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Title: July Uprising 2024: Causes and Consequences

Abstract: The July Uprising of 2024 was a turning point in the history of Bangladesh. The research provides a systematic study of the causes, development, and results of this historic movement. The movement began as a peaceful protest at Dhaka University. Students protested against a High Court order that brought back a 30% job quota for the descendants of freedom fighters. However, due to government reactions, the protest quickly grew into a massive countrywide revolution. This led to the complete collapse of the government on August 5, 2024. The study aims to identify the root causes of the uprising and to analyze its consequences on governance. The study uses a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative. The primary data used from semi-structured interviews with student coordinators and key policy actors. Secondary data collected from reliable media reports, government records, and the Bangladesh Constitution. The scope of the research covers the structural problems in public service recruitment, the role of digital communication networks, and the wide-ranging policy changes in the Interim Government. The research explains the trajectory of the movement using structural grievances, meritocracy theme, media acceleration, and systemic uprising. The movement created a repression-resistance loop that destroyed public trust and regime legitimacy. To survive, the movement used an anti-fragile, decentralized leadership structure that prevented the state from neutralizing it. The study provides an important legal lesson by looking at Article 29 of the Bangladesh Constitution. Article 29(3) allows special measures for backward sections of society, but this clause is permissive, using the word 'may' instead of 'must'. This means that changing or abolishing job quotas is a matter of executive policy choice, not a judicial order. The High Court crossed its traditional boundaries by shifting from legal verification into active policy generation. This intervention deeply destabilized the institutional balance of power. After the regime collapsed, an interim government took power and faced multifarious challenges. The government managed these through a mix of mediation and targeted enforcement. To fix the state, the government created specialized reform commissions. These commissions designed a blueprint to end unchecked executive dominance. The commissions also recommend independent Ombudsman oversight, changing old bureaucratic systems into data-driven Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and creating the July National Charter. The research concludes that sustainable democratic governance cannot rely on coercive state power. Instead, it must be rooted in public trust, merit-based equality, and true systemic accountability. The research recommends executing all proposed constitutional updates to secure institutional separation of powers. The July Uprising stands as a permanent civilizational recovery that opened vital spaces for deep democratic development.

Keywords: July uprising 2024, quota reform, judiciary and executive discretion, digital mobilization, repression-resistance loop, interim government, governance reform.

Introduction

The July uprising 2024 in Bangladesh, a resistance against authoritarian rule, marked a pivotal movement in the nation's struggle for democratic freedom and the right to free speech (Siddik 2025). It was initially catalysed by discontent with public-sector recruitment policies, specifically student grievances over the reinstatement of a 30% freedom-fighter descendants' quota in public service. The tension erupted into a nationwide uprising. It quickly spread beyond its original demands, evolving into a broader anti-government protest involving multiple segments of the country. The uprising reached a significant tipping point in Bangladesh's political landscape, as mass mobilization, online engagement, and public defiance played a crucial role in shaping the course of events. The intensification of protests was further fueled by state responses, including violent actions by law enforcement and internet shutdowns, which in turn intensified public reaction. Ultimately, the movement led to major political consequences, including leadership changes and debate over democratic governance and institutional reforms. The research aims to explain the causes and consequences of the July Uprising 2024 in Bangladesh.

2. Background of the Research

Bangladesh has a long history of student-led activities shaping its democratic and political landscape, from the 1952 Language Movement to the pro-democracy struggle of the 1990s (Jackman 2021). The 2018 quota reform protests exposed dissatisfaction with the patron-based recruitment system and rising youth frustrations (Zainuddin 2025). It mobilized students, urban middle classes, and disenfranchised youth alike (Abid 2025). The uprising reflected not only policy-related grievances but also deep-rooted frustrations over inequality, governance, and generational exclusion (Chowdhury 2025). The empowered political party tried to hold the people's mandate by building infrastructure, economic growth, and showing other development (Muhammad 2025). In remembering of discrimination against ordinary people and contrary to favoritism with the dependents of freedom fighters, irritated mass people and all their efforts sank into oblivion through a mass movement. The movement originated from the order to reinstate a thirty percent quota for the offspring of independence fighters, both in cadre and non-cadre civil service officers, issued on June 5, 2024, from the High Court Division of the Bangladesh Supreme Court. Students from Dhaka University rallied in protest against the court order and demanded the cancellation of the order, establishment of fair quotas, and enhancement of a new law for setting a five percent quota for all government jobs. On July 15, 2024, Chhatra League activists attacked quota protesters, and the clash broke out since then. Six protesters were killed, and 100 people were injured in Dhaka, Chattogram, and Rangpur on July 16, 2024. The government deployed law enforcing agencies, and instructed to use lethal weapons to counter the protestation, which included arbitrary arrests and detentions, internet shutdowns, callous violence (Nazia 2024). The government shut down schools, colleges, and universities. Students demanded justice. Again, 29 people died on July 18, and the government announced a nationwide curfew. Key organizers of the movement were picked up, and several opposition leaders were detained. The number of deaths was rapidly increasing, and the protests erupted in countrywide. Mobile internet services were

stopped. August 1st detained organizers were released from the custody of law enforcement agencies. The protesters dismissed dialogue with the government and called for the entire government's resignation (Keaten 2025). Protesters arranged a huge gathering in central Shaheed Minar and called for a march on Dhaka. People from across the country began converging on Dhaka and captured gates and key points. The Prime Minister left the country, and the regime collapsed (Siddik 2025). The events shed the blood of 1400 people (Keaten 2025) of whom most are common people (Hassan 2025).

3. Problem Statement

Despite the significance of the July Uprising in Bangladesh, as a major episode of mass political mobilization, there remains a limited systematic understanding of how and why a relatively specific policy-based protest centered on quota reform was transformed into a countrywide revolutionary movement. Discussions often focus either on immediate triggers or on descriptive accounts of events, but tend to overlook the deeper structural conditions, mobilization dynamics, and state-society interactions that collectively shaped the trajectory of the uprising. Furthermore, there are insufficient analytical clarities regarding the mechanisms through which youth-led movements, digital communication, and diffusion of protest occur across the country. The interplay between repression and resistance, and its role in intensifying collective action, also remains underexplored in the context of Bangladesh. In addition, while the uprising resulted in significant political outcomes, including leadership changes and debates on governance reform, there is a lack of comprehensive research examining its short-term and long-term implications for democratic institutions, public trust, and policy transformation. Therefore, the study seeks to address these gaps by systematically analyzing the causes and consequences of the July Uprising 2024. By doing so, it aims to contribute to a more public policy informed and empirically grounded understanding of contemporary protest movements in Bangladesh and their broader implication for political change and democratic development.

4. Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are:

1. To identify the root causes of the July Uprising 2024 in Bangladesh.
2. To analyze the consequences of the July Uprising 2024 in Bangladesh.

5. Research Questions

1. What are the key factors that contributed to the July Uprising 2024 in Bangladesh?
2. How did the July Uprising transform Bangladesh's political dynamics and governance structure, and what are the key changes resulting from it?

6. Scope of the Research

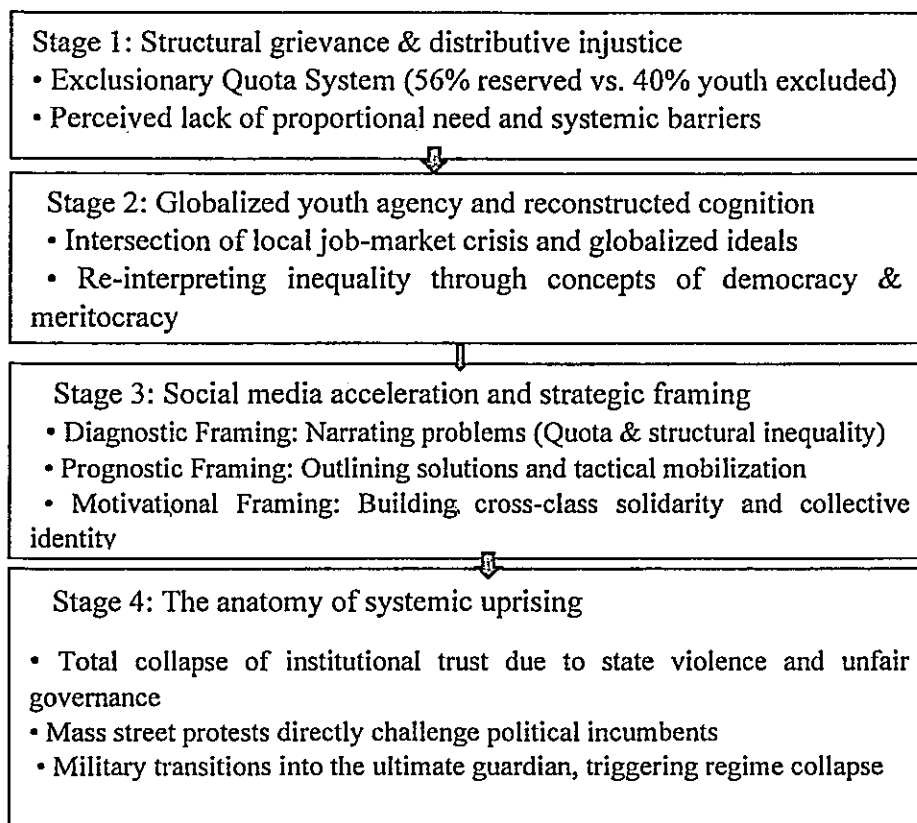
The research explored the root cause of the July Uprising specially the justification of reinstate the quota system through the court for the dependents of freedom fighters in the government

recruitment policy. Secondly, the role of government, beneficiaries, and supporting political parties' followers, law-enforcing agencies, student organizations, common people, and the influence of the media and political parties during the movement. Thirdly, the study also analyzed the consequences of the movement, especially regime change, interim government formation, and their key policy steps towards an egalitarian, human, dignified, and democratic Bangladesh.

7. Review of Literature

The uprising is defined as a situation where political incumbents are challenged by mass protest, and the military turns into the ultimate guardian (Yukawa 2022). It's a form of collective resistance by ordinary people against political, social, economic, and cultural injustice. Uprising occurs when people lose trust in the government, rights and freedom are restricted, economic hardship increases, widespread male governance, unfair elections, discrimination, failure of democracy, and state violence increases (Anser 2026).

Theoretical Framework



Sources: Compilation by Author, 2026

7.1 Movement, revolution, and uprising have multifarious aspects

Movement, revolution, and uprising have positive and negative effects. The American Revolution (1775–1783), was caused by unfair taxation, lack of political representation, British control over trade, military enforcement, and the influence of enlightenment ideas, which led colonists to demand independence (Greene 2000). The French Revolution was due to economic crisis, social inequality, poverty and food shortage, absolute monarchy, the influence of enlightenment ideas, as well as knowledge from the American revolution which ended the monarchy, destroyed feudalism, promoted equality and rights, spread nationalism, and inspired global political change (Jha, 2023). The causes of the Second World War (1939-1945) were the treaty of Versailles, the great depression, and the rise of nationalism. It caused massive destruction and loss of life, led to the rise of the USA and USSR as superpowers, created the United Nations, triggered decolonization, divided Europe, and introduced the nuclear age (Hanks, 2009). The Arab Spring was a series of protests and uprisings across the Middle East and North Africa especially, Tunisia, that began in 2010. Internal and external dynamics played a critical role in changing the power in Tunisia (Sofi 2019). It was caused by authoritarian rule, corruption, unemployment, economic inequality, human rights abuses, and public demands for democracy and dignity. This Spring led to the overthrow of some rulers, civil wars in several countries, economic decline, refugee crises, and limited democratic progress, with Tunisia being the most stable case (Mushtaq, 2017).

7.2 Grievance widespread to uprising

In the age of globalization, transformations, restructuring, and grievances are being experienced and articulated all over the world (Giddens, 2003). Political contention in Bangladesh cannot be understood solely as a reaction to domestic policy decisions. Instead, youth political agency emerges at the intersection of localized grievances and globally circulating ideas about democracy, meritocracy, and justice. Globalization, in this sense, does not determine protest outcomes, but it reshapes the symbolic and cognitive resources through which actors interpret inequality and envision political alternatives (Olah, 2025).

7.3 Social movement leads to the downfall of the political government:

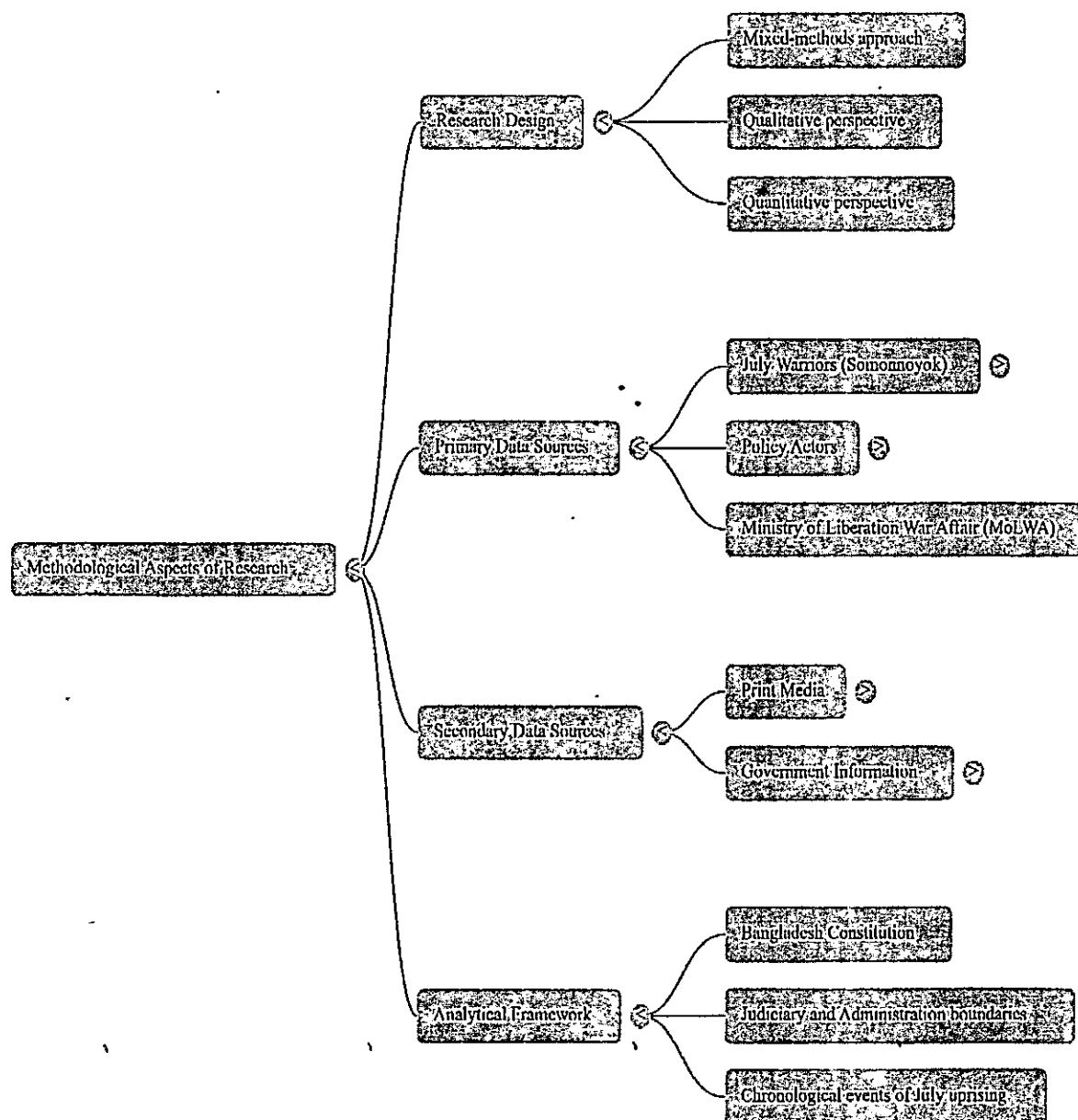
Social media can be a key stakeholder to play role to accelerate any movement. Framing theory assists to encompass movement by narrating problems, mobilizing assistance, presenting grievances, issuing events with participants and the wider community (Zaklama 2025). In a movement, the organizers use technology to influence organized stakeholders. They show social movements on social media by instating problems and providing solutions and tactics and motivating people (Mendelshon 2025). The July movement was framed in the same way, the protester used social media to seek out problems, such as the quota system in government jobs and inequality, and suggest solutions, motivate people to engage, and ensure solidarity with the protestors.

7.4 Undermining genuineness calls for uprising

In the quota system, reserving 56% of jobs, when 40% of youth were excluded, qualified candidates were absent, lacking evidence of proportional need, which may fail to meet the standard. Bangladesh's 30% quota lacked reasonable criteria in 2024. Since the freedom fighters' descendants, unlike marginalised groups, were not found to face with documented systemic barriers of contemporary social or economic relevance. The quota system was increasingly serving the interests of politically influential groups rather than genuinely marginalized communities, thereby undermining its original justification (Abid 2025).

8. Methodological Aspects

The research is a combination of mixed-methods, both qualitative and quantitative. From the qualitative perspectives, primary data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with July warriors named somonnoyok. Also, personal interviews and face-to-face interviews of July warriors with print medias were collected in-consultation and with permission from July warriors. Policy actors like civil servants, lawyers, policy makers were consulted to figure out the research. Secondary data collected from print media specially, British Broadcasting Corporation Bangla (BBC Bangla). BBC Bangla's news, daily Prothom Alo, Bangladesh Sangbad Songstha (BSS) were utilized to shape the chronological events of July uprising and activities of policy actors in several segments, stages, and positions. The government website, especially Website of Cabinet Division, were used to gather information of the number of reform commissions formed by interim government. Ministry of Home Affairs reports were used to analyze the challenges of Interim government faced during the period. Bangladesh Constitution was analyzed empirically to determine the cross-boundary of Judiciary and Administration. To materialize the research, primary data was collected from the Ministry of Liberation War Affair (MoLWA).



Source: Compilation by Author 2026

9. Result or Findings

The findings are conceptualized through a four-stage analytical framework: (1) The Quota system determination and cross-boundary analysis, (2) Chronological Analysis of the uprising with policy perspectives, (3) Interim government formation and its reforms, and (4) Challenges of interim government. The trajectory culminates in comprehensive institutional restructuring, shifting governance from one regime to another.

9.1 The Desecration of Judicial Authority and Executive Responsibility: The judgment of the Quota system determination and cross-boundary analysis.

The controversy surrounding the quota system in Bangladesh and the judicial decision related to it became one of the most significant constitutional and political issues in 2024. The debate intensified following the High Court's ruling no 6063 of 2021 dated 05 June, 2024 (Court 2021) regarding the reinstatement of quotas in government employment, which triggered widespread student protests and eventually contributed to the broader political unrest that culminated in the July uprising. At the center of the controversy lies a fundamental constitutional provision: whether the establishment or abolition of a quota system is a matter for judicial determination, or it falls within the exclusive policy-making authority of the executive branch. The research offers an important framework for analyzing this issue through the lens of constitutional law, separation of powers, and judicial review. To clearly visualize the constitutional core of the 2024 Bangladesh quota controversy, the framework below is mapped out as a structured comparative matrix. The table separates the constitutional anchors, operational powers, limitations, and specific crisis touchpoints between the executive and judicial branches of government.

Structured Comparative Matrix

Analytical Dimension	The Executive Sphere (Policy & Discretion)	The Judicial Sphere (Review & Interpretation)
Core democratic role	Policy-making, administrative governance, systemic recruitment planning, and resource distribution.	Constitutional text interpretation, upholding the rule of law, and keeping government actions within legal limits.
Constitutional source (Constitution 2018)	Article 29(3)-A permissive, enabling clause granting authority to implement special provisions for backward sections.	Power to judicial review- implied constitutional authority to audit state behavior and legal framework
Operational power and scope	Absolute discretion to introduce quotas, change reservation ratios, or entirely abolish them based on shifting social needs.	Authority to strike down arbitrary or discriminatory quotas, and verify if beneficiaries are genuinely disadvantaged.
Democratic legitimacy	Directly accountable to the public through electoral process; holds political mandate to make value judgement.	Independent, non-elected legal guardian; missing a direct popular policy mandate, hence tied strictly to textual legality.
Strict boundary (The limits)	Cannot enforce policies that violate fundamental rights or disregard basic constitutional constraints.	Cannot create public policy, prescribe exact percentages, or substitute its own policy preferences for the executive's.
The 2024 Controversy focus	Exercised valid policy discretion in 2018 by abolishing quotas to align with public demand and administrative choices.	Ordered the reinstatement of the quota system, crossing the boundary from legal verification into active policy generation.

Source: Compilation by Author 2026

As charted above, the tension emerges because the text of Article 29(3) of the Bangladesh Constitution is inherently permissive ('may' rather than 'must'). When the High Court ordered the restoration of the system, it did not just audit constitutional compliance; it effectively dictated a policy outcome. This structural chart demonstrates that maintaining a clear line between the executive's policy-making discretion and the judiciary's power of legal review is vital to preserving institutional stability under the separation of powers.

The constitution of Bangladesh establishes equality as one of the core principles governing public employment. Article 29(1) guarantees equality of opportunity for all people in public service, while article 29(2) prohibits discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. However, Article 29(3) creates an exception by allowing the state to make special provisions for disadvantaged or backward people. This provision reflects the constitutional commitment to substantive equality, which seeks not only equal treatment but also equitable opportunities for historically marginalized groups.

A critical aspect of Article 29(3) is its wording. The constitution permits the state to adopt special measures but does not require it to do so. The provision authorizes the government to create quotas when necessary but does not impose a constitutional obligation to maintain them. Consequently, according to the argument presented in the article, both the existence and the absence of quotas are constitutionally permissible. If the government decides to establish quotas for disadvantaged groups, such a decision falls within constitutional boundaries. Similarly, if the government decides to abolish quotas entirely. That decision is also constitutionally valid.

This interpretation leads to the description that quota policy is fundamentally a matter of executive discretion. In a democratic system, elected governments are responsible for designing and implementing public policies. Decisions concerning recruitment, employment, and affirmative action programs generally belong to the executive branch because they involve political judgment, resource allocation, and administrative considerations. The executive is accountable to the public through electoral processes and, therefore, possesses the legitimacy to determine whether quotas should exist and how they should be structured.

The role of the judiciary, however, is different. Courts are entrusted with interpreting the Constitution and ensuring that government actions remain within constitutional limits. Judicial reviews serve as an important safeguard against arbitrary or unconstitutional exercises of power. Therefore, courts may examine whether a particular quota system violates constitutional guarantees of equality or whether the beneficiaries of a quota genuinely qualify as disadvantaged groups under Article 29(3). If a quota category is found to be discriminatory, irrational, or inconsistent with constitutional principles, the judiciary has the authority to strike it down.

The research argues that the controversy emerged because the High Court's intervention appeared to go beyond reviewing the legality of quotas and the realm of policy-making. From a constitutional perspective, there is an important distinction between reviewing a policy and

creating one. Reviewing a policy involves determining whether it complies with the Constitution. Creating policy involves deciding what the policy should be. The former is a judicial function, while the latter belongs to the executive. When courts effectively direct the government to maintain or restore a quota system, it is argued that they risk crossing the boundary between interpretation and administration.

The principle of separation of powers is particularly relevant in this context. Modern constitutional democracies divide authority among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches to prevent the concentration of power. Each branch performs distinct functions and operates within its own sphere of authority. While complete separation is impossible, constitutional stability depends upon maintaining appropriate institutional boundaries. If courts assume executive functions, democratic accountability may be weakened because judges are not elected policymakers. Conversely, if the executive disregards constitutional limitations, the rule of law may be undermined.

The research further contends that not all quota categories can automatically be justified under Article 29(3). Historically, Bangladesh maintained quotas for freedom fighters' descendants, women, districts, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities. While some of these groups may clearly qualify as disadvantaged sections of society, others may not. For example, the study argues that not all descendants of freedom fighters can be regarded as socially or economically backward. Therefore, courts may legitimately examine whether a specific quota category satisfies constitutional criteria. This form of judicial scrutiny does not violate the separation of powers because it concerns constitutional compliance rather than policy preference.

Another important issue raised by the article is the distinction between equality and equity. Equality requires that all citizens receive equal opportunities, whereas equity allows special treatment for disadvantaged groups in order to achieve fair outcomes. The quota debate reflects the tension between these two principles. Supporters of quotas argue that they are necessary to address historical disadvantages and ensure representation. Critics contend that excessive quotas undermine merit and equal competition. Resolving this tension requires careful policy judgment, which is precisely why many constitutional scholars view quota design as a matter best left to elected governments rather than courts.

In a nutshell, the research presents a compelling argument that the decision to create, modify, or abolish quotas is primarily an executive function rather than a judicial one. While the judiciary has an essential role in reviewing whether quota provisions comply with constitutional principles, it should not substitute its own policy preferences for those of the government. The court's authority extends to determining the legality of quota categories and ensuring that they serve genuinely disadvantaged groups. However, deciding whether quotas should exist at all remains a matter of executive discretion. Therefore, the court-ordered restoration of the quota system can be viewed as constitutionally debatable because it potentially blurred the distinction between judicial review and executive policymaking. The controversy ultimately highlights the importance of maintaining a proper balance between constitutional oversight and democratic governance in Bangladesh.

9.2 The Court Order & the Uprising

The findings have been summarized and organized into a model to facilitate a clear understanding of policy perspective and process. The chart below provides a highly structured, rigorous, and classified chronological analysis documenting one of the most pivotal sociopolitical transformations in modern history: the 2024 Quota Reform and subsequent Mass Movement. Originating as a localized academic grievance against structural inequalities within the civil service recruitment framework, the movement rapidly metastasized into a defining nationwide campaign. By tracing the evolution of these events from their historical antecedents in 1972 through to the institutional shift on August 5, 2024, the analysis clarifies the complex interplay between people's activism, state apparatuses, legal frameworks, and shifting institutional legitimacy.

Chronological Analysis: Policy Perspectives

Chronology	Phase / Event	Primary Actors	Actions / Activities	Government Policy Responses	Stakeholder Participation	Output / Immediate Outcome
1972 – 2012	The Quota Evolution Era: Introduction and accumulation of various quotas.	Bangladesh Government	Policy formulation and gradual inclusion of special quotas (freedom fighters, women, disabled, etc.).	Enacted and modified quota ratios periodically, eventually raising total quotas to 56%.	Underrepresented areas, women, and families/descendants of freedom fighters.	System structured with 56% reserved seats, creating long-term structural friction.
2007 – 2018	Early Friction: Intermittent student protests and initial state pushback.	University students, High Court, Head of Government.	Student-led movements demanding reforms; legal petitions filed.	High Court denied validity petitions; Prime Minister announced the continuation of quotas for descendants.	Student bodies, judicial entities.	Failure to achieve lasting change; systemic anger remains suppressed.
July 1, 2020	The Structural Shift: Initial total abolition of quotas and emergence of ASDM.	Civil service aspirants, "Anti-Discrimination Student Movement	Emergence of ASDM platform; launch of nationwide marches and road blockades.	Eliminated all quotas for civil service, though the policy framework remained ambiguous.	General student population nationwide.	Mass mobilization begins under a unified banner; policy confusion lingers.

		" (ASDM).				
July 1 – 10, 2024	The Catalyst: Court reinstatement of quota triggers the "Bangla Blockade".	Supreme Court (Appellate Div.), ASDM coordinators, University students/faculty.	Post-Eid protest resumption; member committee formed; "Bangla Blockade" countrywide road/rail halts.	Appellate Division upheld the HC verdict, later issuing a temporary 4-week stay on freedom fighter quotas.	University students and faculty joining en masse.	Complete physical paralysis of transport infrastructure; intensification of protests.
July 11 – 13, 2024	Early State Friction: Street clashes and legal warnings.	Protesters, Police, Home & Law Ministers, Foreign Minister.	Breaking barricades at Shahbagh; clashes across cities (Dhaka, Chattogram, Cumilla); press conferences against false cases.	Police filed cases naming unknown accused; Ministers warned that "limits were crossed" and streets cannot change verdicts.	Students vs. law enforcement agencies.	Dozens of students injured; legal pressure fails to deter protesters.
July 14, 2024	The Rhetorical Turning Point: The "Razakar" controversy.	Prime Minister, Dhaka University (DU) students, Awami League (AL) General Secretary.	Late-night campus demonstrations chanting reactive slogans ("Who are you? Razakar..."); massive public outrage.	PM dismissed protests at a press conference, using the controversial "Razakar descendants" analogy.	Broad student community, AL leadership.	Ideological polarization; AL alleges the movement is being co-opted by political opponents.
July 15, 2024	Outbreak of Student-on-Student Violence	Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), Protesting students, Coordinator.	Protesters attacked with indiscriminate beatings, cocktails, and firearms; nationwide protests called in response.	BCL Central President and AL General Secretary openly call to "deal decisively" with the protesters.	BCL activists vs. general students; university teachers injured.	Hundreds of injured; violence spreads instantly to other campuses like Jahangirnagar University.

July 16 – 17, 2024	The First Fatalities & Complete Shutdown	Abu Sayed (killed student), Police, Protesters, law enforcing agencies, Prime Minister.	Mass protests following Abu Sayed's death; symbolic funeral prayers; "Complete Shutdown" declared; Hanif Flyover toll plaza torched.	Ordered closure of all educational institutions; vacated hostels; deployed law enforcing agencies; PM gave a peace-seeking speech.	General public, agitated female students expelling BCL leaders from DU halls.	Hostels occupied by protesters; HSC exams postponed; protests turn highly violent.
July 18 – 19, 2024	The Escalation: Digital Blackout and State of Emergency.	Private/Public university students, Mir Mughdho (killed), Security forces, Ministers.	Helicopters firing tear gas/gunfire; BTV & government buildings torched; Narsingdi jail broken; 9-point demand issued.	Total nationwide internet shutdown; curfew imposed with a "shoot-at-sight" order; deployment of Army; 2-day general holiday.	Massive multi-demographic participation (including children like Ria Gop killed).	25+ deaths on July 19 alone; physical isolation from the world; abduction of key coordinators (Nahid, Asif, Baker).
July 20 – 23, 2024	The Legal Concession & Continued Crackdown	Supreme Court, Detained coordinators, Armed Forces, Business Leaders.	Nahid Islam found tortured and abandoned; 48-hour ultimatum given; business leaders declare support for AL government.	Appellate Division canceled the HC verdict, rewriting recruitment to 93% merit / 7% quota; Gazette issued.	Business elites (supporting government), International bodies (UN concern over UN-marked vehicle misuse).	Over 500 arrests; limited return of broadband; core quota demands legally met but student anger remains unpacified.
July 24 – 28, 2024	The Forced Statements & Block Raids	Former PM, 13 Western Embassies /EU, DB Police Chief, Co-coordinators.	Use of VPNs by public; viral imagery of tied-up minors (Faiyaz); hidden coordinators reject forced video withdrawals.	PM wept at damaged infrastructure; DB police broadcasted a video of 6 captive coordinators withdrawing protests;	Diplomatic community (letters sent), Amnesty International (reporting lethal weapon use).	Over 9,000 to 10,000 mass arrests nationwide; mobile internet restored after 10 days; deep public skepticism.

				nationwide "block raids".		
July 29 – 31, 2024	The Red Profile Campaign & "March for Justice"	Citizens, High Court, Lawyers, UN Secretary-General.	Mass adoption of red social media profiles; "March for Justice" and "Remembering Our Heroes" art/graffiti campaigns.	Government called for national mourning (rejected); banned Jamaat-e-Islami/Shibir; social media unblocked after 13 days.	Parents, university teachers, lawyers, artists, and HSC examinees boycotting exams.	High Court rebuked the DB ("Do not mock the nation"); DB chief transferred; global pressure intensifies.
August 1 – 2, 2024	Transition to Rebellious Non-Cooperation	Released coordinators, Cultural workers, Civil society, Former PM.	"Droho Jatra" (March of Rebellion); coordinators revealed they were pressured in DB custody; Non-cooperation announced.	Released coordinators; PM ordered release of ordinary students and tasked AL leaders to sit for talks; temporarily blocked Facebook/Telegram.	Massive cross-sector alliance of left-wing parties, actors, and parents.	High Court judicial inquiry commission formed; UN High Commissioner proposes fact-finding committee.
August 3, 2024	The One-Point Demand	Hundreds of thousands of citizens, Army Chief.	Massive crowd at Shaheed Minar rejects PM's dialogue offer ("no dialogue with bullets"); 1-point demand for resignation.	PM stated "the doors of Ganabhaban are open"; AL announced counter-programs across districts.	General public, BNP leadership calling for immediate resignation.	Narrative officially shifts from "policy critique" to "total rejection of government legitimacy"; Army Chief says Army stands by the people.
August 4, 2024	The Violent Prelude to the Fall	Protesters, Police, AL activists, University Teachers' Network.	Widespread clashes on Day 1 of non-cooperation; University Teachers' Network presents an	Government directive to shut down 4G mobile networks.	Broad civil and political spectrum.	Over 100 deaths in a single day; total breakdown of state control.

			interim government outline; "March to Dhaka" brought forward.			
August 5, 2024	The Fall of the Regime: (The Consequence)	PM, Army Chief, Crowds of Citizens	Hundreds of thousands defy the curfew, taking over the streets, Ganabhaban, the PM's office, and Parliament.	PM resigned and fled to India; Army Chief held meetings with political parties (BNP, Jamaat) and prominent citizens.	Massive nationwide public celebration.	End of the Regime: Official announcement of PM's resignation; transition toward the formation of an interim government.

Source: Compiled by Author 2026

The findings from semi-structured interviews arranged chronologically and categorically synthesizing and summarizing the statements of the July warriors those present the core messages, major themes, public spirit, and philosophy of uprising in a concise and well-structured manner. The research indicates that the July Uprising was not an isolated event but an inevitable structural eruption resulting from years of unaddressed systemic grievances, and the erosion of civic spaces. ".... The people of Bangladesh have long been deprived of their right to vote, their civic freedom, and have suffered under forced disappearances and state torture. A deep hatred towards the Awami League grew inside the populace. Everyday acts of extreme brutality by state machinery created an explosive public rage...." (Hossain 2025). "...The July movement was an explosion of inner consciousness and long-festered public anger. It wasn't just a sudden anomaly; it was driven by a deep societal sense of moral obligation to stand up against systemic discrimination. If students hadn't taken the lead, entire country would have slid further back into subjugation...." (Alam 2025). "... Previous historical student movements laid the critical foundational framework for the July Uprising. In the university residential halls, students lived under extreme coercion. The Chhatra League forced everyone into their political programs, punishing and kicking out anyone who resisted. This institutional abuse turned universities into tinderboxes...." (Kaium 2025).

9.2.1 Decentralized Leadership as an Anti-Fragile Defensive Tactic

The survival of the movement during intense state crackdowns was a direct result of its multi-layered, anonymous leadership architecture, which prevented the state from collapsing the uprising by arresting the primary coordinators. "...Because there was no singular leader, the government could not neutralize the movement by targeting specific individuals. When the first-tier

coordinators were picked up or forced into hiding, an anonymous second-tier and third-tier leadership immediately stepped up to manage field operations. This decentralized approach was our core strategy..." (Hossain 2025).

9.2.2 Operational Execution and Cross-District Tactics

The strategic operational choices made during high-stress programs like the 'March for Justice'. "...Executing state-wide coordination under severe exhaustion was grueling. During the 'March for Justice', we strategically chose to target the judiciary and court areas. We did this because we already had active local networks of lawyers and supportive citizens in those zones, allowing us to maintain severe pressure across multiple districts simultaneously..." (Ullah 2025).

9.2.3 The One-Point Demand: The 'Do or Die' Mandate

August 3rd marked the definitive transition of the movement from a reformist student protest into an absolute, non-negotiable national revolution focused entirely on regime change. "...By early August, we had moved into a 'do-or-die' situation. The leadership reached a point of absolute clarity: either we survive and overthrow this government, or we face certain death. Despite constant surveillance and torture, we stepped out onto the Shaheed Minar to announce the single-point demand. There was no turning back..." (Islam 2025).

9.2.4 Operationalizing the 'March on Dhaka':

Organizers deliberately designed a multi-pronged geographic strategy to bypass military barricades and channel the mass influx of citizens directly toward the seat of executive power. "...During our strategy sessions on the night of August 4th, we meticulously drew up a tactical blueprint mapping out 10 distinct geographic entry routes into Dhaka. The objective was to channel the hundreds of thousands of arriving citizens from entry points like Uttara, Mirpur, and Shahbagh, converging them directly on the Ganabhaban...." (Kayem 2025).

9.2.5 The Fall of the Regime:

On 5th August 2024, unprecedented mass mobilization directly altered the calculation of state security forces. "...When the curfew was imposed, the critical question was how the military would react. Ultimately, junior officers and soldiers refused to turn their weapons against the citizens. As massive waves of people advanced from Shahbagh, Uttara, and Mirpur, the regime's defense collapsed. By 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM, journalists confirmed that Sheikh Hasina had fled..." (Islam 2025).

9.2.6 Post-Uprising Realities & Future Trajectories

The retrospective accounts of the organizers offer deep insights into the personal trauma, psychological shifts, and long-term political challenges facing post-uprising Bangladesh. "...The July Uprising completely transformed the mindset of our youth, instilling a permanent sense of civic agency and a collective refusal to accept tyranny. However, we must acknowledge that slow

institutional reforms over the past year have caused some public frustration and fading energy. The core revolutionary spirit remains, but it requires structural results to survive..." (Zunayed 2025). "...This uprising was a profound civilizational recovery. If traditional political parties fail to rid themselves of fascism, muscle politics, and corruption, they will not survive. The youth have found their voice, and if institutional transformation is stalled, a second mass social movement will inevitably rise to enforce deep state reconstruction...." (Rifat 2025).

