareness among the university community, staff and students regarding child labor and its consequences. Encourage empathy and promote a culture of support towards these children.

Regular Monitoring: Establish a system for continuous monitoring of child labor within the canteens. This could involve regular inspections, feedback mechanism and anonymous reporting channels, ensuring accountability and proper working conditions.

Collaboration with NGOs and Government Agencies: Collaborate with relevant nongovernmental organizations and government agencies that specialize in child welfare. They can contribute their expertise, resources and guidance to tackle child labor effectively.

Collaboration with Suppliers: Engage with suppliers and vendors who provide goods and services to the canteens. Encourage them to certify that child labor is not involved in the production or supply chain, promoting ethical sourcing practices.

Rehabilitation and Support: Develop a comprehensive rehabilitation and support program for child laborers. This may involve counseling services, access to healthcare and financial support to transition them back to education or secure alternative employment opportunities.

Child Protection Policies: Develop and implement child protection policies within the university canteen. This includes strict guidelines prohibiting the employment of children below the legal working age and establishing procedures to ensure compliance.

Empowerment and Participation: Involve child laborers in decision-making processes and initiatives that directly affect them. Encourage their active participation to develop a sense of ownership and empowerment.

Raise Living Standards: Work towards improving the living standards of families of child laborers, addressing underlying socio-economic factors contributing to child labor. Providing assistance to families in terms of income generation, healthcare and housing can help to break the cycle of poverty.

Advocacy and Policy Reform: Advocate for stricter enforcement of laws against child labor and support policy reforms that protect the rights and welfare of children. Engage with relevant stakeholders and policymakers to create an enabling environment for sustainable change. Eradicating child labor requires a comprehensive and collective effort. By implementing these recommendations, you can contribute to creating a more equitable and just society for these child laborers in Dhaka University canteens.

7. Conclusion

Addressing the issue of child labor within Dhaka University's canteens is paramount, as it constitutes a violation of fundamental rights, denying children their rightful access to education and robbing them of their childhood. Both the university administration and the government must swiftly intervene to rectify this matter. Strict enforcement of regulations and legal frameworks prohibiting the employment of underage children is imperative (Bangladesh Labor Act, 2006). Additionally, public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives should be launched to educate the populace on the adverse effects of child labor and the importance of upholding fair employment practices (UNICEF, 2021). Alternative measures such as scholarship programs and vocational training should be introduced to provide children with educational opportunities and valuable skills (National Child Labor Elimination Policy, 2010). Collaborative efforts among the university, NGOs, and government agencies are essential to foster a sustainable and inclusive environment that respects the rights and well-being of all

individuals (GPS, 2021). Dhaka University's canteens can serve as a beacon of ethical employment practices by eradicating child labor and ensuring a safe and nurturing workplace for all employees. The prevalence and impact of child labor in Dhaka University's canteens underscore the urgent need for comprehensive reforms (UNICEF, 2021). The socioeconomic factors driving children into the workforce, coupled with lax enforcement of labor laws, have perpetuated this cycle of exploitation. Multi-stakeholder collaboration involving government agencies, academic institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector is crucial to addressing the root causes of child labor (International Labor Organization, year). This collaborative effort should focus on strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, and providing alternative livelihood opportunities for vulnerable families. Dhaka University must lead by example, advocating for the rights of all children and promoting ethical practices within its premises. Only through collective action and unwavering commitment can we effectively combat child labor and ensure a brighter future for generations to come.

The prevalence and impact of child labor within Dhaka University's canteens and food shops underscore the urgent need for concerted action and comprehensive reforms. This investigation has revealed the stark reality of children being deprived of their fundamental rights to education, health and a childhood free from exploitation. The socio-economic factors driving children into the workforce, coupled with inadequate enforcement of labor laws and insufficient institutional support, have perpetuated this vicious cycle of exploitation. The findings highlight the imperative for multi-stakeholder collaboration involving government agencies, academic institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector to address the root causes of child labor and implement sustainable solutions. This includes strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing monitoring and enforcement mechanisms and providing alternative livelihood opportunities for vulnerable families. As a community, we must prioritize the well-being and future prospects of our children by creating safe and supportive environments where they can thrive and fulfill their potential. Dhaka University, as a leading educational institution, has a crucial role to play in setting a precedent for ethical practices and advocating for the rights of all children. Only through collective efforts and unwavering commitment can we effectively combat child labor and ensure a brighter future for generations to come.

The eradication of child labor in Bangladesh demands a comprehensive strategy encompassing rigorous law enforcement, enhanced access to quality education, targeted poverty alleviation programs, stringent industry regulations, community engagement, and robust research initiatives. Strengthening existing laws with stricter penalties and improved monitoring mechanisms, coupled with initiatives to make education more accessible and appealing, can discourage families from resorting to child labor. Concurrently, poverty alleviation efforts should target vulnerable households while holding industries accountable through stringent regulations and corporate social responsibility initiatives. Engaging local communities and raising awareness are pivotal for fostering a culture that prioritizes children's rights, while ongoing research and data collection are imperative for informed policymaking and progress tracking. Through sustained commitment, collaboration, and resource allocation, Bangladesh

can create a future where every child is afforded the opportunity to thrive, unencumbered by the burden of exploitative labor.

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Socioeconomic Challenges and Coping Strategies Adopted by the Widows in Bangladesh

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Abstract

In Bangladesh widowhood is commonly describe as a deplorable event in a women's life and here widows are the most deprived section in every aspects of the society where their identity is snatched with the death of their husband. This study focused on the socioeconomic challenges faced by the widows of Bangladesh. It aims to determine the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, to understand the problems and violence faced by the widows and to explore the coping strategies adopted by the widows. Non-experimental research design was prepared to attain the research objectives, the study was quantitative in nature and social survey method is used to carry out the research, multistage cluster sampling procedure was followed and data were collected through interview method by using a semi structure interview schedule. This study has found that a large number of widows (27.4%) are illiterate and by profession they are dependent housewife (64.3%), majority of them (77.4%) did not get the share of their rightful inheritance from their father', they had to face a lot of problems in their life as economic crisis (62.7%), psychological crises (49.2%), problems in getting proper living facilities (71.8%), poor healthcare opportunities (53.2%), physical torture (40.8%), problems in rearing their dependent children (83.1%), negative attitude (60.5%) by their family members etc. Their life is full of suffering and they mainly use their tolerance capacity as the coping strategies and gradually they become habituated (77.6%) to live with those problems. It is recommended that increase of social security program, proper practice of laws, increase awareness, creating employment opportunity and providing training to them can reduce the vulnerabilities of the widows of Bangladesh.

Key Words: *Widow, Marriage, Socio-economic challenges, Violence, Coping Strategy*

1. Introduction

Marriage and widowhood is deliberated as two major inclinations in woman's life in all over the world. Marriage is almost universal in Bangladesh like other countries in the world. In advance marriage with an older man was an ordinary phenomenon in pre-colonial Indian society and for this reason a young girl experiences widowhood at a very little age. Nonexistence of the practice of widow remarriage and the absence of the right of inheritance to a father's or husband's property in Hindu community added too much sufferings in the life of the widows who had to spend the residuum of their lives as unwanted dependents of their in-laws or parental families (Akhter, 2001). The long-standing patriarchal social system makes a woman socially vulnerable and economically dependent on a man. For a widow, who has losses her husband at early age, life becomes very hard. From the ancient age to date the condition of widows is very hurtful in the society especially in Indian subcontinent either they belonged to

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Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Buddhist community. But the status of widows in Hindu community was more hurtful as they did not have the right to live after death of their husbands. At the beginning of the 19th century, the orthodox Hindu community practiced *Sahamaran* or *Sati Daho* (burning of widow with their husband's corpse) system. It was declared illegal by Bengal Sati Regulation, 1829 because of social movement against Sati practice under the leadership of famous social reformer Raja Rammohan Roy (Ghafur and Mannan, 1968). An endeavour had been made during the 1850s to introduced widow remarriage among the Hindu widows in order to reduce their sufferings (Akhter, 2001). The Widow Remarriage Act, 1856 however, failed to acquire its desire purpose because it was resisted by the conventional attitude of the orthodox society. But with the passes of time this attitude of the society has changed. Now the widow remarriage is worldwide accepted and granted. This law opens a new door for those widows who want to restart their life through remarriage but cannot change the condition of those who do not want or do not get the proposal for remarriage. For this, still in the society the condition of widow is very ponderous.

However, in Bangladesh the condition of widow is worse than the common woman living in the society (Akhter, 2001). The woman in our country also faces a heap of problems and violence after the death of their husband. The crux faced by the widows includes social, economic, cultural and psychological in nature. All of those problems become very serious at their old age (Islam, 2020). The widow in our society is bound to experience diverse types of oppression in her life. For Example, lack of indispensable emotive support and monetary arsenal at old age when her income calibre is slowly reduced, that is the emergence of unending persecution for the widow. Generally, widows of Bangladesh are more dependent on family and face worse socioeconomic problems than men. Besides understanding their challenges, it is also needed to know how do they cope with and survive in such circumstances. In order to understand this issue, the present study has been carried out.

2. Problem Statement

In general, after expire of their husbands the widows cannot fulfil their basic needs (Amin, 2018). Most of them do not get any help from the inmates of in-laws. They are also deprived of their deserved property. Older widows have to go through a plenty of sufferings. The traditional virtuous society attributed severe sanctions on older widows. The widows undergone a diverse types of physical, psychological, moral and spiritual misery by the merciless hands of the society and ascribed hideous pain on them. As a result, the older widows were forced to live socially, financially subservient and physically austere. A widow's overt appearances was not considered as propitious one; or this reason she had to live in secrecy (Islam,2020). Inflexible socioeconomic contemplation make the aged widows afflicted, discriminated, and immolated in the society. The widows experienced humiliation and pain in the society which affects them very intensely (Islam, 2020). Even a good number of them do not get any assistance from the government. In 2018-19 fiscal year only 14 lakh widows got widow allowance (BBS, 2019) while the total number of widows was 4.5 million in our country which constitute almost 2.7% of the total people (Amin, 2018). Among the widows, the most common problem is financial

incapability to support themselves and their children. They do not have any source of regular income and feel very insecure in the society. In such situation, the present study has been conducted on the socioeconomic challenges and violence faced by the widows and the coping strategy they adopted for exploring how the widows of Bangladesh straggle with all kinds of difficulties.

3. Literature Review

Widows in Bangladesh are often considered as the poorest and most vulnerable segment of society (Hossain, 2010). It is generally assert that widowhood is sharply attached with a wide range of impairment across less or intermediate income societies. Widows whether young or old need financial, social, moral and mental support for their survival. But widowhood is thought as a social stigma. There are many societies where widow has a narrow communal status and is cropped from social participation (Akhter, 2001). After the death of husband, the widow has to go through a variety of social and economic problems and suffer from various disparities (Asian Human Rights Commission, AHRC, 2010).

A study entitled “Impact of Social Prejudices on the Status of Widows: A Sociological Study on Kishoregonj Zila” by the Lawyers and Jurists (2013) revealed that widows are most tormented and marginalized from every aspects of the community. Because of prejudices widows can not live their life freely which added a lot of problems in their life. They do not participate in social festivals because they are considered ill-fated. They are not licensed to touch the neonate, cannot participate the decision making in family, they face problems to work outside, even deprived from their husbands’ property. Like other woman, widows do not work freely. Social prejudices also make them mentally depressed and insecure.

Another study on the “Analysis of the Socio- Economic and Psychological Status of the Widows: A Study on Jhenidah District” by Bhowmik, et.al. (2020) showed that widows of Bangladesh are the most divested section in the society. They faced a variety of challenges in fulfilling their fundamental needs such as food, clothing, shelter, dignity e.t.c. It also revealed that the widows face many social problems such as discrimination in society, little school support, suspicious attitude towards them, social exclusion etc. and faced less support from school authorities for their children, they also experienced extreme poverty and most of them live by hand to mouth and do not have any savings.

Another study on “Widows in Rural Bangladesh: An Analysis” carried out by Hossain (2010), revealed that social avoidance against the widow in rural area of Bangladesh is a momentous disquiet. They have no claim on their husband’s property and stay mostly in social incoherency. In the male ruled society, they have no option but to rely on their male kinsmen. Despite of all of these anguish and social awfulness, the state of widows remains unpronounced and unaddressed by the government, the United Nations and its agencies, the media and civil society organizations.

Islam (2020) transpired that the family condition of the older widows is not satisfactory, moreover their financial condition is very penetrable, many of them do not get the properties from their husband and completely depend on their children and family members, they even do

not have the decision making power in their family and face social discrimination, they also have experience in restriction and get exclusion from their relatives, a great number of aged widows feel themselves as the burden of their family and do not get support at desired level from society.

Ahmed (2018) revealed that majority of the deserted women belongs from lower socioeconomic background, their economic condition is very fragile, for this reason as a source of alternative income they send their children to work before they reached 18 years, their housing quality is also very pitiful, most of them lived in single room in a slum which is constructed with bamboo and CI sheets, they also suffer from malnutrition due to lack of nutritious food, they even deprived from familial and social support.

Ahmed and Ahmmed (2015) conducted a study on problems and challenges of deserted women in Bangladesh, which stated that most of the deserted women have to pass their life with great economic insecurity, they also have problems in bestowal and faced the threat of excision, physical insecurity and protect themselves from sexual harassment, they also have to face a great hardship in rearing their dependent children and found themselves deprived from their husband's rightful possession.

It is found that the studies carried out by various authors and organizations like AHRC (2010), Hossain (2010), Bhowmik, et.al. (2020), Islam (2020) and Lawyers and Jurists (2013), focused on problem faced by widows in Bangladesh and Ahmed & Ahmmed (2015) and Ahmed (2018) extensively focused on the problems and challenges faced by the deserted women but there is paucity of information about the violence the widow face in their family and the strategy they adapted to continue their livelihoods. The present study intended to fill the identified research gaps. However, the findings of this study would enable the government of Bangladesh and other stakeholders to devise specific policies and strategies to minimize the socio-economic challenges faced by the widows and their dependents in Bangladesh.

4. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to analyse the socioeconomic challenges and coping strategies adopted by the widows in Bangladesh. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To determine the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the widows;
2. To identify the problems and violence faced by the widows; and
3. To explore the coping strategies devised by the widows to overcome their challenges.

5. Methodology

By nature, the present study is quantitative one and non-experimental research design (survey design) has been prepared to attain the research objectives. Multi-stage cluster sampling procedure has been applied to select the sample. First Gopalganj district has been selected purposively. Then Gopalganj municipality has been selected purposively. Then three wards No. 1, 3 and 4, and from that three wards six *mahallas* have been selected randomly. Then complete enumeration procedure has been followed and all the widows of the selected *mahallas* have been considered as sample. Total number of sample was 124. Primary data were collected from

the respondents through interview with semi-structured interview schedule. Data have also been collected through interview from key informants (local leaders, school teachers etc.). Secondary data have been collected through consulting various research reports published by GOs and NGOs articles, books, newspaper etc. But emphasis has been given on primary data to analyse the research issues. And descriptive statistical method has been used to analyse the collected data through using SPSS and ethical guidelines were strictly followed throughout the study.

6. Results and Discussion

Widows are very vulnerable in Bangladesh. The socio-economic challenges and violence the widows deal with are numerous. The widows are exploited by society as well as the family in various ways and they are divested from the basic human rights. They are distinguished by their husbands' family and do not have site in their own maternal house. Besides due to illiteracy they are less skilled to earn for managing their living. They become stymied from all aspects of their life. The widows of our country suffer from multifarious labyrinth due to the socio economic and cultural reasons. The study has tried to find out various social and economic challenges and violence faced by the widows and their adopted strategies to cope with those challenges.