9.3 Formation of the Interim Government and its Reform

Following the mass political uprising in July-August 2024, the Interim Government of Bangladesh formed several specialized reform commissions to diagnose systemic structural vulnerabilities and provide policy pathways.

9.3.1 Public Administration Reform Commission Report

Public Administration Reform Commission formed to restructure a centralized civil bureaucracy crippled by colonial-era protocols. It proposes replacing the subjective Annual Confidential Report (ACR) with a quantitative, real-time Key Performance Indicator (KPI) model managed by independent evaluation units. To separate policy design from routine administration, it introduces a Senior Management Pool (SMP), alongside field office decentralization, an administrative crime panel, and a permanent Ombudsman service (PARCR 2025).

9.3.2 Anti-Corruption Commission Reform (January 2025)

Anti-Corruption Commission Reform Committee formed to transform the ACC from a reactive, politically influenced body into an autonomous enforcement agency. It strikes down laws requiring ministerial approval to investigate senior civil servants, establishes an independent ACC Prosecution Wing, and mandates direct budgeting from the Consolidated Fund. It deploys an automated 'Integrity Tracking System' for public procurement and strengthens whistleblower protections with anonymity and financial incentives (ACCR 2025).

9.3.3 Media Reform (March 2025)

Media Reform Commission Report Addressed ownership monopolies and corporate sycophancy that compromise journalistic freedom. It drafts a statutory Media Commission Act to replace state-controlled licensing with an independent regulatory body, while repealing restrictive codes. Financially, it enforces the Newspaper Wage Board Awards, updates government ad distribution to aid regional media, and shifts state media (BTV/Radio Bangladesh) to a public broadcast model (MRCR 2025).

9.3.4 The Local Government Reform Commission Report (April 2025)

The Local Government Reform Commission Report outlined a blueprint to reverse dependency on the central secretariat which weakens rural and urban bodies (Zila, Upazila, Pourashavas). It implements a unified legal framework through four baseline laws and creates a statutory Local

Government Commission to manage asset distribution and performance audits. It introduces localized taxation maps with the NBR and mandates local alternative dispute resolution courts (LGRC 2025).

9.3.5 Health Sector Reform Commission Report (April 2025)

Health Sector Reform Commission Report operated under the principle of 'Health as a Fundamental Right' to combat high out-of-pocket spending and uneven rural resource allocation. It establishes the Bangladesh Health Commission (BHC) as an independent oversight body and creates the medical accreditation council (BMEAC) to standardize training. It calls for phased funding increases linked to a universal basic health insurance policy and sector-wide digitization (DHIS2/eMIS) (HCRC 2025).

9.3.6 Labor Reform Commission Report (April 2025)

Labor Reform Commission Report titled 'Transformation Framework for the World of Work,' it targets wage disparities and barriers to forming independent trade unions. The core legislative recommendation is amending the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 to establish a Universal National Minimum Wage that scales every three years based on inflation. It expands legal protections to informal workers and establishes rapid alternative dispute channel (LRCR 2025).

9.3.7 Women's Affairs Reform Commission Report (April 2025)

Women's Affairs Reform Commission Report provided a strategy to eliminate gender-based discrimination and secure equal inheritance, guardianship, and parental custody rights. It transforms the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs into a high-level hub overseeing gender-responsive budgeting across all line ministries. It mandates workplace gender certifications, expands childcare facilities, and allocates climate-gender resources (ccGAP) for coastal households (WARCR 2025).

9.3.8 Constitution Reform Commission Report (Mid-2025)

The Constitution Reform Commission served as the baseline framework for all secondary legal changes. It targets unchecked executive dominance in the Prime Minister's Office by imposing a strict two-term cap on tenure. It amends Article 70 to allow MPs free voting rights on budgets and legislative oversight. It establishes uniform rules for five key Constitutional Commissions, mandates a decentralized, independent judiciary, and removes executive authority to suspend fundamental citizen rights during emergencies (CRCR 2025).

9.3.9 National Consensus Commission (NCC)

Following the historic July Uprising, Bangladesh's Interim Government initiated an extensive restructuring process to restore democratic institutional framework and public accountability. Central to this transition was the formation of several specialized reform commissions in late 2024.

To bridge recommendations with legislative implementation and build political harmony, the seven-member National Consensus Commission (NCC)—chaired by Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus—was established on February 13, 2025. The NCC formally compiled systemic findings into the comprehensive 'July National Charter' on October 31, 2025, charting a baseline for state governance.

9.4 Interim Government: Challenges, Strategies, and Outcomes

When the interim government of Bangladesh assumed executive power in August 2024, it inherited not only a ruined institutional landscape but also a deeply traumatized and hyper-mobilized citizenry. The total absence of functional police forces in the immediate weeks post-uprising, combined with an open civic space, caused a rapid emergence of localized political movements, labor strikes, interest-group agitations, and instances of violent mob justice. The research provides a systematic, data-driven, and categorical catalog of the movements, voices, and mob culture that occurred during the 2024–2025 transition. By categorizing these disruptions into clear functional typologies, this research evaluates how many of these issues were faced directly by the administration, the mechanisms used to control them, and their operational outcome metrics (Demands Achieved, Partially Settled, Countered, or Rejected).

9.4.1 Quantitative Resolution and Assessment Matrix

The table below, that made from the Annexure-111, details the distribution of social disruptions, showing that the interim government used a mixed approach: granting legitimate administrative demands while taking firm action against mob violence and infrastructure sabotage.

Movement / Group Typology	Primary Action Tactic	Govt Facing Strategy	Outcome Status	Institutional Impact
Judiciary / Bank Purges	Secretariat Siege / Ultimatums	Mediation & Executive Replacement	Achieved	Complete leadership change
University VCs	Campus Lockouts / Public Shaming	Administrative Notifications	Achieved	Overhaul of higher education
RMG Belt Labor	Highway Blockades / Plant Damage	Joint Task Forces & Tripartite Deals	Partially Achieved	18-Point industrial consensus
Palli Bidyut (PBS)	Grid Sabotage Threat	Arrests under Emergency Acts	Rejected	Preservation of power infrastructure

Campus Lynching	Kangaroo Courts / Extrajudicial Acts	Criminal Murder Indictments	Countered/Suppressed	Enforcement of anti-vigilante rules
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Shrine Attacks	Property Destruction	Deployment of Security Guards	Countered/Rejected	Protection of cultural heritage
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Deprived Bureaucrats	Secretariat Slogans / Sit-ins	Special Evaluation Committees	Achieved	Mass career promotions
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Ansar Siege	Armed Blockade of Advisers	Military Intervention & Dispersal	Rejected/Suppressed	Restructuring of auxiliary forces
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Source: Compiled by Author 2026

9.4.2 The Judiciary and Central Bank Purges

In August 2024, thousands of student protesters surrounded the Supreme Court premises and the Bangladesh Bank headquarters. They issued ultimatums demanding the immediate resignation of the Chief Justice, several High Court Division judges, and the Governor of the Central Bank, labeling them as architects of legal authoritarianism and financial theft.

A wave of localized movements spread across nearly every public university and senior college in Bangladesh. Protesting students and aligned faculty factions demanded the immediate step-down of Vice-Chancellors, Pro-VCs, and treasurers linked to political student cadres.

9.4.3 The Ashulia-Gazipur RMG Industrial Belt Standoff

From late August through October 2024, hundreds of thousands of Ready-Made Garment (RMG) workers blocked major highways in Ashulia, Gazipur, and Savar. The protests disrupted manufacturing, with workers demanding the clearing of back-wages, equal gender recruitment ratios, increased attendance bonuses, and structural union recognition.

9.4.4 The Palli Bidyut Samity (PBS) Administrative Strike

Over 45,000 employees of the Palli Bidyut Samity (Rural Electrification Board) threatened a total national power grid shutdown. They demanded the unification of REB and PBS, permanent job regularizations for contractual staff, and the withdrawal of disciplinary actions against their leaders.

9.4.5 University Campus Lynching Incidents

In September 2024, horrific extrajudicial killings occurred on senior university campuses. At Dhaka University, a mentally unstable man named Tofazzal was beaten to death inside a residential hall on suspicion of theft. Concurrently, at Jahangirnagar University, a former political cadre leader was lynched by a group of student protesters.

9.4.6 Cultural Vigilantism

Fraternal religious factions and fundamentalist mobs attacked several historical Sufi shrines (Mazhars) across Gazipur, Sylhet, and Narayanganj, vandalizing property and declaring these cultural structures as un-Islamic.

9.4.7 Non-Cadre and Deprived Bureaucrats

Hundreds of civil servants who claimed they were denied promotions under the previous political regime for partisan reasons staged continuous sit-ins inside the Secretariat. They demanded retrospective promotions, back-pay, and immediate postings to senior administrative slots.

9.4.8 Ansar Guard Secretariat Siege

In late August 2024, thousands of contract-based members of the Bangladesh Ansar surrounded the National Secretariat, locking all exit gates and holding several senior advisers hostage. They demanded the immediate nationalization of their service and the abolition of the mandatory unpaid leave rotation system.

10. Recommendations

The demands made by the protesters during the street movement, and the structural policy recommendations outlined by the specialized Reform Commissions appointed by the Interim Government. Here is a comprehensive breakdown of these recommendations and demands for learning:

The institutional reform commissions appointed by the Interim Government mapped a foundational blueprint aimed at dismantling systemic governance decay and absolute executive dominance.

In public administration, recommendations shift toward structural accountability by replacing subjective colonial-era evaluation models with data-driven Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), creating a Senior Management Pool to separate policymaking from administrative maintenance, and introducing independent Ombudsman oversights.

To cement financial and operational neutrality, the Anti-Corruption Commission is envisioned as fully autonomous, removing external ministerial authorization rules and securing direct allocations from the Consolidated Fund.

Media and local government models advocate for legislative decentralization, recommending a statutory Media Commission to replace state-controlled licensing and specialized frameworks to minimize local reliance on central grants.

Crucially, constitutional reforms target systemic over-centralization by enforcing a strict two-term prime ministerial limit, liberating legislative voting rights under Article 70, and safeguarding fundamental human rights during states of emergency.

Concurrently, broader structural policies prioritize universal health insurance, dynamically indexed national minimum wages, and equitable legal reform regarding inheritance and guardianship.

11. Conclusion

This research has systematically investigated the causes and consequences of the July Uprising 2024 in Bangladesh, addressing a critical gap in contemporary political science and social movement literature. By moving beyond superficial descriptive accounts and immediate catalysts, the research has analyzed the complex interplay of long-term structural grievances, institutional boundaries, and the dynamics of state-society conflict that culminated in a historic paradigm shift. The empirical findings confirm that while the uprising was formally ignited by specific grievances over public-sector recruitment policies—specifically the High Court's reinstatement of the controversial 30% freedom-fighter descendant quota—the movement's rapid expansion was fueled by much deeper societal undercurrents. Decades of youth marginalization, economic exclusion, structural inequalities, and an increasingly patron-based recruitment framework had fostered widespread dissatisfaction across the nation. When the state chose to meet peaceful student-led activism with systemic repression, internet blackouts, and militarized violence, it generated a powerful repression-resistance feedback loop. This heavy-handed response ultimately delegitimized the ruling regime, transforming a localized policy critique into a full-scale countrywide revolutionary movement that successfully demanded the collapse of the government. Crucially, this research has illuminated a vital constitutional lesson regarding governance and the separation of powers. Through a comparative analysis of Article 29 of the Bangladesh Constitution, this paper demonstrated that quota determination is inherently a matter of executive policy discretion rather than judicial decree. The High Court's intervention blurred institutional lines by shifting from legal verification to active policy generation, an action that severely destabilized the political landscape. Furthermore, using Framing Theory, this study underscored the transformative role of digital communication networks, illustrating how social media acted as a primary engine for mobilizing diverse socioeconomic classes, establishing solidarity, and sustaining collective action despite physical and digital clampdowns. In terms of consequences, the July Uprising has fundamentally reshaped the governance architecture and political trajectory of Bangladesh. The collapse of the old administration and the subsequent formation of an interim government have opened unprecedented institutional space for structural reforms, accountability, and policy transformation. While the immediate objective of merit-based quota reform was

codified into law, the long-term legacy of the uprising lies in its foundational challenge to systemic authoritarianism and its demand for an egalitarian, transparent, and democratic society. Ultimately, this study concludes that the 2024 Uprising stands as a watershed moment in modern South Asian history, proving that sustainable governance cannot rely on exclusionary state power, but must instead be built upon a foundation of public trust, institutional balance, and democratic accountability.

Declaration: I declare that this paper contains neither any plagiarized material nor any AI-generated content. The analysis is the author's contribution.

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Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre

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Programme & Studies Division

Evaluation Department

157th Advanced Course on Administration and Development

Individual Assignment

Seal

NAME OF THE MODULE: Research for Governance

MODULE NO:05

DATE:15.06.2026

Marks Obtained

Code No.

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DATE: 15.06.2026

Instruction to be followed

(Please read carefully)

1. Please write your Name, Roll No etc. at the specified space.
2. Writing Name, Roll No. etc. at any other place or making the script otherwise may cause cancellation of your answer script.
1. Put tick (✓) marks on Evaluation method and Institute's Name.

Name: A T M Shariful Alam

Roll No. 102

**Shifting Quotas to Meritocracy in
Bangladesh Civil Service: Impact on
Gender, Geography and Academic
Performance**

Abstract

The success of governance depends on ethics, meritocracy, and professionalism of civil servants. July 2024 marked a turning point in Bangladesh when the traditional quota system (44% merit) in BCS (Cadre) recruitment was replaced by a merit-based quota system (93%). The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), elected in the Thirteenth National Parliament Election-2026, has prioritized merit, honesty, creativity, skill, experience, and training as the sole criteria for recruitment, transfer, and promotion in civil administration (Shisir and Sakib, 2026). This study analyzes three major dimensions across the BCS (Administration) Cadre, covering 2,620 recruited officers from the 33rd to 44th BCS batches: (1) sex ratio and gender representation trends, (2) geographic performance by district and divisional concentration, and (3) academic background distribution across science, arts, commerce, and other disciplines. Batches are divided into Group 1 (33rd–38th, pre-reform baseline, 44% merit) and Group 2 (39th–44th, post-reform, 93% merit). The study adopts a pragmatic, mixed-methods approach with a Quantitative Quasi-Experimental Design. The Key findings of this study are: (1) female representation declined dramatically from ~35–40% in earlier batches to below 19–21% in later batches after quota reforms in July, 2024; (2) science graduates share has increased from under 40% to nearly 60–70% due to merit based quota system; and (3) Dhaka and Chittagong divisions simultaneously account for 43–45% of all recruits, before and after the quota reforms.

Keywords: BCS (Administration) Cadre, Gender Representation, Geographic Distribution, Academic Background, Bangladesh Civil Service Recruitment, Public Administration Reform.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Bangladesh's civil service inherits a legacy of the Central Superior Services of Pakistan and the Indian Civil Service developed by the British Empire. Currently, Bangladesh Public Service consists of 20 grades under the National Pay Scale-2015, categorized into four classes where the BCS (Cadre) officers consisting of 26 cadres in total enter at 9th grade of the existing pay scale after a competitive recruitment examination organized by the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC) (www.mopa.gov.bd). Many countries including India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Nigeria have quota systems in civil service recruitment (Paudel, 2016). Bangladesh's quota system was introduced in 1972 just after the liberation war (Suk Kim & Monem, 2009) and modified by successive governments. Countries like Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have built their development on a merit-based civil service (Kim, 2020), focusing on leadership, innovative thinking, and problem-solving. Nevertheless, underprivileged, minority, and disabled people often remain overlooked in purely merit-based systems. The government must find an acceptable method that restores meritocracy while enabling disadvantaged, minority, women, and other groups to participate in civil service (Shisir and Sakib, 2026). Bangladesh's Constitution protects these groups under Article 23A (cultural rights) and Article 29 (representation in public service).

1.2 Problem Statement and rationale:

Before 2024, the merit quota was 44% in civil service (cadre) recruitment of Bangladesh, now 93%. The freedom fighter quota dropped from 30% to 5%, while the district and women quotas were waived to prioritize meritocracy. But the critical questions remain unanswered like: What changes have occurred in male-female ratios? Which districts/divisions are performing better or worse in the merit list? Does the existing BCS syllabus ensure equal access for all academic backgrounds (Science/Arts/Commerce)? And does the current merit-based system maintain balance between meritocracy and representation of women, underprivileged districts, disabled, and minority groups?

No published study has used disaggregated data on academic background, gender, home district, and cadre to systematically analyze BCS recruitment outcomes between pre- and post-reform periods (33rd to 44th batches). Barua and others (2025) examined regional representativeness but did not specifically analyze the effects of quota reform. Little empirical research exists on the link between academic background (science, arts, commerce) and BCS exam success. Kader and associates (2025) focused only on public administration graduates. This study fills these gaps to support the Government of Bangladesh in policy formation for a sustainable, efficient civil service.

1.3 Research Question and Objectives

1.3.1 Research Question:

- A. To what extent does the existing quota system for BCS (Cadre) recruitment ensure equal opportunity to applicants in terms of academic backgrounds, sex, and geographical regions?

1.3.2 Objectives:

- (1) To determine whether the existing syllabus ensures equal opportunity to the applicants from all academic backgrounds;
- (2) To identify changes in male-female ratio resulting from quota reforms; and
- (3) To identify which districts/divisions are performing better or worse in BCS cadre recruitment following the quota change.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This review is grounded in two key theoretical frameworks: Max Weber's bureaucracy theory, which demands merit-based recruitment for rational state effectiveness, and Donald Kingsley's representative bureaucracy theory (1944), which argues that civil service should mirror the socio-demographic makeup of the community it serves to uphold public confidence and democratic legitimacy. The essential framework of civil service globally balances bureaucratic effectiveness with representative bureaucracy.

2.1 Historical Evolution of the Quota System in Bangladesh

The quota system in Bangladesh's civil service has historical origins formally dating to 1934 under British India (Rahman, 2009). Following the 1971 Liberation War, in 1972, 30% of BCS positions were allocated to freedom fighters, 10% to women affected by the conflict, and 40% to underrepresented districts, leaving just 20% for merit (Rahman, 2009). In 1997, the freedom fighter quota was extended to include children of freedom fighters; in 2010, grandchildren were also made eligible transforming it from a restorative justice tool into what critics called 'inherited privilege.' Protests in 2018 led the government to eliminate the quota for first and second class positions by 2020. In June 2024, a High Court ruling reinstated the earlier system, sparking large-scale protests, after which the Supreme Court ordered a four-week stay. The post-2024 reform represents one of the most significant shifts toward merit-based selection in Bangladesh's civil service history (Table-1).

Table 1: Comparison of Existing and Immediate Last Quota System for BCS (Cadre) in Bangladesh

Quota Class	^(a) Quota % (Ongoing)	^(b) Quota % (Previous)	Remarks
Merit Quota	93%	44%	Increased
District Quota	—	10%	Waived
Women Quota	—	10%	Waived
Freedom Fighter Quota	5%	30%	Reduced
Disabled/3 rd Gender Quota	1%	1%	Unchanged
Minority Quota	1%	5%	Decreased

Source: ^(a)Ministry of Public Administration (MoPA), 2024; ^(b) Ministry of Public Administration (MoPA), 1985.

2.2 Meritocracy and Examination Design: Academic Background

British sociologist Michael Young (1994) defined meritocracy as 'intelligence plus effort' ($I + E = M$). Kernaghan (2011) differentiates between the merit principle (guiding values) and the merit system (administrative processes that implement the principle). The Northcote-Trevelyan Report of 1854 proposed competitive written examinations as the basis for civil service selection in Britain.

The BCS Recruitment Rules (1981) were announced in 1982, and the first BCS examination was held that year. Under the BCS (Age, Qualification and Examination) Rules 2014, candidates must hold a master's degree or equivalent four-year degree. The three-stage exam consists of: (1) a 200-mark MCQ preliminary test (Table 2); (2) a 900-mark written exam for general cadres (Table 3); and (3) a 200-mark viva voce. The most recent preliminary syllabus for the 50th BCS (anticipated 2026) was updated by BPSC (The Daily Prothom Alo, 30/11/2025).

Table 2: BCS Preliminary Exam Mark Distribution (Updated for 50th BCS)

Subject Area	Marks
Bengali Language and Literature	30
English Language and Literature	30
Bangladesh Affairs	25
International Affairs	25
Mathematical Reasoning	20
Mental Ability	15
General Science	15
Computer and Information Technology	15
Geography, Environment & Disaster Management	10
Ethics, Values and Good Governance	15
Total	200

Source: Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC), 2025.

Table 3: BCS Written Exam Mark Distribution

Subject	Marks	Duration
Bangla	200	4 Hours
English	200	4 Hours
Bangladesh Affairs	200	4 Hours
International Affairs	100	3 Hours
Mathematical Reasoning & Mental Ability	100	3 Hours
General Science & Technology	100	3 Hours
Total	900	

Source: Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC), 2025.

A key question is whether this syllabus provides equal opportunity to candidates from different academic backgrounds. A quantitative study by Kader and associates (2025) examining 2,919 BPSC participants found that public administration graduates held merely 4% of administrative positions, while non-public administration graduates (science, commerce, and arts) accounted for 96%. This raises questions about whether the BCS examination favors general cognitive skills over discipline-specific training.

2.3 Gender Representation: Quota Elimination and Merit-Based Selection

The concept of representative bureaucracy was first developed by Kingsley (1944). In Bangladesh, the women's quota was established in 1972 and implemented in 1976, requiring 10% of all positions to be reserved for women. The National Policy for the Advancement of Women (1997, revised 2004, 2008, 2011) set a target of 30% women's representation in all decision-making levels. Shahan et al. (2023) found that while female officials had consistently increased over a 20-year period (2001–2020), there was a slight drop in recent periods, and the abolition of the 10% women's quota raises substantial concerns about gender representation.

Global evidence is mixed: research in Mexico found that formal meritocracy does not automatically result in gender-balanced outcomes (Castilla and Benard, 2010). The 43rd BCS gazette (October 2024) showed 2,064 individuals selected across cadres (www.mopa.gov.bd), but gender-disaggregated data was not included. The 50th BCS preliminary exam (February 2026) attracted 290,951 candidates with 12,385 qualifying for the written test (www.psc.gov.bd), but gender-specific success rates are not publicly documented.

2.4 Regional Disparities in Merit-Based Selection

An office memo of the Establishment Division in 1972 established a strong district-based quota reservation policy, requiring government positions to be filled on the basis of district populations (Khan and Ahmad, 2008). The 1972 constitution guaranteed equal opportunities and non-discrimination in civil service based on race, caste, religion, ethnicity, sex, or place of birth. Barua, Shahan, and Hassan (2025) studied the most thorough investigation of regional representativeness and found that district population shares and freedom fighter shares historically determined regional representation in the BCS (Administration) Cadre, while university completion rates showed a positive correlation with share of officials. The 2024 reforms, by eliminating district quotas and reducing freedom fighter quotas, may disproportionately favor candidates from districts with better educational infrastructure and coaching facilities.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature review shows that while considerable research has focused on aspects of civil service recruitment in Bangladesh, no study has thoroughly examined the effects of the 2024 quota changes utilizing detailed data from multiple cadres and batches. This study addresses these gaps by analyzing 33rd to 44th BCS batches categorizing approximately five years before and after the quota reform using the BPSC recruitment data on gender, home district, and academic background for the BCS (Administration) Cadre.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Methodology: From Quotas to Meritocracy

This study adopts a pragmatic research paradigm using a mixed-methods approach with a heavy emphasis on Quantitative Quasi-Experimental Design (Figure 1). When a researcher wants to establish cause-and-effect relationships in real-world policy settings where random assignment of participants to control and treatment groups is ethically or practically impossible, a mixed-methods approach with a strong emphasis on quantitative quasi-experimental design is most appropriate (Shadish, Cook & Campbell, 2002). In this study, it is not possible to randomly assign candidates to pre and post-reform groups because the July 2024 quota reform was a natural policy action outside. Rather, using a retrospective Before-and-After comparison paradigm, this study treats the 33rd–38th batches (44% merit) as the baseline (Group 1) and the 39th–44th batches (93% merit) as the intervention phase (Group 2). When longitudinal administrative or archive data is available, this design is frequently used in the social sciences, public administration, healthcare, and economics (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

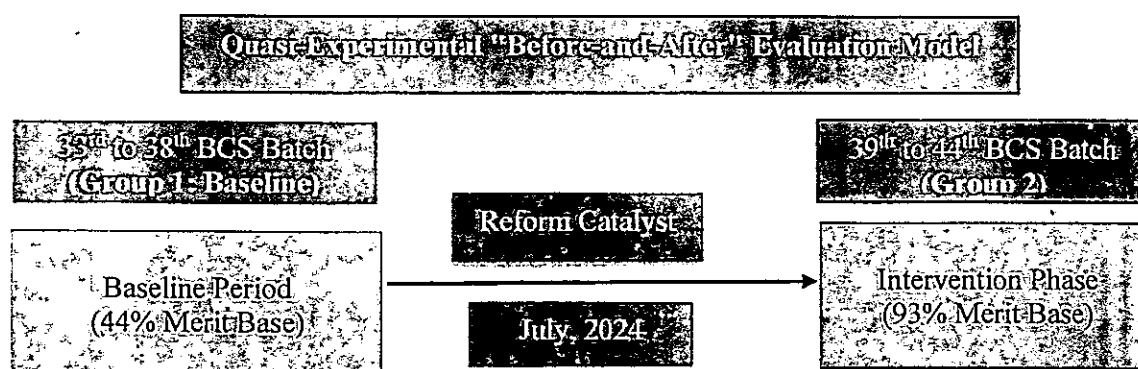


Figure 1: A quasi-experimental "Before-and-After" evaluation model

This method enables a cost-efficient utilization of pre-existing secondary administrative data (BPSC records), allowing for the analysis of a large cohort (2,620 officers) without incurring the expenses of collecting primary data, as well as tracking genuine institutional changes over nearly a decade. The incorporation of mixed methods provides additional contextual insights and interpretative richness to the quantitative trends, thereby enhancing the relevance of the findings for policy (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). It proves especially valuable for assessing policy reforms that require simultaneous measurement across various outcome dimensions including gender, geography, and academic

background (Bamberger, Rugh & Mabry, 2012). Quasi-experimental designs cannot completely rule out confounding variables that might have changed concurrently with the quota reform, such as changes in higher education enrollment patterns or socioeconomic trends, in contrast to a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT), which is considered the gold standard for causal inference (Duflo, Glennerster & Kremer, 2007). This design provides limited insight into the lived experiences of candidates or the subjective perceptions of recruiters, which may be equally important for understanding representativeness deficits, in contrast to qualitative case studies or ethnographic approaches used in related studies (Shahan et al., 2023; Akter et al., 2019).

3.2 Study Population and Size

Of Bangladesh's 26 cadres, this study focuses exclusively on the BCS (Administration) Cadre, which dominates in number among general cadres. For example, BCS (Administration) comprised 244 of approximately 400 general cadre recruits in the 44th batch (61%), and 290 of 608 in the 33rd batch. The study covers 2,620 officers across nine batches (Table 4).

Table 4: Sample Size by BCS Batch following BCS (Administration) Cadre

Batch	Group	Recruited
33rd BCS	Group 1	300
34th BCS	Group 1	298
35th BCS	Group 1	300
37th BCS	Group 1	300
38th BCS	Group 1	306
40th BCS	Group 2	245
41st BCS	Group 2	322
43rd BCS	Group 2	300
44th BCS	Group 2	249
Total (9 Batches)		2,620

Source: Author's calculation based on data collected from Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC).

3.3 Data Collection and Formatting

The study relies on secondary data provided by BPSC [Annexure-1(a), 1 (b)]. Data were classified into four academic groups: Science, Arts, Commerce, and Others (Table 5), and candidates' districts were assigned to one of Bangladesh's eight administrative divisions (Table 6). Sex Ratio is computed as males per 100 females ($SR = M/F \times 100$). Percentage female ($F/Total \times 100$) is also used as a policy metric.

Table 5: Academic Groups and Major Subjects following under-graduate programs in Bangladesh

Academic Group	Major Subjects Included
Science	Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Engineering (CSE, Civil, Mechanical, Electrical), Pharmacy, Agriculture, Statistics, Mathematics, Medical Sciences, etc.
Arts	English, Bangla, History, Political Science, Sociology, Law, Public Administration, Social Work, Mass Communication, Education, Fine Arts, etc.
Commerce	Accounting, Finance, Marketing, Banking, Management, Business Administration, etc.
Others	B.A., B.S.S., Pass Course graduates, etc.

Source: University Grant Commission, (UGC), Bangladesh, 2025.

Table 6: Districts under different divisions in Bangladesh

Division	No. of Districts	Name of Districts
Barishal	6	Barguna, Barishal, Bhola, Jhalokati, Patuakhali, Pirojpur
Chittagong	11	Bandarban, Brahmanbaria, Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Cumilla, Feni, Rangamati, Noakhali, Laksmipur, Khagrachari, Chandpur

Division	No. of Districts	Name of Districts
Dhaka	13	Dhaka, Faridpur, Gazipur, Narayanganj, Munsiganj, Kishorganj, Manikganj, Narsingdi, Tangail, Sariatpur, Madaripur, Gopalganj and Rajbari
Khulna	10	Bagerhat, Jashore, Khulna, Satkhira, Narail, Kustia, Magura, Meherpur, Jhinaidah, and Chuyadanga
Mymensingh	4	Netrokona, Sherpur, Jamalpur and Mymensingh
Rajshahi	8	Natore, Chapainawabganj, Shirajganj, Pabna, Joypurhat, Bogura, Naogaon, and Rajshahi
Rangpur	8	Nilphamari, Gaibandha, Panchagar, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, and Rangpur
Sylhet	4	Moulvibazar, Habiganj, Sunamganj, and Sylhet

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 2025.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Gender Representation: Sex Ratio and Trends

Across all 2,620 officers from the 33rd to 44th BCS cohorts, male officers constitute a clear majority of 1,858 (70.9%) compared to 762 females (29.1%). The aggregate sex ratio is approximately 244 males per 100 females nearly 2.5 males for every female which is substantially more skewed than would be expected under even modest gender parity progress.

Table 7: Overall Gender Distribution, BCS Administration Cadre (33rd–44th Batch)

Category	Number of Recruitment	Percentage (%)
Total Officers	2,620	100.0%
Male Officers	1,858	70.9%
Female Officers	762	29.1%
Sex Ratio (M per 100 F)	244	—

Source: Author's calculation based on data collected from Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC).

4.1.2 Batch-by-Batch and Comparative Period Analysis

Batch-level analysis reveals a consistent and accelerating decline in female representation. The 33rd BCS had the highest female share (35.7%), dropping to a record low of 18.5% by the 44th BCS. The 34th batch peak of 39.9% is nearly double the 44th batch's 18.5%. Table 8 below details this trend.

Table 8: Gender Distribution by BCS Batch under BCS (Administration) Cadre

Batch	Total	Female (n)	Female (%)	Male (n)	Male (%)
33rd BCS	300	107	35.7%	193	64.3%
34th BCS	298	119	39.9%	179	60.1%
35th BCS	300	110	36.7%	190	63.3%

Batch	Total	Female (n)	Female (%)	Male (n)	Male (%)
37th BCS	300	86	28.7%	214	71.3%
38th BCS	306	97	31.7%	209	68.3%
40th BCS	245	56	22.9%	189	77.1%
41st BCS	322	84	26.1%	238	73.9%
43rd BCS	300	57	19.0%	243	81.0%
44th BCS	249	46	18.5%	203	81.5%
Total	2620	762		1858	

Source: Author's calculation based on data collected from Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC).

The most striking result emerges from the group comparison (Table 9): female recruits in Group 1 averaged 34.5%, declining by nearly 13 percentage points to 21.8% in Group 2 which is a decline of roughly one-third of women's representation within a single decade.

Table 9: Sex Ratio of Group 1 (33rd–38th) vs. Group 2 (39th–44th)

Period Group	Total Recruits	Male	Female
Group 1: 33rd–38th BCS	1,504	985 (65.5%)	519 (34.5%)
Group 2: 39th–44th BCS	1,116	873 (78.2%)	243 (21.8%)
Overall	2,620	1,858 (70.9%)	762 (29.1%)

Source: Author's calculation based on data collected from Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC).

Factors driving this trend include: the location of coaching centers disadvantaging rural and female candidates; social norms around women's mobility and early marriage; increasing competition intensity (often 400,000+ applicants for 300–400 administration positions); and structural barriers in exam preparation access. Given women's rising tertiary enrollment, the declining trajectory in BCS is especially concerning and warrants further research (Akter et al., 2019).

4.2 Geographic Distribution:

4.2.1 Divisional Performance:

Table 10 shows divisional recruitment of nine batches where Chittagong division leads with 349 (23.20%) followed by Dhaka division 323 recruits (21.48%) following the 33rd to 38th batches under Group 1. Together, they account for 44.68% of all officers from just two of Bangladesh's eight administrative divisions following the Group 1 while this number little bit increase under the Group 2 (39th to 44th) which is 43.10%. But Dhaka division performs better than Chittagong division after the quota reforms while the performance of Chittagong division sharply falls after quota reform. The possible reasons behind the better performance of Dhaka and Chittagong division could be hosting of the majority of top-ranked public universities and BCS coaching centers, urban social networks transfer examination strategies, and English-medium or better-quality secondary education provides an advantage in BCS written exams. But more research need in this area to get a better understanding of these factors on BCS recruitment. On the other hand, the percentage of Khulna and Mymensingh division are almost steady before and after the quota reforms while percentage of Barisal and Sylhet division slightly decrease after quota reforms in 2024. But the performance of Rangpur division sharply rises after the quota system while Rajshahi division shows a moderately rising trend. The detailed district-wise BCS cadre officials recruited under the BCS (Administration) cadre following the batch 33rd to 44th are mentioned in Annexure 2.

Table 10: Recruitment under BCS (Administration) Cadre by Division (33rd to 44th Batch)

Division	Total	Group 1: 33rd–38th	Group 1: 1(%)	Group 2: 39th–44th	Group 2: 2(%)	G1 vs G2 Trend
Dhaka	583	323	21.48	260	23.30	Sharp Rise
Chittagong	570	349	23.20	221	19.80	Sharp fall
Rajshahi	321	174	11.57	147	13.17	Moderately Rise
Khulna	319	184	12.23	135	12.10	Almost Steady
Mymensingh	276	164	10.90	112	10.04	Almost Steady
Rangpur	266	137	9.11	129	11.56	Sharp Rise

Barisal	183	112	7.45	71	6.36	Reduce slightly
Sylhet	102	61	4.06	41	3.67	Reduce slightly
Total	2,620	1,504	100%	1,116	100.00	

Source: Author's calculation based on data collected from Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC).

4.2.2 District Performance:

At the district level, the top 15 districts together account for approximately 45.35% considering the Group 1 following the 33rd to 38th batches while the figure increases to 47.40% considering the Group 2 following the 39th to 44th batches of the total recruits despite Bangladesh having 64 districts (Table 11). Under both groups (Group 1 and Group 2), Dhaka division is the highest contributor. On the other hand, among these 15 districts, Dhaka, Tangail, Jashore, Noakhali and Barisal districts showed slightly better performance after the quota reforms while the performance of Chittagong, Cumilla, Mymensingh, Sirajganj and Kishoregonj slightly fall. On the other hand, Chandpur, Dinajpur and Rajshahi showed a moderately higher performance after the quota reforms while Brahmanbaria and Netrokona districts showed a moderately low performance.

Table 11: Top 15 Districts by Total Recruitment under BCS (Administration) Cadre (33rd–44th Batch)

District	Total (33 rd – 44 th)	Group Count 33 rd – 38 th	Group 1(%)	Group 2 Count 39 th – 44 th	G2(%)	Remarks
Dhaka	177	100	6.65	77	6.90	Slightly Rise
Chittagong	141	85	5.65	56	5.02	Slightly fall
Cumilla	110	66	4.39	44	3.94	Slightly fall
Mymensingh	100	60	3.99	40	3.58	Slightly fall
Tangail	80	42	2.79	38	3.41	Slightly Rise

District	Total (33rd– 44th)	Group 1 Count 33rd– 38th	Group 1 (%)	Group 2 Count 39th– 44th	G2(%)	Remarks
Chandpur	71	33	2.19	38	3.41	Moderately Rise
Jashore	66	35	2.33	31	2.78	Slightly Rise
Barisal	63	36	2.39	27	2.42	Slightly Rise
Sirajganj	62	36	2.39	26	2.33	Slightly Fall
Noakhali	61	34	2.26	27	2.42	Slightly Rise
Rajshahi	60	28	1.86	32	2.87	Moderately rise
Kishoreganj	56	33	2.19	23	2.06	Slightly Fall
Dinajpur	56	27	1.80	29	2.60	Moderately Rise
Brahmanbaria	54	35	2.33	19	1.70	Moderately Fall
Netrokona	54	32	2.13	22	1.97	Moderately Fall
Total (Top 15)	1,211 (out of 2620)	682 (out of 1504)	45.35	529 (out of 1116)	47.40	

Source: Author's calculation based on data collected from Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC).

Similarly, the 15 lowest performed districts covered only 7.80% of the total recruitment under Group 2 while the performance was 11.50% before the quota reforms (Table 12). This indicates an alarming situation for these districts. So, why few districts are performing better than the rest of the districts need to understand otherwise, in the long run, decision making could be biased following the most dominant districts in civil service especially for BCS (Administration) cadre.

Table 12: 15 Lowest Performed Districts by Total Recruitment under BCS (Administration) Cadre (33rd–44th Batch)

District	Total (33rd–44th)	Group 1 (33rd–38th)		Group 2 (39th–44th)		Remarks
		Number	% of Group 1	Number	% of Group 2	
Bandarban	6	5	0.33	1	0.09	Fall
Manikganj	11	5	0.33	6	0.54	Slightly Rise
Panchagar	12	11	0.73	1	0.09	Fall
Lakshmipur	16	7	0.47	9	0.81	Slightly Rise
Madaripur	16	13	0.86	3	0.27	Fall
Naogaon	17	9	0.60	8	0.72	Fall
Jashore	17	13	0.86	4	0.36	Fall
Meherpur	18	12	0.80	6	0.54	Fall
Jhenaidah	19	10	0.66	9	0.81	Slightly Rise
Bhola	21	13	0.86	8	0.72	Fall
Rangamati	21	19	1.26	2	0.18	Sharp Fall
Sherpur	21	12	0.80	9	0.81	Almost Steady
Barguna	21	14	0.93	7	0.63	Fall
Natore	22	14	0.93	8	0.72	Fall
Bagerhat	22	16	1.06	6	0.54	Fall
Total	260	173.00	11.50	87.00	7.80	

Source: Author's calculation based on data collected from Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC).

4.3 Academic Background Distribution

The dataset was categorized into four academic groups: Science, Arts, Commerce, and Others. The results reveal a dramatic shift in the composition of recruits across the two period groups which are shown in the table 13. Science graduates increased by 21.82 percentage points (50.20% → 72.02%), peaking at 76.00% in the 43rd batch. Arts graduates declined precipitously by 20.97 percentage points (33.12% → 12.15%), falling below 11% in the 43rd and 44th batches. Commerce declined modestly (10.82% → 7.01%), while 'Others' increased slightly (5.84% → 8.80%). So, why such rising trend is found under the science background graduates after the

quota reforms need to clearly understand by the policy makers. There could be several reasons like whether science graduates from elite engineering and medical universities (BUET, DUET, RUET, medical colleges) increasingly targeting the administration cadre; or the preliminary and written exams' emphasis on mathematics, science, and analytical reasoning systematically favoring science-trained candidates. The near-disappearance of arts graduates (from over 45% in the 34th batch to ~10% in the 44th) risks homogenizing civil service culture and reducing capacity for humanistic, historical, and policy-oriented governance (Kader et al., 2025). So, more research need in these areas to understand the key factors behind the increasing or decreasing of different academic background.

Table 13: Academic Background of BCS (Administration) Cadre Recruits following 33rd to 44th Batch (% by Batch)

Batch	Science (%)	Arts (%)	Commerce (%)	Others (%)
33rd (G1)	50.00%	37.33%	9.00%	3.67%
34th (G1)	37.92%	46.64%	11.07%	4.36%
35th (G1)	46.67%	36.67%	10.33%	6.33%
37th (G1)	55.67%	26.67%	10.00%	7.67%
38th (G1)	60.78%	18.30%	13.73%	7.19%
40th (G2)	70.61%	14.29%	6.53%	8.57%
41st (G2)	68.01%	14.60%	5.90%	11.49%
43rd (G2)	76.00%	9.67%	6.00%	8.33%
44th (G2)	73.49%	10.04%	9.64%	6.83%
Group (G1) Average	50.20%	33.12%	10.82%	5.84%
Group (G2) Average	72.02%	12.15%	7.01%	8.80%

Source: Author's calculation based on data collected from Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC).

Chapter 5: Discussion

Akter and colleagues (2019) found that while women constituted 43% of total university graduates, their BCS representation was well below which is attributed to examination design, social pressure, and the informal coaching economy disadvantaging rural women. This study strongly confirms this finding: the drop from 35–40% female representation in the 33rd–35th batches to below 20% in the 43rd–44th batches indicates that progress made in the mid-2010s has been reversed. Studies by the Bangladesh Institute of Governance and Management (BIGM) and UNDP Bangladesh documented quota-merit tensions in BCS recruitment. The women's quota has not always been filled in competitive cadres, and this study confirms that the merit pathway produces a gender imbalance that quotas have not fully corrected. If we consider the global context then we will see: Rwanda has achieved over 60% women in the public sector through explicit quotas and cultural change; France achieved near-parity in its National School of Administration (ENA/INSP); the Philippines maintains over 60% women through cultural factors and institutional support (UNDP, 2014). But Bangladesh is moving in the opposite direction.

On the other hand, Hossain (2021) observed over-representation of Dhaka and Chittagong division officers in competitive cadres. This study also quantifies it precisely: these two divisions supply 45% of BCS (Administration) cadre officers while comprising approximately 35% of the country's population. But rest of the divisions especially, Sylhet, and Barisal division are not performing well. The UK's Senior Civil Service has struggled with Oxbridge over-representation (23% of senior civil servants versus 1% of the general population), addressed through blind recruitment and contextual admissions data. India's IAS shows similar patterns of over-representation from urban centers and English-medium schools (LBSNAA, 2019).

Similarly, the civil service especially the BCS (Administration) cadre in Bangladesh is highly dominated by the science background graduate and the trend is increasing day by day after the quota reforms in 2024. China's experience with engineering graduates from Tsinghua and Peking University dominating the National Civil Service Examination (guokao) raises a risk of technocratic homogeneity limiting humanistic and relational governance capacity (Zheng, 2019) like Bangladesh. No previous

study, however, examined the science-arts-commerce shift in the administration cadre during this reform period which is a new and significant contribution of this research.

The three findings of this study such as: 1) gender decline, 2) geographic concentration, and 3) science dominance are interrelated through structural mechanisms. Science programs are concentrated in urban universities (BUET in Dhaka, CUET in Chittagong, RUET in Rajshahi) that also dominate geographic recruitment. Women are underrepresented in most science programs, especially engineering. BCS coaching institutes are heavily concentrated in Dhaka and Chittagong. This creates a reinforcing cycle whereby urban, male, science-educated candidates are systematically advantaged by resource access, examination design, and social networks, while rural, female, and arts/commerce-educated candidates face compounding disadvantages. The absence of blind, standardized viva voce procedures also enables unnecessary subjectivity that likely disproportionately harms underrepresented groups. However, more researches are required in these area to identify the key factor behind the high and low performance of women, different academic background and different regional districts in BCS (cadre) recruitment especially after the quota reform in July,2024 to ensure a well representative, sustainable, efficient and meritorious civil service in Bangladesh.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research systematically analyzed recruitment patterns in the BCS (Administration) Cadre across nine batches from the 33rd to 44th BCS examinations, covering 2,620 officers. Three consistent and concerning trends emerged:

- (1) A sharp decline in female representation from approximately 40% to approximately 19% over the study period, a decline of nearly one-third within a decade.
- (2) A persistent geographic concentration of recruits where Dhaka and Chittagong together supply 45% of all administration cadre recruits, with the Dhaka division's share rising sharply in Group 2 (from 21.48% to 23.30%).
- (3) A rapid and near-complete dominance of science graduates where share rising from an average of 50.20% in Group 1 to 72.02% in Group 2, with arts graduates declining from 33.12% to 12.15% over the same period.

A civil service that continues to under-represent women, marginalizes entire geographic regions, and homogenizes academic backgrounds risks becoming both less legitimate and less capable. The comparative evidence from India, Rwanda, France, the United Kingdom, and Singapore shows that civil service representativeness is neither automatic nor irreversible but it requires intentional, evidence-based institutional design. As this study considered only the BCS (Administration) cadre due to dataset, budget, and time limitations, more intensive research covering other technical and non-technical cadres is necessary to make BCS recruitment more sustainable, effective, and transparent.

Chapter 7: Recommendations

7.1 Gender Equity Measures

- a) **Mandatory Gender Impact Assessment of BCS Examination:** BPSC should commission a systematic assessment of each stage of the BCS exam such as after preliminary, written, and viva to determine where and why gender gaps occur, evaluating pass rates by gender at each stage.
- b) **Privilege to women:** If there is vacant under the freedom fighter quota i.e. 5%, then the vacant number of posts under this quota could be filled up by women on merit basis or the freedom fighter quota could be reduced to 1% (given the rarity of eligible candidates), with the freed 2% allocated to the women's quota.
- c) **Viva Voce Reform:** Introduce standardized, structured protocols with clear evaluation criteria. Viva panels should be gender-balanced, and sessions should be recorded (at least internally) for accountability.

7.2 Geographic Equity Measures

- a) **District-wise Performance Monitoring:** BPSC should publish district-wise BCS recruitment data annually to enable evidence-based monitoring and also to help in taking initiative by local administration to improve the performance at local level such as district and upazila level such arrangement special coaching on BCS exam, increase of awareness for BCS exam etc.
- b) **Privilege to less performed region:** If there is vacant under the freedom fighter quota i.e. 5%, then the vacant number of posts under this quota could be filled up through unprivileged regions on merit basis or the freedom fighter quota could be reduced to 1% (given the rarity of eligible candidates), with the freed 2% allocated to the district quota.

7.3 Academic Diversity Measures

- a) **Examination Syllabus Rebalancing:** BPSC should conduct a competency-needs analysis and rebalance the preliminary and written examination syllabus to ensure a level playing field for science, arts, and commerce graduates, as well as pass-course students.

b) Competency-Based Assessment: Transition toward competency-based assessments covering leadership, communication, ethical reasoning, and analytical writing that are not inherently weighted in favor of any academic discipline. The UK's Fast Stream and Singapore's Civil Service College entrance assessments offer proven models.

c) Subject Taxonomy Standardization: BPSC should standardize and publish a clear taxonomy of academic disciplines in BCS recruitment data to facilitate rigorous future research and better diversity tracking.

7.4 Institutional Recommendations

a) Longitudinal Tracking Study: A funded research program through MoPA/BPATC should track BCS officers from recruitment to career progression to assess whether gender, geographic, and academic backgrounds predict career trajectories, promotions, and performance evaluations.

b) Viva Voce Bias Audit: Commission an independent audit of viva voce marks by gender, district of origin, and academic background to quantify the role of the oral examination in reproducing or ameliorating existing inequalities.

8. Declaration: I declare that this paper contains neither any plagiarized materials nor any AI-generated content. The analysis is the author's contribution. Any deviation from this declaration is author's liability.

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Annexure-1 (a)

For this study, the data (MS Excel File-in English) is required from Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC) following BCS 33rd to 44th batch i.e. 05 years before and 05 years after the current quota system. Due to time limitation and budget, the recruitment data of only three cadres [(Non-Technical Cadre: Especially BCS (Administration), BCS (Police) and Technical Cadre)] following the table mentioned below will be considered. The required data has been collected from Bangladesh Public Service Commission (PSC).

Table-1: For BCS (Administration) Cadre: Non-Technical Cadre: 33rd to 44th Batch

Sl. No.	Name of Cadre	Batch	Name	Merit	Date of Birth	Home district	BSc/Equal in which Subject	Sex
1.	BCS (Administration)							
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								

Annexure 1 (b)

বাংলাদেশ লোক-প্রশাসন প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্র
সাভার, ঢাকা-১৩৪৩
www.bpatc.gov.bd

১৫৭তম উচ্চতর প্রশাসন ও উন্নয়ন কোর্স
(২৬ এপ্রিল - ২৪ জুন ২০২৬)

স্মারক নম্বর-০৫.০১.০০০০.০০০.২৬১.২৫.০০৫৩.২৬. ১১২

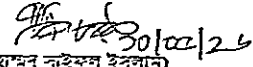
তারিখ: ২৭ বৈশাখ ১৪৩৩
১০ মে ২০২৬

বিষয়: গবেষণা কার্যক্রমে ব্যবহারের জন্য ডাটা/তথ্য সরবরাহ সংক্রান্ত আবেদন অগ্রায়ণ।

উপর্যুক্ত বিষয়ের প্রেক্ষিতে বাংলাদেশ লোক-প্রশাসন প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্রে চলমান ১৫৭তম উচ্চতর প্রশাসন ও উন্নয়ন (এপিএডি) কোর্সের প্রশিক্ষণার্থী জনাব এটিএন শরিফুল আলম, উপসচিব, জনপ্রশাসন মন্ত্রণালয়, কোর্সের গবেষণা কার্যক্রমে সম্পন্ন করার জন্য "From Quotas to Meritocracy: An Impact Analysis of BCS Recruitment" নামক শীর্ষক বনদেশ্ট পেপারে বর্ণিত তথ্য (MS Excel-এ) বাংলাদেশ সার্ভিস কমিশন হতে সরবরাহ করার জন্য বচিব, বাংলাদেশ পাবলিক সার্ভিস কমিশন, আগারগাঁও, ঢাকা বরাবর আবেদন করেছেন।

২। জরুরি স্বাক্ষরিত আবেদন পরবর্তী প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো।

সচিব
বাংলাদেশ পাবলিক সার্ভিস কমিশন
আগারগাঁও, ঢাকা


(মোহাম্মদ সাইফুল ইসলাম)
পরিচালক (আন্তরঙ্গ বিজ্ঞান)
ও
কোর্স পরিচালক
১৫৭তম এপিএডি
মোবাইল: ০১৭৩৮-৪০১১১১
ই-মেইল: saif_27th@yahoo.com

স্মারক নম্বর-০৫.০১.০০০০.০০০.২৬১.২৫.০০৫৩.২৬.১১২

তারিখ: ২৭ বৈশাখ ১৪৩৩
১০ মে ২০২৬

অবগতি/অবগতি ও প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো :

- ১। কোর্স উপদেষ্টা, ১৫৭তম উচ্চতর প্রশাসন ও উন্নয়ন কোর্স, বিপিএটিসি, সাভার, ঢাকা।
- ২। জনাব এটিএন শরিফুল আলম, উপসচিব ও প্রশিক্ষণার্থী, ১৫৭তম উচ্চতর প্রশাসন ও উন্নয়ন কোর্স, বিপিএটিসি, সাভার, ঢাকা।
- ৩। অফিস কপি/অনুলিপি


(মোহাম্মদ সাইফুল ইসলাম)
পরিচালক (আন্তরঙ্গ বিজ্ঞান)
ও
কোর্স পরিচালক
১৫৭তম এপিএডি

Annexure 2

The complete district-level dataset of recruitment under BCS (Cadre) especially for the BCS (Administration) cadre following BCS batch 33rd to 44th organized by division is mentioned below:

BCS (Administration) Cadre – Recruitment Summary by Division, District & Batch											
Division	District	Group 1 : 33rd – 38th Batch					Group 2 : 39th – 44th Batch				Grand Total
		33rd	34th	35th	37th	38th	40th	41st	43rd	44th	
* 36th, 39th, and 42nd batches are not present in the source data.											
Barisal	Barguna	4	4	5	1	0	3	2	2	0	21
	Barisal	7	6	12	4	7	8	5	7	7	63
	Bhola	1	4	2	3	3	0	1	4	3	21
	Jhalakati	1	1	1	3	4	2	1	1	0	14
	Patuakhali	3	7	3	6	6	1	1	4	4	35
	Pirojpur	3	2	4	3	2	4	3	5	3	29
Barisal Total		19	24	27	20	22	18	13	23	17	183
Chittagong	Bandarban	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	6
	Brahmanbaria	6	8	7	8	6	2	7	8	2	54
	Chandpur	5	8	8	5	7	4	13	13	8	71
	Chittagong	17	16	14	9	29	5	21	14	16	141
	Comilla	12	14	15	14	11	15	13	7	9	110
	Cox's Bazar	4	2	6	5	3	2	6	3	2	33
	Feni	5	3	4	2	1	2	3	2	2	24
	Khagrachhari	3	5	9	1	5	0	1	1	1	26
	Lakshmipur	3	2	3	4	2	1	6	1	1	23
	Noakhali	9	7	5	7	6	7	5	9	6	61
	Rangamati	2	6	4	2	5	1	0	0	1	21
Chittagong Total		67	72	75	58	77	39	75	59	48	570
Dhaka	Dhaka	19	23	16	24	18	24	19	19	15	177
	Faridpur	3	4	3	3	3	2	4	4	1	27
	Gazipur	6	5	3	7	6	8	5	3	5	48
	Gopalganj	3	5	5	1	4	7	7	3	0	35
	Madaripur	2	3	4	7	1	6	3	6	2	34
	Manikganj	2	2	3	6	2	1	4	4	2	26
	Munshiganj	2	4	4	2	3	2	2	4	3	26
	Narayanganj	4	4	2	4	7	2	4	2	2	31
	Narsingdi	3	8	5	5	7	3	5	9	7	52
	Rajbari	3	3	3	2	1	3	4	2	3	24
	Shariatpur	1	3	3	3	2	6	1	1	3	23
	Tangail	8	8	5	8	13	6	11	15	6	80

BCS (Administration) Cadre - Recruitment Summary by Division, District & Batch

Division	District	Group 1 - 33rd - 38th Batch					Group 2 - 39th - 44th Batch				Grand Total
		33rd	34th	35th	37th	38th	40th	41st	43rd	44th	
Dhaka Total		56	72	56	72	67	70	69	72	49	583
Khulna	Bagerhat	2	4	3	2	5	1	0	3	2	22
	Chuadanga	1	1	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	20
	Jessore	8	8	6	6	7	2	11	11	7	66
	Jhenaidah	7	4	3	6	5	4	8	4	7	48
	Khulna	4	7	6	6	7	5	6	3	1	45
	Kushtia	3	3	4	3	4	4	8	3	3	35
	Magura	2	3	2	5	6	2	1	0	0	21
	Meherpur	0	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	11
	Narail	1	2	2	2	2	3	1	1	3	17
	Satkhira	5	3	6	2	4	4	3	4	3	34
Khulna Total		33	36	35	36	44	30	42	32	31	319
Mymensingh	Jamalpur	5	4	6	6	6	1	6	4	7	45
	Kishoreganj	10	4	6	6	7	4	4	9	6	56
	Mymensingh	12	11	10	14	13	5	9	15	11	100
	Netrokona	7	5	8	7	5	4	7	4	7	54
	Sherpur	2	4	3	2	1	1	5	2	1	21
Mymensingh Total		36	28	33	35	32	15	31	34	32	276
Rajshahi	Bogra	8	5	4	3	5	4	7	8	8	52
	Joypurhat	1	2	0	2	2	2	1	5	1	16
	Naogaon	6	3	3	7	2	1	3	5	1	31
	Natore	3	3	3	7	1	0	5	2	5	29
	Nawabganj	6	2	2	3	4	2	2	3	1	25
	Pabna	5	5	5	6	2	8	5	4	6	46
	Rajshahi	8	4	6	5	5	5	11	9	7	60
	Sirajganj	9	5	8	7	7	4	8	6	8	62
Rajshahi Total		46	29	31	40	28	26	42	42	37	321
Rangpur	Dinajpur	7	5	4	7	4	8	5	11	5	56
	Gaibandha	5	5	7	6	5	2	8	7	5	50
	Kurigram	3	3	7	2	4	6	4	1	6	36
	Lalmonirhat	1	0	2	2	1	2	4	2	1	15
	Nilphamari	3	2	3	4	2	4	3	5	2	28
	Panchagarh	3	3	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	12
	Rangpur	3	4	3	4	7	9	10	2	4	46
	Thakurgaon	3	3	1	2	2	2	2	3	5	23

BCS.(Administration) Cadre – Recruitment Summary by Division, District & Batch											
Division	District	Group 1 - 33rd – 38th Batch					Group 2 - 39th – 44th Batch				Grand Total
		33rd	34th	35th	37th	38th	40th	41st	43rd	44th	
Rangpur Total		28	25	30	28	26	34	36	31	28	266
Sylhet	Habiganj	3	2	3	4	1	3	7	2	2	27
	Moulvibazar	2	3	4	1	4	3	1	1	1	20
	Sunamganj	4	3	4	3	1	4	4	2	1	26
	Sylhet	6	4	2	3	4	3	2	2	3	29
Sylhet Total		15	12	13	11	10	13	14	7	7	102
GRAND TOTAL		300	298	300	300	306	245	322	300	249	2620

Source: Author has developed this table on the basis of collected secondary data from Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC),



Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre

Savar, Dhaka.

Programme & Studies Division

Evaluation Department

157th Advanced Course on Administration and Development

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Seal

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MODULE NO:05

DATE:15.06.2026

Marks Obtained

Code No.

Code No.



Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre

Savar, Dhaka.

Programme & Studies Division

Evaluation Department

157th Advanced Course on Administration and Development

Individual Assignment

Seal

NAME OF THE MODULE: Research for Governance

MODULE NO:05

DATE: 15.06.2026

Instruction to be followed

(Please read carefully)

1. Please write your Name, Roll No etc. at the specified space.
2. Writing Name, Roll No. etc. at any other place or making the script otherwise may cause cancellation of your answer script.
1. Put tick (✓) marks on Evaluation method and Institute's Name.

Name: Mrinal Kanti Dey

Roll No. 103

Seminar Paper
on
**Digitization of land Mutation System: A Study on Service
Recipients Insight**

Submitted by

Mrinal Kanti Dey

Roll no- 103



157th Advanced Course on Administration and Development
Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre, Savar, Dhaka-1343

1. Digitization of Land Mutation System: A Study on Service Recipients' Insight

Abstract:

Land mutation refers to the ownership of land, Updating the record of right (ROR) and any kind of change in that record. In the previous time, this service has been provided manually that required long time and often associated with corruption and lack of transparency. Despite the introduction of E-mutation system in Bangladesh, several challenges persist that limit its effectiveness and accessibility. Inadequate technological infrastructure, weak network connectivity and insufficient equipment in local land offices affect the service delivery. The objectives of this research is to identify the benefits of E-mutation and to determine the challenges of it at the same time to recommend possible way out to ensure better service delivery. The target respondents of the study are mutation applicants, Assistant Commissioner (Land), Kanungo, Land Services Facilitation Centers Entrepreneurs and Union Land Assistant Officers. This research has been conducted in a qualitative and descriptive approach to justify the impacts and challenges of e-land mutation in Bangladesh. Here not only primary but also secondary data sources have been applied to make sure comprehensive analysis.

The study reveals that digitization of land mutation system has a great impact on the service recipients; as it reduces time, cost, and visit (TCV) and increases the transparency of service providers. In addition, it reduces the nuisance by brokers and ensures better service quality. However, nearly four-fifths of the service recipients are still dependent on others to apply for E-mutation owing to a lack of knowledge of land-related documents and weak ICT skills. Moreover, the existing version of digital land mutation (version-2.1) has some software related complexities and the Server capacity is not up to the mark. This paper would assist the policymakers to devise further strategies for efficient land management in Bangladesh.

Introduction

2.1 Background

Bangladesh is a small country with huge population where land management is regarded very important for overall development of the country. Land mutation

refers to the ownership of land, Updating the record of right (ROR) and any kind of change in that record. It is regarded as a critical land administrative process which ensures the legal recognition of ownership after the transfer of land by different process like sale, inheritance, or other means. In the previous time, this service has been provided manually that required long time and often associated with corruption and lack of transparency. The E-mutation system can ensure the upgradation of records by reducing human intervention, and making the process faster and more accessible and credible to citizens.

Land is considered as the most vital source of livelihood security and methods of production in Bangladesh (Arens, 2011). Owing to, the great demand of land, the repeated transfer of it is very high (Nahrin and Rahman, 2009). However, it takes a long time to complete all 8 procedures of land transfer and the upgradation of the record of rights (USAID, 2010). Various studies have identified the traditional land management system as a vital reason for incompetent land management in the land starving country like Bangladesh. (Brooks and Alam, 2015; Hossain, 2015; Talukder et al., 2014).

The Ministry of Land is completely liable for land administration and management in Bangladesh. The procedures conducted under this ministry cover land survey, preparing and updating record of rights, Khas land management, vested and abandoned property management, collection of land development tax (LDT), land acquisition, international and inter-district land boundary demarcation etc. unexpectedly, the transfer of land ownership is not guided and regulated under this ministry. Instead, the registration of land transfer is performed under the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. Owing to, lack of coordination between the registration and the updating RoR (Herrera, 2016), issues like forged deeds, false ownership of documents, illegal occupancy, legal disputes, social conflicts etc. arise frequently (Asad, 2013).

However, the introduction of E-mutation has initiated a significant step to modernize land management system but it has many challenges like, lack of digital literacy, inadequate infrastructure, resistance to change among existing officials.

2.2 Problem Statement

Despite the introduction of E-mutation system in Bangladesh, several challenges persist that limit its effectiveness and accessibility. A significant portion of the population who live in rural areas have limited digital literacy and access to the internet and it is a nightmare for them to ensure the service by using the system independently. Additionally, inadequate technological infrastructure, weak network connectivity and insufficient equipment in local land offices affect the service delivery. There is a need for conducting research on how Digital land management like E-mutation would affect service recipients as well as challenges encounter by service providers. Moreover, owing to legal and technical complications of the issue, a few numbers of researchers create their scope in this particular area. Therefore, this study seeks identifying the challenges and impacts of E-mutation on service providers and service recipients as well as their perception about it.

2.3 Research Objectives

This Research covers the following objectives:

- a) To identify the benefits enjoyed by E-mutation applicants from the digital platform of land management system and recommend ways to maximize those.
- b) To determine the recognized challenges of E-mutation applicants and service providers to use digital land management systems and suggested possible ways out to ensure better service delivery.

2.4 Rationale

The introduction of E-mutation in Bangladesh is regarded as an important step for digitalizing land administration and promoting public service delivery. In the previous time, the manual land mutation system was time-consuming, critical, and often influenced by corruption, delays, and lack of accountability. With a view to addressing these issues, the Government of Bangladesh launched an online based land mutation process for ensuring quicker, transparent, and citizen-centric services. Studying the impacts and challenges of E-mutation is Significant because the ownership and transfer process of land are directly associated with economic security and social stability. The E-mutation system has enhanced efficiency, reduced unofficial costs, and increased access to land services for service expecting

people. However, there are many challenges still exist, covering lack of digital literacy, weak internet connectivity in certain rural areas, technical problems, and lack of consciousness among the people. Therefore, this research is meaningful for the better understanding how E- mutation is contributing to good governance and what steps are essentials to overcome its challenges like, operational and institutional in Bangladesh.

3.Literature Review

Mutation is the procedure of the revision and upgradation of the Record of Right arising by the transfer of land ownership and the partition as well as amalgamation of land holdings (Siddiqui, 1997). without mutation, an individual cannot claim that he is the rightful owner of a piece of land or paying taxes in his own name. Moreover, they remain worried to the risk of the land being sold to another person by the previous owner and it originates the maximum rate of land transfer and transformation in Bangladesh (Hossain, 2015), a quick and trustworthy mutation process is of highest importance. The Assistant Commissioner (AC) Land of Upazila land office is fully liable for mutation. Now a days, Digitalization has been incorporated at different points in the process of Mutation to make it more transparent and people-friendly. Firstly, in the previous time an applicant has to visit the AC Land office to submit their applications but now they can do this by using online portal of the Ministry of Land. Secondly, all payments, including the application fee of BDT 70 and the DCR (Duplicate Carbon Receipt) fee of BDT 1,100, can be easily paid by using mobile/internet banking. Thirdly, it was necessary in the previous time to visit the Upazila Land Office to get the update status of the application, service-recipients can now get the same information from the portal. Besides, an applicant gets SMS notifications to inform him of the receipt of his application, the date of hearing, and the ultimate decision on his application. where there are no complains, applicants only need to visit Upazila Land office to attend the hearing. In some special cases hearing are conducted online. Finally, applicants can collect QR code based DCR of their record of right online. This DCR is regarded as valid document to the printed one that would be issued previously. At present e-mutation has been implemented in 61 districts, all upazila and union land offices. Bangladesh achieved the United Nations Public Service Award (UNSPA) in 2020 for the successful operation of Digital land Management. According to the website of the Ministry of Land, an average 2.2 million mutation applications are submitted

every year. Before the introduction of e-mutation, various authors have identified the land administration in Bangladesh as highly inefficient, critical, and loaded with corruption and many of them recommended its digitalization as a solution (Khan et al., 2009; Nahrin & Rahman, 2009; Islam et al., 2015). In a research, conducted on 46 Upazilas of two districts, Saif and Howlader (2018) agreed that the average time required to complete the mutation process was 39 days, with end-users having to make four visits on average to the land office. A few months after the introduction of e-mutation, Chowdhury (2019) operated a study across 51 Upazilas of 8 divisions and found that e-mutation had been proved successful on some key indicators. Firstly, 68.4% of respondents had been able to submit their applications within 3 hours, whereas only 19% had been able to do so under the manual system in the past. Moreover, the percentage of respondents who could get their mutation done with only two visits to the AC Land office had more than doubled. The authors assert that as almost 80% of the respondents were satisfied with e-mutation that ensure the deduction that they did not think the additional cost in return for better service delivery. Hasan and Gourab (2023) conducted a Research in Savar upazila and found e-mutation to have brought largely positive results among general service recipients. Almost 100% of respondents opined that digitization has led to process simplification, while nearly 85% suggested that it has lessened the time, cost, and travel required to avail of the service. In addition, both end-users and service providers mentioned that digitization has voided the role of brokers/intermediaries, thus reducing unexpected harassment and the incidence of hidden costs. Many Researchers have conducted identical studies in other developing countries. For example, Gupta et al. (2018) argued that users availing of the e-governance services offered by the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) consider economic benefits gained from reduced time and visit needed to be the most positive outcome of digitization. The study also mentions other positive outcomes of e-governance, such as enhancement in the quality of service. In relation to, the digitalization of land administration in Malaysia, Halid et al. (2022) recommended that it has led to economic benefits not just for end-users but also for the government by ensuring it easier to collect land revenue. Singh (2023), found in a comparison of e-governance reforms implemented in Brazil, Chile, India, Jamaica, and the Philippines, argues to time savings that ranges from several hours to several days. Most remarkable among these is Chilean case, where the tax application procedure has gone down from 25

days to 12 hours and that corruption is pandemic in developing countries (Singh et al., 2010). Many Authors suggested that e-governance can ensure higher accountability and reduce the understanding of corruption. Pathak et al. (2009) argued that E-governance has successfully reduced corruption and enhanced government-citizen bond in Ethiopia. Singh et al. (2010) found similar results in a comparative study operated across Ethiopia, Fiji, and India. With reference to public purchase in South Africa, Maepa et al. (2023) argued that the introduction of e-governance has reduced fraud, illegal activities and corruption. On the contrary, Saxena (2017) finds that e governance procedures in India still have a long way to go before they can deliver on the assurance of controlling corruption. Siddique & Mohamed (2007) identify bureaucratic incompetency as well as incapability and unprofessionalism of service providers as remarkable obstacles. Their findings are similar to Pathak et al (2009), who contend that government organizations do not show positive attitude in developing positive government-citizen relationships. In their investigation of why the success of Bhoomi, that associated the digitization of land records in Karnataka, could not be reproduced in other states of India, Munshi et al. (2019) mentioned several reasons including parallel use of manual and digital records, the lack of coordination between agencies, and dependence on an incremental approach to digitization. Choi et al. (2016) mentioned institutional and infrastructural issues as restricting the success of e-procurement in Indonesia.

A synopsis of the above literature helps to strengthen the research gaps indicated in the introductory section. First of all, most of the studies in the Bangladesh context have occupied time and cost aspects in assessing the impact of e-mutation, whereas research in the context of other countries has identified numerous other benchmarks. The impact of e-governance on the insight of corruption has been broadly studied in developing countries (Johansen, 2023). However, similar evidences are absent for the case of e-governance in Bangladesh. Second, the majority of the studies reported above have either performed impact assessment through the view of service recipients or through the eyes of the executive body related without making proper attempt to capture the impact on those providing the service. The present study can help to relieve these gaps and thus advance perception of e-governance improvements in Bangladesh and other developing countries.

4. Methodology

This research has been conducted in a qualitative and descriptive approach to justify the impacts and challenges of e-land mutation in Bangladesh. Here not only primary but also secondary data sources have been applied to make sure comprehensive analysis. First of all, Primary data has been collected by the means of in-depth interviews according to checklist from union and upazila level land office officials in Barishal sadar and Amin bazar Revenue Circle, service recipients in Amin bazar Revenue Circle and union land office at Savar upazila in Dhaka District of Bangladesh. Service recipients have been selected randomly who were present at the time of field visit. Secondly, Secondary data has been collected from different government reports, journal articles, policy documents, books, and online sources associated with land administration and Digital Governance.

The study used calculated sampling to select respondents who have direct experience and connection with the digital land mutation process. After that, collected data has been evaluated with the help of thematic and comparative procedures for identifying the significant benefits, like, transparency, accountability, reduced corruption, and better service delivery. various challenges like, technical shortcomings, lack of sufficient digital literacy, poor internet connectivity issue as well as administrative obstacles have also been analyzed in this research. Finally, the findings of the research have been intended at evaluating the success of e-mutation system and suggest significant recommendations for promoting digital land management in Bangladesh.

Both quantitative and qualitative data are essential to triangulate the findings obtained from the study. Qualitative data could provide such insights which might be helpful for further program design. Therefore, different qualitative techniques were applied to collect data from different kinds of stakeholders and target groups. For qualitative data the following tools were used:

- Key Informants Interview (KII)
- In-depth Interview (IDI)

KII

KIIs are also expected to provide valuable information that is not easily captured in statistics or documents. Another important reason for selecting KIIs as one of the measures to collect qualitative data is that they help to be familiar quickly with the study area and to obtain in-depth information within a short time. Avoiding employment of long time in data collection, especially while conducting unstructured interviews and to encourage respondents to provide concrete information for the sake of the research was also possible through the KIIs. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with the following stakeholders:

- Assistant Commissioner (Land)
- Union Land Assistant Officer

Kanungo

Land Services Facilitation Center Entrepreneur

IDI

The IDIs were conducted using semi-structured guidelines prepared for mutation applicants.

Qualitative Sample Distribution

For the qualitative part, respondents were selected following purposive sampling technique. The sample distribution for the qualitative approaches was as following:

Techniques Respondents/Areas Total

KII

AC (Land) -02

Kanungo-02

ULAO -02

LSFCs Entrepreneurs-04

Total KII -10

IDI Mutation applicants -30

Total IDI -30

Qualitative Respondent selection

Respondents/participants of IDIs and KIIs were selected based on Positive approach to participate in this research and availability. Purposive method was applied in this study.

5. Results / Findings

5.1 Attitude about Service Simplification

Being asked about service simplification after the E-mutation process, nearly a significant number of the respondents (75%) answered positively. However, an insignificant portion (25%) of them thought it was complex. It can be understood that these 25% people had no idea or pre-experience about the previous mutation process or current E-mutation system. There might have been a possibility that they had been dependent on middlemen or brokers to get the service. The respondents of KII also think that the application process has become much easier after launching E-mutation. Previously, Service recipients had to collect the application form from Upazila/union Land Office. Moreover, they have a web application system. The respondents of KII still think that the level of knowledge on land related documents required for the application has not changed in the new E-mutation system.

5.2 Time, Cost and Visit Reduction

When asked about whether time was reduced or not after starting e-mutation, a substantial number of participants (86%) opined that time has reduced significantly after the E-mutation process. All the circles under study expressed nearly the same views regarding this point. An insignificant number of respondents answered negatively (8%) and a poor number of them (6%) do not know. When asked about reduction of visits to get service after introducing E-mutation most of respondents (90%) expressed that there has been a substantial reduction in the number of visits. Amin Bazar Revenue Circle is with higher performance (86%) in reducing the number of visits, while Barishal Sadar upazila showed a lower (75%) than other similar Area. Majority of the respondents answered positively regarding cost reduction after the E-mutation process in the study areas. Revenue Circles and

upazila land office showed that more than 85% service recipients could save money compared to the hidden and direct cost incurred by them during the previous manual system of mutation. However, the remaining people (15%) still either do not know about it or incur cost as if it were the previous system.

5.3 Dependence on submitting application and decrease nuisance for E- Mutation

Among the respondents, only (20%) claimed to have applied for E-mutation themselves but most of them (80%) applied with the help of others. According to the respondents of KII, the number of self-applications is even lower and not satisfactory level. One of the respondents informed that it could be below one out of ten applicants. Respondents who could not apply for E-mutation were ignorant either of land documents (38%), or of digital management systems (47%), or of both (15%). This feature prevails in all Revenue Circle and upazila land offices with nearly similar characteristics, with a significant difference between Amin Bazar Revenue circle and other study area in case of understanding regarding land related documents. Lack of understanding of land related docs as well as Lack of understanding about digital application.

According to the KII respondents, lack of understanding of land related documents is very common with the respondents. This lack of understanding is responsible for creating further problems. The applicants often attach unnecessary documents with their applications, and often do not attach the required ones. In addition, the KII respondent sometimes found applications with major errors that the applicants did not intend to. In many cases, on the day of the hearing, the applicants admit that they do not have knowledge or understanding of land related documents. It is significant to know whether unnecessary harassment and nuisance created to service recipients by brokers and touts have decreased or not after introducing the E-mutation system. In response to this question, (80%) of the total respondents answered positively while the remaining (20%) thought otherwise. However, Barishal sadar upazila was found to be lagging behind in case of decreasing brokers' intervention (60%). Here Amin Bazar Revenue Circle performed far better (90%) than another in terms of decreasing middlemen's intervention or deception.