6.1 Age Structure of the Widows

In Bangladesh, the women become widow at different ages. There is no specific age of the widows in Bangladesh like other countries in the world. It is found that about half of the respondents (48.4%) became widow within 45 years. As opposed to, more than one third (38.7%) of the respondents become widow at 46-60 years. However, 12.1% respondents become widow at the age of 61-75 years. 7.3% respondents become widow at 16-30 years which is very pathetic. Data indicate that early widowhood is one of the demographic features of the study area.

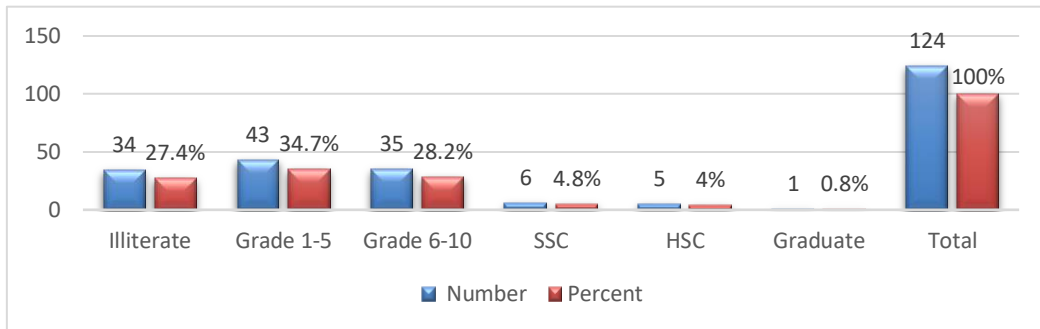
Table 6.1: Age at Widowhood of the Respondents

Age at Widowhood (in years)	Number	Percent
16-30	9	7.3
31-45	51	41.1
46-60	48	38.7
61-75	15	12.1
Above 75	1	0.8
Total	124	100

6.2 Educational Background of the Widows

The figure 6.1 shows that most of the respondents have completed grade 1-5 (34.7%), and one fourth of the respondents (28.2%) completed grade 6-10. On the other hand, the third highest numbers of respondents are illiterate. Only 4.8% and 4.0% respondents have passed the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) Examinations. Respectively only one respondent (0.8%) has completed graduation. The data indicate that poor educational status of the widows is another feature of the study area.

Figure 6.1: Educational Qualification of the Respondents



6.3 Professional Background of the Widows

Profession is one of the most important determiners of the socioeconomic condition of anyone. Through it one can get an idea of one’s socioeconomic status. The present study has tried to explore the professional background of the widows. Data show that most of the respondents are dependent housewife (64.5%). Second highest of them are maid servants (17.7%). Some of them are day labourer (6.4%), shopkeeper (2.4%), and school teacher (2.4%), and a few of them are engaged in animal husbandry (1.6%), while 4.8% are involved in other activities that include private tutor, chef and seamstress. The data indicate that the widows of the study area belong to a very lower professional background.

Table 6.2: Profession of the Respondents

Profession	Number	Percent
Dependent Housewife	80	64.5
Maid Servant	22	17.7
Day Labor	8	6.4
Shopkeeper	3	2.4
School Teacher	3	2.4
Animal Husbandry	2	1.6
Others	6	4.8
Total	124	100

6.4 Income of the Widows

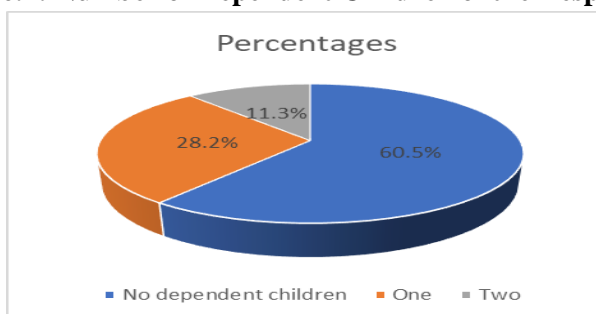
Income and savings is one of the most important determiners of measuring one’s economic status. The study shows that most of the respondents (58.1%) do not have any personal income. Second highest respondents’ (16.9%) monthly personal income is BDT 2501-5000. Some of the respondents’ (8.9%) monthly income is within BDT 1-2500; 8.1% respondents’ monthly income is within BDT 7501-10000. One the other hand, a few of the respondents’ (5.6%) monthly income is BDT 5001-7500. And rest of the respondents’ (2.4%) monthly income is above BDT 10000. So it shows that the widows of the study area have a very poor income status.

Table 6.3: Personal Income of the Respondents

Monthly Personal Income (BDT)	Number	Percent
No income	72	58.1
1-2500	11	8.9
2501-5000	21	16.9
5001-7500	7	5.6
7501-10000	10	8.1
Above 10000	3	2.4
Total	124	100

6.5 Dependent Children of the Widows

The widows of Bangladesh face very hardship to rear their dependent children. It is not detached in the study area. The figure 6.2 shows that most of the respondents (60.5%) do not have dependent children. On the other hand, it has found that more than one-third (39.5%) of the respondents have dependent children, of which 28.2% respondents have one dependent child and 11.3% have two dependent children. It might be said that many widows have dependent children and they are to face difficulty in rearing the children.

Figure 6.2: Number of Dependent Children of the Respondents

6.6 Property of the Widows

Here property means the inheritance the widows get from their fathers' house and from the in-laws house after their husbands' death. Though it is their right to get that property but a lot of widows in our country are deprived of their rights, and the following table analyses the rate of widows who got the property.

Table 6.4: Information about getting Inheritance

Whether got the Inherited property	Inheritance of Husband	Inheritance of Father
Yes	89 (71.8)	28 (22.6)
No	35 (28.2)	96 (77.4)
Total	124 (100)	124 (100)

Percentage has been shown in parenthesis

It is found that most of the respondents (71.8%) have got their husbands' inheritance. On the other hand, more than one-fourth (28.2%) of the respondents did not get it when they have the right to get their husbands' property. In case of fathers' inheritance this situation is more

vulnerable. Here only 22.6% respondents have got the share of their fathers' property and 77.4% respondents did not get any share from their fathers' property. Data indicate that many of the respondents are deprived of their rights.

6.7 Problems Faced by the Respondents to Get their Inheritance

The table 6.5 shows that in the category of husbands' inheritance the highest number of the respondents (57.3%) did not face problems to get their rightful inheritance. On the other hand, 42.7% respondents had to face problem to get their husbands' inheritance. That means a significant number of widows had to face problem in getting their husbands inheritance.

Table 6.5: Opinion on Problems Face to Get the Inheritance

Whether face problems to get the Inherited property	Inheritance of Husband	Inheritance of Father
Yes	38 (42.7)	19 (67.9)
No	51 (57.3)	9 (32.1)
Total	89 (100)	28 (100)

Percentage has been shown in parenthesis

With regard to the fathers' inheritance, majority of the respondents (67.9%) faced problem to get their fathers' inheritance and 32.1% did not face any problem. So, the data indicate that large number of respondents faced problem to get the inheritance from their father's as well as in-laws' family.

6.8 Types of Problems Faced by the Respondents to Get their Inheritance

The table 6.6 shows that about half of (50 %) respondents have faced threats (such as threat to physical torture, threat to causes harm to their children etc.) by their in-laws' families to get their husbands' inheritance after expire of their husbands, about one third (31.6%) of them have faced physical torture (beaten by their in laws family members) to get their husband's property from their in-laws. And in-law's family of the rest of the respondents (21.1%) have broken up their family bondage.

Table 6.6: Types of Problems Faced by the Respondents Related to the Inheritance

Categories	Types of problems	Frequency	Percent
Husband's Inheritance (N=38)	Threat by in-laws families	19	50.0
	Cut of family bondage	8	21.1
	Physical torture	12	31.6
Father's Inheritance (N=19)	Threat by brothers	5	26.3
	Cut of family relationship	16	84.2
	others	1	5.3

(Multiple answers have been accepted)

On the other hand, in category of getting father's inheritance, relatives of a large portion (84.2%) of the respondents have broken up relationship with them. A few of them (26.3%) have faced threats (such as threat to physical torture, cut of relations with maternal family, threat to causes harm to their children etc.) given by their brothers, and another 5.3% have faced others

problems that include miss behave of their sisters-in-law to get the inheritance from their fathers' house.

6.9 Opportunity to Avail Healthcare

Healthcare is very necessary to lead a healthy life. Every person has the right to get healthcare. In our country, women are derived of proper healthcare, more specifically the widows have a little opportunity to have healthcare from the family. A lot of them do not get any healthcare from their family.

Figure 6.3: Opinion on Having Proper Healthcare from Family

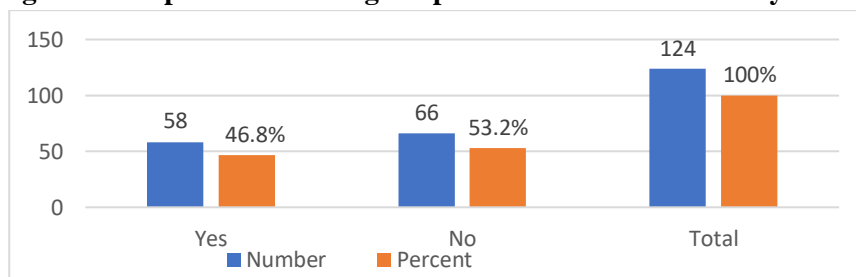


Figure 6.3 shows that among the total respondents, more than half (53.2%) do not get proper healthcare in their family because of economic problem (75.8%); and other reasons such as family negligence, son does not provide the cost, daughter in laws misbehaviour etc. And 46.8% get the same opportunity. Here not to get proper healthcare means those who does not get the treatment facility in their severe or chronic diseases as appendix, diabetes, cancer, eye irritation, joint pain, surgery need in their uterus etc. But almost all of them can take paracetamol in fever.

6.10 Opinion on Problems Faced at their Family

The widows of Bangladesh cannot think of their life without sufferings and vulnerabilities. The widows of Bangladesh face a lot of problems in their family. The rate of those is very little who do not face any problem in their family.

Table 6.7: Opinion on Problems Faced by the Respondents at their Family

Whether faced problems	Number	Percent
Yes	118	95.2
No	6	4.8
Total	124	100

The table 6.7 shows that almost all of the respondents (95.2%) of the study area face problem at their family. And only 4.8% do not face problem at their family. It is very disappointing that almost all of widows are to face problem at household level.

6.11 Types of Problems Faced by the Widows

It is noticeable from the table 6.8 that majority of the respondents of the study area (62.7%) face economic crisis (such as faced extreme poverty, fail to full fill their basic needs, do not have any economic freedom etc.) at their family followed by about half (49.2%) of the respondents face psychological crisis (such as anxiety about the future of their dependent children, non-cooperation of the family members, has to live unaccompanied in family, rude behaviour,

humiliation etc.). Some of them (14.4%) face negligence of family, that means they do not have any importance and respect in their family and treated as burden. A few of them (5.1%) are verbally abused by their daughter in law (as torture the widows by their speech, use slang language etc.) and only 3.4% respondents are physically abused (such as forcefully work in their family, beaten up etc.) by family members. So, it is evident that majority of the respondents faces economic and psychological problem at their family.

Table 6.8: Distribution of Types of Problems Faced by the Respondents

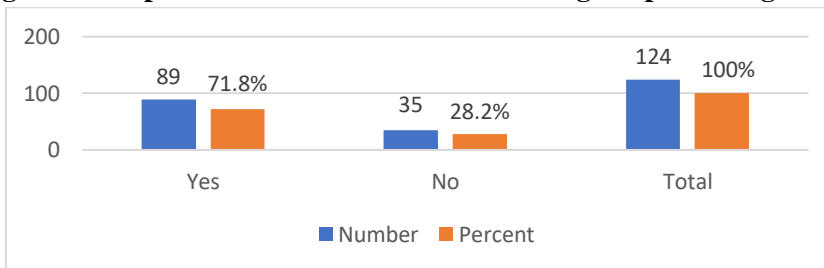
Types of Problems	Frequency (N=118)	Percent
Economic crises	74	62.7
Psychological crises	58	49.2
Family negligence	17	14.4
Physical abuse	4	3.4
Verbal abuse by daughter in law	6	5.1

(Multiple answers have been accepted)

6.12 Problem in Getting Proper Living Facilities

Widows of our country also faces problem in getting proper living facilities such as food, medical, housing, recreation and others (water, sanitation etc.) which are very much necessary for living.

Figure 6.4: Opinion on Problem Faced in Getting Proper Living Facilities



The figure 6.4 shows that majority of the respondents (71.8%) face problems in terms of getting proper living facilities which includes medical (74.2%) and others such as food, housing, recreation, water and sanitation etc. And on the other hand, 28.2% respondents reported that they did not have any problems in terms of living facility.

6.13 Public Attitude towards the Widows

Public attitude towards the widows is one of the most important issues that affect the life of the widows adversely. The study has investigated the nature of familial and societal attitude towards the widows. The study has found both positive and negative attitude.

Table 6.9 shows that in terms of familial attitude most of the respondents (60.5%) face negative attitude of their family members such as disrespect, negligence and rude attitude shown by their daughter in-law and sometime by their sons. On the other hand, more than one-third (39.5%) respondents have reported that their family members show positive attitude to them such as they respect and love them.

With regard to societal attitude, majority of the respondents (83.9%) reported that they enjoy positive attitude of the society. The people show respect and sympathy to and well-behave with them. On the other hand, 16.1% face negative attitude of the society. They are the victims of disrespect and humiliation in the society.

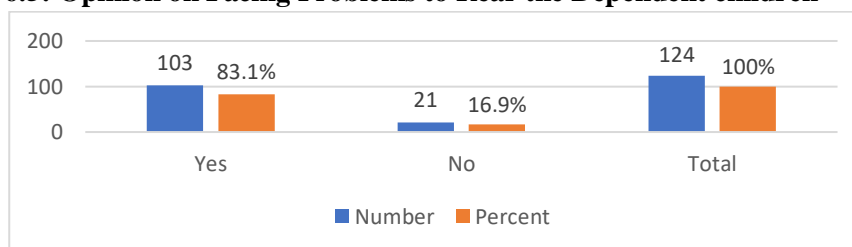
Table 6.9: Distribution of Attitude towards the Widows

Categories	Nature of Attitude	Number	Percent
Familial attitude	Positive attitude	49	39.5
	Negative attitude	75	60.5
	Total	124	100
Societal attitude	Positive attitude	104	83.9
	Negative attitude	20	16.1
	Total	124	100

6.14 Problems Faced by the Respondents to Rear their Dependent Children

Women who become widow at a young age have dependent children. And a widow has to face a lot of problem to rear their dependent children. Indeed, it is a great challenge for the widows who have dependent children to rear up them.

Figure 6.5: Opinion on Facing Problems to Rear the Dependent children



From the figure 6.5 we can see that more than three-fourth (83.1%) of the respondents had to face problem to rear their dependent children after their husbands' death in the forms of economic insecurity, social insecurity, non-cooperation of the relatives etc. On the other hand, only 16.9% respondents have reported that they did not face any problem to rear their dependent children. So, it is a great challenge for the widow to rear the dependent children.

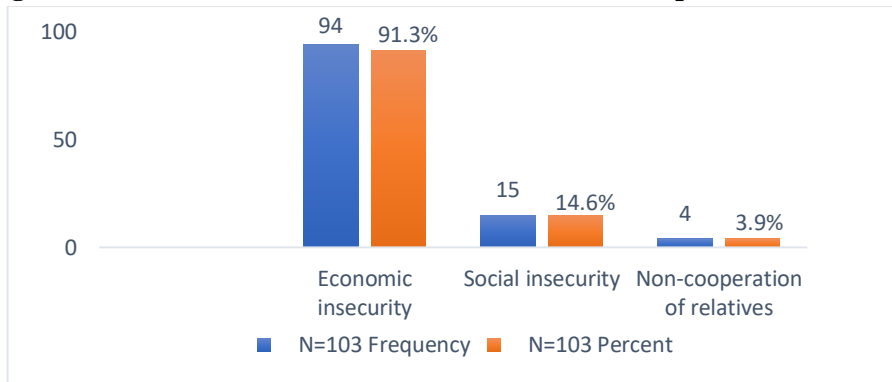
6.15 Nature of Problems Faced by the Respondents to Rear their Dependent Children

Most of the widows of our country face a lot of problems to rear their dependent children. These problems may have many types such as economic insecurity, social insecurity, non-cooperation of the relatives and so on.