The responses of the key informants' match with the findings. According to them, the nuisance by brokers or middlemen increases with the number of visits. Before introducing the E- Mutation system, often the applicants would visit land offices to be informed of the update of their applications which increased their vulnerability. As the number visits decreased after introducing E-mutation, the nuisance of brokers or touts also decreased.

5.4 Transparency of service providers

It was identified that the investigation process done by Union Land Assistant Officer (ULAO) has become more transparent than the investigation done during the pre- E-mutation procedure. Of the respondents most of them (80%) thought it to be transparent while the remaining (20%) thought otherwise. Here Barishal sadar upazila was seen to be lagging behind (70%) in terms of transparent investigation done by the ULAOs, while Amin Bazar Circle was found with higher transparency (90%) on the same issue. Moreover, when asked about the attitude to service recipients by ULAOs, most of the respondents (88%) answered affirmatively. While Amin bazar Circle leads in this abstract issue of cooperation to people by service providers, Barishal Sadar Circle trails back with 70% positive answers. From the qualitative data it was found that cooperation from the ULAOs is increasing over the years in all the union land offices. It was found that the cooperative attitude of the staff employed at Upazila Land Office increased tremendously that staff working at Upazila Land Office are more cooperative than before. It was also shown that in the case of Amin Bazar Revenue circle this tendency is higher than the other upazila under study. So, it was assumed that the closer the Upazila Land Office was to the urban area the better and more positive attitude was shown by the employees working at the Upazila Land office.

5.5 Service Recipients' dependence on brokers and Land Services Facilitation Centers (LSFC)

When asked about whether respondents took help of middlemen for E-mutation, most of them (82%) answered negatively. It became evident that after initiating the E-mutation system, people with computer literacy and internet access either at home or Land services facilitation centers, dependency on so called touts or brokers decreased tremendously. However, a good number of them (18%) still needed brokers' intervention to get mutation service. It was identified that only (30%) of the

applicants went to LSFCs to complete the E-mutation process, while most of them (50%) paid other private internet service providers to submit the application. The remaining respondents (20%) could apply themselves without any help from others. Moreover, when asked about the cost incurred by them for applying through LSFCs only seven respondents revealed the cost. These seven persons paid 200BDT, 400BDT and 300BDT respectively. It proved that some service recipients still were not aware of the real cost of service provided by the entrepreneurs of LSFCs. Among the respondents, (85%) paid other persons/ organizations to apply for E-mutation. Of them 09 persons refused to reveal the cost of application; whereas, for the rest of applicants, the average expense was 500 BDT. From the data above it was assumed that the cost of application at LSFCs was lower than the cost needed at other private organizations.

5.6 Software and server related complexities

Being asked about e-mutation software of 2.1 version related issue most of the service providers replied that they are facing some problems especially the procedural complexities of the software. There are some fields of new software that is not so easy to fill up with existing information of the application. The previous version of e-Mutation (version 2.0) was very user-friendly. The respondents of KII still think that the new version should be modified as per the requirements of service providers. Moreover, when asked the service providers about the performance of the existing server, most of the service providers have mentioned that sometimes the server became slow down and it hampered to ensure better service to the people. Sometimes they have to wait a long time to submit the application. It indicates that the e-mutation server capacity needs to be developed for ensuring the maximum benefit of the service to the service recipients.

6. Conclusion

E-mutation is comparatively new in Bangladesh but its impact on the service recipients has been identified to be positive to a great extent. Respondents are satisfied with their experience of the new E-mutation system and evaluate that introduction of E-mutation has decreased the application process time, the number of visits and the cost of mutation dramatically. However, it was found that most of

the respondents took help from others to apply for e-mutation. It indicates though there are several perceived benefits of E-mutation, the application process is not yet user friendly to a satisfactory level. Moreover, there is a lack of coordination between the office of land registrations (Sub-registry Office) and the office of E-mutation (Upazila Land Office) as land registration and land mutation are intrinsic part of one another and one impacts the other.

Besides, even though most of the respondents are educated (SSC and above), more than half of the total respondents have no computer and internet literacy. It indicates that the present education system could be redesigned for incorporating more computer related lessons. In addition, around four fifth of the respondents took help from others to apply for E-mutation. It indicates that in spite of being educated, they lack the knowledge on the land related documents, took help from others to apply for E-mutation. On the other hand, two-thirds stated that they do not have knowledge on land related documents. It shows that there is a vast gap between the required land related knowledge for application and actual land related knowledge of the applicants.

Moreover, lack of internet usage knowledge exceeds the lack of knowledge on land related documents. It has a negative impact on investigation process by Union Land Assistant Officers due to poor land literacy of service recipients and real attitude of the staff will not be assessed by the service recipients. Besides, the software and server related complexities should be addressed properly to ensure better service. Again, the study identified that the nuisance from brokers has reduced significantly and most of the respondents said that they did not take help from any broker. However, they took help from others to apply, that signifies that a stakeholder group exists in the middle of the e-mutation process who are not considered as brokers. The role of Land Services Facilitation Center in mutation application is not remarkable enough as it was expected. LSFCs are not able to break syndicate around land litigations and mutation system, as most of the respondents are not prepared for digital land management system even today. It is also found that land title possession is still male dominated. There is room for study to identify the ownership ratio based on sex.

Finally, there is room for operating research on how digital land management systems would affect service recipients. In spite of, legal and technical complications of the issue, this study would pave the way for identifying the impacts of E-mutation on the service recipients and their impression and would remain as a best instance to the policy makers and as a source of study for the researchers in this field.

7. Recommendations

It is very important to digitize the land mutation process with a view to ensuring hassle free services to the recipients and it is, further, vital to make citizens aware regarding land E-mutation system to reduce the interference of middlemen and brokers. Computerization in the land mutation system saves time to a great extent both of the service provider as well as the service recipients. Therefore, to optimize the system, selected citizens, LSFCs entrepreneurs, private internet service providers at local and rural level, and para-legal professionals should be provided computer literacy and land related literacy training all over the country undertaking a project on Information Communication Technology and Land Literacy. people will be aware of land related documents and internet-based application systems if they are provided training on ICT and Land literacy. Besides, lab-based training at Computer Labs in different educational institutes can be undertaken. Our existing Land Administration Training Centre and BCS Administration Academy can be delegated responsibility for implementing projects on skill development covering different level Officials of Field Administration. Moreover, the software related complexities and weak server issue must be taken into consideration and have to take immediate action by project officials as well as policy makers with a view to maximizing better service to the citizen. Besides, the existing software of 2.1 version should be rectified and the server capacity must be enhanced.

Service recipients have to communicate with ULAOs with land documents when they do not get the service in time because of their limited knowledge on land mutation process. There is room for policy intervention in this step of E-mutation to identify a citizen-friendly way for increasing the transparency in investigation report

done by ULAOs. There exists a group of para-legal professionals with no institutional degree in law who are generally known as brokers or touts. A group of paralegals, like deed writers and stamp vendors, with knowledge of ICT and Land Documents can be developed, like the existing Entrepreneurs of LSFC, and license may be issued to them by The Collector for practicing by fixing fees for providing land related services to the people. It will create a revenue base for the government and help to complete the service given informally to citizens with poor knowledge of ICT and land documentation.

Advanced training on land management can also be provided to the limited existing entrepreneurs of Land Services Facilitation Center and their number can be increased. In case of any kind of moral degradation while providing service, his/her license can be cancelled, and penal measures can be taken. It will also formalize their services and will be brought under control rules and regulations. It was found that in many cases the number of visits were higher than expected. A new study needs to be designed to investigate cases where the number of visits is high and then proper steps can be taken to decrease that number. Officials working at the Union/Upazila Land Offices who provide direct services to the people can be trained in order to improve their manners and etiquette to the service recipients. The front desk officials need to make eye-contact and smile towards the service recipients. These front officials can also be assigned to help people how to submit an application for e-mutation and process of receiving services related to land mutation.

There is lack of coordination between the office of land registrations (Sub-registry Office) and the office of E-mutation (Upazila Land Office), being under two different ministries- Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs and the Ministry of land respectively. Since land registration and land mutation are intrinsic part of one another and one impacts the other, it is an urgent policy decision that needs to be addressed for the sake of providing citizen centric, speedy and easy service delivery. So, it is vital to bring these two offices under one umbrella- bringing the Department of Registration under the Ministry of Land - for ease of operation regarding issues related to land mutation and registration.

8.Declaration

I declare that this paper contains neither any plagiarized materials nor any AI - generated content. The analysis is the authors contribution. Any deviation from this declaration is authors liability.

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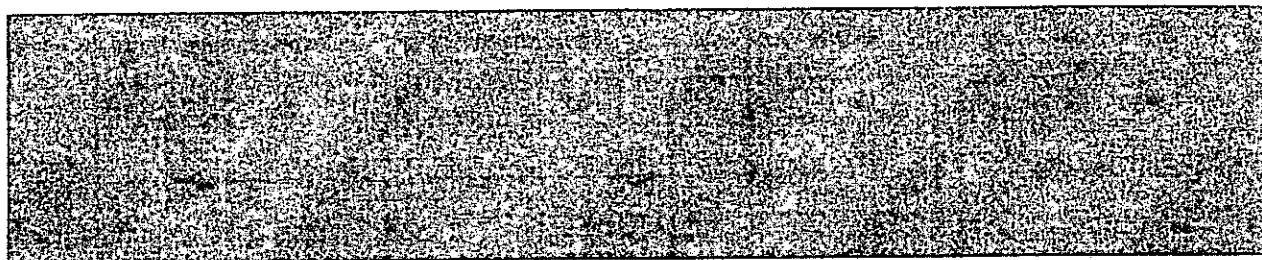
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Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre

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Programme & Studies Division

Evaluation Department

157th Advanced Course on Administration and Development

Individual Assignment

NAME OF THE MODULE: Research for Governance

MODULE NO:05

DATE:15.06.2026

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1. Put tick (✓) marks on Evaluation method and Institute's Name.

Name: Nusrat Sultana

Roll No. 104

Institutional Weaknesses in Public Service Delivery: Evidence from Kurigram's Charlands

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Public service delivery lies at the heart of a modern democratic state. When a government functions well, it brings healthcare to the sick, opens schools for children, and provides safety nets for the poor. In Bangladesh, the state has made real strides over the past three decades in economic growth, literacy, and maternal health. Yet these national gains have not reached everyone equally. In the remote charlands of Kurigram District, a different reality persists. Here, geography and institutional failure combine to keep hundreds of thousands of people cut off from the basic services that the constitution promises them.

Consider a family living on a char—a river island formed by sedimentation in the Brahmaputra and Dharla river systems. When a child falls seriously ill, the mother cannot simply walk to a clinic. She must first find money for an engine-boat, then brave unpredictable river currents, and finally reach a government health center on the mainland—often after several hours. If it is monsoon season, the boat journey may be too dangerous to attempt at all. By the time the family arrives, the child may have worsened. Worse still, there may be no doctor present because the post is vacant. This is not an exceptional story. It is the daily norm for roughly 550,000 people living across 450 charlands covering approximately 800 square kilometers in Kurigram.

Kurigram is Bangladesh's most economically marginalized district. Data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) shows an overall poverty rate of approximately 70.8%, with extreme poverty affecting 53.2% of the population. Primary school dropout rates in char areas range between 40% and 59%, driven by seasonal flooding, child labor, and early marriage. Up to 90% of char households report inadequate access to basic healthcare. These are not just statistics; they reflect a systematic failure of governance to deliver on its most fundamental promises.

The problem is not purely geographical. Institutional weaknesses—vacant posts, poor inter-agency coordination, rigid one-size-fits-all regulations, weak monitoring systems, and inadequate incentives for field workers—compound the effects of physical isolation. When a teacher or health worker is assigned to a char, there is often no proper accommodation, no transport allowance that covers the real cost of boat travel, and no supervisory system that checks whether they are doing their job. Not surprisingly, many posts remain unfilled or abandoned.

This study focuses on those institutional causes. It examines how weak governance structures prevent even willing administrators from delivering services effectively in the charlands of Kurigram. The goal is not simply to document failure but to generate practical insights for reform.

1.2 Problem Statement

Ensuring fair distribution of public services remains one of Bangladesh's most persistent governance challenges, especially in geographically isolated areas like charlands. Despite constitutional guarantees and various government programs, people living on Kurigram's chars face significant barriers when trying to access education, healthcare, social safety nets, agricultural support, and administrative services.

The structural picture is troubling. Nearly 50% of char households are functionally landless. The entire char-dwelling population of 550,000 is served by only five secondary schools. National Social Safety Net Programs (SSNPs) theoretically target the ultra-poor, yet localized surveys suggest that comprehensive safety net coverage fails to reach over 60% of eligible extreme-poor char households. The reason is not simply a lack of funds. Administrative bottlenecks, geographic remoteness, elite capture, and weak oversight are the primary reasons that national transfers do not reach their intended beneficiaries.

Government agencies operating in remote areas frequently lack adequate staff, logistical support, and infrastructure. Officials posted to char regions often work under extremely difficult conditions with no meaningful incentives, creating low motivation and high turnover. Inter-agency coordination is poor, leading to duplicated efforts in some areas and complete gaps in others. Most importantly, current administrative frameworks are designed for stable, mainland environments. They do not accommodate the seasonal isolation, river erosion, population displacement, and environmental fragility that characterize charlands. As a result, delivery systems that work reasonably well on the mainland often fail completely in these riverine settings.

While some scholarship has addressed poverty, disaster vulnerability, and livelihood insecurity in char regions, systematic research examining institutional aspects of governance failure is limited. This study addresses that gap.

1.3 Objectives and Research Questions

General Objective

To examine the institutional weaknesses that block effective delivery of government services to citizens living in the charlands of Kurigram District.

Specific Objectives

- To identify key administrative and governance weaknesses that affect access to government services in char areas.
- To analyze how geographical isolation interacts with limited institutional capacity to shape service delivery outcomes.
- To explore how elite capture and lax oversight deepen the exclusion of char communities.
- To connect research findings to national policy frameworks such as the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS).

Research Questions

- What institutional weaknesses obstruct effective public service delivery in the charlands of Kurigram District?
- How does geographical isolation shape administrative performance and citizens' access to government services?
- What governance and coordination failures contribute most significantly to service exclusion in char areas?
- What reforms, including mobile service delivery and char-specific budgeting, can make service delivery more inclusive?

1.4 Rationale of the Study

This study matters for three groups of people: char residents, local officials, and NGOs working in the region.

Char residents are the most directly affected. Between 35% and 50% of them are landless. Primary school dropout rates exceed 40%, and up to 90% of households lack basic healthcare access. These residents are rarely included in policy discussions. This study brings their experiences into the record and provides them with evidence to advocate for fairer governance.

Local officials, including Union Parishad members and upazila administrators, face institutional barriers that this study can help them articulate and overcome. By identifying specific coordination failures and structural problems, this research offers practical insights that administrators can use to design more effective governance strategies.

NGOs and development practitioners also stand to benefit. Char-based NGOs like RDRS Bangladesh fill critical gaps where the state is absent. However, their work is often hampered by the same systemic failures. When social safety net programs miss over 60% of eligible families, the burden falls on NGOs. Better diagnosis of the problem helps NGOs and the government work together more effectively.

Finally, this study connects to Bangladesh's existing national policy commitments. The National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) aims to modernize service delivery and extend coverage to vulnerable populations. However, implementation in charlands has been deeply insufficient. By examining exactly where the NSSS and other programs fall short in char settings, this study provides actionable recommendations for narrowing the gap between policy intent and lived reality.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The challenge of delivering public services in geographically marginalized areas has attracted significant attention in public administration and development studies. Scholars consistently find that effective service delivery depends not only on financial resources but on institutional effectiveness, administrative capacity, accountability structures, and decentralized governance.

Institutional theorists argue that strong formal structures are essential for ensuring fair access to public goods. Grindle (1997) observes that weak institutional frameworks in developing countries tend to produce implementation failures, administrative inefficiency, and inequitable service distribution. Rondinelli (1981) adds that decentralization and local administrative autonomy are particularly important in geographically diverse settings, where centralized systems are poorly suited to local realities.

Research from the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) confirms that remote rural populations are frequently excluded from public services because of poor infrastructure, weak local governance, and limited coordination among agencies. A study by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) found that nearly 30% of resources earmarked for social safety nets are lost due to local administrative inefficiencies and elite capture—a process through which well-connected local elites redirect public benefits toward themselves and away from the most vulnerable.

Rahman and Asad (2022), focusing specifically on Kurigram's charlands, found that macro-level government programs routinely fail to reach the ultra-poor. Families in remote chars depend almost entirely on NGOs like RDRS Bangladesh for poverty reduction support. The Government of Bangladesh's own policy reviews acknowledge that while the National Social Security Strategy

(NSSS) aims to modernize service delivery through digital payment systems, deep spatial disparities and poor local monitoring continue to prevent resources from reaching the most isolated char communities.

BRAC and UNDP have both documented that char populations remain disconnected from mainstream administrative systems not just because of physical distance but because of environmental instability. When a char is submerged during monsoon season or disappears due to river erosion, the formal administrative system has no mechanism to follow the displaced population and ensure service continuity.

Ahmed (2015) argues that remote regions in Bangladesh face what he calls “administrative marginalization”—a condition in which policy implementation mechanisms are designed from a mainland perspective that simply ignores the realities of isolated environments. Officials are appointed, regulations are enforced, and budgets are allocated as if charlands were ordinary rural areas. They are not.

The literature also consistently flags a shortage of skilled personnel in remote postings. Officials avoid char assignments because of difficult living conditions, poor communication, and inadequate incentives. Many posts remain vacant for extended periods. Existing accountability and monitoring systems are further weakened by corruption, political interference, and bureaucratic fragmentation.

Despite these contributions, there remains a gap in research on how institutional weaknesses and geographical isolation interact specifically in Kurigram’s charlands. This study aims to fill that gap.

2.1 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

This study draws on two main theoretical traditions: Institutional Theory and Governance Theory. Institutional Theory focuses on how formal administrative structures, organizational norms, and governance arrangements shape policy implementation. It argues that institutions perform well when their internal design matches their external environment. When this fit is broken—as it is in the charlands, where mainland-centric regulations govern an environment that floods, erodes, and shifts seasonally—institutional dysfunction is the predictable result.

Governance Theory emphasizes participation, decentralization, transparency, and inter-agency coordination as foundations of effective public administration. It suggests that vertical decentralization (empowering local bodies like Union Parishads) and horizontal coordination

(among line departments) are both necessary for services to reach citizens in complex environments.

Together, these frameworks predict that the service delivery gap in Kurigram's charlands is not random or inevitable. It reflects structural design failures: regulations that assume stable geography, incentive systems that ignore real costs, coordination mechanisms that create silos rather than cooperation, and monitoring systems that cannot function across rivers and floodwaters.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

This study uses a primarily qualitative approach, supplemented by quantitative data. A qualitative design is appropriate because the central concern is understanding how institutions operate in a specific socio-geographical context, how governance practices shape administrative behavior, and how citizens experience public service delivery in charland areas. Quantitative data—including demographic statistics, numbers of schools and health facilities, and coverage figures for social safety programs—are used to provide factual grounding for the qualitative narrative.

3.2 Research Design

The study follows a case study design, concentrating on selected char areas in Kurigram District. A case study approach allows for in-depth exploration of governance problems and institutional challenges within a specific socio-geographical context. This design is particularly suitable when the research questions require understanding complex processes and when the boundary between the phenomenon and its context is not easily separated.

3.3 Study Area

Research was conducted in char areas across four upazilas of Kurigram District: Roumari, Chilmari, Ulipur, and Rajibpur (including Char Rajibpur). These areas were selected because they represent the district's most geographically isolated and administratively underserved communities. All four upazilas face seasonal flooding, riverbank erosion, and significant challenges in accessing basic government services.

3.4 Data Collection

Two primary data collection methods were used. First, a structured institutional survey was administered to senior district administrators and heads of key line departments. This supply-side approach captured how government officials perceive and experience the institutional constraints on service delivery. Second, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with frontline government officials who have direct, day-to-day responsibility for delivering services in char areas.

To balance supply-side administrative perspectives with demand-side community experiences, feedback was also gathered from 36 char residents across the study area. This grassroots data grounds the administrative findings in the lived reality of the people the system is meant to serve.

3.5 Sampling Technique and Justification

Purposive sampling was used to select all respondents. This non-probability method is appropriate here because the research requires participants with direct, first-hand knowledge of governance failures and service delivery challenges in charland settings. Random sampling would likely miss the most knowledgeable informants.

The institutional survey targeted 14 senior administrative officials and department heads. One might reasonably ask whether 14 respondents are sufficient to capture the range of governance failures in a district as complex as Kurigram. The answer lies in the institutional roles these individuals occupy. They are not ordinary respondents; they are the decision-makers who control resource allocation, personnel deployment, and operational planning for their respective departments across the entire district. Their assessments reflect institutional-level realities, not individual perceptions. Together, they cover health, education, agriculture, fisheries, livestock, family planning, local government, and core district administration—providing comprehensive sectoral coverage. This targeted approach yields richer, more policy-relevant insights than a larger random sample of less-informed participants would provide.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Target Group and Survey Participants

Primary data was collected from senior administrative officials and department heads in Kurigram District. These officials were grouped into two categories to capture both horizontal and vertical perspectives on governance.

The first group comprised Core Administration and Coordination Officials: the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), the Chief Executive Officer of the Zila Parishad, the Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Char Rajibpur, and Assistant Commissioners. The second group comprised Line Department Heads and Sectoral Specialists: the Civil Surgeon, Deputy and ex-Civil Surgeons from Health and Family Welfare, the Deputy Director of Agricultural Extension, the District Livestock Officer, the District Fisheries Officer, the Deputy Director of Family Planning, and the District and Primary Education Officers.

By deliberately selecting these officials, the survey is positioned to directly address the research objectives. These are the people who design, authorize, and deliver government services. Their insights reveal institutional constraints from the inside.

4.2 Key Institutional Barriers

Survey respondents rated four structural barriers on a scale of one (not a barrier) to five (critical barrier). The responses reveal a significant overlap of geographic, human resource, and regulatory problems.

Table 1: Assessment of Key Institutional Barriers to Service Delivery (Scale 1–5)

Institutional Barrier	Rating Level	Key Departments Affected
Geographic Isolation and Communication	Critical (Level 5)	Agriculture, Health, Fisheries, Primary Education
Personnel Deficits and Vacant Posts	Critical (Level 5)	UNO Char Rajibpur, ACs, Fisheries, Family Planning
Inadequate Infrastructure and Digital Connectivity	Critical (Level 5)	ADC, UNO, Zila Parishad CEO
Regulatory Uniformity (One-Size-Fits-All)	Critical to Noticeable (Levels 4–5)	Agriculture, Civil Surgeon, Assistant Commissioners

Geographic isolation was rated a critical barrier by nearly every department. The Brahmaputra and Dharla river systems physically prevent regular official visits, disrupt logistics chains, and

make routine monitoring nearly impossible during monsoon season. Personnel deficits were similarly rated as critical. Many key field positions remain vacant for extended periods. Infrastructure gaps—no office buildings, no staff quarters, no stable internet—further undermine field presence. Finally, regulatory uniformity was identified as a systemic problem: national laws and secretariat instructions are written for mainland conditions and are routinely inapplicable to the fluid geography of charlands.

4.3 Incentive Frameworks and Staff Retention

The survey closely examined the current Remote/Char Allowance, which is meant to encourage officials to accept and remain in char postings.

Table 2: Assessment of Remote/Char Allowance by Department

Assessment of Char Allowance	Departments Reporting This
Not provided / Non-existent	Health and Family Welfare (Civil Surgeon), Local Government (Zila Parishad CEO)
Insufficient to cover travel and living costs	Core Administration (ADC, UNO, ACs), Agriculture, Livestock, Education, Fisheries
Effective for staff retention	Family Planning (isolated outlier)

The findings are clear: the existing allowance is widely seen as grossly mismatched with the actual costs of working in a riverine environment. Engine-boat rentals, seasonal navigation risks, and the need to maintain a second household on the mainland all impose real financial costs that the current flat-rate allowance does not begin to cover. Because this incentive structure fails, char postings are effectively treated as professional punishments. Officials avoid them when possible, leave as soon as they can, and find ways to minimize time in the field when they have no choice but to stay.

4.4 Coordination, Decentralization, and Accountability

Governance Theory argues that effective public administration requires both vertical decentralization (empowering local government bodies) and horizontal coordination (between line departments). The survey data reveals serious failures on both dimensions.

Table 3: Governance Metrics – Coordination, Decentralization, and Accountability (Scale 1–5)

Governance Dimension	Score Range	Key Finding
Inter-Agency Coordination	1–3 (mostly 1–2)	Severe silo effect; field coordinators score it lowest
Decentralization of Union Parishads	1–2	UPs lack authority and funds for char-specific response
Data Accuracy for Resource Allocation	1–2	Budgets based on mainland metrics; char data deemed unreliable
Monitoring and Accountability	1–2 (over 70% rate 1 or 2)	Physical remoteness makes regular supervision impossible

Field administrators such as the UNO and Assistant Commissioners gave inter-agency coordination the lowest possible score of one, indicating a complete silo effect. Individual line departments operate within vertical command chains and rarely share resources, coordinate field visits, or jointly plan services for char communities. Union Parishads are legally and financially too constrained to fill this gap. They cannot redirect funds or mobilize resources in response to char-specific crises without higher-level approval—approval that is often slow to arrive.

The accountability deficit is compounded by an information vacuum. Over 75% of district administrators acknowledge that budgets are allocated using mainland metrics, not accurate char population data. This means that resource pools are systematically miscalculated for a highly vulnerable population.

4.5 Environmental Volatility and Governance Planning

Table 4: Frequency of Environmental Disruptions to Service Delivery Plans

Disruption Frequency	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Frequently (multiple times a year)	9 out of 14	64.3%
Occasionally	5 out of 14	35.7%
Rarely or Never	0	0%

Monsoon floods and riverbank erosion do not respect annual budget cycles. When a service center is submerged, when a boat is unavailable, or when a road is washed out, planned service delivery must stop. Nearly two-thirds of respondents report this happens multiple times every year. The remaining one-third say it happens occasionally. Not a single respondent said it rarely or never happens.

When asked to identify the single most significant institutional weakness behind the service gap between mainland and char populations, an overwhelming 85.7% chose a lack of char-specific policy frameworks over budgetary constraints or weak decentralization. Administrative leaders do not primarily see the problem as a lack of money. They see it as the absence of a flexible, locally appropriate governance framework.

4.6 Monitoring Gaps and Data Asymmetry

Respondents rated whether current monitoring and accountability systems are adequate for remote char settings. The mean score was 1.64 out of 5. Not a single department head agreed or strongly agreed that monitoring mechanisms are sufficient. Standard reporting protocols exist on paper, but physical distance makes actual field verification essentially impossible under current transport constraints.

Resource allocation data shows a similar gap. The median score for the accuracy and appropriate use of char population data was two out of five. More than three-quarters of district leadership explicitly noted that budgets are assigned using formulas designed for the mainland. Line departments are then expected to serve a high-vulnerability population with resources that were calculated for a far less challenging setting.

4.7 Structural Reform Priorities Identified by Respondents

When asked what reforms would most meaningfully address these problems, respondents identified three priorities.

First, a dedicated central governance body. The vast majority of respondents called for a separate Charland Affairs Ministry or an autonomous Char Governance Board with its own ring-fenced budget and legislative authority. This reflects a conviction that mainstream ministries, designed for stable mainland conditions, are structurally incapable of addressing the needs of shifting riverine communities.

Second, an integrated mobile service model. Respondents suggested moving away from fixed infrastructure toward dynamic approaches: floating service centers, mobile health clinics, and one-door service camps that bring multiple government services directly to char communities rather than expecting isolated families to travel to the mainland.

Third, unified field structures and staff fulfillment. Respondents recommended merging overlapping frontline cadres—such as field health workers and family planning staff—under a single operational umbrella. This would reduce duplication, improve coordination, and make better use of scarce personnel. Filling vacant posts and replacing the flat-rate char allowance with a realistic, cost-adjusted Riverine Navigation Premium were also identified as urgent needs.

Voices from the Charlands

The institutional data from district officials is important, but it can make a distant problem feel abstract. The experiences of the people who actually live in Kurigram's charlands bring those institutional failures into sharp human focus. Feedback gathered from 36 char residents across the study's four upazilas reveals that the administrative problems documented in Chapter 4 translate directly into hardship, fear, and exclusion in everyday life.

4.8 The Cost and Danger of Distance

An overwhelming 83% of surveyed char residents described travel to mainland government offices as extremely difficult. The main barriers are the high cost of engine-boat fares and the physical danger of river crossings during rough weather. For a poor family, a single boat trip to a government office may cost more than a day's wage—and that assumes the river is navigable. During monsoon season, crossings can be life-threatening. Many families simply do not go, choosing to forgo services rather than risk the journey or spend money they do not have. This

perfectly reflects the administrative consensus that geographic isolation is the most critical structural barrier.

4.9 The Invisible Public Workforce

Nearly 75% of char residents reported that government officers and field specialists are rarely or never present inside the chars. Visits happen occasionally at best. This is the human consequence of the vacancy crisis and the inadequate char allowance that officials described. From the ground level, the state simply does not show up. Families who need healthcare advice, agricultural support, or help with a government application have nobody to turn to. The theoretical entitlements that law and policy provide have no practical meaning when there is no official to deliver them.

4.10 Emergency Relief and the Safety Net Delay

About 70% of citizen respondents said that emergency relief and social safety net support consistently fail to arrive on time during floods or sudden riverbank erosion. Local Union Parishad members, whom residents should be able to rely on in a crisis, lack the legal authority and immediate funds to act quickly. The result is a dangerous delay between the moment of crisis and the moment of response—a delay that the institutional findings attribute directly to the absence of flexible, locally-held emergency funds and the over-centralized decision-making structure.

4.11 The Demand for a Separate Char Ministry

When asked how to fix the service gap, char residents did not ask for minor adjustments. They called for fundamental change. Their suggestions mirrored almost exactly the structural reforms proposed by district administrators: a dedicated Charland Affairs Ministry with its own budget, and regular floating service camps that bring health, education, and administrative services directly to the river banks. Residents understand, from lived experience, that mainstream ministries are not designed for them. They want an authority that is.

Secondary Data Analysis

The empirical findings from this study are strongly supported by secondary evidence from academic research, national media, and public policy reviews.

Major newspapers including The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, and The Business Standard regularly carry field reports about governance failure in Kurigram's charlands. These accounts consistently describe frontline workers struggling to reach remote duty stations, families unable to access basic

services, and relief efforts that arrive too late or not at all. This media coverage closely mirrors what both administrators and residents described in this study's primary data collection.

Academic and think-tank research reinforces these findings. Studies from BIDS and CPD point to a deep structural mismatch between rigid mainland-centric budgeting and the fluid, unpredictable geography of the chars. Policy dialogue participants and regional analysts consistently argue that standard administrative laws are ineffective in these environments. The NSSS, despite its ambitious goals, has failed to reach the most isolated char communities because its implementation mechanisms were not designed for environments where a service center can be washed away overnight.

The convergence of primary findings, community testimony, media accounts, and academic research points to the same conclusion: without a flexible, char-specific governance framework and a dedicated central authority, mainstream administrative systems will continue to leave Kurigram's char communities behind.

Focus Group Discussion Results

Focus Group Discussions with local officials added qualitative depth to the survey findings. While the survey data captured what the problems are, the FGDs revealed how those problems feel from the inside and why they persist.

Officials described the complete absence of office buildings and staff quarters as a daily operational nightmare. Without a place to work or sleep in the chars, frontline workers must make expensive and dangerous daily boat commutes. This directly explains why nearly 79% of survey respondents said the char allowance does not even cover basic travel and living costs. It is not that the allowance is slightly low; it is that the cost of working in the chars—without any state-provided infrastructure—is fundamentally higher than what any flat-rate allowance accounts for.

The FGDs also shed light on why inter-agency coordination is so poor. Departments are locked into strict vertical command structures. A health officer cannot share a boat with an agricultural extension worker without navigating bureaucratic approval processes that take longer than the monsoon window in which travel is safe. Resources are not shared, field trips are not coordinated, and the result is that each department operates as an isolated unit—none of them with enough resources to reach the communities they are meant to serve.

Perhaps most revealing was the discussion of budget inflexibility during environmental crises. Officials explained that when a flood hits, they are legally prevented from redirecting funds to respond to it. The annual budget cycle assumes a stable environment. It does not allow for the

kind of dynamic reallocation that the chars actually require. This frustration, shared by officials across departments, is exactly why 64.3% of survey respondents report having to completely redirect their service delivery plans multiple times a year—not because they choose to, but because the environment forces them to and the law gives them no better option.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This study confirms that the exclusion of Kurigram's charland communities from basic government services is driven as much by institutional design failures as by physical geography. Geographic isolation is real and severe, but it is not insurmountable. Other countries and programs have found ways to deliver services to remote and flood-prone populations. What makes the situation in Kurigram's charlands particularly difficult is the combination of physical isolation and institutional rigidity.

Regulations written for the mainland, incentive systems that ignore the true costs of remote work, accountability mechanisms that cannot function across rivers, inter-agency structures that create silos rather than cooperation, and resource allocation formulas that do not account for the actual char population all compound each other. The result is a governance system that is structurally incapable of serving the people it is legally obligated to reach.

The findings of this study are consistent with the National Social Security Strategy's goal of extending coverage to vulnerable populations, but they demonstrate that the NSSS cannot achieve this goal in charlands without significant structural reforms. Digital payment systems and centralized targeting methods fail when there is no field presence, no accurate data, and no flexible local authority to manage implementation.

Addressing this challenge requires a genuine shift in how Bangladesh governs its most isolated communities. Mobile clinics, digital care delivery, char-specific budgeting, and a dedicated central governance body for charlands are not radical ideas. They are necessary adaptations to a reality that the existing system has so far refused to acknowledge.

Chapter 6: Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following four reforms are recommended as priorities.

Establish a Dedicated Charland Affairs Ministry or Governance Board

Mainstream government ministries are designed for stable mainland conditions. They are structurally ill-suited to the shifting riverine environment of the chars. More than 85% of surveyed

administrators agree that an autonomous Char Governance Board with its own ring-fenced budget and legislative authority is essential. This body should have the mandate and resources to design, fund, and oversee all public services in charland areas. Without dedicated institutional authority, every reform will be filtered through bureaucratic structures that were not built for this context and will likely produce the same results.

Launch a One-Door Mobile Service System

Instead of expecting char dwellers to make expensive and dangerous boat trips to mainland offices, services must come to them. Floating service centers and regular mobile service camps—combining health clinics, agricultural extension, national ID registration, social safety net enrollment, and administrative support under one roof—should be established on a regular schedule across the chars. Solar-powered digital hubs can extend connectivity even in the most isolated areas. This approach directly responds to the 83% of residents who cited the cost and danger of mainland travel as their primary barrier to accessing government services.

Replace the Char Allowance with a Realistic Riverine Navigation Premium

The current flat-rate char allowance fails because it does not reflect the actual costs of working in a riverine environment. Engine-boat rentals, seasonal navigation risks, and the need to maintain secondary housing on the mainland are real expenses that fall entirely on officials who are already serving in difficult conditions. The allowance should be replaced with a variable, cost-adjusted Riverine Navigation Premium that is calculated based on actual documented costs, regularly reviewed, and sufficient to make char postings genuinely competitive with mainland assignments. Without this, the vacancy crisis will continue.

Introduce Climate-Adaptive, Flexible Budgeting

Annual budget cycles assume a stable environment. Charlands are not stable. When a flood hits, officials need the legal authority to redirect funds immediately—not wait for approval through a bureaucratic process that may take weeks. Financial regulations should be updated to give the UNO, Upazila teams, and Union Parishads the authority to make dynamic, needs-based reallocation decisions when environmental crises occur. This should be paired with a real-time, localized digital census to replace the mainland-based formulas currently used to allocate resources, ensuring that future budgets reflect the actual size and vulnerability of char populations.

Chapter 7: Declaration

I declare that this paper contains neither any plagiarised material or any AI generated content.

The analysis is the author's contribution. Any deviation from this declaration is author's liability.

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157th Advanced Course on Administration and Development
Individual Assignment

NAME OF THE MODULE : Research for Governance, (Final Seminar Paper Submission)
Part-II

MODULE NO: 5

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2. Writing Name, Roll No. etc. at any other place or making the script otherwise may cause cancellation of your answer script.
3. Put tick (✓) marks on Evaluation method and Institute's Name.

Name: Lutfun Nahar

Roll No: 105



How Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) can play role in Public Corporation:

A Case Study of Jiban Bima Corporation (JBC)



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Abstract

Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) plays an essential role in maintaining harmonious industrial relations in public corporations. In Bangladesh, public corporations operate within a bureaucratic structure where employee participation, labor rights, productivity, and organizational effectiveness are strongly influenced by labor-management relations. This research paper examines the role of Collective Bargaining Agents in public corporations with a particular focus on Jiban Bima Corporation (JBC), the only state-owned life insurance corporation in Bangladesh. The study explores how CBA contributes to employee welfare, conflict resolution, productivity improvement, policy implementation, and organizational sustainability.

The research adopts a qualitative case study approach using secondary data sources such as annual reports, journal articles, government documents, newspaper reports, and previous academic studies. Findings reveal that CBA in public corporations serves as a bridge between management and employees by protecting workers' rights, negotiating wages and benefits, improving workplace conditions, and ensuring participatory decision-making. In the context of Jiban Bima Corporation, the role of CBA is significant because the corporation operates within a large workforce and extensive branch network throughout Bangladesh.

The study further identifies challenges faced by CBA, including political influence, bureaucratic delay, limited managerial cooperation, lack of professional training, and resistance to organizational reforms. Despite these challenges, effective collective bargaining can improve employee morale, reduce labor disputes, and strengthen institutional efficiency. The paper recommends modernization of labor-management practices, greater transparency, skill development programs, participatory governance, and digital communication systems to improve the effectiveness of CBA activities in public corporations.

This study contributes to the understanding of labor relations in Bangladesh's public sector and provides policy recommendations for strengthening collective bargaining practices in state-owned enterprises.

1.Title:

How Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) can play role in Public Corporation: A Case Study of Jiban Bima Corporation (JBC)

2.Introduction

Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) plays a significant role in protecting workers' rights, ensuring industrial peace, and maintaining healthy labor-management relations in organizations. In public corporations, the role of CBA becomes more important because these organizations operate under government policies and public accountability. Jiban Bima Corporation is the only state-owned life insurance corporation in Bangladesh established under the Insurance Corporation Act, 1973

In Bangladesh, public corporations have historically played a vital role in economic growth. Among these corporations, Jiban Bima Corporation occupies a significant position in the insurance sector. Established in 1973 after the nationalization of the insurance industry, JBC became the sole state-owned life insurance company in Bangladesh. ([Banglapedia][1])

The proposed study aims to analyze how the Collective Bargaining Agent contributes to employee welfare, organizational stability, and dispute resolution in Jiban Bima Corporation (JBC). The study will also examine the challenges faced by CBA in public corporations and suggest measures for improving labor-management relations.

2.1. Background of the Study

Collective bargaining is a process through which workers negotiate with employers regarding wages, working conditions, benefits, and other employment-related issues. In Bangladesh, the activities of Collective Bargaining Agents are regulated under the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006. A CBA represents employees in negotiations with management and workers to establish mutual understanding between workers and employers.

Public corporations in Bangladesh often face administrative complexities, bureaucratic management systems, and subordinate employee conflicts. Therefore, the role of

CBA(grade 12 -20) is crucial in ensuring harmonious relationships between management and employees. As a government-owned institution, Jiban Bima Corporation employs a large workforce across regional and branch offices throughout the country.

JBC has been serving the insurance sector since 1973 and operates under the Ministry of Finance. The corporation has a large number of employees, agents, and administrative staff.

The existence of a strong and effective CBA can help improve employee satisfaction, reduce conflicts, ensure workers' participation in decision-making, and increase organizational productivity. Therefore, studying the role of CBA in JBC is important for understanding relations between management and subordinate employee in public corporations of Bangladesh.

Public corporations are established by governments to provide essential services and contribute to national economic development. These organizations employ large numbers of workers and therefore require efficient labor-management relations. Collective Bargaining Agents (CBAs) act as representatives of employees and negotiate with management regarding wages, working conditions, job security, welfare benefits, and organizational policies.

The role of CBA in public corporations is especially important because employees often depend on collective representation to safeguard their rights and communicate their concerns to management. Effective collective bargaining contributes to industrial peace, employee satisfaction, and organizational productivity.

2.2. Problem Statement

Although Collective Bargaining Agents are established to protect subordinate employee's interests and maintain official peace, many public corporations in Bangladesh experience communication gaps, unrest, conflicts between employees and management. In some cases, employees feel that their demands are not properly represented, while management may consider CBA activities as barriers to administrative decisions.

Questions therefore arise regarding how effectively CBAs perform their functions in organizations such as Jiban Bima Corporation.

In Jiban Bima Corporation, there may exist issues such as:

- Communication gaps between management and employees;
- Delays in resolving employee grievances;
- Limited participation of employees in policy decisions;
- Conflict of interest between management and subordinate demands
- Political influence and bureaucratic interference in CBA activities.

These issues may affect employee morale and organizational performance. Therefore, it is necessary to examine how effectively the CBA performs its responsibilities in JBC and what measures can strengthen its role.

2.3. Objectives of the Study

2.3.1. General Objective

To analyze the role and effectiveness of Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) in a public corporation, with a focus on Jiban Bima Corporation.

2.3.2. Specific Objectives

1. To identify the functions and responsibilities of the CBA in JBC.
2. To analyze the relationship between management and employees through CBA activities.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of CBA in protecting the CBA member's right and interest.

2.3.3. Research Questions

1. What are the major functions of CBA in public corporations?
2. How does CBA contribute to employee welfare and organizational development?
3. What challenges affect the effectiveness of CBA in Jiban Bima Corporation?
4. What strategies can improve collective bargaining practices in public organizations?

2.4. Justification of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons:

- It will contribute to academic knowledge regarding subordinate-management relations in public corporations of Bangladesh.
- The study will help policymakers to understand the practical role of CBA in government organizations.
- It will assist the management of Jiban Bima Corporation in improving employee relations and workplace harmony.
- The findings may help trade unions and employee representatives improve collective bargaining practices.
- The study may provide recommendations for strengthening industrial democracy and reducing workplace conflicts in public organizations.

2.4.1. Significance of the Study

This study is important because it highlights the practical role of staff unions and CBAs in maintaining official harmony in Bangladesh's public sector. The findings may help policymakers, managers, labor leaders, and researchers understand how collaborative staff relations can improve organizational effectiveness.

As public corporations are important for national economic development, improving lower subordinate relations with top management through effective collective bargaining is essential for organizational success and employee satisfaction.

3. Literature Review

Collective bargaining has been widely discussed in labor relations and human resource management literature. According to the Bangladesh Labor Act 2006, a Collective Bargaining Agent is a trade union authorized to negotiate and represent workers in employment matters.

Researchers have identified collective bargaining as an important tool for protecting employee rights, improving wages, and ensuring industrial peace. Armstrong (2014) argued that effective collective bargaining improves communication and cooperation between employers and employees.

Dunlop's Industrial Relations Theory explains that harmonious industrial relations depend on interactions among workers, management, and government institutions. In public corporations, government policies strongly influence labor-management relations.

Studies on public corporations in Bangladesh reveal that trade unions and CBAs often face challenges such as political interference, lack of administrative cooperation, and limited bargaining power. Rahman (2012) noted that public sector organizations require strong labor-management cooperation to ensure efficiency and service quality.

Regarding Jiban Bima Corporation, previous studies mainly focused on insurance services, organizational performance, and financial development rather than labor relations. Therefore, there is a research gap concerning the role of CBA in JBC.

This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing how CBA activities influence employee welfare, organizational discipline, and dispute management in JBC.

Collective bargaining refers to the negotiation process between employers and employee representatives regarding employment conditions. A Collective Bargaining Agent acts as the officially recognized representative of workers.

3.1. CBA in Public Corporations

Public corporations differ from private organizations because they are accountable to the government and public. Therefore, labor relations in public corporations are often influenced by political and administrative factors.

Researchers have found that effective CBAs can:

- * Reduce labor/staff unrest in office
- * Improve employee's morality
- * Facilitate communication
- * Increase productivity in office work
- * Ensure fairness in administrative decisions

3.2. However, ineffective CBAs may lead to:

- * Political conflicts, which may worsen office environment
- * Corruption
- * Administrative delays in works
- * Frequent strikes and disputes in office

3.3. According to industrial relations theory, collective bargaining promotes:

- * Democracy
- * Active participation of employees
- * Resolves Conflict in office, which keeps the office environment harmony
- * Employee rights protection

Scholars such as Dunlop and Flanders emphasized that collective bargaining is essential for maintaining industrial peace and ensuring balanced staff-management relations.

4. Methodology of the Study

4.1. Research Design

The study will follow a descriptive and analytical research design. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches will be used.

4.2. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on:

1. Human Relations Theory
2. Industrial Democracy Theory
3. Collective Bargaining Theory

These theories explain how employee participation and cooperative staff-management relations improve organizational effectiveness.

4.3. Sources of Data

The data collection process involved several stages:

Primary Data

Primary data has been collected through:

- Structured questionnaires;
- Interviews with employees, CBA leaders, and management officials;
- Observation of organizational practices.

Secondary Data

Secondary data has been collected from:

- Books and journals;
- Annual reports of Jiban Bima Corporation;
- Bangladesh Labour Act 2006;
- Government publications;
- Research articles and online sources.
- Collection of Organizational Information

Review of Academic Literature

- Relevant books, journal articles, and research papers on collective bargaining, labor relations, and public corporation management were reviewed.
- Information regarding the history, structure, and activities of Jiban Bima Corporation was collected from official reports and encyclopedia sources. ([Banglapedia][1])

4.4. Population and Sample

The population of the study included employees, CBA representatives, and management officials of JBC.

A sample of approximately 20 respondents selected using simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques.

4.5. Data Collection Tools

- Questionnaire survey;
- Semi-structured interviews;
- Document analysis.

4.6. Data Analysis

Collected data have been analyzed using the following techniques:

- Descriptive statistics;
- Tables and charts;
- Comparative and thematic analysis.

4.7. Study Area

The study conducted at selected offices of Jiban Bima Corporation in Bangladesh. After collecting data it have been analyzed by graphical representation. Some data graphically represented in pie chart, some data in bar diagram.

4.7.1 Can CBA play a supportive role to increase employee's work efficiency?

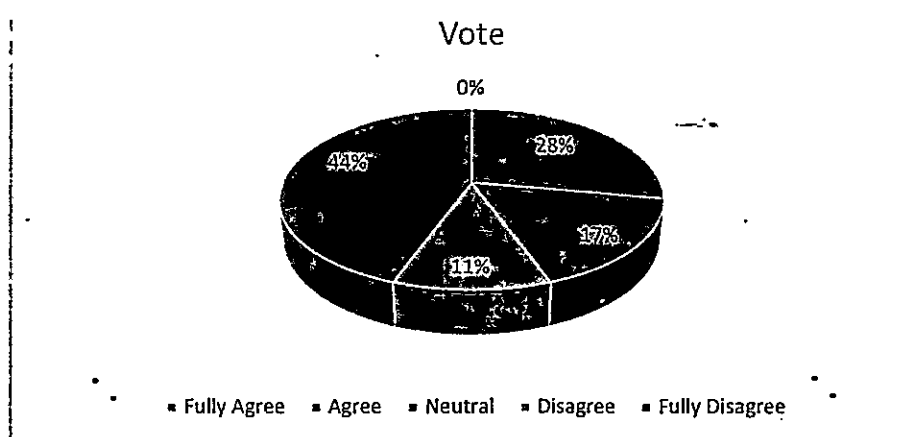


FIGURE 1

44% respondent disagreed with it

28% respondent fully agreed with it

17% agreed with it and

11% respondent were neutral. That is, we can say that according to the survey, most of the employees agreed that CBA can play a supportive role to increase employee's work efficiency.

4.7.2 Can CBA help to reduce employee's dissatisfaction?

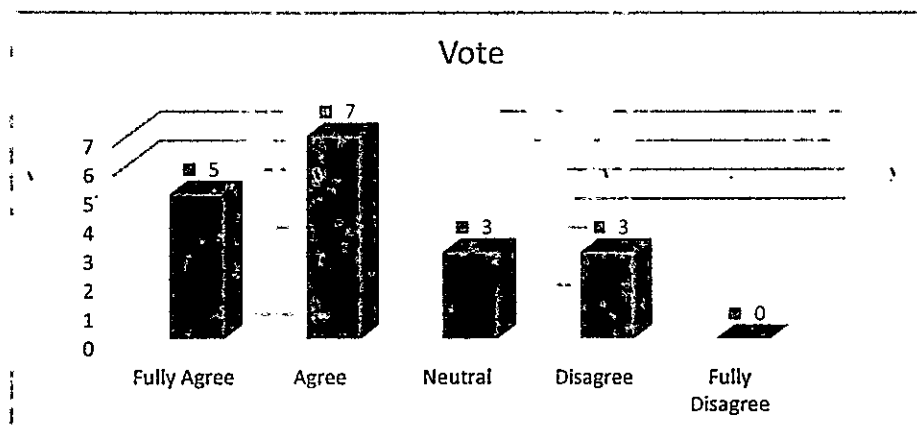


FIGURE 2

The collected data have been presented in bar diagram. We see that most of the respondents agreed that CBA can help in reducing dissatisfaction.

4.7.3 What are the major challenges of the CBA?

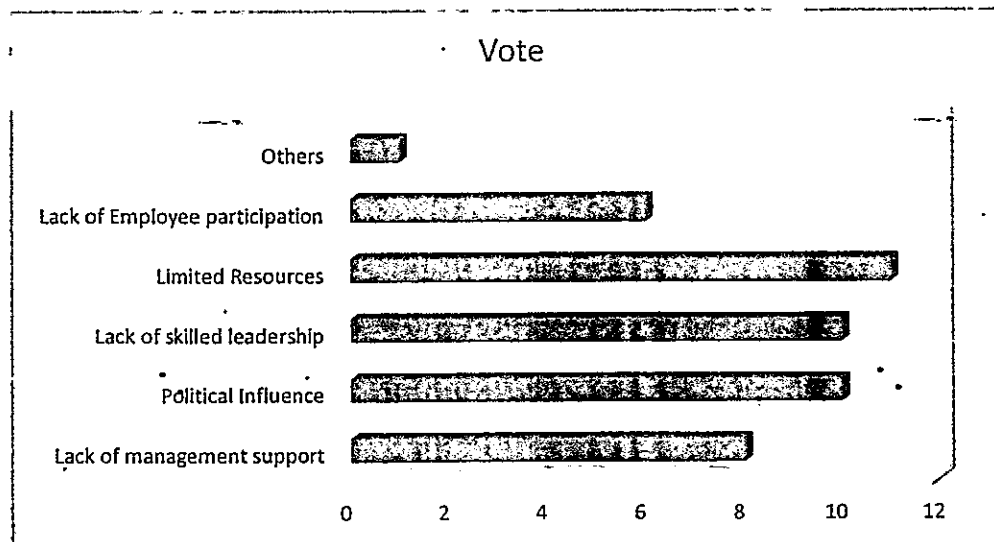


FIGURE 3

According to the collected data respondent opined that

---- Political interference

-----Lack of management support

-----Lack of skilled leadership..... These are the major challenges of CBA.

4.7.4 Is CBA capable to represent properly the interest of employees?

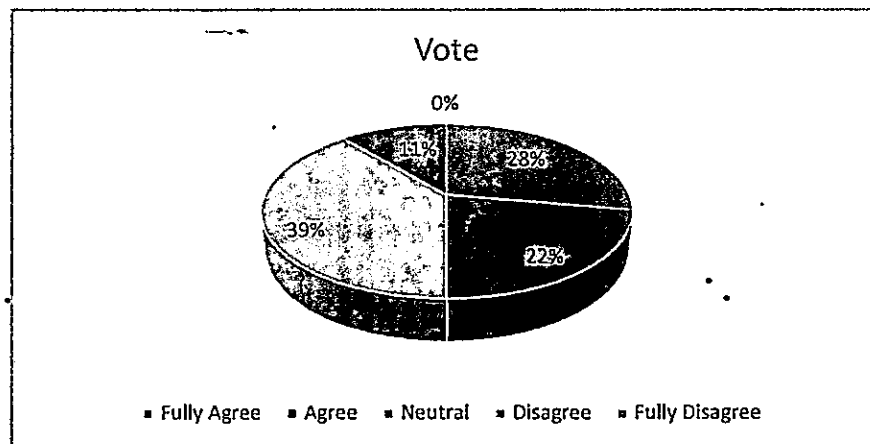


FIGURE 4

50% employees agreed that CBA is capable. 11% disagreed on it. 39% did not replied.

4.7.5 Can CBA successfully negotiate with management?

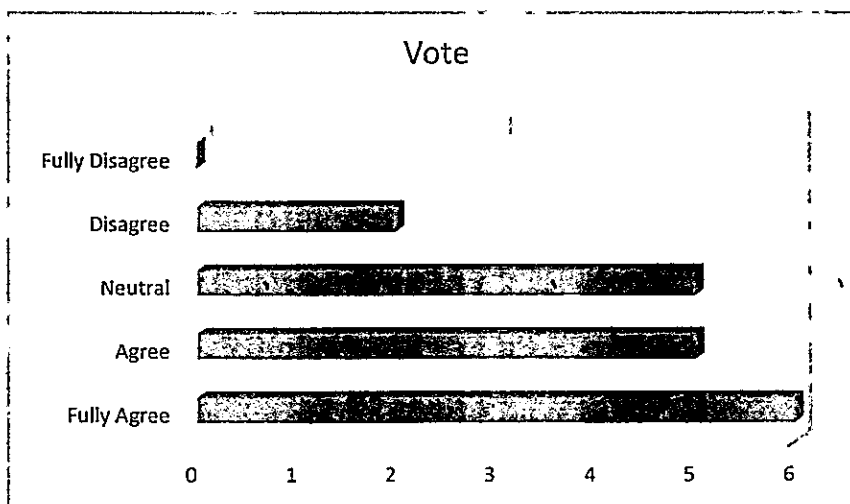


FIGURE 5

4.7.6 Does CBA help resolve workplace disputes.

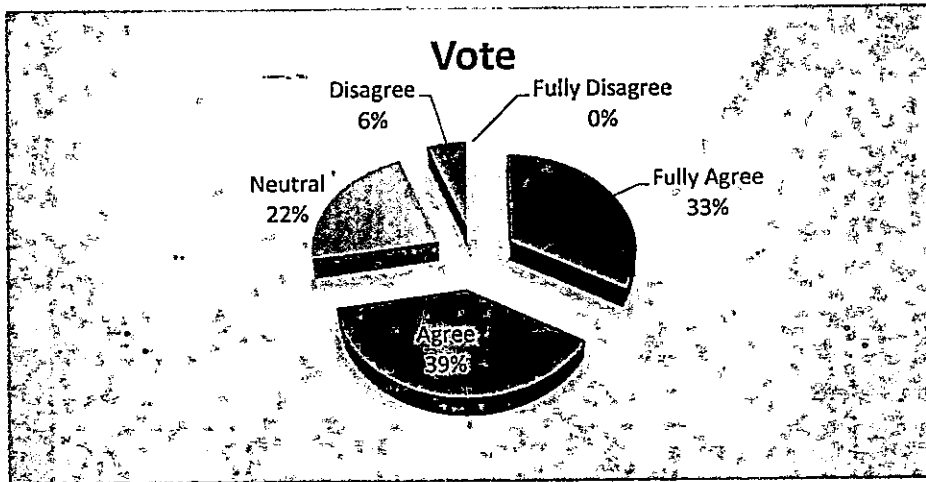


FIGURE 6

Most of the respondent / employees agreed that CBA can help to resolve workplace dispute.

4.8. Limitations of the Study

- Limited access to confidential organizational information;
- Time and financial constraints;
- Possible unwillingness of respondents to provide accurate information.
- Dependency on secondary data
- Limited access to internal union documents
- Lack of direct interviews with staff and managements
- Limited published research on CBA in JBC

4.9. Expected Outcomes of the Study

The study is expected to:

- Identify the actual role of CBA in JBC;
- Highlight strengths and weaknesses of collective bargaining practices;
- Provide recommendations for improving labor-management relations;
- Contribute to policy formulation for public corporations in Bangladesh.

4.8.1. Organizational Structure

The corporation operates through:

- * Head office in Dhaka
- * Regional offices all 8 divisions in Bangladesh
- * Zonal offices
- * Sales offices
- * Branch offices throughout Bangladesh

4.8.2. Its management structure includes:

- * Board of Directors
- * Managing Director
- * General Managers
- * Deputy General Managers
- * Administrative divisions

The corporation has thousands of officers, staffs, and field-level employees. ([Banglapedia][1])

4.8.3. Functions of Jiban Bima Corporation

Major functions include:

- * Providing life insurance services
- * Mobilizing public savings
- * Offering pension and group insurance schemes
- * Supporting national economic development through investments
- * Protecting policyholders' financial security

4.8.4. The corporation offers various insurance products. Among those, the following are the popular

- 1) Whole life assurance
- 2) Endowment assurance
- 3) Pension scheme policy
- 4) Group insurance policy
- 5) Child protection policy
- 6) Rural insurance schemes
- 7) Multiple endowment policy
- 8) Education policy
- 9) Marriage endowment policy

5. Role of CBA in Public Corporations

❖ Protecting Employee Rights

One of the primary responsibilities of CBA is protecting workers' rights. CBAs negotiate regarding:

- * Salaries
- * Promotions
- * Posting according to necessity
- * Leave facilities
- * Retirement benefits, when any CBA member retires, they try to expedite the retirement facilities
- * Health insurance benefits

In public corporations, employees often depend on CBA for protection against administrative discrimination and unfair treatment.

❖ Maintaining Industrial Peace

CBAs help reduce labor disputes by acting as intermediaries between management and workers. Effective communication and negotiation reduce the possibility of strikes and unrest.

❖ Improving Productivity

Satisfied employees are generally more productive. CBAs contribute to motivation by ensuring:

- * Fair treatment
- * Proper working conditions
- * Career development opportunities

This creates a positive work environment.

6. Role of CBA in Jiban Bima Corporation

❖ Representation of Employees

In JBC, CBA serves as the representative body for officers and employees. It communicates workers' concerns to management and negotiates regarding:

- * Pay structure
- * Transfers
- * Promotions
- * Service benefits
- * Pension facilities

Given the large workforce and nationwide branch network of JBC, employee representation is essential for maintaining coordination and discipline.

❖ Ensuring Workplace Harmony

The insurance sector depends heavily on teamwork and customer service. CBA helps maintain harmonious relations among employees and management, reducing workplace conflicts.

❖ Supporting Organizational Reforms

JBC has introduced modernization initiatives such as digital premium collection and IT-based management systems. ([The Business Standard][4])

During organizational reforms, CBA can:

- * Help employees adapt to changes
- * Reduce resistance
- * Facilitate communication
- * Protect employee interests during restructuring

❖ **Enhancing Employee Motivation**

Motivated employees contribute positively to organizational performance. Through negotiations and welfare activities, CBA improves job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

❖ **Role During Crises**

Public corporations often face operational and financial challenges. Reports indicate that JBC experienced issues related to investment management and recovery of deposits from financial institutions. ([The Business Standard][5])

During such situations, CBA can:

- * Protect employee morale
- * Prevent labor unrest
- * Encourage cooperative problem-solving

❖ **Contribution to Service Delivery**

JBC's success depends on customer trust and efficient service. Positive labor relations supported by effective CBA activities can improve:

- * Customer service
- * Employee accountability
- * Operational efficiency

----- 0 -----

7. Findings of the Study

The major findings of the study are summarized below:

1. CBA Acts as a Communication Bridge

CBA plays a significant role in establishing communication between employees and management in public corporations.

2. Employee Welfare is a Major Function

The study found that CBAs contribute significantly to:

* Wage negotiations
* Welfare benefits
* Working conditions
* Job security

3. Industrial Peace Depends on Effective Collective Bargaining

Organizations with effective labor-management cooperation experience fewer conflicts and better operational performance.

4. Political Influence Weakens CBA Effectiveness

One major challenge is political interference in union activities. Political influence sometimes shifts focus away from employee welfare.

5. Bureaucratic Structure Delays Decision-Making

In public corporations like JBC, administrative procedures are often slow. This creates frustration among employees and reduces the effectiveness of collective bargaining.

6. Need for Professional Training

Many union representatives lack professional training in negotiation, labor law, and organizational management.

7. Technological Changes Require Adaptation

As JBC introduces digital systems and modernization initiatives, employees need training and support. CBA can play a constructive role in change management.

8. Collective Bargaining Improves Organizational Commitment

Employees who feel represented and respected are more committed to organizational goals.

8. Challenges Faced by CBA in Public Corporations

❖ Political Interference

Political affiliation often influences labor union activities in Bangladesh. This reduces professionalism and creates conflicts.

❖ Lack of Financial Resources

Many CBAs lack adequate financial resources to conduct training, awareness programs, and welfare activities effectively.

❖ Weak Negotiation Skills

Some union leaders lack negotiation and communication skills, reducing the effectiveness of collective bargaining.

❖ Bureaucratic Resistance

Public corporations sometimes resist employee participation in decision-making.

❖ Technological Transformation

Automation and digitalization may create fear among employees regarding job security.

❖ Corruption and Lack of Transparency Corruption and favoritism can weaken employee trust in both management and union leadership.

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Strengthen staff-Management Cooperation

Management and CBA should develop cooperative relationships based on trust and transparency.

2. Professional Training for CBA Leaders

Training programs should be organized on:

- * Labor law
- * Negotiation techniques
- * Conflict management
- * Organizational leadership

3. Reduce Political Influence

CBAs should focus primarily on employee welfare rather than political activities.

4. Introduce Participatory Management

Employees should be involved in organizational decision-making processes.

5. Improve Communication Systems

Digital communication systems can improve coordination between management and employees.

6. Support Technological Adaptation

Employees should receive training regarding digital transformation and modern insurance technologies.

7. Ensure Transparency in Administrative Decisions

Transparent policies regarding promotion, transfer, and performance evaluation can reduce workplace conflicts.

8. Encourage Employee Welfare Programs

Organizations should support welfare activities such as:

- Health services, Counseling, Recreational programs, Skill development for the employees.

9. Strengthen Monitoring Mechanisms

Government authorities should monitor labor-management practices to ensure fairness and accountability.

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10. Conclusion

Collective Bargaining Agents play a vital role in public corporations by protecting employee rights, maintaining industrial peace, improving communication, and supporting organizational development. In the case of Jiban Bima Corporation, the role of CBA is particularly important due to the corporation's large workforce, nationwide operations, and strategic significance in Bangladesh's insurance sector.

The study reveals that effective collective bargaining contributes positively to employee satisfaction and organizational efficiency. However, challenges such as political interference, bureaucratic delays, weak negotiation capacity, and resistance to change limit the effectiveness of CBAs in public corporations.

To ensure sustainable organizational development, both management and employee representatives must adopt collaborative and professional approaches. Strengthening labor-management relations through transparency, participation, and training can significantly improve the performance of public corporations in Bangladesh.

Declaration

I declare that this paper contains neither any plagiarized material nor any AI – generated content. The analysis is the author's contribution. Any deviation from this declaration is author's liability.

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১৫৭ তম উচ্চতর প্রশাসন ও উন্নয়ন কোর্সের আওতায় সেমিনারে পেপার প্রণয়নের জন্য তথ্য সংগ্রহ
গবেষণা কার্যক্রম।

সেমিনারে পেপারের Title: How CBA can play role in public Corporation :

A case study of Jibon Bima Corporation (JBC)

Questionnaire

১. জেন্ডার:

☐ পুরুষ ☐ মহিলা

২. বয়স:

☐ ১৮-৩০ ☐ ৩১-৪০ ☐ ৪১-৫০ ☐ ৫১+

৩. শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা:

☐ এসএসসি ☐ এইচএসসি ☐ স্নাতক ☐ স্নাতকোত্তর ☐ অন্যান্য: _____

৪. পদবি:

☐ কর্মকর্তা ☐ কর্মচারী ☐ ব্যবস্থাপক ☐ উচ্চ ব্যবস্থাপনা ☐ অন্যান্য: _____

৫. Jibon Bima Corporation-এ চাকরির মেয়াদ:

☐ ৫ বছরের কম ☐ ৫-১০ বছর ☐ ১১-২০ বছর ☐ ২০+ বছর

৬. আপনি কি CBA-এর সদস্য?

☐ হ্যাঁ ☐ না

CBA সম্পর্কে সচেতনতা ও ধারণা

৭. আপনি কি CBA-এর ভূমিকা ও কার্যক্রম সম্পর্কে অবগত?

☐ হ্যাঁ ☐ না

উত্তর হ্যাঁ হলে, আপনার জানানমতে বিভিন্ন সময়ে গঠিত CBA-এর কমিটির কার্যক্রম সম্পর্কে জানান।

১৭. ব্যবস্থাপনা CBA-এর দাবিগুলো গুরুত্ব সহকারে বিবেচনা করে।

☐ সম্পূর্ণ একমত ☐ একমত ☐ নিরপেক্ষ ☐ অসম্মত ☐ সম্পূর্ণ অসম্মত

১৮. CBA এবং ব্যবস্থাপনার মধ্যে কার্যকর যোগাযোগ রয়েছে।

☐ সম্পূর্ণ একমত ☐ একমত ☐ নিরপেক্ষ ☐ অসম্মত ☐ সম্পূর্ণ অসম্মত

সাংগঠনিক কার্যকারিতায় প্রভাব

(লিকার্ট স্কেল ব্যবহার করুন)

১৯. CBA-এর কার্যক্রম কর্মচারীদের কর্মক্ষমতা বাড়াতে সহায়ক ভূমিকা পালন করে।

☐ সম্পূর্ণ একমত ☐ একমত ☐ নিরপেক্ষ ☐ অসম্মত ☐ সম্পূর্ণ অসম্মত

২০. CBA প্রতিষ্ঠানের স্থিতিশীলতায় অবদান রাখে।

☐ সম্পূর্ণ একমত ☐ একমত ☐ নিরপেক্ষ ☐ অসম্মত ☐ সম্পূর্ণ অসম্মত

২১. CBA কর্মীদের অসন্তোষ কমাতে সহায়তা করে।

☐ সম্পূর্ণ একমত ☐ একমত ☐ নিরপেক্ষ ☐ অসম্মত ☐ সম্পূর্ণ অসম্মত

২২. CBA ব্যবস্থাপনা টিমের সাথে কর্মচারীদের বিরোধ কমাতে সাহায্য করে।

☐ সম্পূর্ণ একমত ☐ একমত ☐ নিরপেক্ষ ☐ অসম্মত ☐ সম্পূর্ণ অসম্মত

CBA-এর চ্যালেঞ্জসমূহ

২৩. CBA-এর প্রধান চ্যালেঞ্জগুলো কী? (একাধিক উত্তর দেওয়া যাবে)

☐ ব্যবস্থাপনার সহযোগিতার অভাব

☐ রাজনৈতিক প্রভাব

☐ দক্ষ নেতৃত্বের অভাব

☐ সীমিত সম্পদ

☐ কর্মীদের অংশগ্রহণের অভাব

☐ অন্যান্য: _____

২৪. আপনি কি মনে করেন রাজনৈতিক প্রভাব CBA-এর কার্যকারিতাকে প্রভাবিত করে?

☐ হ্যাঁ ☐ না ☐ নিশ্চিত নই



Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre

Savar, Dhaka.

Programme & Studies Division

Evaluation Department

157th Advanced Course on Administration and Development

Individual Assignment

Seal

NAME OF THE MODULE: Research for Governance

MODULE NO:05

DATE:15.06.2026

Marks Obtained

Code No.

Code No.



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Instruction to be followed

(Please read carefully)

1. Please write your Name, Roll No etc. at the specified space.
2. Writing Name, Roll No. etc. at any other place or making the script otherwise may cause cancellation of your answer script.
1. Put tick (✓) marks on Evaluation method and Institute's Name.

Name: Abdullah al Khayrum

Roll No. 106

Title: Digital Transformation in Public Service Delivery: An Assessment of the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System in Bangladesh

Abstract

Digital transformation has emerged as a crucial component of modern public administration by enhancing efficiency, transparency, accountability, and service delivery. In Bangladesh, the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs has developed the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System (OFFDMS) to digitize freedom fighter records, preserve historical documentation, streamline administrative processes, and enhance access to government services. This study assesses the effectiveness of the system in improving public service delivery and examines the opportunities and challenges associated with its implementation. A qualitative research design was adopted for the study. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with seven respondents, including three freedom fighters, one freedom fighter's child, one martyr freedom fighter's child, one system analyst, and one senior assistant secretary involved in managing freedom fighter-related services. Secondary data were collected from government documents, policy reports, academic publications, and relevant literature on digital governance and public administration. The collected data were analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings indicate that the system has substantially improved transparency by making freedom fighter records, gazette notifications, documentary evidence, and administrative orders publicly accessible. The study also reveals that although many elderly freedom fighters face challenges in using digital technologies independently, they access services through family members, local entrepreneurs, and Union Digital Centers. However, several challenges remain, including delays in allowance disbursement, data inconsistencies across records, inadequate awareness regarding available services, inclusion and exclusion errors, limited integration among government databases, and insufficient grievance redress mechanisms. The study concludes that the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System represents a significant achievement in Bangladesh's digital governance journey. Nevertheless, further technological integration, database interoperability, service automation, and citizen awareness initiatives are necessary to maximize its effectiveness and ensure equitable public service delivery. The findings contribute to the growing literature on e-governance and provide policy recommendations for strengthening digital transformation initiatives in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Digital Transformation, E-Governance, Public Service Delivery, Freedom Fighter Management, Bangladesh

1.0 Introduction:

1.1 Background of the Study

Digital transformation has become a central strategy for improving governance and public administration worldwide. Through the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), governments are enhancing administrative efficiency, transparency, accountability, and citizen-centered service delivery (Heeks, 2006; OECD, 2020). Beyond the mere digitization of records, digital transformation involves the restructuring of administrative processes, organizational practices, and service delivery mechanisms to improve public sector performance and governance outcomes (Dunleavy et al., 2006). By facilitating real-time information sharing, automating routine functions, and expanding access to public services, digital technologies have significantly contributed to the modernization of government institutions (United Nations, 2022).

Bangladesh has made substantial progress in digital governance over the past decade under the visions of "Digital Bangladesh" and "Smart Bangladesh" (World Bank, 2021). As part of these initiatives, numerous public services have been digitalized, including e-passports, electronic procurement, online taxation, digital land management, and social safety net programs (Rahman, 2023). Within this broader digital transformation agenda, the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs introduced the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System (OFFDMS) to modernize the management of freedom fighter records and related services. The system serves as a centralized digital repository for freedom fighter information, documentary evidence, gazette notifications, allowance records, and successor information. By digitizing these records, the government seeks to improve transparency, strengthen record preservation, facilitate verification processes, reduce fraudulent claims, and enhance service delivery to freedom fighters and their families.

The significance of the OFFDMS extends beyond administrative modernization. It also contributes to preserving the historical legacy of the Liberation War of 1971 by safeguarding valuable national records. Historically, freedom fighter records were maintained through manual processes, which often resulted in document loss, verification delays, record inconsistencies, and administrative inefficiencies (Ahmed, 2021). The introduction of the OFFDMS represents an important governance innovation aimed at addressing these challenges while improving access to benefits and services for freedom fighters. Given its dual role in public

service delivery and historical preservation, assessing the effectiveness of the system is important for understanding the broader implications of digital transformation in Bangladesh's public sector (Bannister & Connolly, 2012; OECD, 2020).

1.2 Problem Statement

The transition from manual record management to digital governance has generated substantial improvements in public service delivery. However, the implementation of digital systems does not automatically eliminate all administrative challenges. Although the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System has improved access to information and administrative transparency, several practical challenges continue to affect its effectiveness. Many freedom fighters belong to older age groups and possess limited digital literacy. As a result, they often depend on family members or intermediaries to access online services. Furthermore, inconsistencies among records, delays in administrative processes, difficulties in correcting information, and gaps in beneficiary awareness continue to create challenges for service users.

The study also identified concerns regarding the inclusion of ineligible beneficiaries and the exclusion of genuine freedom fighters from official records. In addition, incomplete integration among government databases creates opportunities for discrepancies and misuse of information. Administrative procedures related to allowance disbursement and service verification still rely partly on manual processes, limiting the full benefits of digital transformation.

1.2.1 Research Gap

From an academic perspective, there is a significant lack of research focusing specifically on the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System. Existing studies on digital governance in Bangladesh primarily examine broader initiatives such as e-governance, digital land management, e-procurement, and social safety net programs. Very limited scholarly attention has been given to digital systems associated with freedom fighter services.

Furthermore, previous research has largely emphasized technological implementation while giving insufficient attention to user experiences, data quality challenges, institutional barriers, and service accessibility issues. The relationship between digital governance and the preservation of historical records also remains underexplored.

This study seeks to address these gaps by providing an empirical assessment of the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System through the perspectives of both service users and service providers.

1.3 Objectives of the Study:

The general objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness of the system in promoting transparency, accessibility, and administrative efficiency.

The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the operational functions and service delivery mechanisms of the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System.
2. To assess the role of the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System in improving public service delivery in Bangladesh.
3. To identify the challenges and limitations associated with the implementation of the system.
4. To explore the experiences of freedom fighters and other stakeholders regarding the use of the system.

1.4 Significance of the Study:

This study possesses both academic and practical significance.

From an academic perspective, it contributes to the growing body of literature on digital governance, e-governance, and public administration in developing countries. While considerable research has examined digital transformation in sectors such as taxation, procurement, and land management, studies focusing on freedom fighter service management remain extremely limited.

The study also expands understanding of how digital technologies can be utilized to preserve historical records while simultaneously improving public service delivery. This dual function makes the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System a unique case within digital governance research.

From a policy perspective, the findings provide valuable insights for decision-makers involved in designing and implementing digital governance initiatives. The study identifies practical challenges experienced by service users and administrators and highlights opportunities for improving system performance.

Furthermore, the research contributes to efforts aimed at ensuring that freedom fighters and their families receive efficient, transparent, and equitable services. Since freedom fighters occupy a special position in Bangladesh's national history, improving service delivery for this group carries both administrative and social significance.