Figure 6.6 shows that the highest number of respondents (91.3%) has faced economic insecurity (extreme financial crises) to rear their dependent children. Some of the respondents (14.6%) have faced social insecurity (such as having no social support, fear to causes harm by the neighbour or others etc.), and rest of the respondents (3.9%) faced the problem of non-co-

operation of the relatives to rear their dependent children. The data indicate that in the widowhood the most serious problem is economic insecurity to rear their dependent children.

Figure 6.6: Nature of Problems Related to Rear the Dependent Children



(Multiple answers have been accepted)

6.16 Information about the Violence Faced by the Respondents

It is found in table 6.10 that, in the area of violence by family members, the highest number of respondents (71.8%) have faced violence by their own family members (son, daughter in law, daughter, brother and sister-in-law). On the other hand, 28.2% respondents have reported that they did not face violence by their family members.

Table 6.10: Distribution of Opinion on Violence Faced by the Respondents

Whether faced violence	Violence by own family members	Violence by in-laws
Yes	89 (71.8)	76 (61.3)
No	35 (28.2)	48 (38.7)
Total	124 (100)	124 (100)

Percentage has been shown in parenthesis

With regard to violence by in-law’s family, little bit less than two-third of the respondents (61.3%) has faced violence by their in-law’s family members (brother-in-law, sister-in-law, nephew). On the other hand, 38.7% respondents did not face violence by them. So, it is evident that majority of the respondent have faced violence in their family by both own family and in-law’s family members after expire of their husbands.

6.17 Nature of Violence Committed by the Own Family Members

Table 6.11 shows that the highest number of the respondents (88.8%) became the victim of psychological torture by their own family members (such as misbehaviour, negligence, humiliation, verbal abuse, loneliness etc.). Some of the respondents (21.3%) have reported that her family members sometimes do not provide food timely eventually they have to fast. A few of them (4.5%) have mentioned that they have been beaten by their son and 2.2% have been beaten by their daughter in-law which is very pathetic. And 1.1% faced other torture as beaten by son in law.

Table 6.11: Nature of Violence Committed by the Own Family Members

Types of violence	Frequency (N=89)	Percent
Beaten by son	4	4.5
Beaten by daughter in law	2	2.2
Have to fasting	19	21.3
Psychological torture	79	88.8
Others	1	1.1

(Multiple answers have been accepted)

6.18 Nature of Violence Committed by the In-laws Family Members

In Bangladesh, a large number of widows become the victims of different types of violence and oppression by their in-laws family members such as physical torture, psychological torture, and sexual abuse and not to provide any economic support to the widows.

Table 6.12: Nature of Violence Committed by In-laws Family Members

Types of torture	Frequency (N=76)	Percent
Physical torture	31	40.8
Psychological torture	37	48.7
Try to sexually abuse	3	3.9
Not to provide any economic support	12	15.8

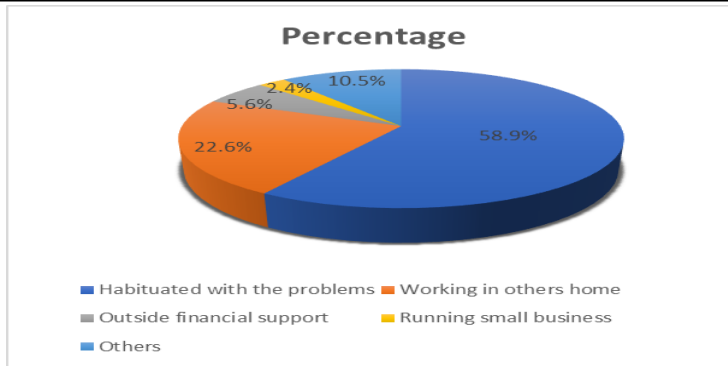
(Multiple answers have been accepted)

Table 6.12 shows that a better part of the respondents (48.7%) have become the victim of psychological torture (such as humiliation, misbehaviour, verbally abuse, not to be sympathetic to their sorrows etc.) by their in-laws family members. The second highest number of the respondent (40.8%) has become the victim of physical torture (such as beaten by in laws family members, excessive pressure of household activity etc.). Some of them (15.8%) have faced economic crisis because of not providing economic support by in-laws family members. And very few of them (3.9%) have reported that in-laws family members tried to abuse them sexually. The data indicate that a lot of widows are seriously tortured by their in-laws family members.

6.19 Strategies Adopted by the Widows to Cope with the Economic Challenges

The figure 6.7 shows that more than half of the respondents (58.9%) have become habituated with the problems. That means they use their tolerance power to cope with the problems. They have accepted these problems as their destiny and try to live with the problems throughout their whole life. About one fourth of the respondents (22.6%) work in others home to earn for coping with their economic problems. Some of the respondents (10.5%) adopt other strategies to cope with their economic problems such as using husband's pension (4 %), seamstress (0.8%), working as a day labour (3.2%), and private tutor (1.6%), chef (0.8%) etc. A few of them (5.6%) have taken outside financial assistance from their relatives and 2.4% have tried to cope with their economic problems by running small business.

Figure 6.7: Types of Strategies Adopted to Cope with the Economic Challenges



6.20 Strategies Adopted by the widows to Cope with the Social Challenges

With lots of economic challenges the widows of our country also face different types of social challenges which make their life more vulnerable. For example, social insecurity, verbal abuse, disrespect and humiliation at community level; physical and psychological torture at household level are crucial social challenges for widows. In this situation they adopt some strategies to cope with their circumstances.

Table 6.13: Types of Strategies Adopted to Cope with the Social Challenges

Types of coping strategies	Frequency (N=124)	Percent
Habituated with the problems	95	76.6
Protest against the torture verbally	23	18.5
Report to the <i>panchayet</i>	6	4.8
Leave the home	7	5.6

(Multiple answers have been accepted)

Table 6.13 shows that more than three-fourth of the respondents (76.6%) have been habituated with the problems they face in the society. Some of them (18.5%) have tried to protest against the torture verbally. A few of them (5.6%) have been found to leave their home to get relief from the problems, and only 4.8% respondents have reported to the *panchayet* against their torture. So, the findings suggest that most of the widows in our country have become habituated with the problem they face in the family as well as in the society and learn to live with those problems.

6.21 Legal Action Taken by the Widows against the Violence

Widows of Bangladesh face various types of violence in their lives. They face various types of violence both at natal home and in-laws family. But only a few of them take legal action against the violence.

Figure 6.8: Legal Action Taken by the Respondents against the Violence

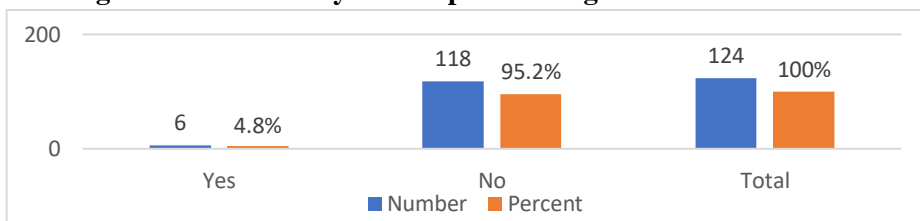


Figure 6.8 shows that out of 124 respondents 118 (95.2%) did not take any legal action against the oppressor. And only 6 respondents (4.8%) have taken a legal action against the persecutor. They have filed law-suit in the court against their in-laws and relatives for taking legal action. So, in this issue the data support that only a few widows of our country take legal action against violence and majority of them tolerate.

7. Summary of the Findings

It is generally thought that widowhood is highly associated with a variety of oppression across the poor and medium income societies (Akhter, 2001). Widows in every ages in rural Bangladesh undergo excessive poverty, ostracism, outrage, homelessness, poor health and discrimination in law and custom (Hossain, 2010). In this circumstance the present study has been conducted to know the socioeconomic challenges faced by the widows and the coping strategies adopted by them in Bangladesh.

The findings of the study show that almost half of the respondents (48.4%) experienced early widowhood within 45 years which is very pathetic. Their educational status is also very poor, 27.4% of them are illiterate; They also belong to lower professional background, 64.5% of the respondents are dependent housewife; 58.1% widows of the study area do not have personal income. Data also show that 39.5% of the widows have dependent children which added more challenges for the widows to rear up them; 28.2% of the widows did not get their rightful inheritance from their in laws and those who get faced a variety of problems like, threat by in laws family members (50%), cut of family bondage (21.1%), physical torture (31.6%). It is also found that 53.2% of the widows do not get proper health care facility from their family; 95.2% of the widows reported they have to face various problems in their family like, economic crisis (62.7%), psychological crisis (49.2%), family negligence (14.4%), physical abuse (3.4%) etc.; 71.8% of them face problems in terms of getting proper living facility; 60.5% face negative attitude of their family members such as disrespect, negligence, rude attitude shown by their daughter in law etc.; 83.1% widows reported that they had to face a variety of challenges to rear their dependent children such as economic insecurity (91.3%), social insecurity (14.6%), non-cooperation of the relatives etc.; 71.8% of the widows faced violence by their own family members in the forms of psychological torture (88.8%), have to fasting (21.3%), beaten by son (4.5%) etc. The study also finds that 58.9% of the widows become habituated with the economic problems they faced and 76.6% with the social problems rather take any action to solve their problem which is very plaintive and 95.2% did not take any legal action against the violence.

So, the findings of the present study give a hint that the widows of our country face a lot of sufferings and vulnerabilities in their life, as economic crisis, psychological crisis, dependency, lack of fulfilment of basic human needs, inheritance problem, face emotional and physical torture and they live with all of those vulnerabilities and day by day they feel lethargic in their life.

8. Conclusion

In Bangladesh widowhood is considered as a definitive and most tragic situation in a woman's life in which her identity is threaten with the death of her husband (Islam, 2020). In our society widows are the most vulnerable people in every aspect. Widows are generally at the ground of the hierarchy particularly in the joint family structure. A lot of widows in different ages in our country pass through absolute poverty, oppression, homelessness, poor health and disunity in law and custom. However, the findings of the present article have become able to show that, a lot of widows are facing different challenges and violence in their widowhood. Majority of the widows face economic insecurity, improper living facilities, negative family attitude, violence by their family members as a forms of physical torture, psychological torture, have to fasting etc. A lot of them also face to get their rightful inheritance, and rear up their dependent children, and as a strategy to cope with the situation, they use their tolerance capacity to become habituated with those challenges s and violence and take those as a part of their life even almost all of them did not take any legal action against the violence they faced which is very pathetic. This article could not focus on the specific challenges and violence faced by the Muslim, Hindu and Christian widows separately and the differences among them and did not show any cause effect relationship. But the findings of the present article can be considered as the patent that a new study is necessary to understand the specific problems faced by the widows of different community. However, the findings recommended that, the family members should show some positive attitude, love, care and attention towards the widows, laws should be properly practiced to protect the property rights of them, employment opportunity should be created through providing training, awareness of the general people and also the widows should be increased, coverage of the social security program should need to be increased which can help to reduce the agony of the widows in Bangladesh.

Finally, it can be argued that widows in our country faces a lot of challenges and violence in their life continuously and pass their life with a great hardship. Now it is high time the general people and different government and nongovernment organization should work together for the betterment of the widows and bring positive changes in the attitude towards them which can help them to restore their rightful place and also restore their valuable existence.

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People's Perceptions and Performances on Solid Waste Management: A Sociological Analysis in the Slum Area of Barishal

Farhana Yasmin* and Hadiuzzaman**

Abstract

Solid waste is one of the most perceptible and contiguous factors of environmental degradation in developing countries like Bangladesh. Our political, social, economic, technological, cultural, and educational institutions continuously produce tremendous waste. There is no proper system to manage those, so rivers, ponds, and lakes are dustbins. This study sets out three objectives 1) To find out the knowledge level of solid waste and its classification among slum dwellers 2) To find out the actual scenario of waste management system or waste disposal system 3) To examine why proper waste management practice is not sustained among them that means to identify the causes of open dumping of solid waste. This research is done by introducing the quantitative method. In total, 100 samples of both males and females are selected through purposive sampling techniques. Data is gathered through the survey with a semi-structured questionnaire. This survey was conducted in the slum areas named Bangabandhu Colony and Rasulpur located on the bank of Kirtankhola River under Barishal City. Here it can be seen that most people have an idea about dirt. But they do not dispose of waste properly. There is a river next to their homestead, so they throw garbage by the river. Sometimes they throw dirt in the open. They also know that garbage must be disposed of properly because it is bad for the environment but they do not dispose of the garbage properly because they do not get much facilities from the city corporation in this regard. That's why proper waste management practices are not sustained among them.

Key Word: Solid, Waste, Slum Area, Management, Practice, and Dispose, etc.

1. Introduction

Global Agenda 21 has pushed developing countries to accomplish sustainable solid waste management by utilizing complementary collaborative action despite their restricted resources (Debrah et al, 2021). For example, developed and industrialized countries create significant amounts of industrial and commercial trash, but underdeveloped countries produce vast quantities of home waste, including food, clothing, wood, medical waste, etc. (Carroll, 1993). As a result of the production of food waste, developing nations are less able than industrialized nations to collect, process, dispose of, or cost-effectively reuse solid waste. In the last several decades, the management of municipal solid waste (MSW) in developing nations has reached an alarming level. Due to rapid urbanization and industrialization, population growth, lifestyle improvements, and a high rate of economic activities, this problem has grown exponentially. Therefore, the solid waste quantity and composition vary according to population density, source diversity, economic activity, and income level (Ahsan, Islam and Shams, 2009).

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As a growing country, Bangladesh has been confronted with the same problems: fast population expansion, rapid urbanization due to rural-urban migration, high consumer numbers, and a high rate of urban solid waste production. Moreover, major metropolitan areas in Bangladesh face environmental hazards from unstructured loading of solid garbage and ineffective waste management (Ahsan et al., 2014). MSW has been a contentious issue around its creation and disposal for urban residents (Muttalib, Alam and Hossain, 2016). In addition, a lack of training in advanced solid waste management procedures complicates the management systems. Besides this, a waste management strategy without a comprehensive plan, inadequate management procedures, and a lack of appropriate technology exacerbate the environmental and public health risks. Presently, inefficient and illogical disposal of solid waste produces severe environmental deterioration and poses a serious threat to the health of living organisms (Shahin, Aktar and Paul, 2019).

Barishal is one of the oldest cities in Bangladesh's southern coastal region, and the Kirtankhola River flows through its southern portion. It originates in Shayestabad and discharges into the Gabkhan Channel in Gajalia (Banglapedia, 2019). As Barishal city is situated on its bank, this river's significance is beyond its limit. Throughout the year, the surge influences its flow. It is around 160 kilometers in length, 600 meters wide, and 15 meters deep. Its drainage area is 30,700 km². It is one of the most important rivers in southern Bangladesh. This river's water is contaminated by the solid waste thrown by the slum dwellers (Ahmed, Ali and Mustari, 2016).

The management of solid waste is one of the greatest environmental challenges on a worldwide platform. Bangladesh is a heavily populated nation; its population will reach over 17 billion by 2020 (Bahauddin and Uddin, 2012). In countries such as Bangladesh, solid wastes represent a significant environmental threat and social concern for urban residents (Riyad et al., 2014). These conditions provide a social, environmental, and professional risk to city residents, urban planners, development authorities, and other affected parties. In the late 1990s, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) introduced a door-to-door collection system that collects only a small fraction of generated waste in exchange for minimal payment in Bangladesh, where a large proportion of the population lacks access to waste collection services (Alamgir and Ahsan, 2007). A few decades ago, environmental deterioration caused by unplanned trash dumping and inappropriate waste management in urban areas was not the primary issue in developing nations like Bangladesh (Bhuiya, Huq and Hossain, 2002).

Rapid population increase and industrialization damage the urban environment and create a significant strain on natural resources, undermining fair and sustainable development. In most cities of the developing world, environmental degradation may be directly attributed to ineffective solid waste management and disposal. The inability of municipal organizations in developing nations to manage growing amounts of waste leads to uncollected garbage on roadways and other public areas. To achieve a sustainable waste management system, environmental, institutional, financial, economic, and social sustainability are required (Zahur, 2007).

The purpose of this study is to examine the real situation of solid waste and the environmental consequences of solid waste in the city of Barisal. The rising population, industry, hotel and restaurant outlets, and healthcare facilities in the city are exacerbating the situation. A few Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are involved in the management of solid waste in this area. In the management of solid waste, attention to environmental considerations is minimal. In addition, the government's measures for effective solid waste collection and handling are minor. Therefore, it is essential to take a sustainable approach to the proper management of solid waste in the city of Barisal to reduce its environmental impact and promote a clean, healthy city.

2. Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is used to explain the real way to dispose of solid waste in the selected environment and also this framework shows the reasons or barriers against the proper solid waste management system which is responsible for ensuring the sustainable practice of the participants in terms of solid waste management.



Figure:1 Conceptual framework of the study
(Source: Created by the researcher)

3. Objectives

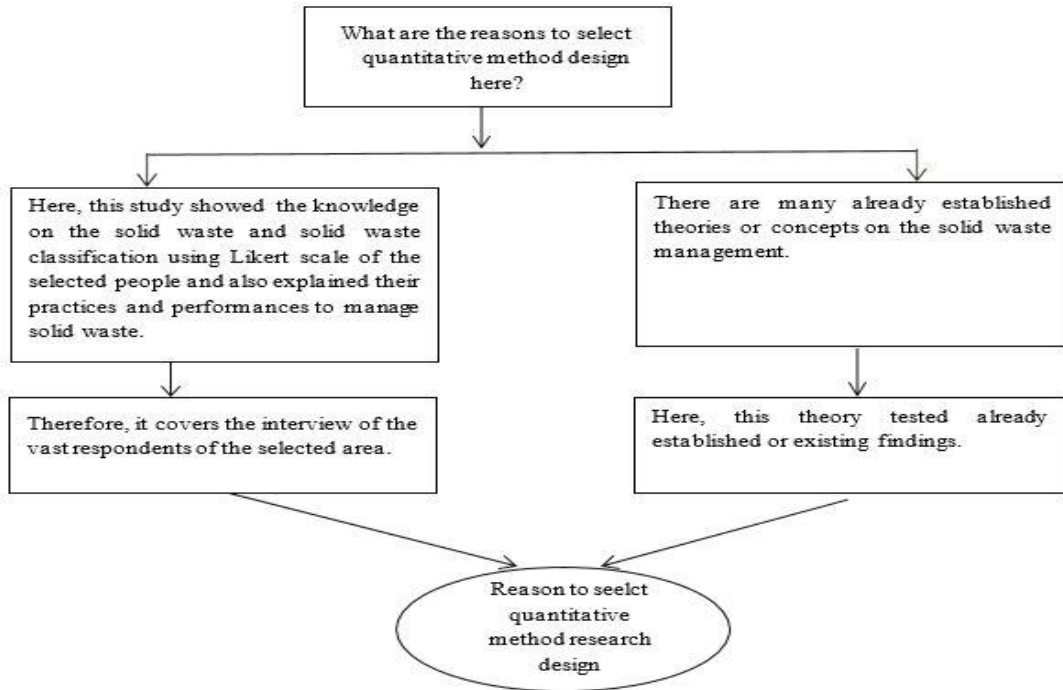
Every research has some particular objectives. Through this objective section, readers would be able to know the major concepts and themes of this study (Yasmin and Hossain, 2021). The salient issue of this study is to assess the local people's performances and perceptions of the solid waste management system in the Barishal Area. There are 03 major objectives of the salient issue of this study. These are

- I. To find out the knowledge level of solid waste and its classification among slum dwellers
- II. To find out the actual scenario of waste management
- III. To examine why proper waste management practice is not sustained among slum dwellers

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Study Design

There are some criteria for selecting this design to conduct research. For example, a quantitative method as a research design is useful to test already established theories and it has protection against biases on the selected topic (Creswell, and Creswell, 2017). Why the quantitative method design is selected for conducting this research? The answer is given below;



*Figure: 2 Research design of the study
(Source: Created by the researcher)*

4.2 Study Area

The study area of this study is two slum areas named Bangabandhu Colony under Ward No. eleven (11) and Rasulpur under Ward no. nine (9) of the city corporation of Barishal. These slum areas are located beside the Kirtonkhola River of Barishal. However, these are the coastal areas of the southern part of Bangladesh. These areas are selected purposively.

4.3 Sample Size and Sampling

It is mentioned that most of the people are slum dwellers in the research area (Data Book, 2018). According to Barishal City Corporation, there is a total 6000 population in Rasulpur slum and a total 14611 in Bangabandhu Colony (Population Census in Bangladesh, 2010); (Matiur Rahman, 2014). From them, researchers purposively selected 100 people who were slum dwellers. That means they selected 50 respondents from Rasulpur sum and 50 respondents

from Bangabandhu Colony purposively. To say more, 100 samples of both males and females are selected through purposive sampling techniques that are;

Gender	Male	Female
Percentage	76	24

4.4 The Way of Survey

Data is gathered through the survey with a semi-structured questionnaire. This survey was conducted in the slum area located on the bank of the Kirtankhola River of Bangabandhu Colony under the Barishal City Corporation.

4.5 Data Analysis

This research study mainly depends on the primary data collected directly from the selected area of study. Some other secondary data are used to emphasize the conscience of the study for a better manifestation. This data is collected from different journals, books, research publications, and other documents in the context of solid waste management profiles in Bangladesh. The first part assigned the demographic factors of the respondents such as (gender, age, and educational qualification of the respondents). Then, the other parts are linked to the three objectives of this study.

4.6 Period of Data Collection

The data collection period is from 12 September to 17 September 2023. Collected quantitative data have been presented in the form of tables, graphs, charts, diagrams, and so on using SPSS software and Excel sheets and are used to analyze the field data.

5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

5.1 Knowledge/Perception About Solid Waste

In this section, the researcher tried to show the actual knowledge or perception of the participants about solid waste and its classification. Also showed the medium of knowing who is known or concerned about solid waste and its classification.

5.1.1 Knowledge About Solid Waste

Knowledge about Solid Waste

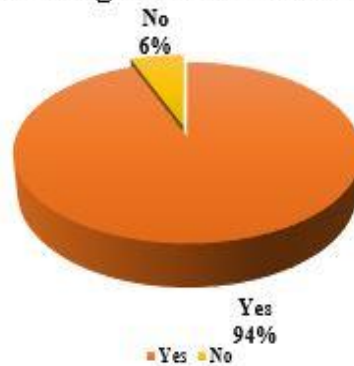


Figure-2 Knowledge About Solid Waste

The figure-3 shows that 94% of respondents have learned or heard the name of the solid waste out of 100%. That means 96% have knowledge about solid waste and only 6% have no knowledge or idea about solid waste.

5.1.2 Decision About the Classification of Solid Waste

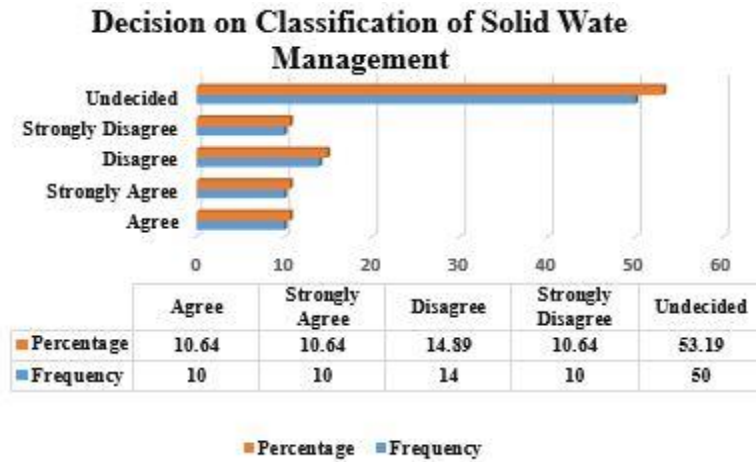


Figure-4 Decision About the Classification of Solid Waste

Figure 4 indicates the knowledge level of the respondents (who know the solid waste) on the classification of solid waste. Among the total 94% of respondents, 10.64% respondents strongly agreed and 10.64% of respondents normally agreed that they have enough knowledge on the classification of solid waste. Similarly, 10.64% of respondents strongly disagreed that they did not have enough knowledge of the classification of solid waste. Most of them that means 53.19%. respondent’s undecided on this matter.

5.1.3 Medium of Knowing Solid Waste

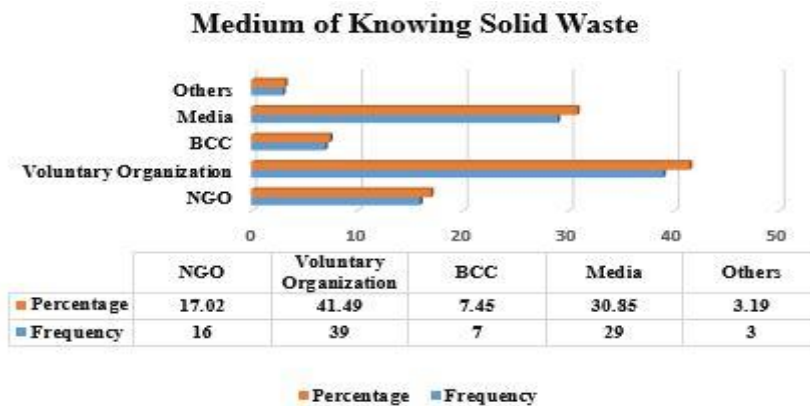


Figure-5 Medium of Knowing Solid Waste

Based on the figure-5, it is found that 94% respondents out of 100% of respondents know solid waste. Among them, a large part of the respondents is concerned about this matter through voluntary organization which percentage is 41.49%. Then 30.85% of respondents are concerned by the media, 17.02% by the NGO, 7.45% by the Barishal City Corporation (BCC), and only 3.19% by the other medium.

5.2 Actual Scenario to Dispose Waste

The researcher explored the actual scenario to dispose of waste in the selected area and also found out the reasons for open dumping by the respondents in this section. Because open dumping is the actual continuous performance of the respondents to dispose of waste here.

5.2.1 The Way to Dispose Waste



Figure-6 The Way to Dispose of Waste

From Figure 6, it is found that the maximum number of respondents dispose of their waste through dumping whose percentage is 89% then only 6% burned and 5% buried their waste.

5.2.2 Place to Dump Waste



Figure-7 The Place to Dump Waste

Based on the Figure-7, it is found that 89% of respondents dump their waste. Among them, a large part of the respondent dumps their waste in the river whose percentage is 56% and 2nd largest part dump their waste in the open place whose percentage is 33% then 11% put their waste into the dustbins. Only 1% dump their waste in the others.

5.2.3 Reason to Dump Waste in the Open Place or River



Figure-8 Reason to Dump Waste in the Open Place or River

Based on the figure-8, it is found that most of the respondents dump their waste in open places and rivers. However, Figure 8 showed that most of the people thought that no dustbins are the reason to dump waste in open places or rivers whose percentage is 48.48%, then 36.36% people thought that no available dustbins are and 9.09% people argued that unconsciousness is the reason to dump waste in open place or river. Only, 6.06% of people argued that no pressure or regulation of the authority is the reason to dump waste in open places or rivers.

5.2.4 Times to Dump Waste Per Day



Figure-9 Times to Dump Waste Per Day

Figure 9 indicates that most people dump their waste two times per day in open places, rivers or others whose percentage is around 80%, and about 13% dump three times, about 7% dump one time a day.

5.3 Why Proper Waste Management Practice is not Sustained

In this part, the researcher showed the reasons why a proper solid waste management system is not sustained among the respondents. For this issue some barriers or irregulating behaviours are responsible.

5.3.1 Distance of Dustbin Given by BCC From Home



Figure-10 Distance of Dustbin Given by BCC From Home

From Figure 10, it is found that more than 65% of respondents argued that dustbins that is used for waste gathering and that are given by the Barishal City Corporation are far from the respondent’s house. Below 20% of respondents argued that dustbins were too far from the respondent’s house and around 18% didn’t comment on this matter.

5.3.2 Times to Collect the Waste in a Week by BCC



Figure-11 Times to Collect the Waste in a Week by BCC

Figure 11 shows that about 60% of people said that city corporations never come to the selected area to collect waste. More than 20% of people said that city corporations come to the selected area to collect waste per week below 2 times and more than 10% of people said that city corporations come to the selected area to collect waste per week more than 2 times.

5.3.3 Personal Barrier to Practice Proper Solid Waste Management



Figure-12 Personal Barrier to Practice Proper Solid Waste Management

From figure-12 it is found that no space to dispose of their waste and unconsciousness are the main personal barriers of respondents which are the reasons to practice proper solid waste management.

5.3.4 Barriers Against Sustainable Practice to Proper Solid Waste Management



Figure-13 Barriers against Sustainable Practice to Do Proper Solid Waste Management

Figure 13 shows that 74% of people thought that proper solid waste management is not sustained them due to the lack of dustbin facilities and regular collection of waste and then 15% thought that lack of proper regulation of the authority is the barrier against sustainable practice to do waste management. Only 11% seemed that unawareness is the barrier against sustainable practices to do waste management.

6 Result and Discussion

One strategy for addressing the environmental atmosphere of a disaster-prone place is to dispose of Solid waste or dirty (EPA, n.d). The earth's climate has undergone significant shifts due to the rapid acceleration of global warming. The presence of solid waste or rubbish in open palce such as rivers, ponds, and other bodies of water has led to the creation of an environmental hazard, which is a significant contributor to the phenomenon of global warming (Rahman, Shams, and Mahmud, 2010). Most of the respondents know about the impact of dumping garbage or the types of garbage. But most of all they have learned about this from different types. UNICEF, Yellow Society, Young Women Christian Association, BRAC, World Vision, Uccash, Aparajeyo Bangladesh, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society other organizers to make the people of selected areas aware of solid waste and its classification (Data Book, 2018). Mentioned that a large part learned about solid waste through media because online media are very available now and it is a very easiest medium to know any kind of information (Hossain and Yasmin, 2022). Besides, other parts of the respondents are concerned about this issue through city corporations, NGOs, and other mediums.

The majority of the respondents in the study dispose of all the waste they generate in rivers and open spaces. On the one hand, as the water of the river is polluted, on the other hand, the environment is polluted. In short, we do injustice to both water and soil by not disposing of waste properly. These two elements (water and soil) are very important for our survival (Faroque and South, 2022). Solid waste management is an enormous challenge for sustainable

development in Barishal City in Bangladesh. The river of Kirtonkhola is polluted day by day due to the excessive dumping of waste. Dhaka's rapid industrial expansion, lack of financial resources, inadequately educated labor, improper technology, and lack of community awareness are the key obstacles to solid waste management in the city. As a result, the city of Dhaka generates more waste through various means, including small enterprises, factories, homes, hospitals, etc. Every day, Dhaka generates 3,000 tons of municipal garbage (Zahur, 2007). In the majority of cities, such as Dhaka, disorganized garbage management and dumping are ineffective. As a result, Dhaka will become unable and unhealthy for its inhabitants to live in (Ornob and Akter, 2020). Similarly, Barishal City Corporation is unable to cope with this solid waste management based on the field data. Because there are no available dustbin facilities, no regular regulation of waste collection, and unawareness, etc. are the barriers to continuing the practice of proper solid waste management among respondents. As a result, proper waste management practice is not sustained among them. This is seriously hampering to ensure safe environmental sustainability.