Finally, the findings may serve as a reference for future digital transformation initiatives within other government agencies by illustrating both the successes and limitations of digital governance implementation.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Digital Transformation and Public Administration

Digital transformation refers to the strategic use of digital technologies to improve organizational processes and service delivery. In public administration, digital transformation enhances efficiency, transparency, and citizen engagement (OECD, 2020). Governments increasingly rely on digital technologies to modernize administrative systems and improve governance outcomes (Heeks, 2006).

2.2 E-Governance and Public Service Delivery

E-governance involves the application of ICTs in government operations and interactions with citizens. Research suggests that e-governance improves service delivery by reducing administrative delays, enhancing accountability, and increasing accessibility of information (Bannister & Connolly, 2012). In Bangladesh, digital governance initiatives have significantly improved citizen access to public services (World Bank, 2021).

2.3 Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability are fundamental principles of good governance. Digital systems promote transparency by making information publicly accessible and reducing opportunities for corruption (United Nations, 2022). Digital records also strengthen accountability by enabling monitoring and verification of administrative activities.

2.4 Digital Inclusion and Data Management

While digital transformation creates opportunities, challenges related to digital literacy, accessibility, and data quality remain significant. Elderly populations often require assisted access mechanisms to benefit from digital services. Effective data management is equally important because inaccurate or inconsistent information can undermine service delivery and public trust (Heeks, 2006).

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Study Area:

The study was conducted in Bangladesh with particular emphasis on the activities of the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs and its associated digital service delivery mechanisms. The Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System served as the primary focus of investigation.

The research explored the experiences of service users and service providers involved in the management and utilization of the system. Particular attention was given to issues related to accessibility, transparency, service delivery, data management, and administrative effectiveness.

The study area was selected because the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System represents one of the most significant digital governance initiatives within the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs and plays a crucial role in providing services to freedom fighters and their families.

3.2 Data Collection:

The study adopted a qualitative research approach to gain in-depth insights into the functioning and effectiveness of the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System.

Both primary and secondary data were utilized.

Primary Data:

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with seven respondents representing different stakeholder groups.

The respondents were:

- Freedom Fighters - 03
- Child of a Freedom Fighter - 01
- Child of a Martyred Freedom Fighter - 01
- System Analyst involved in system management - 01
- Senior Assistant Secretary responsible for processing allowance-related administrative activities - 01

Sampling:

Purposive sampling was employed to select respondents who possessed direct experience with the system either as service users or service providers.

Semi-structured interviews allowed respondents to share their experiences and perspectives in detail while ensuring consistency across interviews. The interview questions focused on accessibility of digital services, transparency and information availability, administrative efficiency, data management practices, challenges and limitations, suggestions for system improvement,

Secondary Data:

Secondary data were collected from various sources, including: Government reports and policy documents, Ministry of Liberation War Affairs publications, Academic journal articles, Books on digital governance, Research reports, Newspaper articles, Relevant online resources. The use of secondary data facilitated the contextualization of interview findings within broader discussions of digital governance and public administration.

3.3 Data Analysis:

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis and qualitative content analysis techniques.

The analysis process consisted of several stages. Firstly, interview responses were reviewed repeatedly to develop familiarity with the data. Secondly, recurring concepts and issues were identified and coded. Thirdly, related codes were grouped into broader themes reflecting common patterns across respondents.

The major themes identified included-Transparency and public access to information, Digital inclusion and assisted access, Administrative efficiency, Payroll and allowance disbursement challenges, Data inconsistencies and record management, Inclusion and exclusion errors, Service awareness gaps, Database integration challenges, Digital preservation of historical records, Future opportunities for system enhancement.

3.4 Research Ethics:

Ethical considerations were carefully maintained throughout the research process. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and their right to decline participation at any stage.

Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that respondents were not identified by name in the research findings. Personal information and sensitive details were excluded from the analysis and reporting process.

The collected data were used exclusively for academic purposes and were not shared with unauthorized individuals or institutions. The researcher also ensured that interview responses were accurately represented without distortion or misinterpretation.

3.5 Limitations of the Study:

Several limitations were encountered during the study. First of all, the research relied on a relatively small number of interview participants due to time and resource constraints. Secondly, many freedom fighters belong to older age groups, making extensive field data collection challenging. Thirdly, access to certain internal government documents and administrative records was limited. Fourthly, the findings primarily reflect the perspectives of selected respondents and may not represent the experiences of all users of the system across Bangladesh. Finally, the rapidly evolving nature of digital governance means that future system upgrades may alter some of the issues identified in the study.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness and challenges of the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System.

4.0 Findings:

4.1 Transparency and Public Accessibility of Information:

One of the most significant findings of the study concerns the substantial improvement in transparency achieved through the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System. Interview respondents indicated that the system contains not only the officially recognized documentary evidence used for freedom fighter verification but also gazette notifications, inclusion orders, cancellation orders, allowance-related information, and various administrative documents.

This represents a major departure from the traditional paper-based system where access to information was largely restricted to government offices and administrative personnel. The public availability of records has significantly enhanced transparency by enabling citizens to verify information independently. Service users no longer need to rely solely on administrative Intermediaries to

obtain information regarding freedom fighter status, documentary evidence, or beneficiary records.

A particularly important example emerged during an interview with a child of a martyred freedom fighter. During the interview.

Case-A

The respondent was able to provide only the Lal Mukti Barta number of his father. Using that single identifier, the researcher demonstrated how the system could instantly retrieve comprehensive information, including the freedom fighter's photograph, freedom fighter number, supporting documentary evidence, and successor information.

- A child of a martyred freedom fighter

Case summary: The respondent expressed satisfaction and appreciation after observing the accessibility of the information. This experience illustrates how digital technologies can improve citizen access to government records and strengthen public confidence in administrative systems. Moreover, the digital availability of records reduces opportunities for document concealment, unauthorized modification, and administrative manipulation.

Findings: The findings therefore suggest that the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System has made a significant contribution to transparency and accountability within the administration of freedom fighter services.

4.2 Digital Inclusion through Assisted Access:

A common concern in digital governance literature is that elderly citizens may face exclusion from digital services due to limited technological knowledge. Since most freedom fighters belong to advanced age groups, this concern was highly relevant to the present study. However, the findings reveal a more nuanced reality.

The three (03) freedom fighters acknowledged that-

Case- B

Although many of us were unable to independently operate computers, smartphones, or online platforms, we did not consider ourselves completely excluded from the digital system. Instead, we accessed digital services through various forms of assisted support. Family members, relatives, local computer operators, Union Digital Centers (UDCs), and nearby service providers frequently helped us access information and complete digital procedures.

- Views from Freedom Fighters

However, interviewee stated that dependence on intermediaries also creates certain vulnerabilities. Beneficiaries may become reliant on third parties for access to personal information and administrative services. This dependency can occasionally increase costs, create opportunities for misinformation, or limit users' direct control over their own data.

Findings: This finding suggests that the success of digital transformation should not be measured solely by individual digital literacy. The existence of support networks and intermediary service mechanisms significantly contributes to digital inclusion. Bangladesh's Union Digital Centers, in particular, appear to play an important role in bridging the gap between technology and elderly service users. However, reliance on intermediaries may create vulnerabilities by increasing dependency, raising service costs, facilitating misinformation, and reducing beneficiaries' direct control over their personal information and administrative processes.

Nevertheless, the findings indicate that the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System has achieved a reasonable level of accessibility despite the age-related challenges faced by its primary beneficiaries. The presence of assisted access mechanisms has substantially reduced the risk of digital exclusion.

From the perspective of E-Governance Theory, this demonstrates that effective digital governance depends not only on technological infrastructure but also on supportive institutional arrangements that facilitate citizen access.

4.3 Improvement in Allowance Management:

The digitization of allowance management emerged as another important achievement of the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System. Compared with the previous manual system, this represents a substantial improvement in efficiency and transparency. Beneficiaries can now receive information regarding payments without repeatedly visiting government offices or financial institutions.

Respondents reported that-

Case-C

Now we receive mobile phone messages whenever the allowance is deposited into our bank accounts. So, our monthly allowances are processed digitally now. Previously, we had to make inquiries about our allowances.

- Freedom Fighter

Despite these improvements, respondents identified persistent challenges associated with the allowance distribution process. Several participants indicated that allowance payments are sometimes delayed because payroll information reaches the relevant authorities late from local administrative offices.

This finding raises important questions regarding the extent of administrative automation within the system. Some respondents questioned why monthly payroll preparation remains necessary when beneficiary information remains unchanged from month to month. They argued that once eligibility has been established and verified, allowance disbursement should be largely automated unless significant changes occur, such as the death of a beneficiary or a change in legal status.

Case-D

One respondent specifically noted that local administrative authorities are usually informed when a freedom fighter dies because government officials often attend funeral ceremonies or related official functions. Therefore, respondents questioned whether the continued reliance on monthly payroll procedures reflects an unnecessary administrative burden.

- Freedom fighter

Findings: These observations suggest that while digitization has improved service delivery, certain legacy administrative practices continue to limit efficiency. The persistence of partially manual procedures demonstrates that digital transformation is not merely a technological process but also an organizational reform process requiring changes in administrative culture and workflows.

4.4 Data Inconsistency and Record Management Challenges:

The study identified data inconsistency as one of the most significant challenges affecting the effectiveness of the system. Several respondents reported discrepancies among official documents relating to freedom fighters. Common inconsistencies included variations in the spelling of names, differences in addresses, inconsistencies in fathers' names, and conflicting birth dates.

Many of these discrepancies originated from historical records created during different periods under different administrative conditions. Since freedom fighter recognition often relied on multiple documentary sources, inconsistencies accumulated over time and became embedded within official records.

Respondents indicated that these inconsistencies frequently remain unresolved because beneficiaries continue receiving allowances despite inaccuracies. Once a beneficiary successfully qualifies for services, there is often little motivation to initiate correction procedures, particularly if such procedures are perceived as complicated or risky.

The presence of inconsistent records creates several administrative risks. First, it undermines the overall reliability of the database. Second, it complicates future verification processes. Third, it may create opportunities for fraudulent claims or identity manipulation.

Findings: The findings suggest that data quality management should become a priority area for future system development. Digital governance systems can only be as effective as the accuracy of the data they contain. Consequently, continuous verification and correction mechanisms are necessary to maintain the integrity of digital records.

4.5 Inclusion and Exclusion Errors in Beneficiary Lists:

Another important theme emerging from the interviews concerns about inclusion and exclusion errors.

Several respondents expressed the view that some individuals who were not genuine freedom fighters had been included in official records, while certain legitimate freedom fighters remained excluded from beneficiary lists.

Although the study did not independently verify these claims, the consistency of such concerns across multiple respondents suggests that the issue remains significant in public perception.

The existence of inclusion errors can undermine trust in public institutions by creating doubts regarding the fairness and credibility of verification processes. Conversely, exclusion errors may deprive eligible individuals of benefits and recognition to which they are entitled.

Digital systems can improve transparency and facilitate verification, but they cannot automatically resolve historical disputes regarding eligibility. The quality of outcomes depends heavily on the quality of underlying records and verification mechanisms.

Findings: These findings highlight the need for continuous review processes, evidence-based verification procedures, and transparent grievance mechanisms to address disputes regarding eligibility and recognition.

4.6 Service Awareness and Information Gaps:

An unpredicted finding of the study relates to the limited awareness among beneficiaries regarding the full range of services available to them. Most respondents were familiar with monthly allowances because these benefits directly affect their daily lives. However, several participants demonstrated limited knowledge regarding other government services and welfare programs available to freedom fighters and their families.

Examples mentioned during interviews included enhanced medical assistance programs and other support initiatives introduced by the government. Some respondents indicated that they learned about such programs only through informal communication rather than official channels.

This finding suggests that information availability does not automatically guarantee information awareness. Even when information exists within digital systems, beneficiaries may remain unaware of available services if communication strategies are inadequate.

The challenge therefore extends beyond digitalization itself. Effective public service delivery requires proactive communication and citizen engagement. Government agencies must ensure that beneficiaries not only have access to information but also understand the services available to them and the procedures required to access those services.

The findings suggest that greater use of SMS notifications, public awareness campaigns, community outreach programs, and Union Digital Centers could help address existing information gaps.

4.7 Challenges in Correction Procedures and Grievance Redress Mechanisms:

The interviews revealed several concerns regarding the correction of records and the resolution of administrative grievances.

Respondents reported that requests for correcting inaccurate information are sometimes processed slowly or remain unresolved for extended periods. In some cases, beneficiaries submitted supporting documents but observed little progress in correcting errors.

A particularly important issue involves fear and uncertainty among beneficiaries. Some respondents believed that attempting to correct records might unintentionally disrupt existing benefits or trigger administrative complications. Consequently, they preferred to tolerate inaccuracies rather than initiate correction procedures.

This finding illustrates how perceptions of administrative risk can influence citizen behavior. Even when correction mechanisms exist, beneficiaries may hesitate to use them if they lack confidence in the process.

Another concern relates to the lack of clear explanations when services are suspended or interrupted. Several respondents indicated that beneficiaries often do not know why allowances have stopped or what steps are required to restore benefits.

From a governance perspective, effective grievance redress mechanisms are essential for ensuring accountability and maintaining citizen trust. The findings suggest that improvements in communication, transparency, and case tracking could significantly enhance user confidence in the system.

4.8 Loan Deduction Mechanisms and Financial Management Issues:

The study also identified challenges associated with loan recovery mechanisms linked to freedom fighter allowances.

Respondents reported that when loan installments are not deducted properly during a particular month, some beneficiaries experience suspension of their entire allowance during subsequent months. Such situations create financial hardship, particularly for elderly beneficiaries who depend heavily on monthly payments.

Participants expressed concern that beneficiaries often receive little information regarding the reasons for such disruptions. In many cases, they must contact multiple offices to determine the cause of the problem.

These findings indicate a need for more transparent financial management procedures and automated notification systems. Beneficiaries should receive clear information whenever deductions, suspensions, or adjustments occur.

Improved communication could reduce confusion, strengthen trust, and enhance overall satisfaction with service delivery.

4.9 Interoperability, Database Integration, and Fraud Prevention:

One of the strongest themes emerging from both service users and service providers concerns the need for greater integration among government databases.

Respondents emphasized that information related to freedom fighters is often distributed across multiple systems, including National ID databases, birth registration databases, allowance records, housing support records, and other administrative databases.

The lack of interoperability creates opportunities for inconsistencies and potential misuse. Several respondents described situations in which individuals corrected information in one database but failed to update corresponding records elsewhere. Birth date discrepancies were identified as a particularly important example.

Participants suggested that integrated databases could help prevent situations in which individuals use different personal information for different purposes, thereby strengthening administrative integrity and reducing opportunities for fraud.

The findings strongly support the development of a comprehensive Management Information System (MIS) that integrates relevant databases and enables real-time information sharing among government agencies.

Such integration would improve verification processes, strengthen accountability, and enhance service delivery efficiency.

4.10 Digital Preservation, Future Opportunities, and System Modernization:

The final theme concerns the broader future potential of the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System.

Respondents generally viewed the system as a positive development and recognized its contribution to preserving historical records related to the Liberation War. By digitizing documentary evidence and making records accessible, the system helps safeguard information that might otherwise be vulnerable to physical deterioration or loss.

However, respondents also emphasized the need for continuous modernization. Suggestions included software upgrades, improved system performance, expanded database integration, and the inclusion of additional information related to housing support and socioeconomic conditions.

Several participants proposed incorporating geographic information and digital mapping features. Such functionality could improve monitoring, planning, and verification processes while supporting future service delivery initiatives.

The findings suggest that the system has evolved beyond a simple document repository. It now possesses the potential to become a comprehensive digital platform supporting evidence-based policy making, beneficiary management, historical preservation, and integrated public service delivery.

5.0 Discussion of Findings:

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System has substantially transformed the management of freedom fighter-related services in Bangladesh. The system has improved transparency, accessibility, record preservation, and administrative efficiency. However, the findings also reveal that digital transformation remains an ongoing process rather than a completed reform.

From the perspective of E-Governance Theory, the system has successfully enhanced transparency by making freedom fighter records, gazette notifications, documentary evidence, and administrative decisions publicly accessible. The ability to retrieve detailed information through a single identifier such as the Mukti Barta Number illustrates how digital governance can reduce information asymmetry between citizens and government institutions. Public access to records also reduces opportunities for corruption, document concealment, and administrative discretion.

The findings further support the argument that digital governance strengthens accountability by creating traceable administrative records. Under the traditional paper-based system, citizens often depended on administrative officials to obtain information. The digital platform has significantly reduced this dependency and empowered citizens to verify information independently.

The study also highlights the importance of digital inclusion. Contrary to concerns frequently raised in digital governance literature, the elderly freedom fighters interviewed in this study were not completely excluded from digital services despite limited technological skills. Family members, Union Digital Centers, local entrepreneurs, and community support networks played a critical role in facilitating access. This finding suggests that successful digital transformation depends not only on technology but also on supportive social and institutional mechanisms.

From the perspective of New Public Management (NPM), the system reflects efforts to modernize public administration through technology-driven service delivery. The digitization of records, online verification processes, and electronic allowance management demonstrate a shift toward more efficient and performance-oriented administrative practices.

However, the findings also indicate that several traditional bureaucratic procedures continue to limit efficiency. Delays in payroll processing, incomplete database integration, unresolved data inconsistencies, and slow correction procedures demonstrate that technological modernization has not yet been fully matched by administrative reform. NPM emphasizes streamlined processes and results-oriented management; therefore, the persistence of manual interventions suggests that further organizational transformation remains necessary.

The study also demonstrates that data quality is central to the success of digital governance initiatives. The existence of inconsistencies in names, addresses, parental information, and birth dates highlights the limitations of digitizing historical records without comprehensive data cleansing and verification. While digitization improves access to information, it does not automatically guarantee data accuracy.

Another significant finding relates to citizen trust. Respondents generally expressed confidence in the transparency benefits of the system. However, uncertainty regarding allowance suspensions, correction procedures, and unresolved grievances indicates that trust can be weakened when communication mechanisms are inadequate. Effective digital governance therefore requires not only technological infrastructure but also responsive communication and grievance management systems.

The findings collectively suggest that the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System has achieved substantial progress toward citizen-centered governance. Nevertheless, its long-term success depends on continuous modernization, database integration, process automation, and institutional commitment to service improvement.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

6.1 Conclusion

Digital transformation has become a fundamental component of contemporary public administration, enabling governments to improve transparency, efficiency, accountability, and service delivery. The Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System represents one of Bangladesh's most significant digital governance initiatives, combining administrative modernization with the preservation of national historical records.

This study assessed the effectiveness of the system through qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with freedom fighters, family members, and service providers. The findings indicate that the system has made substantial contributions to public service delivery by increasing transparency, improving information accessibility, preserving documentary evidence, and facilitating the management of freedom fighter-related services.

One of the most important achievements identified by the study is the public availability of freedom fighter records and supporting documents. Citizens can now access and verify information that was previously difficult to obtain under manual administrative systems. This has strengthened transparency and reduced opportunities for information concealment and administrative irregularities.

The study further revealed that digital inclusion has been supported through informal and institutional assistance mechanisms. Although many freedom fighters face challenges in using digital technologies independently, support from family members, Union Digital Centers, and local service providers has enabled them to benefit from digital services.

At the same time, the research identified several challenges that continue to affect system performance. These include delays in allowance disbursement, data inconsistencies across records, inclusion and exclusion errors, limited awareness regarding available services, inadequate grievance mechanisms, and insufficient integration among government databases. Such challenges demonstrate that digital transformation involves both technological and organizational dimensions.

The findings also emphasize the importance of accurate and integrated data management. As government services become increasingly dependent on digital systems, maintaining reliable and interoperable databases becomes essential for ensuring administrative integrity and preventing misuse.

Overall, the study concludes that the Online Freedom Fighter Document Management System has significantly contributed to digital governance and public service delivery in Bangladesh. However, further reforms are necessary to enhance automation, improve data quality, strengthen citizen engagement, and maximize the benefits of digital transformation. The experiences documented in this study provide valuable lessons for future e-governance initiatives both within the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs and across the broader public sector.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Introduce fully automated allowance management.
2. Conduct periodic data verification and cleansing.
3. Simplify record correction procedures.
4. Strengthen digital grievance redress mechanisms.
5. Integrate Bir Nibash information into the MIS.
6. Introduce socioeconomic verification mechanisms.
7. Upgrade software infrastructure regularly.
8. Develop an integrated Freedom Fighter Management Information System.

7. Declaration: I declare that this paper contains neither any plagiarized material nor any AI- generated content. The analysis is the author's contribution. Any deviation from this declaration is author's liability.

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Roll No. 107

Socio-Economic Condition of Fishermen under Khas Jolmohal Management:

A case Study in Jashore Sadar,

Abstract

The governance of open and closed waterbodies specifically government-owned large wetland, ponds, lakes are designated as *Khas Jolmohals* is a cornerstone of Bangladesh's rural economy, fulfilling animal protein demands and acting as a primary employment engine for marginalized communities. This paper evaluates the socio-economic vulnerabilities, structural traps, and waterbody management challenges encountered by traditional, professional fishermen operating under the state-led *Khas Jolmohal* leasing framework in Jashore Sadar Upazila, Bangladesh. Utilizing a descriptive and analytical research design, this study examines the institutional bottlenecks, credit dependencies, and extra-legal pressures that dictate field-level resource distribution. The empirical findings reveal deep structural poverty and pervasive systemic exclusion. Despite mandatory registration within local fishermen's cooperative societies (*Jele Samabay Samity*), traditional fishermen face severe institutional discrimination. Economic indicators highlight stark income constraints: 50 of surveyed fishers earn a monthly household income between 7,500 taka and 10,000, while 36% survive below 7,500taka per month. Housing security is critically low, with only 18% owning a personal homestead, leaving 82% landless or dependent on unstable living arrangements. Furthermore, 84% of respondents explicitly report navigating local political coercion and targeted pressure from non-fishing influential elites during lease distributions, marketing of fish and daily fishing operations. The analysis demonstrates that while public property management policies are de jure structured to protect authentic fishing communities, field-level "elite capture" systematically strips traditional fishermen of their resource rights, converting them into marginalized wage laborers on their own ancestral waters. The paper concludes by presenting a framework for legislative reform, institutional credit democratization, decentralized tracking, and targeted livelihood safety nets to restore equitable access to Bangladesh's public waterbodies.

Keywords: Khas Jolmohal, Elite capture, Traditional fishermen, Socio-economic vulnerability.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Bangladesh is a riverine and wetland-rich nation situated on the deltaic plain of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna rivers. The country's unique geography features an extensive network of open and closed waterbodies, including rivers, canals, floodplains, natural depressions (*haors*), and seasonal wetlands (*beels*). These aquatic resources are rudimentary to the national economy, contributing substantially to GDP, employment, and the country's nutritional security by supplying approximately 60% of national animal protein requirements.

Within the legal architecture of public property administration in Bangladesh, government-owned water bodies leased out for commercial fish cultivation and capture fisheries are categorized as *Khas Jolmohals*. Managed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Land, these waterbodies are split into closed *Jolmohals* (under 20 acres, typically ponds or smaller lakes) and open *Jolmohals* (spanning larger rivers, canals, and extensive water networks). The history of *Khas Jolmohal* governance reflects evolving property regimes, shifting from the feudal revenue collection structures of the Mughal and British colonial *Zamindari* estates to state-controlled public assets following the historic passage of the *East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act (EBSATA)* of 1950.

In modern land governance, the principal regulatory mechanisms are governed by the *Land Management Manual 1990* and the comprehensive *Jolmohal Management Policy 2009*. This modern policy explicitly aims to protect the welfare of traditional, professional fishermen whose ancestral livelihoods depend entirely on harvesting fish. The legal framework decrees that the leasing rights of these public water bodies must preferentially be awarded to registered, genuine fishermen's cooperative societies (*Jele Samabay Samity*). This approach was designed to eliminate exploitative commercial middlemen, maximize sustainable yield, and establish local social equity.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite these explicit regulatory mandates designed to protect vulnerable fishers, the implementation of the *Khas Jolmohal* leasing system remains limited by field-level gaps and institutional contradictions. Land and water resources in Bangladesh are highly contested spaces due to high population density and the commercial profitability of intensive aquaculture. Consequently, public water bodies face constant pressure from non-fishing financial investors, influential political actors, and rural elite networks.

Traditional, professional fishermen in Jashore Sadar Upazila live in conditions marked by severe economic insecurity and social exclusion. The commercialization of public wetland leasing has often transformed traditional user rights into restrictive, capital-intensive contractual regimes. Genuine fishermen face systemic barriers: they are frequently excluded from meaningful cooperative decision-making, lack the formal financial capital required to submit competitive lease bids, and face physical intimidation or legal coercion from local power brokers. As a result, fishing communities continue to experience stagnant or declining real incomes, chronic indebtedness to informal moneylenders (*Mohajons*), poor housing infrastructure, high illiteracy, and vulnerability during seasonal fishing bans.

While existing literature addresses macro-level community fisheries management or the ecological status of major river basins and the northeastern *haor* eco-zones, localized empirical assessments focusing on the socio-economic outcomes of the *Khas Jolmohal* framework in the southwestern region—specifically Jashore Sadar Upazila—remain scarce. This study directly addresses this gap by analyzing empirical data collected from 50 professional fishermen to evaluate their material living standards and identify the structural barriers embedded in current waterbody leasing operations.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The core intent of this research is to analyze the socio-economic realities of professional fishing communities under the current regulatory framework. The study is organized around the following objectives:

General Objective

- To assess the comprehensive socio-economic condition of traditional fishermen operating under the *Khas Jolmohal* management framework in Jashore Sadar Upazila.

Specific Objectives

1. To evaluate key demographic and economic indicators, including household income brackets, asset distribution, literacy levels, and housing security.
2. To investigate the structural and extra-legal barriers within the *Khas Jolmohal* leasing process, specifically focusing on market entry costs and elite capture.
3. To formulate actionable, evidence-based policy recommendations for legal, administrative, and financial reforms to safeguard the resource access rights of authentic fishing communities.

1.4 Justification of the Study

In Jashore Sadar Upazila, the abundance of closed and open waterbodies makes fisheries governance a primary driver of the rural economy. However, despite the high commercial and ecological productivity of these water bodies, fishing communities remain among the most marginalized socio-economic groups in the area. Local policy execution is often affected by powerful non-fishing intermediaries who exploit administrative vulnerabilities to secure lucrative public leases, bypassing the intended poor beneficiaries.

This study is justified because it provides localized empirical evidence on the actual living standards and institutional challenges of fishermen under the *Khas Jolmohal* management system in Jashore Sadar. Most previous research in this region has focused on biological yields, limnological profiles, or technical aquaculture efficiency, often neglecting the socio-political dynamics of resource access.

Consequently, policymakers, the Ministry of Land, the Department of Fisheries, and non-governmental development organizations frequently lack the localized, field-verified data necessary to design targeted interventions. The empirical insights, income charts, and institutional analyses presented in this paper offer a clear resource for designing inclusive public wetland policies, reforming leasing requirements, and implementing welfare programs tailored to marginalized fishing communities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework: Common Property Resources and Elite Capture

The analysis of *Khas Jolmohal* management aligns with the broader theoretical discourse on Common Property Resources (CPRs), institutional design, and the phenomenon of "elite capture." Garrett Hardin's foundational concept of the *Tragedy of the Commons* (1968) posited that open-access resources are inherently prone to overexploitation because individual users act rationally to maximize their personal gain at the expense of the collective asset. However, subsequent scholarship, led by Elinor Ostrom (1990) in her work on governing the commons, demonstrated that long-term sustainable management of shared resources is entirely achievable without heavy-handed state privatization or strict top-down control. Ostrom proved that self-organizing, community-based user groups can effectively govern common resources provided they possess clearly defined boundaries, equitable conflict-resolution arenas, formal recognition by authorities, and balanced power distributions.

In developing agrarian economies like Bangladesh, the state often designs hybrid governance structures, such as the *Jolmohal Management Policy 2009*, to operationalize community-based resource management by granting exclusive leasing privileges to traditional user groups (e.g., fisher cooperatives). However, as developmental economists like Bardhan and Mookherjee (2000) note, these decentralization policies frequently run into the problem of "elite capture." Elite capture occurs when local socio-political power brokers, wealthy capital investors, or non-target actors exploit institutional, financial, or administrative vulnerabilities to monopolize the benefits of a public policy, thereby displacing the intended marginalized beneficiaries. In public wetland management, elite capture transforms community-based co-management into an exclusionary structure that reinforces existing inequalities.

2.2 Historical Evolution of Public Wetland Leasing in Bangladesh

The administrative framework governing public wetlands in Bangladesh has deep historical roots, evolving through distinct legal and political eras:

Post-Independence Consolidation (1950–1971)

Following the abolition of the *Zamindari* system via the *East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act (EBSATA)* of 1950, ownership of all public lands and water bodies was legally transferred to the state. Property classified as *Khas* (state-owned property) was managed primarily by the Ministry of Land. However, the governance style remained deeply colonial; the state prioritized short-term fiscal revenue maximization by leasing out *Jolmohals* via open competitive auctions. This system naturally favored wealthy, influential commercial leaseholders (*Ijaradars*), who routinely outbid traditional, impoverished fishers.

Post-Liberation Policy Transformations (1971–Present)

Recognizing that open auctions systematically excluded traditional fishing communities, the Government of Bangladesh introduced several policy course corrections. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the *New Fisheries Management Policy (NFMP)* sought to shift the management focus from revenue generation to equity and direct participation by licensing individual, genuine fishers. This was reinforced by the *Land Management Manual 1990*.

The current policy benchmark, the *Jolmohal Management Policy 2009*, completely eliminated the open auction system for most closed and open water bodies, instituting a closed bidding system restricted exclusively to registered fishermen's cooperative societies. Despite these progressive statutory adjustments, the deep financial and political asymmetries within rural communities continue to impede the policy's equity objectives.

2.3. Studies on the Socio-Economic Precarity of Fishermen

Empirical scholarship assessing fishing communities across Bangladesh consistently shows they are among the most marginalized occupational groups in the country. Ahmed (1999) and Hossain (2009) documented that traditional fishers suffer from high levels of landlessness, absolute income poverty, structural dependence on non-formal capital networks, and exclusion from mainstream financial institutions. Islam (2011), in an analysis of community-based fisheries management in the central and flood-prone regions of Bangladesh, observed that while participatory models look highly structured on paper, they frequently break down at the village level due to local corruption, political manipulation, and weak enforcement of user rights.

Similarly, Rahman (2017) explored wetland resource management in the southwestern coastal and deltaic plains, noting that large public ponds possess immense commercial potential, which makes them prime targets for local political syndicates. Scholars agree that the core problem facing traditional fisherman is not a lack of legal frameworks, but rather the gap between national statutory policy and its field-level execution. This study directly contributes to this literature by analyzing these dynamics within the specific socio-political environment of Jashore Sadar Upazila.

3. Research Methodology: Research methodology is qualitative. The study primarily utilizes a descriptive and analytical research design to evaluate qualitative socioeconomic and structural issues. Qualitative methods, themes, and analytical approaches have been used to investigate the field-level realities.

3.1 Research Design

This study utilizes a descriptive and analytical research design that integrates quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Quantitative data provides precise, measurable insights into economic distributions, asset ownership, and demographic trends. Concurrently, qualitative methods capture the underlying socio-political dynamics, lease-bidding manipulation, and power asymmetries that standard statistical metrics can obscure.

3.2 Study Area

The field research was conducted across selected *Khas Jolmohal* zones within Jashore Sadar Upazila, located in the Jashore District of southwestern Bangladesh. Geographically, Jashore Sadar is characterized by a high density of closed ponds, extensive water channels, and commercially viable *baors*. These abundant aquatic resources support a large population of hereditary, professional fishing families. The high market value of the local fish harvest makes these public water bodies highly contested sites, providing a

suitable setting for investigating the intersection of public land policies and marginalized livelihoods.

3.3 Target Population and Sampling Technique

The target population for this research was strictly defined as professional, traditional fishermen whose primary income and household sustenance depend directly on harvesting fish within public water bodies under government lease frameworks.

To ensure high data validity, a **purposive sampling technique** was employed to select fifty 50 respondents. The selection criteria required that every respondent be:

1. A full-time, professional fisher from a traditional fishing background.
2. An officially registered member of a localized, government-recognized Fishermen's Cooperative Society (*Jele Samabay Samity*).
3. Actively engaged in harvesting fish within the *Khas Jolmohal* networks of Jashore Sadar Upazila.

While a sample size of 50 respondents may appear small compared to broad national demographic surveys, it was selected to ensure deep, high-fidelity data collection regarding sensitive institutional challenges, lease-bidding micro-dynamics, and financial details. Larger, superficial surveys often fail to capture these nuances because respondents may feel insecure discussing political pressure and informal debt structures.

3.4 Sources of Data

This research is based on both primary and secondary data sources:

Primary Data

Primary data was gathered directly from field sites through structured instruments:

- **Semi structured Questionnaire Surveys:** Administered individually to the 50% selected professional fishers by a trained research team to capture precise quantitative measures of household income, asset portfolios, housing, and semi-structural obstacles.
- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):** Conducted with five (5) key figures, including senior cooperative leaders, local union parishad representatives, community elders, and local land administration officials, to verify the structural realities of the lease-bidding process.

- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Three 3 separate FGD sessions were organized with groups of 8 fishermen to facilitate open dialogue regarding extra-legal exclusion, market access barriers, and the mechanics of elite exploitation.

Secondary Data

Secondary data was gathered to establish a historical and regulatory baseline. Sources included official policy files from the Ministry of Land (e.g., *Jolmohal Management Policy 2009*), annual statistical registries from the Department of Fisheries (DoF), relevant academic journal articles, land management textbooks, and research monographs published by the WorldFish Center and similar organizations.

3.5 Data Collection Tools and Quality Control: the data collection tool is semi-structured questionnaires. The primary field instruments included semi-structured questionnaire schedules, open-ended KII guidelines, and interactive FGD protocols. To ensure data quality, all field instruments were pre-tested in a fishing community outside the target sample zone, allowing for necessary calibration. Informed verbal and written consent were explicitly obtained from every respondent prior to interviewing, and strict data anonymization was maintained to safeguard participants from potential local repercussions.

3.6 Data Analysis

The collected data was cleaned, organized, and verified for consistency. Quantitative data was processed using basic descriptive statistics. Frequency distributions, percentage analyses, and mean cross-tabulations were applied to key variables—such as monthly household income ranges, homestead land ownership status, and types of institutional harassment.

The resulting insights are presented using structured tables and conceptual diagrams. For qualitative data gathered via KIIs and FGDs, a systematic thematic matrix analysis was conducted, categorizing field insights into core themes: financial exclusion, political coercion, and administrative loopholes.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic and Professional Status of Respondents

The demographic baseline analysis confirmed that 100% of the fifty 50 surveyed respondents are full-time, professional, traditional fishermen. Every single respondent possesses an official fisherman identity card issued by the Department of Fisheries and maintains active registration within a local Fishermen's Cooperative Society (*Jele Samabay Samity*). This professional homogeneity is highly significant: on paper, this exact

demographic group should be the exclusive managers and beneficiaries of the *Khas Jolmohal* leasing system under national law. Therefore, any socio-economic deprivation or institutional exclusion identified in this sample points directly to systemic implementation gaps rather than a failure of target group identification.

4.2 Economic Profiles: Chronic Low Income and Poverty Traps

The empirical financial profiles compiled from the field indicate deep structural poverty. Despite working in highly productive water bodies, the direct economic returns secured by genuine fishers are insufficient for sustainable living standards.

The field data regarding monthly household income was cross tabulated into distinct income ranges to assess living standards relative to national economic baselines:

Monthly Household Income Range (BDT)	Number of Surveyed Fishermen (N=50)	Percentage of Total Sample (4000 words)	Structural Economic Classification
Below 7,500 BDT	18	36%	Extreme Vulnerability / Ultra-Poor
7,500 BDT to 10,000BDT	32	64%	Low Income / Vulnerable Poor
Above 10,000 BDT	0	0%	Marginal Middle Class
Total	50	100%	

Source: Primary Field Survey, Jashore Sadar Upazila.

The table reveals that 100% of the professional fishers surveyed earn a monthly household income beneath 10,000 BDT. Specifically, 64% (32 respondents) fell to the 7,500 BDT to 10,000 BDT brace, while 36% (18 respondents) survive on an income below 7,500 BDT. These financial constraints place the fishers well below national urban and peri-urban living wage benchmarks, keeping them trapped in a cycle of generational poverty where savings are impossible, and food expenditure consumes much of their income.

4.3 Housing Precarity, Land Deprivation, and Sanitation Living Standards

Socio-economic security is reflected not only in cash flows but also in physical asset ownership, secure housing, and access to basic amenities. The empirical field observations indicate significant land deprivation among the fishers:

- **Homestead Land Ownership:** Only 18% (9 respondents) own their personal homesteads (*Viti*).
- **Landlessness and Housing Insecurity:** The remaining 82% (41 respondents) do not own land. They live on inherited joint-family plots, rent small spaces, or build temporary settlements on public river embankments or *Khas* lands without formal land titles.
- **Housing Quality:** Over 90% of dwellings were classified as *Kutchha* (constructed from fragile materials like bamboo, thatch, corrugated iron sheets, and mud), leaving them vulnerable to seasonal storms and flooding.
- **Water and Sanitation Access:** While access to basic tube-well water was high (94%), over 70% of households lacked access to hygienic, sanitary latrines, relying instead on shared unhygienic facilities. This high level of asset deprivation impacts their financial options: without land titles to offer as collateral, these fishers are systematically excluded from formal banking institution credit lines.

4.4 Institutional Bottlenecks and the Reality of Elite Capture

The core findings of this research highlight the institutional and structural barriers that prevent traditional fishers from realizing their legal rights under the *Jolmohal Management Policy 2009*. The survey recorded a clear consensus regarding the presence of extra-legal interference and elite capture in local water bodies:

- 84% of surveyed professional respondents (42 out of 50) reported encountering persistent local political interference and intense, coercive pressure from illegal, influential non-fishing elites.

The qualitative data from FGDs and KIs clarifies how this systematic exploitation operates on the ground:

Transition to Low-Wage Laborers

Once an elite syndicate captures a *Khas Jolmohal* lease, traditional fishers are often reduced to wage laborers or sharecroppers on their own ancestral waters. Instead of

operating as independent, self-improving cooperative owners; they receive a small daily wage or a minor percentage of the catch. The high-value commercial species are collected and sold directly by the elite financiers, concentrating the economic benefits of public wetlands in the hands of a few non-fishing investors.

Coercive Control and Asymmetric Power

Fishers who attempt to challenge this arrangement face significant obstacles. Respondents noted that any attempts by genuine fishers to independently bid for leases or manage water bodies without elite backing are met with physical exclusion, destruction of fishing gear, or targeted legal harassment. The local land administration and law enforcement agencies are often perceived as non-responsive or biased toward influential political figures, leaving marginalized fishers without access to justice.

5. Discussion and Synthesis

The empirical evidence from Jashore Sadar Upazila reveals a clear disconnect between progressive statutory policy and the socio-political realities of local resource management. According to institutional design theory, community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) models should empower marginalized groups, improve resource sustainability, and reduce poverty. However, when these models are implemented within deeply unequal socio-political environments, they are vulnerable to extensive elite capture.

The primary structural driver of this institutional failure is the capital-intensive design of the lease-bidding framework. The state requires immediate, lump-sum cash payments for annual or multi-year leases to secure public revenue. This design fails to account for the cash-flow realities of traditional fishers, who operate on a day-to-day subsistence basis. Combined with the total absence of tailored institutional credit lines from state-owned banks, this payment structure creates a financial barrier that traditional fishers cannot overcome independently. This financial gap allows non-fishing investors to step in as de facto leaseholders. Consequently, the cooperative society framework, designed to empower fishers, is transformed into an administrative tool used by elite networks to obtain state-subsidized leases.

6. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the *Khas Jolmohal* management framework in Jashore Sadar Upazila faces structural challenges in achieving its core social equity and poverty reduction goals. Although the fifty (50) surveyed fishermen are legally registered cooperative members, they remain trapped in systemic poverty. This is clearly indicated by low monthly

household incomes (under 10,000 BDT for 100% of the sample), high landlessness (82%), and widespread vulnerability to political and economic coercion (84%).

The current policy framework, designed to protect marginalized communities, has been compromised by elite capture, transforming independent fishers into low-wage laborers on public water bodies. Addressing these issues requires moving away from revenue-focused leasing models toward comprehensive, well-monitored, participatory wetland governance.

6.2 Policy Recommendations

To address elite capture and improve the socio-economic status of traditional fishing communities, the following policy interventions are recommended:

1. Restructure Lease Payment Frameworks

The Ministry of Land should reform the payment mechanics governing *Khas Jolmohal* leases. Instead of requiring large upfront lump-sum payments, the policy should allow for flexible, installment-based payments spread across the active fishing season. This adjustment would lower the financial entry barrier for genuine fishers and reduce their reliance on wealthy investors.

2. Establish Dedicated Institutional Credit Lines

The central bank (*Bangladesh Bank*) should mandate state-owned commercial banks and agricultural development banks (such as *Bangladesh Krishi Bank*) to design and deploy low-interest, collateral-free credit products specifically for registered fishermen's cooperative societies. These targeted micro-credit lines would provide cooperatives with an independent financial capacity to meet lease requirements.

3. Implement Decentralized Oversight and Multi-Stakeholder Monitoring

Independent, multi-stakeholder monitoring committees should be established at the Upazila and District levels. These bodies must include representatives from traditional fishing communities, civil society, non-governmental organizations, and the Department of Fisheries. The committees should be tasked with verifying that the physical management, operational decisions, and economic profits of leased *Khas Jolmohals* remain directly in the hands of registered fishers.

4. Expand Target Livelihood Interventions and Social Safety Nets

The Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief should integrate vulnerable fishing households into national social safety net programs. This includes providing targeted skills training, off-season Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) support during fishing bans, and long-term housing security through public housing

initiatives (such as the *Asrayan Project*) to address the high rate of landlessness (82%) in these communities.

7. Declare that this paper contains neither any plagiarized materials nor any AI-generated content. The analysis is the author's contribution. Any deviation from this declaration is author's liability.

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Roll No. 108

Seminar Paper

A Framework for Quick Response to Disaster Management via Community Engagement with Reference to Documentation: A Multi-Hazard Qualitative Study

Abstract

Bangladesh has developed a mature disaster risk management architecture, yet the first actions that save lives, assets, documents, livestock, and mobility in the opening hours of a disaster are often performed by ordinary residents before formal agencies arrive. This article investigates how community-led quick response is practiced and documented across five multi-hazard field contexts in northern Bangladesh: drought in Lalmonirhat, flood and livestock risk in Jaldhaka of Nilphamari, flood in Gangachara of Rangpur, riverbank erosion in Gaibandha, and Kalboishakhi storm impacts in Domar of Nilphamari. Drawing on key informant interviews and focus group discussions, the study uses thematic analysis to identify response functions, enabling conditions, documentation gaps, and policy-entry points. The findings show a consistent pattern: communities act as first respondent through evacuation, shelter support, boat transport, road clearance, livestock relocation, protection of identity and land documents, informal warning dissemination, and care for children, older people, women, and persons with disabilities. However, official reporting generally counts losses and relief transactions rather than the social labor, time, material contribution, and local knowledge that reduce losses. The article proposes a Community Response Documentation Framework (CRDF) that links field-level evidence capture with Union Parishad verification, disaster management committee reporting, NGO support, and national disaster risk reduction planning. The analysis argues that documenting community response is not merely a recognition exercise; it is a governance reform that can strengthen accountability, target preparedness investment, build local motivation, and align Bangladesh's disaster management practice with the Sendai Framework's priorities on risk understanding, governance, preparedness, and stakeholder participation.

Keywords: community-based disaster management; disaster documentation; first response; Bangladesh; riverbank erosion; drought; flood; Kalboishakhi; Sendai Framework.

1.0 Introduction:

1.1 Background and Problem Statement:

Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to natural disasters due to its low-lying deltaic terrain and proximity to the Bay of Bengal. Bangladesh experienced 219 natural disasters between 1980 to 2008. Major recent disasters include severe floods (2022, 2024) and cyclones like Amphan (2020) and Yaas (2021), which cause significant displacement, damage agricultural land and destroy livelihoods. Bangladesh has developed a comprehensive, multi-hazard national disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategy that aims to enhance the country's resilience to natural hazards and climate-induced disasters. This strategy is closely aligned with international frameworks, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and integrates risk considerations into national development planning. Underpinned by a robust legal and institutional foundation—including the “Disaster Management Act, 2012” and the Standing Orders on Disasters—the strategy clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders. A notable feature of Bangladesh's approach is its effective vertical integration. During and immediately after disasters the quick responders are the neighborhood communities. A quick response to disaster management involves immediate actions taken within the first 72 hours—search and rescue, evacuation and providing emergency relief like food and water. It focuses on saving lives, sanitizing the area and preventing further damage through rapid, coordinated efforts to minimize casualties and restore safety. But these activities are not quantified and acknowledged in the official documents. Though there are lot of references of CBDM in the disaster management practices, in only a few cases it has been successfully incorporated into policy issues. There are two major causes in this regard: First, the best practices of CBDM initiatives become local initiatives and are not properly disseminated. It was observed that there have been good examples of CBDM in specific locations within a country. But these lessons are not transferred to other parts of the country neither do they reach adjacent countries of the region. The other aspect is that due to a lack of recognition of CBDM initiatives at the national level, there are often limited resources devoted to these activities. Thus, in most cases, CBDM is seen in isolation and distinct from national disaster mitigation practices and it is not included in national development policy.

1.2 Objectives:

There is an increasing need to understand the basics of CBDM. In this study find the initiatives of the local communities are counted and recognized in the formal documents. Advocate to formulate a framework for incorporating CBDM into national policy issues with special focus on sustainability.

Specific objectives:

1. How to quantify the initiatives of the local communities during and immediately after disasters in the formal documents?
2. Advocate for the formal recognition of these initiatives in national disaster management documents and policies.

1.3 Research questions:

- i. How does community exposed to disaster Vulnerability respond to the Disaster management programmes? And
- ii. How can these initiatives of the local communities put in the formal documents?

1.4 Justification /Rational of the study

The world is facing disasters on everyday basis. Despite the fact that the entire world is facing different types of natural and anthropogenic disturbances, most of the victims are reported in the under developed and developing countries from Asia and the Pacific region. The geological settings, geographical features and demographic profile compel Bangladesh to experience excessive physical and social vulnerability. As a result, the high-risk profile causes the country to rank 13th out of 181 countries of the world, whereas rank 7th in terms of impact level from the climate led disasters that took place between 2000 and 2019. Since independence, the country experienced a number of major disasters with severe intensity, like the 1991, 2007, and 2009 cyclones and 1987, 1988, 1998, 2004, and 2007 floods, in addition to many small calamities. (Department of Disaster Management, Dhaka, 2012)

SL NO	Date	Disasters	Total death	Total affected
1	20 August 1998	Flood	1,517	7,30,00,000
2	29 April 1991	Cyclone	1,38,866	1,54,38,849
3	13 May 1996	Tornado	545	34,000

4	8 July 1998	Flood	1050	1,50,00,050
5	12 August 2004	Flood	747	3,60,00,000
6	1 September 2007	Flood	1110	1,37,71,380
7	15 November 2007	Cyclone	4234	89,23,259
8	25 May 2009	Cyclone	330	50,000
9	27 June 2012	Landslide	122	3,62,465
10	13 May 2013	Cyclone	17	1,28,550
11	2019 to 2021	Covid-19 pandemic	Over 20 million in whole world	Affected 100 millions, Infected likely in the billions

Sources: Department of Disaster Management, MoDMR, GOB

The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA) played a significant role in disaster risk reduction and adopted a guideline for mitigating disaster vulnerability by UN member countries in 2005. Realizing this, the Government of Bangladesh has launched a series of disaster reduction plans and programs through Comprehensive Disaster Management (Hossain, 2011; Izumi and Shaw, 2015). Currently, the main documents dealing with disasters in Bangladesh are the Disaster Management Act 2012, the National Disaster Management Policy 2015, the Standing Order on Disasters 1997 (revised on 2010), the Division of Disaster Management and Disasters (DM & RD) and the National Plan for Disaster Management 2010-2015.). After independence in 1971, Bangladesh enacted a well-written Constitution in Various articles of the Bangladesh Constitution support an effective disaster management policy. various articles of the Bangladesh Constitution support an effective disaster management policy. The Bangladesh Constitution dictates governments and other organizations to manage disasters, all the institutions, including the Government of Bangladesh, have to follow the Constitution (Kamal, 1994; Chaudhury, 1995).

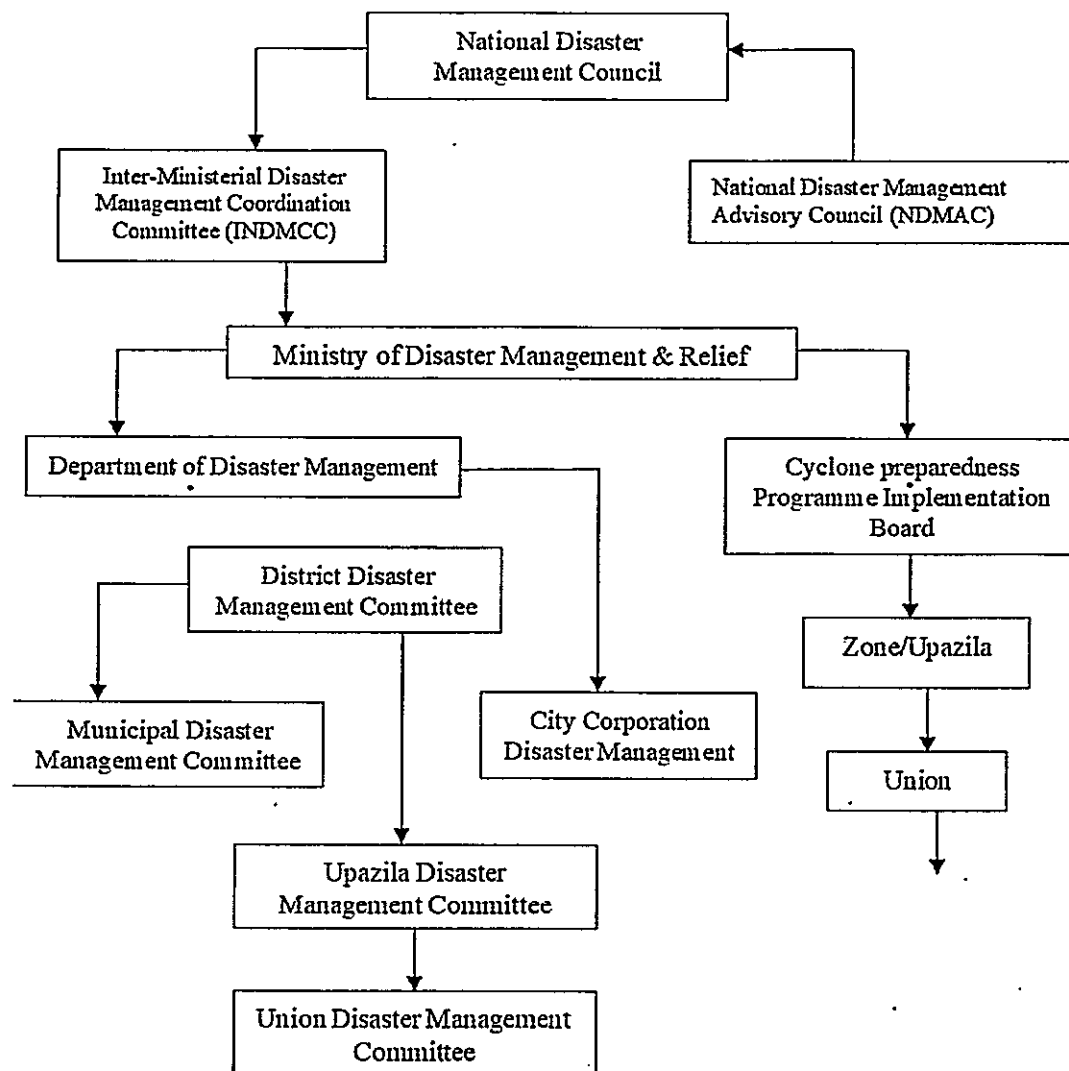


Figure 2: Institutional Framework of Disaster management in Bangladesh (Khan and Rahman, 2007).

Bangladesh has done well in some indexes like birth control, life expectancy, poverty alleviation, literacy rate, and also disaster management etc. But regarding this, she has to go a long way. There are lots of formal and informal initiatives including neighborhood communities regarding disaster management. Community participation-oriented disaster management approach is very much successful among other initiatives. Response to disaster risk reduction (DRR), community-based disaster management (CBDM), and enhancing community resilience to natural disasters can reduce or minimize the impacts of disaster. This research is very much justified to expedite these mentioned processes.

2. Literature Review:

Disaster risk governance has evolved from a predominantly relief-centered model toward a broader risk reduction paradigm. The Sendai Framework represents this shift by emphasizing risk understanding, governance, resilience investment, and preparedness for effective response and recovery (UNDRR, 2015). Bangladesh's disaster policy landscape reflects a similar evolution. The Standing Orders on Disaster 2019 define roles and responsibilities across stages and levels of disaster management, while the National Plan for Disaster Management 2021-2025 seeks to guide implementation of the Disaster Management Act and to operationalize a whole-of-society approach (Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief [MoDMR], 2019; 2020). The National Adaptation Plan of Bangladesh 2023-2050 also places disaster, social safety, agriculture, water resources, capacity development, and institutional resilience within a long-term adaptation agenda (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change [MoEFCC], 2022). Despite this progressive architecture, implementation remains uneven. Bangladesh has been described as a strong case of institutional learning in cyclone risk reduction, yet hazards such as riverbank erosion, local storms, heat, and drought often require finer local response systems than national plans can provide. The World Bank Group (2022) identifies climate risk and adaptation as central development issues for Bangladesh, while the IPCC highlights increasing climate-related risks across Asia, including risks associated with extreme heat, floods, and drought conditions (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2022). These risks are not experienced abstractly. They appear as crop loss, loss of safe water, repeated displacement, transport disruption, damage to electric lines, and pressure on health, education, and livelihoods.

Community-based disaster risk reduction (CBDRR) offers a people-centered response to this complexity. Twigg (2015) emphasizes participation, accountability, local capacity, and social organization as core principles of effective DRR. Habiba et al. (2013) show that Bangladesh has substantial experience with community-based approaches, including local planning and stakeholder collaboration. Azad et al. (2020) further argue that people-centered risk reduction in Bangladesh depends on cross-scale partnerships that can connect community participation with institutional support. These works support a central premise of the present study: community response is not peripheral to disaster management; it is one of its operational foundations. A second strand of literature concerns the relationship between local knowledge and formal systems. Mercer et al. (2010) propose integrating indigenous and scientific knowledge through participatory

processes rather than treating one as superior. Kelman et al. (2012) similarly argue that no single knowledge form is sufficient for DRR, but local and indigenous knowledge can contribute far more than policy systems often allow. Gaillard and Mercer (2013) describe the challenge as a knowledge-to-action gap: the problem is not simply that knowledge is absent, but that knowledge does not always travel into decisions, institutions, and practice. In the field sites studied here, that gap is visible in highly practical terms. Residents know signs of riverbank erosion, who owns a boat, which family has a disabled member, where cattle can be moved, and which houses need urgent help. Yet that knowledge is often held orally, used in emergencies, and forgotten after official damage forms are completed.

A **third relevant** literature concerns humanitarian information management. Altay and Labonte (2014) show that information flows, formats, sharing priorities, and hierarchical systems shape emergency response effectiveness. Their lesson is directly relevant to community response documentation: if the reporting form does not ask about community contributions, those contributions will not appear in the official evidence chain. Documentation is therefore not a neutral clerical issue. It determines what is seen as a disaster management input, what is considered eligible for support, and what lessons are transferred across locations. Bangladesh's disaster management literature also emphasizes partnership. Khan and Rahman (2007) assessed the partnership approach to disaster management and identified the importance of coordination among government, NGOs, and communities. The present article extends that discussion by arguing that partnership requires documentation infrastructure. If communities are treated as partners only during mobilization but not during reporting, planning, and budgeting, partnership remains incomplete. A formal record of community action can provide a basis for recognition, accountability, capacity building, and evidence-based policy revision.

A **fourth relevant** literature examines the nature, intensity, vulnerability and consequences of various types of disasters and also explores the trends of different types of disasters viz. cyclone, flood, tornados and nor'-wester, earthquakes, landslides, riverbank erosion, drought, famine, fire, building collapse etc. The study (i) elucidates the nature, intensity, trends, causes and consequences, severity and vulnerability of different types of disaster in Bangladesh from last five decades to the present day (ii) explores the disaster risks, challenges and vulnerabilities of disaster affected people and (iii) find out how to cope with or adapt or manage against various disasters

confronted with and disaster risk reduction and mitigation and (iv) suggests policy formulations or recommendations of disaster management as utmost need.

A fifth relevant literature try to investigate the existing shortfalls in the existing foundational DRR plan of Bangladesh and contribute in developing a frame-work of National DRR Strategy in line with the SFDRR guideline in order to meet the target in time. In addition, this study also try to evaluate the policy initiatives of Bangladesh tackling COVID-19 outbreak. In doing so, this research look into the available sources of objective information and then carry out a comprehensive analysis to reach a conclusion.

A sixth relevant literature Bangladesh is prone to recurring natural hazards due to its geographical position and topography. The country has suffered casualties and damage to homes, agriculture, and the economy as a result of tropical cyclones. Effective disaster management approaches are required to reduce the risk of disaster and loss. The Constitution of Bangladesh plays an active role in implementing these approaches at the national and sub-national level. This article analyzes parts of the Constitution addressing disaster management by ensuring disaster governance and adaptive governance. Bangladesh's supreme law supports all phases of the disaster management cycle. Consequently, it is said that the Constitution would be an essential document for effective disaster management at all levels.

The study adopts three analytical concepts. First, community first response refers to actions taken by local residents, volunteers, local leaders, and informal groups before or alongside formal response agencies during the first 0-72 hours of a disaster or during the critical onset phase of a slow-onset hazard. Second, documentation gap refers to the mismatch between actual community action and formal records. Third, institutional recognition refers to the process by which community actions are validated, archived, acknowledged, and connected to resources or policy change. These concepts allow the study to move beyond the general claim that communities are important and to ask how their contributions can be made governable without being bureaucratically captured or overburdened. The analytical framing is also informed by vulnerability theory. Wisner et al. (2004) argue that disasters occur when vulnerable people are exposed to hazards; vulnerability is shaped by social, economic, and political conditions. In the field data, landless laborers, small farmers, women-headed households, children, older people, and persons with disabilities appear repeatedly as vulnerable groups. Community response often works

precisely because residents know these vulnerability patterns. However, unless local vulnerability knowledge is documented and protected, formal systems may under-target assistance and fail to recognize who performed critical care work.

3. Methodology

This study has adopted a qualitative, multi-site case study design to explore community-led disaster response and documentation practices in northern Bangladesh. The interpretive research approach has been employed because the study has focused on understanding human behavior, experiences, emotions, and social phenomena rather than statistical measurement. Purposive sampling has been used to select participants with relevant knowledge and experience in disaster management and community response.

Data have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data have been gathered through Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) conducted in several disaster-prone areas, including Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Rangpur, and Gaibandha districts. These sites have represented different disaster contexts such as drought, flood, riverbank erosion, and Kalboishakhi storms. Participants have included government officials, Union Parishad representatives, agriculture and livestock officers, NGO personnel, community disaster management committee members, farmers, women, youth volunteers, and disaster-affected households.

Secondary data have been collected from journals, books, policy documents, reports, periodicals, and internet sources. The collected information has been analyzed using an inductive thematic approach combined with policy-oriented coding. Field data have been reviewed to identify major response activities, including rescue, evacuation, livestock protection, crop protection, warning dissemination, water management, and emergency support. These activities have then been categorized according to hazard type and stakeholder involvement.

To enhance the reliability of findings, the study has applied triangulation by comparing perspectives from community members, government officials, and NGO representatives across

different disaster settings. Ethical considerations have been maintained throughout the research process by ensuring respect for participants and responsible use of field information.

Although the study has relied on qualitative and purposively collected data, it has provided valuable insights into the recurring contribution of community-led disaster response and the existing gaps in formal disaster documentation systems.

Limitations of the study

The study has limitations. First, the data are qualitative and purposively collected; they do not provide district-level prevalence rates. Second, some field files contain richer participant profiles than others, which limits cross-site comparability. Third, the analysis relies on field notes rather than audio transcripts, so it cannot conduct fine-grained discourse analysis. Fourth, the proposed framework is conceptual and requires pilot testing. Nevertheless, the data provide sufficient evidence to identify a policy-relevant problem: community-led response is repeated, valuable, measurable, and insufficiently institutionalized in disaster documentation

Table 1. Field sites, hazards, and data sources used in the qualitative synthesis

Field context	Dominant hazard focus	Key data sources	Analytical emphasis
Aditmari/Kamlabari, Lalmonirhat	Drought	KII with agriculture official; FGD with six participants	Water scarcity, crop loss, drought policy gap, vulnerable groups, rainwater harvesting needs
Jaldhaka, Nilphamari	Flood, storm, drought, livestock risk	KII with livestock officer, PIO, NGO officer; FGDs with community members and CDMC/local leaders	First response, livestock relocation, coordination, youth/women roles, training and logistics needs
Gangachara, Rangpur	Flood	FGDs with farmers and women; KII with Union Parishad member and CDMC volunteer	Crop damage, child and elderly rescue, shelter support, bamboo pathways, undocumented volunteer work
Kamarjani/Gaibandha Sadar	Riverbank erosion	FGD with erosion-affected community; KII with PIO	Night evacuation, boat rescue, document protection, informal early warning, volunteer recording gap
Chilahati/Domar, Nilphamari	Kalboishakhi storm	FGD modules with farmers, women, youth; KII with UP member and NGO volunteer	Crop and house damage, child injury response, livestock rescue, road clearance, electricity disruption

Note. The field corpus is treated as qualitative evidence. Participant counts are not used for statistical inference.

Research Gap: There are lots of research regarding disaster management. But no study finds the initiatives of the local communities put in the formal documents. There is no also a policy that guidelines the competent authorities to make it quantitative manners.

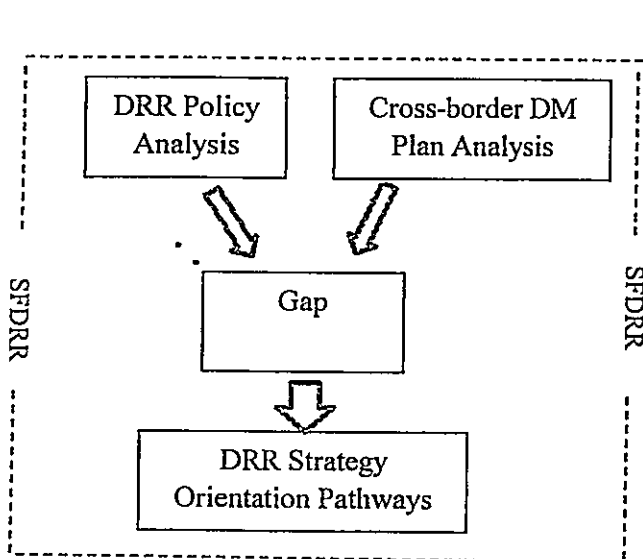


Figure:1 Conceptual Framework

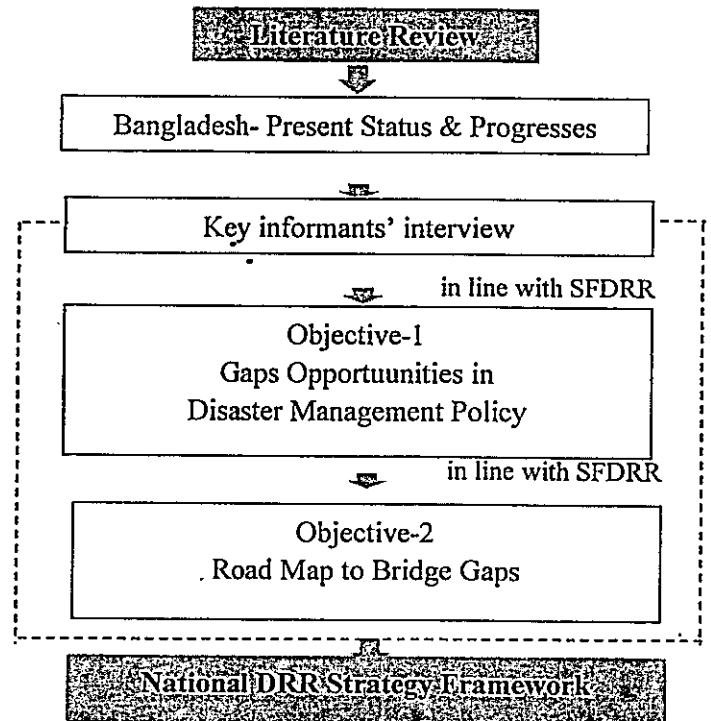


Figure:2 Methodological Framework

4. Findings

The findings are organized around six themes: the community as first responder, hazard-specific response functions, informal warning and local knowledge, protection of vulnerable groups, 'documentation gaps, and policy aspirations'. Across all sites, participants described community response as immediate, practical, and socially organized. In contrast, formal assistance was generally described as delayed, focused on assessment and relief, or constrained by transport, communication, resources, and mandate.

4.1 Community members are de facto first responders

Community members have served as de facto first responders during disasters because they have usually been the first to provide rescue, evacuation, emergency assistance, and information before formal agencies arrive. Their proximity, local knowledge, and social networks have enabled rapid action, making them a critical component of effective disaster response systems (IFRC, 2020; UNDRR, 2015). The strongest cross-site finding is that communities respond first. In Jaldhaka,

the PIO stated that local people are key actors in disaster response, while government agencies mainly provide support and coordination. The NGO officer similarly noted that community participation is indispensable because residents are physically closest to affected people when a sudden disaster occurs. In Gangachara, local people rescued children, elderly persons, livestock, and belongings before external support arrived. In Domar, youth and neighbors rescued cattle, protected houses, cleared roads, and transported an injured child to health services. In Gaibandha, the erosion FGD documented a dramatic example: during a night erosion event in August 2023, community members reportedly evacuated 23 households, approximately 120 people, built temporary bamboo shelters, saved roof sheets, boats, cattle, goats, furniture, and protected identity and land documents before government officials arrived several days later.

This pattern matters because it challenges a conventional sequence in which the state is imagined as the principal responder and community members as beneficiaries. The field evidence suggests a different sequence: community action begins immediately, formal response arrives later, and official documentation often begins at the moment of damage assessment rather than at the moment of community rescue. The earliest and most labor-intensive phase is therefore poorly represented in institutional memory.

Community response is not random. It follows informal division of labor. In Gaibandha, participants described knowing who had boats, who could do heavy lifting, who coordinated with the chairman, and who managed documents, children, and valuables. In Jaldhaka, youth volunteers disseminated warnings, assisted in rescue, helped vulnerable groups, and distributed relief. Women were described as central to shelter management, food preparation, childcare, and support to elderly and disabled persons. In Domar, neighbors responded in minutes to storm impacts by protecting children, cattle, roof structures, and roads. The consistency of these patterns indicates that local response is a social infrastructure. It may not be written into formal plans, but it is embedded in relationships, trust, practical knowledge, and lived hazard experience.

4.2 Response actions vary by hazard but share a common logic of life, asset, and document protection

While disaster response actions vary significantly across different hazards, emergency logistics always operate under a shared foundational mandate. The primary core objective focuses on

preserving human life, safeguarding physical infrastructure, and protecting vital administrative documentation to prevent systemic societal collapse during a crisis (Jiang & Yuan, 2019).

The field sites show that community response is tailored to hazard characteristics. During flood, community members prioritize human evacuation, livestock movement, temporary shelter, food sharing, road or boat mobility, and rescue of children and older persons. Gangachara farmers reported crop inundation, road submergence, and income loss, while women described nighttime evacuation and shelter support. During Kalboishakhi storms, action is faster and more immediate because damage occurs within minutes. Farmers described flattened crops and livestock exposure; women described child injury from hail and neighbors' immediate rescue; youth described road clearance after trees fell. During riverbank erosion, the most distinctive community actions are dismantling houses before they collapse, moving households to embankments, using boats, saving land papers and NID cards, building temporary shelters, and warning downstream chars. During drought, the action pattern shifts toward water conservation, crop diversification, demand for rainwater harvesting, drought-tolerant crops, groundwater management, and support for vulnerable households.

Despite these differences, a common logic links all sites. Community members try to protect life first, then livestock and movable assets, then documents, food, water, and mobility. This order is especially visible in erosion and flood contexts, where residents must decide quickly what can be saved. The field data also show that documents are not merely personal belongings; they are legal survival tools. Gaibandha participants stressed that saving NID cards and land documents protected people's legal existence. This is a critical finding for disaster policy because official damage assessment often focuses on visible physical loss while underestimating administrative vulnerabilities created by document loss.

The drought case adds another dimension. Drought is slow-onset and therefore does not always trigger the same dramatic rescue narrative. Yet the Lalmonirhat field materials show serious agricultural and health implications: agriculture dependency above 60 percent, estimated crop loss around 20 percent, heat stroke and dehydration concerns, and a lack of dedicated government programs in the reported locality. The FGD participants linked drought to climate change, monsoon unpredictability, groundwater overexploitation, deforestation, Teesta river crisis, and desertification. Their recommended actions included early warning, water infrastructure, rainwater

harvesting, wastewater reuse, reservoirs, drought-resistant crops, and community safety nets. This suggests that quick response for drought must be understood as early action and anticipatory adaptation, not only emergency relief.

Table 2. Cross-hazard typology of community-led quick response identified in the field data

Response domain	Observed community actions	Hazard contexts	Documentation status in field evidence
Human safety	Evacuation of children, older people, women, disabled persons; medical referral after injury	Flood, storm, erosion	Frequently absent or only indirectly reflected in damage/relief reports
Livestock and livelihood asset protection	Moving cattle/goats to elevated places or sheds; saving roof sheets, boats, furniture, crops/food supplies	Flood, storm, erosion, drought	Usually undocumented; loss may be counted but prevention effort is not
Shelter and household support	Temporary shelter on embankments, neighbor shelter, cooking and childcare in shelters	Flood, erosion, storm	Rarely recorded with names, hours, or gendered labor
Mobility and access restoration	Boat transport, bamboo walkways, tree/road clearance after storm	Flood, erosion, storm	Mostly absent from formal reports
Warning and risk communication	Mobile calls, WhatsApp group, neighbor alerts, observation of cracks/river cutting/ecological signs	Erosion, flood, storm, drought	Informal and not connected to official early warning systems
Water and drought management	Water conservation, rainwater harvesting proposals, crop diversification, community ponds/reservoir needs	Drought	Needs are recognized informally, but dedicated program documentation appears weak in the field material
Document protection	Saving NID cards, land papers, medicine, legal documents	Erosion, flood	Highly valued by community; absent from standard damage-focused documentation

Note. Categories are synthesized from multiple KIIs and FGDs. The table reports qualitative recurrence rather than numerical prevalence.

4.3 Local knowledge functions as early warning and operational intelligence

Local knowledge acts as an essential preparedness and response tool, providing localized, time-tested insights that serve as early warning and operational intelligence to predict environmental anomalies and significantly enhance community resilience (Mwalwimba, Manda & Ngongondo, 2024).

Local knowledge appears in two forms: hazard anticipation and operational response. In Gaibandha, participants described reading cracks in the soil, the sound of riverbank collapse, fish movement, upstream information, and mobile communication from other chars. A WhatsApp group named Kamarjani Alert was described as a community communication channel. In Jaldhaka and Gangachara, residents followed weather forecasts when available but also relied on neighbors and local announcements. In drought-affected Lalmonirhat, FGD participants identified water scarcity, plant behavior, and ecological or animal signs as early indicators. These practices confirm the argument that local knowledge is practical, place-specific, and action-oriented (Kelman et al., 2012; Mercer et al., 2010).

However, local knowledge is not automatically integrated into formal early warning systems. Participants repeatedly described informal knowledge as something that worked inside the community but did not travel upward. The Gaibandha KII suggested that disaster management committees and volunteers sometimes maintain lists and photos, but reports remain basic and may not reflect the full scale of community action. This points to a partial documentation environment rather than a total absence. Some records exist, especially through committees, photos, videos, NGO case stories, and volunteer lists. The problem is that these records are inconsistent, not standardized by hazard, not linked to community contributions in measurable form, and not reliably translated into planning and resource allocation.

The policy challenge is therefore not to replace local knowledge with expert systems. It is to create interfaces through which local observations, names, hours, resources, and outcomes can be captured without slowing response. A Bengali paper form with visual icons, a Union Digital Center entry form, a WhatsApp-based report, or NGO-assisted mobile data collection were all suggested in the Gaibandha FGD. These suggestions are important because they come from residents who understand both the urgency of disasters and the limitations of literacy, internet access, and trust.

4.4 Vulnerable groups are known locally but not always visible institutionally

Structural inequalities and systemic marginalization often render locally recognized vulnerable populations institutionally invisible to policymakers during disasters (Méndez et al., 2020). Consequently, humanitarian frameworks frequently overlook these groups, exacerbating their exposure to risk and creating significant barriers to long-term recovery (Sultana et al., 2023).

Across sites, participants identified children, older persons, persons with disabilities, women, landless laborers, small farmers, and erosion-displaced households as particularly vulnerable. In drought-affected Lalmonirhat, elderly people, children, and disabled persons were identified as highly vulnerable because they cannot easily move, access water, or adapt livelihood strategies. In Gangachara, neighbors rescued children at night and helped families relocate to shelters. In Domar, a neighbor rescued an injured child during a hailstorm. In Gaibandha, women described maintaining an informal mental list of elderly and disabled residents, including a blind older woman who was never left during erosion events.

This local knowledge of vulnerability is highly valuable. Formal vulnerability lists may exist through social protection programs, disability registers, or Union Parishad records, but the field data show that operational vulnerability during a disaster is often more specific. It depends on who is home at night, who can walk, which household has a boat, who has documents buried in a tin box, who needs separate transport due to purdah norms, and which paths are passable. Community members have this knowledge because they live with one another. Disaster documentation systems should therefore capture not only the number of affected people but the community mechanisms through which vulnerable people were protected.

The gender dimension is particularly important. Women were not always described as formal decision-makers, but their response labor was central: packing documents and medicine, managing children, cooking in shelters, maintaining savings records, supporting older women, and organizing household-level care. If formal records focus only on male leaders, boat owners, or elected representatives, they will reproduce an incomplete picture of community response. A Q1-standard policy analysis must therefore treat gendered labor not as a footnote but as a core component of disaster response capacity.