7 Conclusion

Proper waste management is an essential part of society's public and environmental health (EPA, n.d). There are potential risks to the environment and health from improper handling of solid wastes (Alam and Ahmade, 2013). Even though the respondent knows about this issue, they do not dispose of the garbage properly. They are busy with their livelihood. This shows that proper waste disposal is not necessary for them. Besides, the city corporation does not have enough facilities for proper disposal of garbage. That's why they are not aware of this at all. As a result, it is seen that they choose rivers or open spaces to dump garbage. To get rid of it, they must first be aware. Then the City Corporation should ensure proper supervision and adequate facilities for proper waste disposal. Above all, waste dustbins should be provided.

In essence, addressing the issue of solid waste management is imperative for the sustainable development and survival of communities in disaster-prone areas. Urgent action is needed to improve infrastructure, educate the population, and implement effective waste management strategies to mitigate environmental hazards and safeguard the health and well-being of residents.

8 Suggestions

Based on the above discussion, it is evident that urgent action is needed to address the challenges of solid waste management in disaster-prone areas like Barishal City. Firstly, there is a critical need for investment in infrastructure such as dustbin facilities and waste collection systems to facilitate proper disposal. Additionally, comprehensive education and awareness campaigns should be conducted to inform the community about the importance of proper waste management and the consequences of improper disposal. Collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, and local communities is essential to develop and implement effective waste management policies and practices. Moreover, the adoption of innovative technologies and sustainable practices should be encouraged to improve waste management efficiency and

minimize environmental impact. By implementing these suggestions, we can work towards ensuring a cleaner and healthier environment for current and future generations.

Acknowledgment

We acknowledge our dearest juniors for their valuable contributions and efforts to the fieldwork. They helped the researcher to collect data for conducting this research work.

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Is Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010 Successful in Eliminating Gender-based Violence in Bangladesh?

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Abstract

This paper investigates the concept of family defined by the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010 (DVPPA) and the success the law achieved in shifting social norms by providing a legal framework. It sheds light on how states proceed towards mitigating tensions between international frameworks on domestic violence and contradictory practice and norms. This paper argues that convoluted remedial measures in statutory laws, personal laws, lack of awareness, vagueness in enforcement procedure, incoordination between the judiciary and law enforcement bodies, under-representation in institutions, omitting violence against men, transgender, foreign spouses, and immigrants, less focus on the prevention measures are significant grounds behind the inadequate application of this Act. The Act itself contains ambiguous insertion of children, disabled, older people, and intimate partner violence. This paper examines contemporary domestic violence laws mainly from the perspective of Asian developing countries. It recommends short and long-term policies focusing on preventive measures as the success or drawbacks of this law will guide how to formulate a feminist strategy for battling gender-based violence and achieve targets of SDGs. It urges establishing Inter-South Asian Commission for Human Rights and Regional Court.

Key words: SDGs, Inequality, Human Rights, Preventive measures, Law reformations.

1. Introduction:

A woman's risk of violence increases if she faces discrimination and deprivation of opportunity in her family at the early stage of her life (Sultana, 2010). Considering this, state-based institutional feminism in Bangladesh brought in DVPPA and the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Rules 2013 (DVPPR) as an obligation under the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1979 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989. The success or drawbacks of this law over 13 years of its implementation can shed light on future policies and strategies to annul, reform, or implement and extend gender-based laws in Bangladesh. According to the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) 2019, the SIGI value of Bangladesh is very high (54.8) (OECD, 2024). Elimination of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and early marriage are connected to enabling a healthy life (SDG3) (United Nations, 2023), women's right to employment and financial security (SDG1) (United Nations, 2023), education, and practical learning outcomes (SDG4) (United Nations, 2023). The SIGI data displays that Bangladesh has widespread discrimination in the family (82.9%). In the Asian region, Bangladesh scored high in lifetime intimate partner physical violence rates from 1998 to 2014 (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015). According to a report of 2023 by Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), from January to December 2023, the total number of occurrences of domestic violence was 483; In 201 cases,

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women were murdered (Ain O Shalish Kendra ASK, 2024). The Annual Report 2021 of the National Human Rights Commission reveals that four out of five complaints on domestic violence received by the Commission have been settled. Two domestic violence cases are disposed of after taking suo motu notice by the National Human Rights Commission. The number is insignificant compared to the total domestic violence incidents reported in newspapers, television, or other media (National Human Rights Commission, 2021). Hence, this study sheds light on states' approach to reducing the tension while applying international norms if it contradicts a practice or religious/ social values. The study examines the role of democracy and women's participation in politics, enforcement, and legal services for properly implementing this law. This paper contains two research questions: 1. Does the Act amplify the independent representation of women? 2. Does the law maintain a reformation and monitoring mechanism to assess its successful implementation against gender-based violence? This paper argues that a complex parallel existence of statutory laws, vagueness in legal terminology and lack of awareness, non-coordination between the judiciary and law enforcement bodies, inconclusiveness to address gender-based violence, limitation in exercising the due diligence principle are significant grounds behind the inadequate application of this progressive law and insufficiency in the independent exercise of this law by a woman as an agent. First, this paper briefly outlines the theoretical development to elucidate the legal framework of domestic violence laws and mainly focuses on the feminist, public health approach, and human rights perspectives. Second, from a legal perspective, it observes explicitly the impact of international, regional, and national laws to assess and review the definitions, punitive, preventive, and protective measures in case of failure of state and non-state actors to comply with the responsibilities under the due diligence principle. From a social perspective, it measures the law's success in eradicating systematic forms of discrimination. Given the limitation of laws to reform informal social norms exercised at individual and community levels (Klugman, 2017), this paper recommends a holistic approach based on short and long-term legislative reformation as a solution. This paper gets information from national and international instruments, as primary data sources and books, journals, case laws, the annual reports from the national women and human rights organisations as secondary data sources.

2. Theoretical Explanation of the Legal Framework of Domestic Violence:

The development of a legal framework can ensure access to resources and access to civil liberties, so how successful the law is, needs to be analysed. The Act of 2010 reflects radical and liberal feminism, vastly developed in the UK and the USA, as it mainly focuses on the victims of violence and abuse. It transforms violence in family affairs into a public issue to emancipate the undermining position of women. This approach of second-wave feminism derives its aim from Simone de Beauvoir's thought- personal is political. It contributed to developing the views on the connection between male dominance in the family by wife-beating and rape and marked it as violence against women (VAW) (Khan, 2015). Hartmann worked on integrating the Marxian approach to the feminist network and revealed the shortcomings of 'family' to form a union of solidarity; rather, it transformed into a union of conflict connecting capitalism and patriarchy, which accelerates labour exploitation in the family (Beneria, 2015).

The public health approach put a multi-disciplinary preventive measure against violence. It collaborates with multiple sectors, including health, education, social services, and justice to abolish violence. The element of this approach is to define and monitor data obtained by a police report or medical reports and identify the risk factors and protective factors; Later, it develops test prevention strategies -an evidence-based approach (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). In the opinion of certain scholars, the shortcoming of this approach is that it concentrates mainly on the causes of violence on victims, with little attention to structural discrimination or the 'risk' factors. Another debate revolves around the competence of safe space facilities to rescue victims from gender-based violence under section 15(1)(c) of DPPA. Kim put doubt on how a victim can find support if her sufferings do not resonate with stereotypical domestic violence victims and creates a scope for society to censure her for lacking victim-likeness. Preventive education should aim at making both males and females aware of the gravity of domestic violence and how to avoid it instead of formulating a policy highlighting how a woman or child can avoid becoming a victim or avoiding confrontation with a perpetrator (Kim, Cho, Choo, & Jun, 2021). Therefore, successfully implementing laws against domestic violence can shift societal norms, assuming the right approach to dealing with women's role in the family. The human right approach considers women's rights as human rights. However, it faces criticism for the generalisation of experience of violence, particularly by portraying veiled Muslim women as oppressed. As per Beneria's view, it diverts the discussion on the independent representation of women as agents. This assumption, however, faces the apprehension of rejection of universal moral principles leading to condoning the obsolete norms or colluding with Islamic fundamentalist views (Beneria, 2015, p. 18). On the other hand, a human rights-based approach to national and community-level collaboration with stakeholders and engaging them in the assessment process has proven effective in shifting derogatory norms. It can help to ensure collective accountability, and consensus-building upon discussion (UN Women, 2018). Apart from long-term interventions to change the deep-seated structure and attitude of men, empowering the victim/survivor is also beneficial (UN Women, 2018, p. 208). From that perspective, the Act of 2010 barely erases the 'colonised image' of third-world women marked by Beneria, Berik, and Floro as poor, dependent, passive, and oppressed. These negative attributes are derived from ignoring class, ethnicity, nationality, age, and cultural differences among women (Beneria, 2015, pp. 15-16). In Neisiah's view, a careful interpretation and enforcement of the human rights approach can create a space for third-world women so that restrictive inclusion of their status can be avoided by recognising and representing their distinct identities (Vasuki, 1993 cited in Wing, 2000) and independent decision-making power over property. Their vulnerability also discourages them from filing a complaint against their partner.

2 Domestic Violence Laws in Various Countries of The World:

2.1.1 USA

The women's movement contributed as a facilitator of policy change on domestic violence laws in the USA. The Violence Against Women Act, 1994, recognises domestic violence as a

national crime. Author Gover and Moore shared that annual expenditure on dealing with VAW through medical and other issues is USD 3.5 trillion every year (Thompson, 2022, p. 9). US takes institutional approach by directing the law enforcement bodies to arrest, prosecute, adjudicate the offenders. It acknowledges violence against women including intimate partner violence and marital rape and later reformations follow public health approach by establishing voucher program for the victims of domestic violence, including immigrant issues, and covering foreign national, elderly, disabled women, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) community (Thompson, 2022, pp. 17-18). The state runs two data collection programs to analyse intimate partner violence (Thompson, 2022, p. 13). The authors shared the presence of diverse views of the researchers and practitioners about the overall success of the Act because they find main contribution of the Act is increasing awareness on VAW instead of stopping the incidence of violence by rigorous efforts and the data from NISVS 2011 shows a decline of incidence of intimate partner violence, but researchers do not intend to mark it as full indicator of success of the Act because, recent increase of intimate partner violence during the period of 2014-2015 and 2017-2018 indicates the opposite trend. (Thompson, 2022, p. 23). In Wormer's view, through its criminal justice system, USA biologically and legally punishes women. Author finds shrinking budget on maternal program as an aftermath of the criticism against affirmative action, i.e., welfare system. A nexus between proponent of patriarchal ideology and conservative politicians is a concern to the author (Wormer, 2008, p. 324).

2.1.2 South Korea

To keep pace with financial growth, the notion of family has been changed from a conveyor of tradition to a tool for economic development, and later, it ended as a catalyst for democracy. Successful use of social media and websites by the women's group to disseminate the unheard voice of the victims worked as supplementary force to gather public support for family law reformations (Shin, 2006, p. 93). It took the fourth phase of reformation from enacting legislation on domestic violence omitting the prevention policies to finally implementing a violence-centred basic plan to constitute a safe community environment. These reformations were necessary to overcome the limitations arising from preventive education or victim-centred protection policies (Kim, Cho, Choo, & Jun, 2021, pp. 16-17) and indicate institutional approach to secure a safe environment in the family sphere to overcome drawbacks from the phase-to-phase enactment of laws and ensure the independent exercise of the law by women. The government enacted the 'Act on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims Thereof 1997 and Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Crimes of Domestic Violence and run a five-year plan to prevent domestic violence. Article 7-2 covers protection facilities for victims including foreigners, disabled people. The Supreme Court recognised crime of marital rape (Yonhap News Agency, 2013). The Ministry of Gender Equality formulate policy made upon investigating domestic violence every three years under article 4-2. The Act contains due diligence principle by providing penal actions for violation of the authorised power and negligence under article 20,21,22 and ensures mandatory special education for failed institutions and publication of inspection report to media.

2.1.3 India

There is unawareness of people on VAW. Therefore, they rarely seek help from police, social workers, lawyers, doctors, and other professionals (NFHS-III). Offences, gender-based violence in nature are defined, recorded, or reported differently, so, accumulating and comparing regions-specific data on non-reporting of domestic violence are difficult to conduct. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2006, though accepted marital rape and provide remedy civil in nature, is criticised for its failure to change the perception of women who face objectification of their body. After filing of case, women find it difficult to stay at the place of residence. Justice becomes more difficult if they are poor, lower caste, or residents of remote areas and face lengthy investigation process. The inadequacy of trained personnel, the apathetic attitude of the law enforcement authorities, and limited opportunities of service assigned to the victim. Indifferent institutional approach from the community, school, legal and health service prevent women from seeking help (Klugman, 2017, p. 35). These obstacles hinder exercise of this Act by women as an independent agent.

2.1.4 Philippines

The Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004 (Act No. 9262) does not separately mention domestic violence. The definition of violence against women and children covers domestic violence occurred against women and children. In a question about violation of equal protection guaranteed under the constitution of Philippines, the Supreme Court held that, due to the unequal power relationship between women and men, women's vulnerability to violence, the extensive gender bias and prejudice against women, the enactment of the said Act is justified (*Provincial Bus Operators Association of the Phillipines v Dole*, 2008). The judiciary considers the mental or emotional anguish on women and child, denial of financial support of minor child committed by the offender as required elements for conviction under the Act (*AAA v. People of the Phillipines*, 2018). As a prevention mechanism, the law established the Inter-Agency Council on Violence Against Women and Their Children (IAC-VAWC) to undertake programs for the elimination of VAW and conduct programs to increase the capability of the employees to be more sensitive towards the victim under article 39. Another preventive procedure under the law is an arrangement of training for all agencies involved in response to VAW and the victim is entitled to paid leave under the Labour Code and Civil Service Rules under article 42 and 43. On the other hand, the offender gets reformatory procedures like rehabilitative counselling, treatment to overcome imbalanced behaviour and if needed, psychiatric treatment or confinement under article 40 and 41. It also contains state-based funding under the gender and development budget for implementing services of the victim including LGBT community, disabled, and elderly people. The prevention mechanism indicates a gender transformative process compiling human rights, public health, and social constructivist approaches.

2.1.5 Indonesia

Law number 23 of 2004 concerning on Domestic Violence Elimination Law is a criminal law approach to resolve conflict regarding domestic violence which is a remarkable success of

secular women's movement (Afrianty, 2018, p. 29). Author Afrianty reveals an intersection of civil and criminal justice field exemplifying the incidence of complain on domestic violence that becomes a ground for divorce in the religious court instead of being a reason for prosecution (Afrianty, 2018, p. 26). Scarcity of data, opposite cultural perceptions, restricted interpretation of Islam (Afrianty, 2018, p. 38), inaccessibility to legal remedy and shortcomings on institutional support are the drawbacks revealed by the author. The law acknowledges marital rape (Afrianty, 2018, pp. 31-32) but not forced marriage. Pro bono lawyers and former victim of violence are conducting non-state social responsibility provided by the Act. Fulfilment of the objective of the law is in question as the religious court does not focus on criminal aspects of divorce when a woman files a case because of physical or psychological violence (Afrianty, 2018, p. 43). It is worthy to mention that the Domestic Violence (Crime and Punishment) Act, 2066(2009) art11- 12(d) highlights on organising gender-sensitive education and gender-sensitive service standard as a process to hold the government accountable for prevention of violence. However, there is no provision of counselling of the offender. The law is gender sensitive, though women face systematic restriction while exercising the law.

2.1.6 Mongolia

The Law to Combat Domestic Violence 2004 of Mongolia consists of the Constitutional provisions, Civil law, Criminal Code, Family laws, Law on the Protection of the rights of the children. Article 2,4 and 7 acknowledges the remedy for any person irrespective of the gender identity, compulsory training for the improvement of the behaviour of the perpetrator, counselling facilities for the victim and prevention mechanisms involve policy making and allocation of budget, public education campaign etc (The Advocates for Human Rights; National Center Against Violence, 2014, p. 67). According to article 46 and 61, the law differentiates crime of violence based on the gravity i.e., minor, less serious, serious, grave, and marital rape is punishable offence. It is worthy to mention that the general information form of the victim does not require parent's or spouse name, rather it requires employment status and the nature of living place and observation note by the social worker. The law follows mainly human rights approach, and the punishment process relies heavily on criminal law approach and some clauses indicates gender responsive approach by providing opportunity to the offender to change the behaviour.

3 Overview of Bangladesh's Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010.

3.1 Partial Reflection of Gender-based Violence:

There is no exhaustive definition of gender-based violence in the existing laws in Bangladesh. The United Nations General Assembly incorporated the Elimination of Violence Against Women in 1993. It defines violence against women as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering towards women'. Under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol 2006, art 16.1 of the Convention, Bangladesh is responsible for protecting a person with a disability from violence and abuse through legislative, administrative^(Groover & Moore, 2021, p. 8), social, educational,

and other measures. A study categorises gender-based violence into two groups- intimate physical violence and sexual violence (Kim, Cho, Choo, & Jun, 2021, p. 3). In Bangladesh, several laws cover family issues applicable to people belonging to different religions. Among total population, 91.04% are Muslim, 7.95% are Hindu, 0.61% are Buddhist, 0.30% are Christian and 0.12% believe in other religion (The Statistics and Informatics Division, 2022, p. 16). Because of the CEDAW reservation, Muslim, Hindu, and Christian law govern family matters. Irrespective of increase in political representation of women (20.9%) (OECD Data, 2023) at the national and international level, reformations in inheritance law or proper distribution of assigned property to women remains difficult due to resistance from religious group or conservative family members. The CEDAW committee report finds it difficult to further equal rights in the household through review and reformation of the law because getting prior approval is a difficult task (Citizens' Initiatives on CEDAW, Bangladesh, 2016). The CIC's stand on obtaining prior approval of the religious leader differs from the government's position. It mentioned that to remove bar to the women's access to inheritance, the supportive movement of the women and human rights groups played significant role. So far, the alteration of any biased laws never happened by consensus with religious leaders (Citizens' Initiatives on CEDAW, Bangladesh, 2016). Validity of polygamous marriage for men and prohibition indicate unequal power relations that may result into economic and physical violence. The Muslim Family Law Ordinance 1961 does not provide any definition of the term 'family'. Section 2 of the Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act 1939 gives women ground for dissolution of marriage if the husband conducted assault or cruelty on a regular basis; prevented legal right over property, failed to treat the wives equitably. Even though the statutory reformation under Muslim Family law Ordinance, 1961, restricted the practice of polygamous marriage by requiring procedural conditions, human rights report reveals irregularities in respecting or obeying these rules or order of the High Court Division (HCD) (Human Rights Watch, 2012). Despite enactment of laws, report also suggests that dowry system is still a common practice which generates numerous incidents of violence (Citizens' Initiatives on CEDAW, Bangladesh, 2016). The Act of 2010 does not specifically cover this issue as economic violence, it can only provide remedy if dowry claim from in-laws result in physical and psychological violence. In Hindu law men and women do not hold equal status while conducting marriage. Therefore, their position in family is not the same. Due to statutory reformations, the polygamous marriage is prohibited among Christians under the Christian Marriage Act, 1872. The Family Courts Act, 2023 applies to everyone. It becomes difficult for a victim to measure priority if same provision is available in two or more laws. For instance, a victim of domestic violence needs to sue in Family Court for realizing maintenance and for violence either under DVPPA in Magistrate of the First Class or under WCOPA. As per section 2 of the Hindu Married Women's Separation and Maintenance Act, 1869, upon proving chastity, and obeying religious sayings, a Hindu woman is permitted to separate residence and maintenance from her husband parallelly, under the Act of 2010 she is entitled to receive money if she files cases on domestic violence. The definition clause includes persons who at any point of time lived in a shared

residence. If the victim does not reside in the same house at the time of violence her economic autonomy over exercising property rights is required to continue the case.

The present Act of 2010 and Rules of 2013 covers domestic violence against women and children irrespective of religious identity and holds the service-providing organisation responsible for providing necessary assistance to disabled women and children. These legislations partially carry the characteristics of a legislation addressing gender-based violence but does not exclusively challenge gender inequality. For instance, its 'shared residence' clause, counselling facilities for the victim, or custody of the children imply the Act's effort to fulfil gender specific needs as meeting women-specific needs is the first step to achieve it (OECD-DAC, 2016, p. 18). For custody, she is entitled to file a writ petition for infringement of the rights (BLAST, 2010). A complex situation may arise for applying the doctrine of welfare as custody of the child to the mother. For custody, she will file an application to Family court; for violence, she can get custody through a court's order under section 17 of the DVPPA. The WCOPA provides a remedy through harsh punishment which does not go with the spirit of settlement of family violence.

Overall, types of domestic violence are 1. Intimate 2. Household and 3. Familial including elder abuse. In Timor-Leste, extended definition of family incorporates relatives ascending or descending and subordinate entity i.e., domestic worker (UN Women, 2018, p. 197). However, no reformation is done to cover distinctively elderly, men, foreign national, domestic workers, immigrants which appeals the question of the true implication of the word 'violence' mentioned in the act as it resonates more with violence against women rather than gender-based violence. From institutional perspective, a country with high record in maintaining human rights standard is supposed to be concerned about the human rights of the non-citizens or immigrants considering the overgrowing number of citizens working and residing abroad in a globalised world (Neumayer, 2005, p. 925). Even though DPPA mentions the term 'children' which implies girls and boys, the act does not contain any explanation about how far it will be applied to incident of domestic violence against boys. To promote gender equality from the personal to societal stage, joint engagement of men and boys along with women and children is critical (OECD-DAC, 2016, p. 19). Apart from that, the indigenous working group do not find proper recognition and acknowledgement of their identity in the present law. Therefore, indigenous women are more at risk of diverse and intersecting gender discrimination (KAPAEENG Foundation; BIWN; IWGIA, 2016). It also questions the progress of gender equality in Bangladesh in terms of achievement of women empowerment standard enough to portray the position of men and women on the same level in the family (KAPAEENG Foundation; BIWN; IWGIA, 2016, p. 206).

The law needs cautious implementation to deal with two conflicting positions: 1. preserving the family and 2. protecting women from violence. Otherwise, improper exercise of reconciliation procedure will deprive women from the justice they seek from law. There is no exact preventive measure to change the violent behaviour. The condition of reconciliation includes obeying religious rules as a ground for continuance of marriage (Disputes resolved by Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust (BLAST)). According to Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017, s 19, a

marriage of a child below 18 is allowed on special circumstances. Bangladesh has highest rate of child marriage in South Asia (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020, p. 7). If health, education, and development of the minor bride is not ensured after her marriage, she is more at risk of violence. The existing domestic violence law does not provide any preventive measure to address this issue; the law is mostly reactive to violence. Even though economic jeopardy is connected to violence (UN Women, 2021, p. 18). A child bride's equal position in family is unlikely to be achieved. Under Hindu law, a girl can marry on achieving the puberty and in Christian law, legal age for marriage is 18, though marriage of the minor is valid under special circumstances under section 9 of the Christian Marriage Act, 1872. The SDG report shows slow progress in achieving gender equality (ESCAP, 2022, p. 40).

3.2 Ambiguous and Vague Legal Definition of Intimate Partner Violence:

The definition of family u/s 2(8) of the Act of 2010 does not specifically mention about violence occurring in intimate partner relationship. It resonates law's 'paternalistic protection' (Béal, 2011) from a criminal man by a normal man and indirectly keeps the unequal power structure intact. Opposite position between religious or customary laws accepting male violence and criminal sanction attributes the inappropriate practice of law. Moreover, instead of accusing the male partner, cultural norm tends to find out fault in women's and girls' attitude, which carries the risk of misdirecting the purpose of laws. It indicates a connection between the ambiguity regarding insertion of 'intimate partner violence' in the legislature as a crime committed in 'family relationship' and the allegation of 'rape' by a woman under the Women and Children Oppression Prevention Act 2000 (WCOPA) against her partner who engaged in an intimate relationship. The HCD released the Appellant in a case (Nazim Uddin (Md) v State, 2017) where the Respondent engaged in a secret physical relationship upon believing that touching upon Holy Quran was enough to perform the marriage. Later, due to a disagreement to pay a dowry, Nasima filed a case u/s 9 of WCOPA 2000 for an allegation of rape under fraudulent means. In this case, the inquiry report was not admitted as evidence; the court found Nasima's testimony unreliable and referred to Jayanti Rani Panda v State of West Bengal 1984 Cri LJ, 1535 (Nazim Uddin (Md) v State, p. 21), where the Indian Supreme Court released the accused and held that 'If a full-grown girl consents to the act of sexual intercourse on the promise of marriage, it is the act of promiscuity on her part and not act adduced by misconception of fact.' According to the court's interpretation, the consent required for invoking section 375 of the Penal Code 1860 refers to voluntary consent (Nazim Uddin (Md) v State, p. 26), not consent by deceitful means. Here, the court, preferred strict interpretation of section 9(1), holding the opinion that a liberal interpretation of law may open a floodgate of embodied and frivolous litigations and transfer a message to society and women partners, which in turn helps shun their tradition-bound values. Therefore, it assumes that the judicial interpretation favours traditional values (Nazim Uddin (Md) v State, p. 30). Frequently a dowry claim on the part of the in-laws, creates the grounds for physical and psychological abuse (State v Abdullah @ Titumir @ Titu, 2017). When there is a gap between the information given in the inquiry report and the information provided to the court, questions arise regarding the

admissibility of the data. In the *State v Abdullah @ Titumir@ Titu*, court did not grant it as admissible evidence. The Court in *Rameshwar Dayal v State of UP*, AIR 1978(SC) (1558) para 32-39 held that an inquest report is the earliest statement regarding a fact and can be directly admissible as evidence but in the present case the court omitted to exercise its persuasive jurisdiction (*State v Abdullah @ Titumir@ Titu*, 2017, pp. 17-19). Court ultimately held that, because of a lack of adequate evidence, the prosecution failed to prove the case beyond a reasonable doubt (*State v Abdullah @ Titumir@ Titu*, 2017, p. 35). In this case, if the relatives and local administrative authorities had been attentive and prompt in responding at the beginning of the conflict between husband and wife, and referred to the domestic violence court, it would not end up as a death. Later conflict-settlement under the intervention of the respected persons from the locality did not work out (*State v Abdullah @ Titumir@ Titu*, 2017, p. 3) and put doubt on the informal settlement of the dispute. Finally, they filed a case to the WCOA. According to judicial interpretation, allegation of abetment of suicide will be quashed if use of abusive word by the husband or partner did not infringe modesty of the wife as defined by custom (*APM Sohrab-uz-zaman v State*, 2016). Even if an economically solvent woman decided to live with her partner, the court did not consider her consent, and considered her unfaithful and a violation of matrimonial right u/s 498 of the Penal Code 1860. The existing laws fails to preserve the dignity and consent of the women (*Sabita Rani v Amal Krishna*, 2016). The context of culture, which is evident in the practice of ‘commission of marriage’ by touching the Quran, even though it sounds devoid of statutory procedures, is not an unusual practice by the partners. Therefore, it has a psychological impact on the person claiming the marriage. A false promise to conduct the formal marriage procedure implied an intention to mislead the victim to get her consent which connects Section 9(1) of Nari o Shishu Nirjatan Daman Ain, 2000 (*Sabbir Sheikh v The State and another*). A judge should consider the victim’s social and economic background to ensure that the alleged crime did not happen upon unequal power position. After pandemic, in Asia-pacific region, intimate partner violence increased and controlling behaviour of the partner was found a cause for less use of help line (ESCAP, 2022, p. 40).

3.3 The Position of Women Under the Definition of ‘Family’:

The definition hardly reshapes the idea of family or recognises the personal autonomy of women and children. The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Rules, 2013 provides a ‘Domestic violation information form’ which requires the victim to write down the father’s or husband’s information first, then the mother’s name. The informant who can complain on behalf of the victim must give the father’s or husband’s name and then the mother’s name. Even though there is no specific mention of the gender of the informant in the section, from the plain reading of the Rule, one can assume that the informant will be a woman. Therefore, it can be said that the Act of 2010 fails to present a new idea of family where women and children are not marked as subordinate but rather as agents as per article 3(1), 4(1)(b), 6(c) of the Rules of 2013.

3.4 Omission of Psychological Factors Behind Domestic Violence:

The Act does not explicitly articulate the provision of counselling for the perpetrator. A study reveals that if the perpetrator of intimate partner violence had a troubled childhood and experienced violence in the family, he might develop negative characteristics which influence him to normalise violence and an aggressive attitude towards his partner (Fernández-Montalvo, et al., 2020, p. 159). Along with the victim, the perpetrator needs treatment program through education, psychological and psychiatric treatment.

3.5 Not Mentioning Marital Rape:

Considering the demonstration of unequal power position in marital relationship through this offence, omission of marital rape in the DVPPA undermines the purpose of protecting women from violence. The preambular paragraph of the Istanbul Convention 2014 recognises the greater risk of women and girl child to gender-based violence than men, and simultaneously it acknowledges men as victims of domestic violence. Besides, the broader definition of domestic violence under article 3 of the Convention includes all physical, sexual, psychological, or economic violence within family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners irrespective of sharing the same place of residence. That is in stark contrast to the existing definition of DVPPA which does not divide the violence by former and current partner.

3.6 Debate on criminal sanction and criminalising woman:

Amongst different views on allowing or restricting legal solution to violence, one argument is about the minimum value, the legal instrument can add because of its connection to patriarchy the other is dividing the nature of punishment depending on the nature of offence. In the opinion of Linda Mills (Klugman, 2017, pp. 11-17), laws should interfere in case of severe physical injuries, reconciliation is appropriate to deal with other issues considering the individual character of violence because sole focus on reconciliation has the problem of hiding violence arising from unequal power of the victim and the perpetrator in the family. Hence the proponent of criminal sanctions finds judicial process a better solution which minimises this power gap as the state proceeds the case on behalf of the victim. Statutes can transform the stagnant scenario by reflecting policy commitment but the factors affecting the attainment of justice are lack of awareness, low probability of apprehension, co-existence of inconsistent customary and religious laws. The DVPPA witnesses the same complexities despite incorporating compensation, maintenance cost, imprisonment, and community service provision under section 16,17,30 and 31. So, question arises about the capacity of law to change the practice of child Marriage and dowry. The number of filing case under DVPPA is very insignificant and the physical or psychological abuse arising out of dowry claim is the reason for filing case to seek compensatory remedy (Parul vs Kowsar Prodhan & others, 2022). The claim of protection order in case of family property dispute gets rejected by the court if the claimant resides separately (Maliha Chowdhury vs Serajul Islam Badol, 2022). Hanmer and Klugman argues that women's attitude, childhood experience of violence, nature of marriage- child/polygamous, level of education accomplished by the men and women are related to the probability of physical

violence. Heise and Kotsadam equalise ownership rights a male control of female behaviour (Klugman, 2017, p. 27).

3.7 Financial Risk of Women as barrier to the Justice

From the judicial stand in case of guardianship of the child, the mother has been given priority (Syeda Shamsunnahar v Morshed Anwar Khan, 2005), but if neither party filed for divorce and the husband files a case for the restitution of the conjugal life, the possibility is greater about the non-execution of the decree because the wife does not possess enough property. It may end up restitution of the marriage even though the wife is unwilling to. There is diverse judicial interpretation regarding this unequal consequence experienced by women. In a judgment, the court termed it as a 'violation of social justice' as guaranteed by the Preamble of the Constitution (Khodeja Begum v Md. Sadeq Sarker, 1998). In another judgment, the court highlighted restitution from a different perspective mentioning the fulfilment of marital obligations of husband and wife connected to sue for restitution (Chand Mia v. Rupunahar, 1991). This may result in psychological violence. Examination of domestic violence laws of other countries reveals a striking difference from the Act of Bangladesh as section 32 criminalises the complainant for false claims. Indirectly it implies more focus on the law on this issue than ensuring her independent exercise of the law. The SIGI data shows that in Bangladesh have limited access to productive and financial assets (52.1%) (OECD, 2024). Moreover, Bangladesh has yet to have statutory law regulating the share of marital property, which puts women at financial risk (World Report, 2012). Women's control over household resources is important because it creates more possibilities to invest in a child's health and education. In this way, it will reduce the incidents of violence against women as well as the risk of future violence of the child (Beneria, 2015, p. 26). For extension of reach of services complying with SDGs 16, specialized police and judicial institutions needs special recruitment (Beneria, 2015, p. 204); after abolishment of women quota from 9th grade government job, the process became uncertain.

4. Examining Responsibility of Bangladesh as a State to Apply the Act Inclusively:

The DVPPA mentions the responsibility of the person authorised to regulate and perform their duties under this Act in case of irregularities resulting in non-fulfilment. According to section 34, in case of failure or refusal of the enforcement officer to execute duties, he may be subjected to departmental proceedings. That implies discretionary power of the administrative body, though the Act does not clarify the nature of sanction here. Constitution guarantees equal rights of women in public life; however, it is silent on discrimination occurring in private life; it is not mentioned in Article 28 of the constitution. The CEDAW committee mentioned that for violence committed by a citizen, a state party to the international instrument cannot avoid responsibility if ignorance is found to deal with incidents later transformed into violence or irregularities are found during investigation and punishment (United Nations General Assembly, 1992). Bangladesh's reservation regarding article 2 and 16(1)(C) of the CEDAW, puts a debate on the performance of the state's duty without robust civil society support (Klugman, 2017, p. 11). The burden to shift the obsolete norms practised in the family against

women's right lies on the autonomous women's organization rather than on state bodies because of the defence that a state can present in support of the reservation. Therefore, Htun and Weldon's finding prefers the necessity of independent feminist movement to growth of democracy for shifting public opinion and modifying voters, civil leaders, and other human rights activists' mindset (Htun & Weldon, 2012, p. 209). Bangladesh's reservation on ESCR and ICCPR should be obliterated for proper implementation of multipronged prevention measure; the socio-economic, civil, and political rights of the subordinated women need to be fulfilled as discriminatory norm continues from denial of those rights (UN Women, 2018, p. 209). Bangladesh is also responsible under the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the CEDAW Committee's Recommendation No.19 incorporates gender-based violence. Through this recommendation, states are now responsible if they are unsuccessful in performing with due diligence. In addition, Article 4 of UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women keeps obligation for states not to refer custom, tradition, or religion for avoiding their compulsions to eliminate VAW. The Beijing Platform for Action requires government to review, adopt and implement laws. Due diligence is a universal principle as well as a rule of customary international law (Klugman, 2017, p. 13). The example of application of due diligence in domestic violence can be found in the incident of murder of Jessica Lenahan-Gonzales (Jessica Lenahan (Gonzales) v USA, 2011) in 1999. The local police failed to implement the restraining order against the father, who was estranged. The Inter-American Commission held that it was the failure of the United States to protect the mother and daughters. Absence of an independent and rigorous investigation and prosecution policy links the question of state's responsibility. In *Aydin v Turkey* (*Aydin v Turkey*) and *Bevacqua and S. v Bulgaria* (*Bevacqua and S. v Bulgaria*), the European Court of Human Rights considered a lack of independent and rigorous investigation and prosecution policy and non-fulfilment of required process of sanctions as a refusal to provide the victim with prompt assistance (Klugman, 2017, p. 14). According to Htun and Weldon, apart from service to the victim, and training of professionals, strong and autonomous feminist movements are more impactful than women's participation in legislatures, the level of national income and democratic development (Klugman, 2017, p. 18).

5. Resource Support from the UN and Development Agency and Partners against Domestic Violence

Decrease in funds is an alarming issue and problem of prevention intervention in developing countries is that it is largely donor-funded and occasionally targeted small group (UN Women, 2018, p. 209). As domestic violence relates to the value, norms of a given community, the exterior factors, i.e., religion, ideology, politics of human rights defenders, politicians, activists, and journalist is vital (Committee on the Elimination against Women, 2017). Any threat on safety and security of them may increase the incidence of violence as they are unlikely to perform their duty to support the victim. The DVPPA does not address the issue of national budget allocation to the government and non-government organisations and their equal status in decision-making. Besides, under section 7, the service providers authorised to protect human

rights and interest under this Act are mainly non-profitable in nature and dependent on foreign donation.

5.1 The Role of Ministry for Women and Children Affairs and Civil Society Groups to Ensure Transparency in Democratic Welfare Practice:

USD 458 million of bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) has been sent on the abolishment of VAW, and USD 574 Million to women's rights organisations and movements (Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD, 2023, p. 12). Data shows a rise in the volume of ODA for gender equality and women's empowerment. Asia and Africa are mostly receiving ODA with gender equality objectives (Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD, 2023, p. 3). The data also shows the highest share of ODA to the government and civil society, which covers democratic participation, election, media and free flow of information, human rights, and health (Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD, 2023, p. 4). The data for 2020-2021 displayed an increase in ODA, but financial assistance for ending VAW require more contributions. Now it is only 0.3% of the total ODA (Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD, 2023, p. 6). The funding for the feminist movement is crucial because in recent times, even though there has been an increase in Generation Equality Investment (GII), the limited available data source suggests that out of 40 billion USD, only 2 billion USD is allocated to support feminist movements and women rights organisations (The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), 2023, p. 34). The shadow report of Citizens Initiative on CIDAW, Bangladesh reveals a lack of transparency on the distribution of safety net programs, which is necessary to support particularly women and children residing in rural areas (Citizens' Initiatives on CEDAW, Bangladesh, 2016). The report also finds a shortcoming in the strategy of the National Action Plan 2013-2025 of Bangladesh because it adopted welfare approaches that prioritise more on response to violence than preventive action. Therefore, the report suggests a prevention-based movement on VAW, including domestic violence, as it is necessary to distribute resources for future implementation.

6 Recommendations and Conclusion:

➤ The first step to implement the Act successfully is to maintain the accountability of state. There is diverse good practice to do so, for instance, Gendernet proposed 'Violence Against Women Code' to hold a government accountable to achieve target 5.2 and 5.3 of the SDGs (OECD-DAC, 2016, p. 7). Training male judges, police officers, and the military on human rights and engaging male groups in activities, including male refugees are necessary for gender-equality-focused laws (OECD-DAC, 2016, p. 19). Violence in early marriage has a connection to divorce and subsequent human trafficking of the child. Because of stereotypical concept, a male child or an old person may feel discouraged to complain on domestic violence. Hence, the Department of Women Affairs should work promptly with service providers at the initial stage of complain of violence to ensure regular use of help line and strict obedience of the law.

➤ The According to French Development Agency, for gender equality to be a significant objective, encouraging women to control the resource and foster participation in project

governance is a pre-condition (OECD-DAC, 2016, p. 20). The Belgian technical operation's gender budget scan is another good practice to ensure the government's accountability by tracking gender expenditure at the planning, implementation, and evaluation stage (OECD-DAC, 2016, pp. 21-22). To drive institutional performance, the EU adopted a gender action plan as a sign of its commitment to organising activities on gender equality. Likewise, Bangladesh can gender action plan and gender budget scan to evaluate the implementation status of the Act.

➤ Secondly, an independent transnational feminist activism is necessary for greater participation through regional human rights instruments solely on VAW enforceable on SAARC or Asia-Pacific zone with an object to establish gender equality founded on dignity, justice, and democracy to preserve social norms and religious text upholding this principle and to modify practices fuelling the sense of superiority among sexes by compulsory education and communication strategy. Like Maputo Protocol 2003, Inter-South Asian Commission for Human Rights can be an institutional approach to address complaints, monitor violence domestic in nature for obtaining goal 16 of the SDGs, which requires an inclusive society and access to justice and institutions. Under current progress, it is unlikely to achieve due to under-representation and gender bias in global, regional, and national governance (UN Women, 2018, p. 126).

➤ In a society relying on severity of punishment, non-enforcement of laws is unlikely to create deterrence. Therefore, statutory laws cannot be enforced effectively without minimising conflicting position among customary or religious laws and national laws (Klugman, 2017, p. 29).

➤ In India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the subaltern scholars refused to ignore the religious and cultural impact and objected deliberate acceptance of Western liberal ideas to ensure decolonisation. Diversified position to adopt uniform family code illustrates that standpoint. The advocacy, review, and training in legal drafting and in interpreting the women's right in the family progressively parallel to engagement of pro-feminist male group in establishing link between religious institutions and political parties by NGO-based human rights Group will be a multipronged step. To connect with women who know best way to deal with unequal power structure (DFID, 2008, p. 32). Additionally, the lawmakers should carefully amend the 'rape violence under deceitful means' clause and include violence committed in an intimate partner relationship. There is a possibility of the negative impact of market-driven capitalism on the restricted services for women affected by violence. Violence from dowry illustrates the problem. According to Jaggi, in a wage-discriminatory labour market, dowry will balance the gain a woman having household specific human capital compared to men having market specific human capital (Jaggi, 2001, p. 1). Therefore, if income opportunity of girls gets increase, parents will invest more on female human capital than on dowry (Mujeri, 2015). Co-ordination between the Ministry of Law and the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Judiciary is necessary to secure the right of paid leave of the labourer who is a victim of violence and resides in a safe place. A contrast between the domestic violence law of India and Bangladesh is that the former amended the Criminal Code, 1983, and the latter does

not take any initiative to coordinate the Act of 2010 with the Criminal Procedure Code, 1898 (Iyer, 2016, p. 19).

➤ As per critical feminism, hurdles by the victim to prove sexual assault in case of scarcity of evidence (Curtis-Fawley & Daly, 2005, p. 608), or apprehension of reprivatisation of gendered violence (Curtis-Fawley & Daly, 2005, p. 625), restorative justice can be an alternative solution to the problem only when victim can exercise significant liberty in the whole process and the perpetrator is integrated in the system. Domestic violence arising from dowry, child marriage is region-specific. Through amendment, direct insertion of dowry related violence is essential to apply the DPPA along with the Dowry Prohibition Act, 2018 for remedy to women belonging to different religion. In the domestic violence information form, the mention of husband's name should be excluded, as informant can be of any gender and except in case of child, mention of father or husband's name should be made optional as it implies subordinate position of the victim.

➤ Solution to the difference between Quranic Islam and 'cultural Islam' (Ali, 2012) relies on increasing awareness on the legal solemnisation of marriage. Disobedience of the law will put the victim in a negative position. Progressive interpretation of religious text can convince the people at large to understand the gravity of discrimination.

➤ Multiple employ strategy for example- social marketing for economic empowerment and collective action utilising online platform to encourage and collect statement from the victim instead of solely event-based activism can help change the obsolete norms. The insertion of mandatory education on gender violence and the collection of statistical data through an electronic database containing domestic violence cases accessed by judges, prosecutors, police, health related professionals and social workers keeping the privacy of the victim intact under article 5 and monitoring is essential.

Overall, by providing governmental and non-governmental initiative for the victim of the domestic violence, the DVPPA accommodates protection and prevention procedure. Therefore, it comprises of institutional feminist approach and partially covers public health approach. However, it does not facilitate an opportunity to the victim to exercise her right as an independent agent, rather a paternalistic protection is evident here which is evidence of inadequate application of human rights approach. There is no prevention mechanism in this Act. Moreover, the law does not provide a new concept of 'family'. Therefore, the Act remains a superficially good laws which is losing track due to ignoring socio-economic factors behind violence. A short and long-term amendment is needed to accommodate men, older, disabled people, foreign spouse, and immigrants. If the victims of violence who took training facilities become a part of the execution of welfare service to the victim of violence, it will empower them and ensure more inclusive and transformative gender justice against domestic violence.

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Effect of Foreign Remittance on Household Healthcare Status in South-central Region of Bangladesh

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to examine the effect of foreign remittance on household healthcare status in rural regions of south-central Bangladesh. Descriptive statistics, t-test, and multiple linear regression technique were employed in this research. Multi-stage sampling approach was used to select the study area, and simple random sampling method was utilized to collect cross-section data from 120 remittance receiving rural households. The study findings indicated that over time, remittance-receiving households improved their access to drinking water, accommodation, and sanitation facilities. In addition, with the increase in remittance income, household consumption and healthcare expenditure had been significantly increased. The estimated regression result demonstrated that household healthcare expenditure was strongly influenced by age of the household head, distance from nearest hospital and total household expenditure. The findings of the study could be useful in planning for sustainable rural development in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Remittance, Healthcare Status, Rural Household, Bangladesh

1. Introduction

Bangladesh is a South Asian country having low per capita income, high rate of poverty and malnutrition (Regmi & Paudel, 2016). About 25 million people in the country representing 16 percent of the total population are undernourished (FAO, 2012). Recent research findings show that remittance income received by the household in the least developing countries helps to improve the livelihood status and welfare. Remittances also provide strong support to the family member to face various abnormal natural and climatic shocks (Kiawu & Jones, 2013). In addition, it helps to ease the budget constraints, reduce poverty, and improve living standard (Adams & Cuecuecha, 2010). Besides, remittances can also promote investment in human capital as well as physical capital at household level. Inflow of remittance has increased manifold to the least developing countries in the recent years. For example, in Africa, the amount of remittance inflow exceeds the official aid and becomes the second largest source of foreign capital, next after foreign direct investment (World Bank, 2011).

Remittances refer to money sent by migrants to relatives in their country of origin or to family or friends living in the same destination country but a separate household (Kim et al., 2021). This financial transfer is a crucial element in the global economy, especially in developing nations, where it serves as a vital income source for many households. Remittances play a crucial role in the economy of Bangladesh, with significant contributions to various aspects of economic development. The inflow of remittances contributes substantially to the country's GDP and generates employment opportunities (Karim et al., 2020). Remittances have been

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identified as a major source of foreign exchange earnings for Bangladesh, aiding in balancing the balance of payments, increasing foreign exchange reserves, enhancing national savings, and boosting the velocity of money (Hasan et al., 2019). Additionally, remittances have a positive impact on reducing poverty, increasing household expenditure, savings, and maintaining the quality of life, as well as promoting gender equality (Sarker & Islam, 2018).

Furthermore, the relationship between remittances and economic growth in Bangladesh has been extensively studied, with findings indicating a positive long-term relationship between remittance inflows and GDP growth (Masuduzzaman, 2014). Remittances not only contribute to short-term consumption but also have long-term growth effects by facilitating investment and overcoming liquidity constraints in economies with underdeveloped financial systems (Fayissa & Nsiah, 2010). The significant role of remittances in Bangladesh's economy is further emphasized by their impact on total factor productivity growth, highlighting the country's dependence on remittances for economic progress (Kumar et al., 2017).

Remittance has a positive impact on the subjective wellbeing of households (Andersson, 2014; Azeez, 2009). Though financially sound households lose productive assets due to migration, poor households acquire those assets (Garip, 2014). Remittances have a significant positive impact on regions where more people are receiving money from abroad, both receiving and non-receiving households as a whole (Iqbal, 2013).

Despite some drawbacks like brain drain, the overall contribution of remittances to Bangladesh's economy remains substantial (Afzal et al., 2022). The dynamics of remittance inflows, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, have underscored the resilience and importance of remittances in sustaining the country's economy (Rafi, 2021). The absorption of remittances in the domestic economy and their macroeconomic impacts have been subjects of interest, showcasing Bangladesh as an intriguing case for studying the effects of remittances on economic growth (Das & Chowdhury, 2019).

1. Literature Review

Over the years, remittances contributed significantly to the livelihood status of a large group of the rural population. Davis and López-Carr (2010) have found that remittances have a positive impact on household consumption (Démurger & Wang, 2016; Gofere, 2013) as well as investment in children's education and healthcare (Hasan, 2006). According to Lubambu (2014), in developing countries, remittances have been a sustainable source of foreign currency rather than FDI, public debt, and other official development assistance. Remittance inflows have both positive and negative impacts on the rural socioeconomic status in Bangladesh. But the former supersedes the latter by generating income levels, providing children with education, promoting social status, increasing employment opportunities for the unemployed, and empowering women (Chowdhury, 2014). When remittance income is incorporated into household income, it helps to alleviate poverty by a larger margin in rural areas of developing countries (Olowa, Awoyemi, Shittu, & Olowa, 2013). For promoting economic development, eradicating poverty, improving healthcare status, and enriching socioeconomic development, remittance plays a significant positive role (Ratha, Mohapatra, & Scheja, 2011).

Remittances have a significant impact on household welfare in Bangladesh. Several studies have examined the relationship between remittances and various aspects of household welfare in the country. Sutradhar (2020) conducted a study on the impact of remittances on economic growth in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The study found a negative effect of remittances on economic growth in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, while remittances had a positive impact on economic growth in India. Szabo et al. (2015) explored the relationship between soil salinity, household wealth, and food insecurity on the southwest coast of Bangladesh. The study found that household wealth, education, and remittances were important predictors of household food security. Ajefu & Ogebe (2019) find that remittances increase the probability of using formal financial services, such as deposit accounts and internet/mobile banking, in Nigeria. Dhakal (2022) explores the relationship between remittances and food security in Malawi, indicating that remittances are closely related to food purchases and can alleviate poverty. Gosai & Deo (2023) suggest that remittances contribute to poverty reduction in Fiji's rural households. Thapa & Acharya (2017) find a positive impact of remittances on household expenditure on education in Nepal. Dash (2020) suggests that remittances have a positive effect on the accumulation of rural assets such as landholdings and livestock holdings. Remittances have been consistently shown to influence household health expenditures and outcomes positively. Studies indicate that households receiving remittances allocate a larger portion of their income to health-related expenses compared to non-recipient households (Frank & Durden, 2017; Kakhkharov et al., 2020; Thapa & Acharya, 2017). This increased healthcare spending is attributed to the improved financial capacity of remittance-receiving households, enabling them to access better medical services and medications (Kalaj, 2015). Moreover, remittances have been associated with enhanced access to private healthcare services (Khan & Valatheeswaran, 2020), improved health knowledge (Ponce et al., 2011), and increased utilization of healthcare services (Nathaniel, 2020).

The impact of remittances on household health extends beyond financial aspects. Remittance inflows have been linked to positive health outcomes, such as enhanced nutritional intake and overall health status of children (Mazzucato & Cebotari, 2016). Additionally, remittances increase the likelihood of household members seeking direct medical care (Kan, 2020). In terms of preventive healthcare, remittances enable households to increase healthcare expenditure, particularly in primary services, which can have a positive impact on health due to their preventive nature (Antón, 2010). Furthermore, remittances contribute to broader societal implications. Remittance-receiving households exhibit more resilience in the face of disasters, as they can access healthcare services more readily compared to non-recipients (Pairama & Dé, 2018). Remittances have also been associated with enhanced social functioning among elderly adults (Ojjieme et al., 2022).

Studies have shown that remittances positively influence health expenditure among rural households in Bangladesh (Hassan, 2021). Additionally, remittances contribute significantly to economic growth in Bangladesh (Sutradhar, 2020). They alleviate poverty by allowing households to increase consumption and invest in health and education (Al-Islam et al., 2022). Remittance-receiving households not only enhance their food security but also invest more in

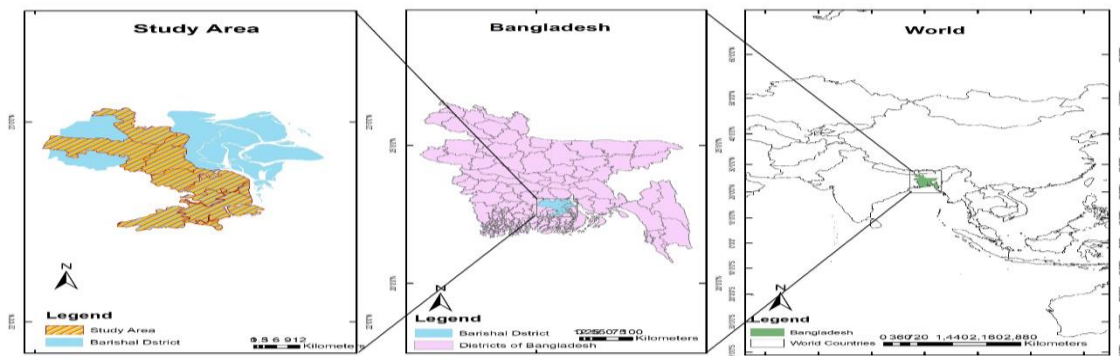
health and education (Szabo et al., 2022). Moreover, remittances positively affect the education and health status of migrant households (Abbas et al., 2014). The impact of international remittances on household healthcare expenditure remains an underexplored area in Bangladesh (Kumar, 2019). A few studies concentrated on the impact of remittances on economic growth, food security, poverty eradication, rural household welfare, etc. The linkage between remittance inflow and household healthcare status has remained unexamined, especially in rural areas of Bangladesh. Hence, the objective of the study is to investigate the impact of remittance earnings on household healthcare facilities in the south-central region of Bangladesh.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Area Selection

The study region has been selected using a multistage sampling technique. Barishal District, located in the south-central coastal region of Bangladesh, has been selected as the principal sampling unit (PSU) for the initial phase. Subsequently, five upazilas (sub-districts), namely Barisal Sadar, Bakerganj, Babuganj, Wazirpur, and Gournadi, within the Barishal district have been designated as secondary sampling units (SSUs) (Figure 1). Furthermore, based on our current understanding, we have not come across any previous research that has investigated the influence of foreign remittances on the healthcare status of rural households in this specific district.

Figure 1: Study Area



Source: Authors' compilation.

3.2 Sampling Technique and Data Collection

The main data were gathered using a questionnaire survey. Prior to commencing the ultimate data gathering process, a preliminary survey was carried out to assess the questionnaire's validity and reliability. The questionnaire consisted of both open-ended and closed-ended items. The researchers employed open-ended questions to elicit the respondents' perspectives on the effects of remittance on their healthcare condition. In addition, closed-ended questions are used to obtain precise information, such as details about the household, income from remittances, income excluding remittances, household consumption, and so on. Following the pilot survey, a pre-tested structured questionnaire consisting of both open-ended and closed-ended questions was employed to gather data through face-to-face interviews conducted from April to May

2023. We collected data from 120 households for the year 2023 as well as for 2019. The reason for collecting the retrospective data for the year 2019 was to identify the effect of remittance in the 5-year interval period. The respondents were asked to recall the data for the year 2019. While a structured questionnaire is effective for obtaining detailed quantitative data, it has difficulties gathering qualitative data. Therefore, in order to address this issue, various widely used qualitative data collection approaches, such as focused group discussion (FGD), key informants (KII), and observation methods, have been utilized.

3.3 Analytical Framework

Hypothesis Testing

The research is to examine the influence of remittance income on the healthcare status of rural households during a 5-year period, from 2019 to 2023. Therefore, a study hypothesis has been formulated:

Null Hypothesis: H_0 = There is no change of healthcare status after 5-year.

Alternative Hypothesis: H_1 = There is change of healthcare status after 5-year.

In this case, the household's healthcare status has been indicated by the household's healthcare expenses. The primary cause is that when a household is financially strong, they can spend more money on healthcare needs of the family members. Hence, increasing expenditures on healthcare over time ensures good health and well-being of the family members. If the healthcare expenses for a given year are higher than the previous year, it indicates the sufficient financial capacity of the household to safeguard healthcare status of the family members.

Description of the Variables

Factors affecting the healthcare status of the household have been described in Table 1.

Table 1: Variable Descriptions

Name of Variable	Symbol	Measurement Unit	Reference
Age	X_1	Years	(Nwaru et al., 2011)
Father Education	X_2	Years of schooling	(Nwaru et al., 2011)
Mother Education	X_3	Years of schooling	(Nwaru et al., 2011)
Total Family Member	X_4	Numbers	(Nwaru et al., 2011)
Distance of Nearest Hospital	X_5	Kilometers	-
Income from Remittance	X_6	BDT per month	(Nwaru et al., 2011)
Household Consumption	X_7	BDT per month	(Nwaru et al., 2011)
Household Healthcare	Y_i	BDT per month	(Nwaru et al., 2011)

Source: Authors' compilation.

The Regression Model

To identify the determinants of household healthcare expenditures, an ordinary least squares (OLS) estimation technique is utilized in a multiple linear regression model. This study ensured that the assumptions underlying ordinary least squares (OLS) were thoroughly examined and upheld prior to establishing causality between the dependent variable and explanatory variables. The variables utilized in the model were obtained through a random sampling procedure, and it

is supposed that the parameters follow a linear trend. Furthermore, it is supposed that the conditional mean value of the error term is zero and will not exhibit any linear correlation with the explanatory variables. Additionally, we made the assumption that the error terms are homoscedastic and that there is no multicollinearity among the independent variables. The regression model is shown in Equation 1.

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + u_i \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where, Y_i refers to dependent variable; X_1, X_2, \dots, X_7 are explanatory variables (Table 1); $\beta_0, \beta_1, \dots, \beta_7$ are parameters to be estimated; and u_i is the disturbance term.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Household Demographic Information

The data obtained indicated that 34 percent of the household heads belonged to the age range of 20 to 40 years. Conversely, 34 percent of them fell between the age brackets of 60 and 80 years. Furthermore, a mere 32 percent fell within the age bracket of 40 to 60 years. Out of the respondents, 43 percent of the household heads were female, while 57 percent of the households were headed by males. Analysis of the gathered data revealed that 20 percent of the household heads are actively involved in business activities, while 28 percent are not engaged in any productive endeavors. Additionally, the study revealed that 38 percent of the respondents were housewives, while 10 percent of them were involved in agriculture. Typically, a family consists of four to six individuals, with less than two of them employed.

4.2 Changes in Household Basic Indicators

The impact of foreign remittances on household basic metrics from 2019 to 2023 is shown in Table 2. The enhancement of these indicators is directly and indirectly linked to the improvement of the health status of the individuals in the home.

Table 2: Changes in Household Basic Indicators

Indicators	Particulars	Frequency (%)		Change
		2023	2019	
Source of drinking water	Deep tube-well	49	47	+2
	Tube-well	48	48	0
	Others	3	5	-2
Housing condition	Concrete	41	31	+10
	Tin-concrete	24	18	+6
	Tin-shade	35	46	-11
	Others	0	5	-5
Sanitation condition	Concrete	54	41	+13
	Tin-concrete	13	13	0
	Tin-shade	32	38	-6
	Straw	1	8	-7
Food storage facility	Refrigerator	58	44	+14
	Storehouse	21	25	-4

Mud-made room	5	8	-3
Others	16	23	-7

Source: Authors' compilation.

Table 2 exhibited a positive change in household access to drinking water from deep tube wells in 2023 compared to 2019. International remittances had increased the income of the recipients' households. With the increased income, they were able to collect more safe drinking water than in previous years. In addition, the structure of household accommodation and sanitation has been upgraded to a concrete-made building from a tin or mud-made structure. Besides, the capacity to store necessary food has also improved. Instead of storing food in a storehouse or mud-made room, they were using modern refrigerators to keep food fresh and hygienic for a long time. The positive change in these indicators due to remittance improved the health condition of household members as well as the overall standard of living. The findings were also supported by the findings of Chowdhury (2014).

4.3 Changes in Income, Consumption and Healthcare Cost

The economic analysis of household consumption behavior asserts that consumption is directly related to household income. Table 3 displays the changes in household consumption and healthcare costs with a change in income from remittance.

Table 3: Changes in Income, Consumption and Healthcare Cost (BDT per Month)

Variables	Year	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean difference	t-value
Income from remittance	2023	120	44850	48301.51	13916.67	4.88***
	2019	120	30933.33	26999.76		
Household consumption	2023	120	22816.67	15495.18	5341.67	3.14***
	2019	120	17475	21646.59		
Household healthcare	2023	120	4556.66	4523.71	948.33	2.38**
	2019	120	3608.33	3922.92		

[Note: Obs. = Observation, Std. Dev. = Standard Deviation, ** = significant at 5 percent level, *** = significant at 1 percent level]

Source: Authors' compilation.

It had been seen from Table 3 that both household expenditure on consumption and health increased with the corresponding increase in income from remittance in 2023 compared to 2019. The findings confirmed that the null hypothesis of the research could be statistically rejected and affirmed that there were significant positive changes in the health status of the remittance recipient families. This study finding was also supported by the findings of Acosta, Fajnzylber, & Lopez (2008) and Antón (2010).

4.4 Determinants of Household Healthcare Status

The healthcare status of a family member depends on various household-specific factors, such as the age of the respondent, the education of the parents, the number of family members, the distance to the nearest hospital, and, more importantly, income. Table 4 identified the major determinants of household healthcare status for remittance-receiving families in 2023. A

multiple linear regression had been used to analyze the impacts of these factors on health status. It was clear from Table 4 that all the factors had a positive impact on household healthcare except income from remittances in 2023. Among all the factors, only the age of the respondent, distance from nearest hospital, and household consumption were statistically and significantly associated with healthcare status.

Table 4: Determinants of Household Healthcare Expenditure

Variables	Coefficients	P-value
Age of the Household Head	66.94** (31.36)	0.03
Father Education	36.35 (102.2)	0.72
Mother Education	152.4 (135.2)	0.26
Total Family Member	63.19 (217.5)	0.77
Distance of Nearest Hospital	284.9* (149.2)	0.06
Income from Remittance	-0.00940 (0.00726)	0.19
Household Consumption	0.0827** (0.0416)	0.04
Constant	-2,982 (2,942)	0.31
R ²	0.154	
Observation	120	
Model summary		
Mean VIF	1.65	

[Note: ** = significant at 5 percent level, * = significant at 10 percent level], Robust standard errors in parentheses.

Source: Authors' compilation.

The estimated results showed that a one-year increase in the age of the household head led to an increase in household healthcare costs by BDT 66, which was statistically significant at the 5 percent level. On the other hand, an increase in BDT 1,000 on household consumption per month caused an increase in household healthcare costs by BDT 82, and it was statistically significant at the 5 percent level. In addition, with the increase in one kilometer distance from household to nearest hospital, the health care cost increased by BDT 285 which was significant at 10 percent level.

The results also stated that income from remittances had a negative association with health costs, although it was statistically insignificant. The underlined reason could be that increased expenditure on basic needs made the family members free from health-related problems. Hence,

for healthcare, households had to spend less money. Similar findings were also reported in the works of Amuedo-Dorantes & Pozo (2011) and Airola (2007).

5. Conclusion

The study provides an examination of how overseas remittances impact the health conditions of households in rural areas of south-central Bangladesh. In recent years, international remittances have significantly contributed to the economic growth and development of the Bangladesh economy. The families receiving remittances have the opportunity to enjoy certain essential facilities. This level of exposure allows people to enhance their health status more effectively than in prior years. The findings of this study indicate that foreign remittances have had a beneficial impact on the health condition of individuals in rural Bangladesh who receive remittances. Therefore, it is imperative for the government to implement measures aimed at augmenting the influx of remittances in the foreseeable future.

6. References

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