4.5 The documentation gap is systematic: losses are counted, contributions are not

Post-disaster tracking suffers from a systematic documentation imbalance: structural losses and damages are meticulously quantified (Miri et al., 2024), whereas the critical socio-cultural contributions and coping mechanisms of local institutions remain unrecorded (Ahmed et al., 2016). This skew undermines holistic resilience building by rendering localized capacities completely invisible.

The most important finding is the systematic difference between what official records count and what communities do. Field participants repeatedly stated that damage lists are prepared after disasters, but community rescue and self-help are rarely recorded. In Gangachara, local youths repaired bamboo walkways and rescued livestock, but these efforts were not documented. In Domar, a youth who rescued cattle and a young woman who rescued an injured child were not recorded. In Gaibandha, the boat owner who reportedly made 11 trips in one night was never asked how many people he moved or how much fuel he spent. The relief form counted rooms and cattle lost, not neighbors helped, hours worked, or assets saved.

This gap has at least five components. First, reporting templates prioritize damage and relief rather than response contribution. Second, records often capture organizational activity, such as government or NGO relief, more than self-organized community action. Third, there is no simple event-level tool that communities can use immediately after a disaster. Fourth, volunteer recognition is hazard-uneven: cyclone preparedness has more formal structures than riverbank erosion or local storms. Fifth, local documentation may be politicized or fragile if controlled by a single actor without transparent verification.

The documentation gap also explains why good practices fail to scale. If a community develops an effective method, such as WhatsApp-based erosion alerts, emergency bamboo shelters, women's document-packing routines, or youth road clearance teams, the lesson may remain local. Gaillard and Mercer (2013) argue that DRR needs stronger bridges between knowledge and action. The present data suggest that a bridge must include forms, responsibilities, incentives, and feedback. Without those, community knowledge remains active during crisis but weak in policy learning.

Table 3. Documentation gaps and proposed minimum indicators for formal records

Gap in current practice	Evidence from field materials	Minimum indicator to add	Responsible entry point
Community labor is invisible	Boat trips, road clearance, shelter construction, cooking, childcare, house dismantling not counted	Number of volunteers; hours contributed; main tasks performed	Union Disaster Management Committee / Union Digital Center
Resources contributed by residents are not reimbursed or valued	Fuel, bamboo, rope, food, boats, labor and savings used before formal aid	Approximate local expenditure and materials contributed	Union Parishad verified by ward volunteers
Assets saved are not counted separately from assets lost	Livestock, roof sheets, documents, boats and furniture saved by neighbors	People evacuated; livestock moved; legal documents saved; temporary shelters built	Upazila DMC consolidated report
Women's care labor is under-recorded	Women manage valuables, cooking, shelter support, vulnerable persons	Gender-disaggregated volunteer roles and care functions	Women members/savings group representative in documentation team
Local warning knowledge remains informal	Soil cracks, river sounds, upstream calls, plant/ecological signs, WhatsApp alerts	Local warning signal used; time between signal and action; channel used	UDMC with technical agency/NGO support
Recognition lacks follow-up	Verbal thanks without certificate, training, equipment, or subsidy	Recognition issued; training/equipment/reimbursement action taken	UNO/PIO/DRRO annual review

Note. Proposed indicators should be piloted and simplified before institutional adoption.

4.6 Communities want recognition, but recognition must lead to support

Community-based disaster management (CBDM) emphasizes that while formal recognition empowers local communities, it remains insufficient without tangible resource allocation. For effective risk reduction, institutional acknowledgment must transition into sustained financial, technical, and structural support, transforming community vulnerability into institutionalized resilience (Maskrey, 2011; Shaw, 2012).

Participants did not ask only for praise. They linked recognition to practical support: fuel subsidies for rescue boat owners, vests and whistles for volunteers, formal erosion-response training, women-first-response training, early warning systems, easy-to-use records, certificates, relief priority, crop insurance, drought-tolerant seeds, water infrastructure, and regular meetings. In Lalmonirhat, participants called for early warning, water infrastructure, climate-smart agriculture, rainwater harvesting, community ponds, micro-savings, and community grain banks. In Jaldhaka, respondents emphasized training, awareness, rescue skills, transport, and coordination. In Gaibandha, the community proposed a paper form in Bengali, visual icons, WhatsApp reporting, Union Digital Center entry, and NGO-assisted smartphone forms.

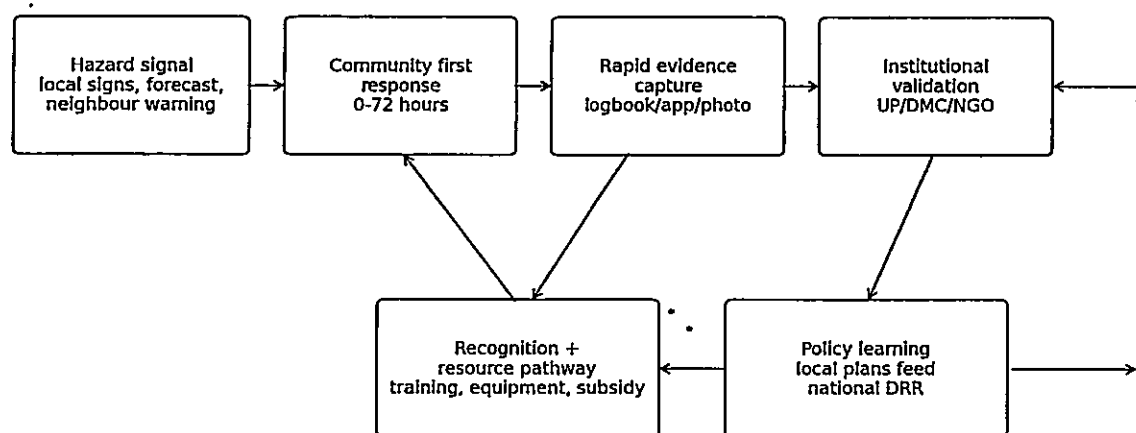
The deeper message is that recognition should be a pathway, not a token. If recording leads to no support, participants warned, reporting will stop. If it leads to fuel, training, relief priority, volunteer certificates, or better local plans, people will have reason to maintain records. This is consistent with participation literature: community engagement becomes sustainable when people see that information sharing leads to meaningful decisions and accountability (Twigg, 2015).

One Gaibandha participant summarized the policy gap powerfully: 'Policy without community is paper. Community without policy is forgotten.' This statement captures the central argument of the article. Bangladesh does not lack disaster policy. Communities do not lack response capacity. The missing link is a documentation and recognition mechanism that connects the two.

5. Proposed Community Response Documentation Framework

Based on the field findings, this article proposes the Community Response Documentation Framework (CRDF). The CRDF is not a new bureaucracy; it is a practical evidence pathway for making community response visible, verifiable, and useful for policy. The framework has six steps: hazard signal, community first response, rapid evidence capture, institutional validation, recognition and resource pathway, and policy learning. Figure 1 presents the logic of the framework.

Community Response Documentation Framework (CRDF)



Core principle: what communities already do must become visible, counted, verified, and linked to support.

Figure 1. Community Response Documentation Framework (CRDF).

The first step is hazard signal. Communities respond to official forecasts, local announcements, neighbor messages, ecological signs, riverbank cracks, storm clouds, and water scarcity. Documentation should capture the warning source because it reveals which channels work. The second step is community first response. The relevant data are not complicated: who responded, what they did, when they started, who was assisted, and what resources were used. The third step is rapid evidence capture. Evidence can include a one-page Bengali form, a photo, a short video, a voice note, a WhatsApp message, or a mobile entry at the Union Digital Center. The fourth step is institutional validation. Validation should be done locally by a small group including a Union Parishad representative, a UDMC member, a volunteer, a women's representative, and where available an NGO worker. This reduces political capture and improves credibility.

The fifth step is recognition and resource pathway. A record should generate something tangible: a certificate, a volunteer ID, training eligibility, fuel reimbursement, equipment allocation, insurance consideration, or priority inclusion in preparedness programs. Recognition should not replace relief for affected households; it should strengthen the capacity of those who reduce loss. The sixth step is policy learning. Consolidated records should feed into Upazila and district disaster management reports and then into national DRR planning. If repeated records show that erosion-

response volunteers need boats, fuel, document-protection kits, or women-led shelter training, the planning system can respond with evidence.

The framework aligns with Sendai priorities. It improves understanding of disaster risk by capturing local signals and vulnerability knowledge. It strengthens governance by assigning documentation roles. It supports investment in resilience by identifying the equipment and training that communities actually use. It enhances preparedness for effective response by turning spontaneous solidarity into safer, better-supported local capacity. It also aligns with Bangladesh's whole-of-society planning direction by operationalizing community engagement in a measurable way.

Table 4. A practical CRDF event record: suggested one-page fields

Section	Core questions	Reason for inclusion
Event identification	Date, time, ward/village, hazard type, warning source	Allows event-level tracking and early warning evaluation
Response actors	Names/roles of volunteers or groups; gender; youth/women involvement	Recognizes people and supports training/certification
Response actions	Evacuation, livestock rescue, shelter, road clearance, medical referral, water support, document protection	Captures what was actually done before/alongside formal response
Outputs	People assisted, livestock moved, households helped, shelters built, documents saved, pathways restored	Separates assets saved from assets lost
Resources contributed	Boats, fuel, bamboo, food, savings, labor hours, local tools	Creates basis for reimbursement and preparedness investment
Vulnerable groups assisted	Children, elderly, disabled persons, women-headed households, landless households	Links community knowledge with protection planning
Verification and follow-up	Verified by community representative, UP/UDMC, NGO if present; support needed; recognition issued	Ensures credibility and connects record to action

Note. The record should be short enough to complete within three days of an event and available in Bangla with visual icons.

6. Discussion

The findings advance an argument that is both empirical and institutional. Empirically, the data show that local people repeatedly perform disaster response functions that are essential to survival and recovery. Institutionally, the data show that formal systems have not yet developed a robust method for documenting those functions. This gap is not a minor administrative problem. It shapes whose knowledge counts, whose labor is recognized, and which capacities receive investment.

First, the field evidence challenges passive-victim narratives. Communities in the study sites are not waiting helplessly for aid. They are moving livestock, carrying children, packing documents, building shelters, clearing roads, sharing food, managing local communication, and advising one another on crop and water adaptation. This aligns with CBDRR scholarship that frames communities as actors with knowledge and capability (Habiba et al., 2013; Twigg, 2015). However, the evidence also warns against romanticizing community resilience. Residents act because they must, often with their own money, unsafe tools, little training, and no insurance. Recognition without support can become extraction: the state benefits from unpaid local labor while communities continue to bear risk. The CRDF therefore treats recognition and resources as inseparable. Second, the study shows that different hazards require different documentation categories. Cyclone and flood systems may be comparatively mature, but riverbank erosion and Kalboishakhi storms have different temporal and operational features. Erosion may unfold through warning signs and sudden collapse, requiring dismantling, boat movement, legal document protection, and repeated displacement support. Kalboishakhi storms demand immediate rescue and post-storm road and electricity restoration. Drought requires anticipatory action, water governance, crop planning, and health awareness. A generic damage form cannot capture this diversity. Bangladesh's disaster reporting system would benefit from hazard-specific modules that keep a common core but allow local adaptation. Third, the documentation gap reveals a deeper information governance problem. Altay and Labonte (2014) demonstrate that emergency response is shaped by how information is formatted, shared, and prioritized. In the present study, the field problem is almost brutally simple: if the form asks only about damaged houses, then saved houses, volunteer hours, and community costs disappear. If the report counts official relief but not self-organized rescue, policy will undervalue community response. If it values official transactions more than social labor, women and youth will remain invisible. Documentation is therefore a form of power.

Fourth, the findings highlight the need to integrate local knowledge with scientific and institutional knowledge. Residents observed cracks, sounds, ecological behavior, river cutting, and water scarcity. These observations are not substitutes for hydrological modeling, weather forecasting, agricultural extension, or satellite data. But neither are technical systems sufficient without local interpretation. Mercer et al. (2010) and Kelman et al. (2012) argue for integrating knowledge forms. The CRDF offers one operational route: local warning signals can be recorded at event level and compared over time with technical forecasts. This can improve early warning relevance while respecting community expertise. Fifth, the study reinforces the importance of scale. Bangladesh's DRR architecture includes national, district, upazila, union, and ward-level institutions. The field evidence suggests that the Union Parishad and Union Disaster Management Committee are the most practical entry points for recording community response, while the Upazila level is important for validation and consolidation. The national level should not attempt to record every action directly. Rather, it should mandate a simple minimum dataset, provide templates, ensure training, and connect records with planning and budget cycles. This would convert localized evidence into policy intelligence without overcentralization.

Sixth, the proposed approach has implications for justice and accountability. Disaster policies often emphasize affected people, but not all affected people contribute in the same way. A household can be both affected and a responder. A person may lose land and still rescue neighbors. A woman may be absent from formal leadership but central to protecting children, medicine, and identity documents. Documenting these roles can improve social recognition and reduce the erasure of care work. It can also improve accountability by showing when formal response arrives late and what communities did in the meantime. However, institutionalizing community documentation must be done carefully. There is a risk that records could be manipulated for political patronage, relief priority, or exclusion. There is also a risk that people may feel pressured to volunteer in order to be recognized. The framework should therefore include transparent verification, community consent, grievance options, and a clear statement that assistance to affected households must not depend solely on recorded volunteer contribution. Recognition should reward response, not punish those unable to respond because of age, disability, poverty, gender norms, or displacement.

The study also contributes to the Bangladesh-specific literature on partnership. Khan and Rahman (2007) emphasized the importance of partnership in disaster management, while Azad et al. (2020)

discuss people-centered approaches and cross-scale linkages. The present findings show that partnership must include evidence production. Communities should not be partners only in field implementation; they should be partners in defining what counts as response evidence. This is where the documentation issue becomes a governance issue. A community that cannot make its contribution visible cannot fully negotiate its needs.

7. Conclusion

This article examined community-led quick response and documentation gaps across multi-hazard field contexts in northern Bangladesh. The evidence is clear: communities are not secondary actors in disaster management. They are often the first responders, first warning interpreters, first shelter providers, first transport providers, first protectors of livestock and documents, and first supporters of vulnerable people. Their actions reduce loss before formal systems arrive. Yet the records that shape policy often begin after these actions have already occurred. The core contribution of the study is to show that documentation is a missing link between community engagement and policy recognition. Bangladesh has strong disaster management institutions and a long history of community-based practice, but community response remains only partially visible in formal reporting. This weakens accountability, underestimates local capacity, and reduces opportunities to invest in the people and tools that actually save lives and assets in the first hours of disaster.

The proposed Community Response Documentation Framework offers a practical solution. It asks local institutions to record what communities already do, verify it transparently, recognize it formally, and connect it to training, equipment, reimbursement, and planning. The framework is compatible with the Sendai Framework and Bangladesh's whole-of-society disaster management direction. It can begin with simple pilot forms at Union Parishad level and expand through digital centers, NGOs, and disaster management committees. Communities do not need to be discovered; they are already responding. What is needed is a fair system that sees them, counts them, learns from them, and supports them. When community action enters official records, disaster management becomes not only faster but also more democratic, evidence-based, and just.

8. Recommendations

The recommendations are organized for government, local institutions, NGOs, and community groups. They are intentionally practical because the field data show that communities need tools that can work during real emergencies, not only policy statements.

First, Bangladesh should introduce a standardized Community First Response Record as an annex to local disaster reporting. The record should be short, Bangla-language, and usable within three days after an event. It should include hazard type, warning source, response actors, actions, people assisted, assets saved, resources contributed, volunteer hours, vulnerable groups assisted, and follow-up needs. It should be incorporated into the workflow of Union Disaster Management Committees and Upazila Disaster Management Committees. The form should not replace damage assessment; it should complement it. Second, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief should pilot hazard-specific documentation modules in riverbank erosion, local storm, flood, and drought-prone unions. Riverbank erosion modules should include house dismantling, embankment relocation, boat transport, document protection, repeated displacement, and safe relocation land. Storm modules should include injury response, road clearance, electricity line disruption, livestock rescue, and house stabilization. Drought modules should include water source stress, crop loss, health impacts, crop adaptation, rainwater harvesting, and community safety nets. Flood modules should include human evacuation, livestock relocation, shelter support, boat service, and temporary pathways.

Third, Union Parishads should maintain a verified volunteer and local resource registry. The registry should include boat owners, youth groups, women's groups, first-aid trained volunteers, livestock owners with shelter capacity, local carpenters, bamboo suppliers, teachers, imams, and persons with communication access. The purpose is not to militarize community life but to make local capacity visible before disasters. The registry should be updated annually and checked after major events. Fourth, recognition should be tied to material support. A certificate alone is not enough. Rescue boat owners should be eligible for fuel reimbursement during verified emergency use. Youth volunteers should receive basic safety equipment, first-aid training, swimming and rescue training, and mobile communication support. Women responders should receive shelter management, protection, health, and documentation training. Communities that maintain accurate records should receive priority for preparedness grants, not because they are more deserving of relief, but because they have demonstrated capacity for risk reduction. Fifth, documentation should

be gender-sensitive and protection-sensitive. Every event record should ask how women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, and women-headed households were assisted. It should also record women's response roles. This will prevent formal reports from recognizing only visible male leadership while ignoring care, food, shelter, and document-protection labor. Sixth, Union Digital Centers can become local disaster evidence nodes. Many participants suggested digital or hybrid recording options. A practical model would allow community members to submit paper forms, WhatsApp messages, photos, and voice notes to a designated operator, who enters the standardized record after verification. This avoids assuming that all residents can use smartphone apps while still enabling digital consolidation. Seventh, NGOs should support documentation capacity without creating parallel systems. Field evidence shows that NGOs sometimes document case stories, videos, and member lists, but these do not always feed into official reports. NGO tools should be aligned with government templates, and government reporting should recognize validated NGO-supported community records. This would reduce duplication and improve policy learning. Eighth, disaster management committees should hold post-event community review meetings. Within two weeks of a disaster, the committee should review what happened, what communities did, what official response provided, what was missing, and which preparedness investments are needed. These meetings should produce a short public note. Transparency can reduce politicization and build trust. Ninth, national policy review processes should include community response indicators. The next generation of disaster management planning can track not only shelters built and relief distributed but also community response teams trained, community records submitted, volunteer hours recognized, local warning signals validated, women responders trained, and local resources reimbursed. Such indicators would make the whole-of-society approach measurable. Tenth, drought should be treated with anticipatory action logic. The Lalmonirhat findings show that affected communities need early warning, water infrastructure, drought-resistant crops, crop insurance, rainwater harvesting, reservoirs, wastewater reuse, and safety nets. Drought response documentation should therefore begin before crisis peaks. It should record rainfall deficits, declining groundwater, crop stress, health symptoms, water access burdens, and community adaptation actions

Statements and Declarations

Ethical consideration: This manuscript is based on field notes provided for academic drafting. The analysis emphasizes roles, themes, and community functions. Direct personal identifiers are minimized in the narrative.

Data availability: The qualitative data consist of KII and FGD field notes supplied by the research team. Further sharing should follow participant consent and institutional requirements.

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Individual Assignment

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Part-II

MODULE NO: 5

Marks Obtained

DATE: 15.06.2026

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Abstract

Food adulteration is a persistent public health problem in urban food markets in Bangladesh. The study was conducted in Karwan Bazar, Dhaka, the largest wholesale and retail food market in the country and employed a mixed-method cross-sectional design to explore food adulteration practices and governance challenges. Three instruments were used: vendor survey (n=15), consumer survey (n=15) and key informant interviews (n=10) with direct observation and triangulation across sources. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and non-parametric statistical methods while qualitative data were analyzed by thematic analysis. Results show a self-reinforcing system: weak regulatory implementation with near unanimous expert consensus on inadequate inspection staffing, limited legal authority and poor inter-agency coordination; pro-safety attitudes among experienced vendors but marked practice deficits and lack of training; and universal consumer awareness of adulteration but shopping based overwhelmingly on price and rarely able to detect contamination. Encouraging signals include a prosocial vendor cohort, willingness to pay for certified safe food that is concern elastic and perceived growth in demand for safer products. The study concludes that durable improvement requires: (a) strengthened enforcement capacity; (b) better coordination; (c) vendor targeted training and registration (d) credible certification and traceability and (e) a shift from episodic punitive enforcement to sustained prevention.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Food safety has become a pressing public health issue in Bangladesh and the strain is sharpest in the cities, where a growing population needs food that is both cheap and plentiful. Karwan Bazar sits at the center of that pressure. In Tejgaon under Dhaka North City Corporation, it is the country's largest continuous wholesale and retail food market, supplying vegetables, fish, meat, dairy, spices, and edible oils daily while resupplying many smaller markets. That gatekeeper position matters: whatever adulteration enters here travels down the chain to millions of consumers. Informal trading has outpaced monitoring, oversight is thin and enforcement uneven conditions under which adulteration persists (WHO, 2020; Hoffmann *et al.*, 2019).

By food adulteration, this study means the deliberate addition of harmful or unauthorized substances to food to cut costs or extend shelf life. The practice spans many product categories in Bangladesh with formalin, calcium carbide, textile dyes and unauthorized preservatives used to brighten appearance or stretch marketability (Islam & Hoque, 2013). The harm is real: sustained exposure has been linked to foodborne illness, liver and kidney damage and raised cancer risk (Hussain, 2016). Bangladesh has responded the Food Safety Act 2013 created the BFSA, backed by mobile courts and routine inspections (Food Safety Act, 2013) but poor coordination, too few inspectors, limited laboratory capacity and accountability gaps hold that machinery back (Hossain *et al.*, 2021).

1.2 Problem Statement

On paper the framework exists; on the ground, adulterated and substandard food keeps moving through Karwan Bazar. Enforcement has leaned on short punitive drives rather than prevention or structural reform and the effect fades once pressure lifts and vendors revert. At the stall level, tight competition and thin margins nudge many toward unsafe preservation or adulterants, worsened by limited training and a shaky grasp of the rules (Islam & Hoque, 2013; Hossain *et al.*, 2021). Much of the adulteration, moreover, appears to begin before goods reach the vendor, arriving already tampered with from upstream suppliers.

The demand side tells a related story. Consumers generally know adulteration happens yet have little means of spotting it and price tends to decide the purchase (Rahman *et al.*, 2020; Unnevehr, 2007). Supply side pressure, weak governance and consumer vulnerability feed one another, leaving unsafe practice to meet little resistance. Strikingly little research has examined

how these pieces interact within a single large wholesale market like Karwan Bazar; most studies isolate one strand rather than treating adulteration as the joint product of institutional, economic and behavioral forces. Without that integrated view, designing interventions that fit the problem is difficult.

1.3 Objectives and Research Questions

1.3.1 General Objective

To assess food adulteration practices and the associated governance challenges in Karwan Bazar, Dhaka and to identify practical strategies for enhancing urban food safety management.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- To examine the food handling, storage and management practices employed by vendors operating in Karwan Bazar.
- To investigate consumer awareness, perceptions and purchasing behavior concerning food safety and food adulteration.
- To identify deficiencies within existing food safety governance frameworks and propose actionable recommendations to strengthen monitoring, regulatory enforcement and compliance mechanisms.

1.3.3 Research Questions

- What food handling and management practices are most commonly adopted by vendors in Karwan Bazar?
- What economic, social or institutional factors influence vendors' engagement in unsafe practices or activities associated with food adulteration?
- To what extent are consumers aware of food safety risks and which factors shape their purchasing decisions?
- What are the major governance and regulatory challenges affecting the management of food safety within the market?
- Which interventions or measures can effectively enhance food safety monitoring, enforcement and regulatory compliance?

1.4 Justification and Rationale

Adulteration drains public health, productivity and consumer confidence and the longer the exposure, the greater the burden of chronic disease (World Bank, 2019). Large wholesale markets such as Karwan Bazar concentrate that risk tangled supply chains, enormous volumes, dense informal vendors and because the market sits so far upstream, a failure here ripples across the city's food supply.

What sets this study apart is that it views governance, vendor practice and consumer awareness as parts of one system rather than separate problems. Evidence of that kind helps policymakers, regulators and market authorities design interventions that last and it adds to a thin literature on urban food governance in low- and middle-income countries (Grace, 2015). The lessons should travel beyond Karwan Bazar to comparable markets across Bangladesh.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Food Adulteration in Developing Countries

Across the developing world, food adulteration is treated as a serious public health problem and the difficulty sharpens in fast growing cities where regulators cannot keep up with expanding food systems (WHO, 2020; Roesel & Grace, 2015). Bangladesh is no exception: reports document adulterants formalin, artificial colorings, calcium carbide, industrial chemicals in milk, edible oils, spices, fish, vegetables and street food (Islam & Hoque, 2013; Alam *et al.*, 2021). Two forces sustain the practice: enforcement too weak to deter and incentives strong enough to tempt. The cost is measured in health with prolonged exposure tied to foodborne illness, organ damage and heightened cancer risk (WHO, 2015; Akhtar, 2015).

2.2 Governance and Regulatory Enforcement

A consistent thread in the literature is that weak governance lets adulteration flourish. Bangladesh did legislate the Food Safety Act 2013 created the BFSA but turning law into practice has proved uneven (BFSA, 2022; Food Safety Act, 2013; Hossain *et al.*, 2021). The recurring complaints are familiar: too few trained inspectors, too little laboratory capacity, poor coordination among overlapping mandates and missing accountability. Some authors add that corruption and political pressure blunt enforcement further, especially in the busiest urban markets (Hossain *et al.*, 2021; Alam *et al.*, 2021).

What this describes is the familiar “implementation gap,” where laws on the books fail to produce compliance because the institutions meant to enforce them lack the capacity (Grindle, 2007). The responsive regulation tradition adds that enforcement by punishment alone achieves less than approaches pairing sanctions with education, engagement and self-regulation which is why periodic inspection drives deter only briefly (Ayres & Braithwaite, 1992).

2.3 Consumer Awareness and Purchasing Behavior

Consumers sit at the heart of the problem too. Food safety awareness among urban Bangladeshis is thin and thinnest among lower income households (Nasreen *et al.*, 2019; Rahman *et al.*, 2020). Even those who grasp the risks are boxed in by cost and the absence of safer, affordable options, so price wins out at purchase (Rahman *et al.*, 2020). The pattern is not unique to Bangladesh; buyers in developing country markets generally cannot verify safety at the stall (Verbeke, 2005; Hoffmann *et al.*, 2019). The Health Belief Model fits well, holding that people act to protect themselves only when they perceive a serious risk and believe they

can do something effective about it (Rosenstock, 1974) which explains why a worried shopper who cannot identify tainted goods does not change what they buy.

2.4 Vendor Behavior and Economic Pressures

Studies of vendors point to financial insecurity and competition as the engines of unsafe practice. The typical small trader works on a narrow margin, with little training and only a partial grasp of the rules (Islam & Hoque, 2013; Hossain *et al.*, 2021). In that setting, an unauthorized preservative can look like sound economics, especially where inspections are sporadic and penalties unpredictable (Hoffmann *et al.*, 2019). Studying this is tricky, since people under report what is illegal or frowned upon, so self-reports likely understate prevalence (Krumpal, 2013) a reason to read such figures cautiously and lean on laboratory testing.

2.5 Research Gap

The literature tends to view food adulteration through one lens at a time public health here, regulatory design there rather than asking how governance, vendor behavior and consumer choice play off one another inside a shared marketplace. Large wholesale hubs like Karwan Bazar, for all their strategic weight, have drawn surprisingly little study. This research sets out to close that gap, bringing vendors, consumers and experts together within one consequential market and triangulating across them.

2.6 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

This study treats food adulteration not as a single cause phenomenon but as the meeting point of governance, economic and behavioral forces. Weak oversight opens the door; the financial squeeze on vendors gives them reason to walk through it and consumers limited by what they know and drawn to what they can afford, keep demand tilted away from safer alternatives.

Two theoretical lenses guide the analysis. Governance Theory accounts for how institutions, accountability and implementation shape compliance, helping explain why unsafe practice survives even where rules are clear (Hossain *et al.*, 2021; Grindle, 2007). The Health Belief Model frames the consumer side, especially the gap between knowing a risk and acting on it (Rosenstock, 1974). For analysis, regulatory enforcement, vendor knowledge, economic pressure, consumer awareness and competition are treated as independent variables bearing on adulteration prevalence and compliance with consumer health risk and public trust as the outcomes.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Study Design and Area

The study used a mixed method, cross sectional design, pairing quantitative survey work with qualitative inquiry. The quantitative side surfaced measurable patterns in vendor practice and consumer perception; the qualitative side supplied the context behind them, the governance failures and behavioral pressures, numbers cannot explain. Running the two together enabled triangulation, so evidence from one strand could corroborate or unsettle the other. Fieldwork took place at Karwan Bazar (23.75°N, 90.39°E) in Tejgaon, under Dhaka North City Corporation, the country's largest continuous wholesale and retail food market, chosen because adulteration here flows downstream to secondary markets and eventually millions of consumers.

3.2 Study Population and Sampling

In all, 40 respondents took part across three groups: 15 food vendors, 15 consumers and 10 key informants' food-safety officials, inspectors and market management representatives. Vendors and consumers were chosen by systematic random sampling so that different market sections and product categories would be represented rather than clustering in one trade. Key informants were selected purposively, on the strength of their roles in food-safety governance and oversight. With time and resources limited, the sample stayed small, so the study is exploratory and its quantitative findings are read as indicative patterns rather than statistically generalizable estimates.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

Three instruments generated the primary data. Questionnaire A (vendors) covered profile, procurement and storage, handling and hygiene, preservative use and Likert-scale knowledge and attitude items. Questionnaire B (consumers) recorded demographics, shopping motivations and product choices, awareness of specific adulterants, self-reported detection, illness and reporting history, attitudes and willingness to pay for certified safe food. Questionnaire C steered the key informant interviews on regulatory and enforcement constraints, drivers and types of adulteration, mobile-court effectiveness and priorities. An observation component recorded handling, hygiene and storage as a check against self-reports and secondary material came from BFSA reports, journals and government documents including the Food Safety Act 2013.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis used SPSS and Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations summarized respondent characteristics, practices, and attitudes. Relationships were examined with cross tabulation and non-parametric tests suited to the small sample and ordinal measures. Spearman's rank correlation gauged associations (vendor voluntary compliance against willingness to report peers, consumer education against awareness depth); Fisher's Exact test handled associations involving willingness to pay and the Kruskal Wallis test compared food-safety confidence across income groups. An exploratory logistic regression illustrated the relative pull of the main KII identified drivers. Given the small sample all inferential results are treated as exploratory and hypothesis generating.

The KII material was analyzed thematically with the emerging themes grouped around the study's core concerns, governance challenges, vendor behavior, enforcement constraints and consumer attitudes toward food safety and adulteration. The quantitative and qualitative findings were then brought together through cross-source synthesis which made it possible to see where the three instruments agreed and where they pulled in different directions.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Taking part was entirely voluntary with informed consent secured from every respondent before data collection. Each participant had the study's purpose explained plainly and was told they could decline or withdraw at any point without consequence. Confidentiality and anonymity were protected throughout: no personally identifying information appears here and respondents are referred to only by instrument type and an assigned number. The work was conducted to keep any physical, social or psychological risk to a minimum.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter sets out what the three instruments returned at Karwan Bazar: a vendor survey (Questionnaire A, $n = 15$), a consumer survey (Questionnaire B, $n = 15$) and key informant interviews (Questionnaire C, $n = 10$). With samples this small, the analysis stays exploratory and the findings are best read as indications rather than generalizable estimates.

4.1 Study Site

Karwan Bazar (23.75°N , 90.39°E) in Tejgaon under Dhaka North City Corporation, is Bangladesh's largest continuous wholesale and retail food market. Its place in the distribution system makes it a natural point of intervention: adulteration that begins here moves down the chain to secondary markets and ultimately to millions of consumers (Figure 4.1).

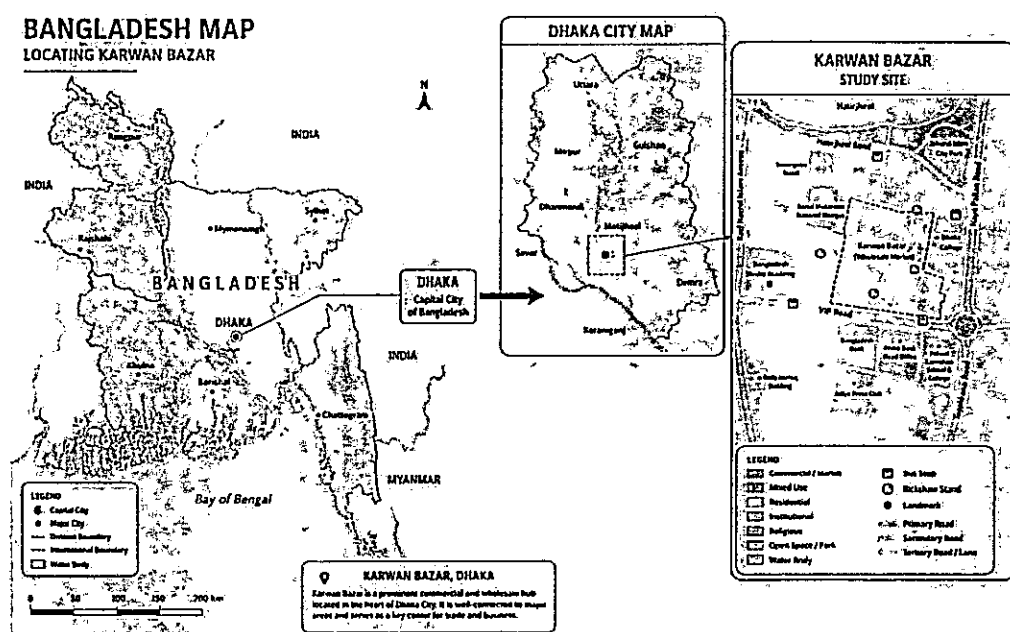


Figure 1 Study site: Location of Karwan Bazar within Dhaka.

4.2 Vendor Survey Findings ($n = 15$)

This section reports the structured survey of fifteen vendors, organized around who they are, how they handle and store food and what they know and believe.

4.2.1 Vendor Profile

The vendor respondents were overwhelmingly male, with thirteen men (86.7%) and two women (13.3%). The most striking characteristic was market tenure: fourteen vendors (93.3%) had traded in Karwan Bazar for more than a decade and the remaining vendor (6.7%) reported

seven to ten years, with no new entrants. The survey thus captured long established traders whose practices have been shaped by years of market experience.

Educational backgrounds varied, though formal schooling was generally limited (Figure 2). Six vendors (40.0%) had no formal schooling and three (20.0%) stopped at primary level, so 60.0% had reached primary level or below. Three (20.0%) finished secondary education, one (6.7%) held SSC or HSC qualifications and two (13.3%) had studied to graduate level or beyond. Training was thin too: ten (66.7%) had never had food safety training, three (20.0%) had attended a formal programme, and two (13.3%) were unsure. On the business side, the sample split almost evenly: seven respondents (46.7%) sold retail only, another seven (46.7%) combined wholesale and retail and one (6.7%) operated purely at wholesale. Table 4.1 sets out the full profile.

Table 1: Vendor profile summary

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	13	86.7
	Female	2	13.3
Education	No formal education	6	40.0
	Primary (Class 1–5)	3	20.0
	Secondary (Class 6–10)	3	20.0
	SSC / HSC	1	6.7
	Graduate or above	2	13.3
Business type	Retail only	7	46.7
	Both wholesale & retail	7	46.7
	Wholesale only	1	6.7
Years at Karwan Bazar	More than 10 years	14	93.3
	7–10 years	1	6.7
Food safety training	No training received	10	66.7
	Yes — formal training	3	20.0
	Not sure	2	13.3

Vendor Educational Attainment (n = 15)

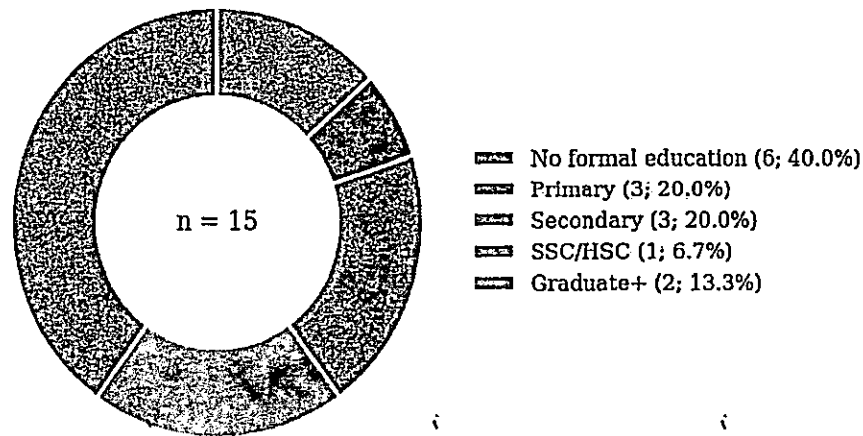


Figure 2 Distribution of vendor educational attainment

4.2.2 Handling and Hygiene Practices

Vendors maintained different standards across food handling tasks with visible product management receiving more attention than personal hygiene (Figure 3). Eight vendors (53.3%) always checked product quality before sale and four (26.7%) did so sometimes 80.0% at least occasionally while two (13.3%) rarely and one (6.7%) never performed checks.

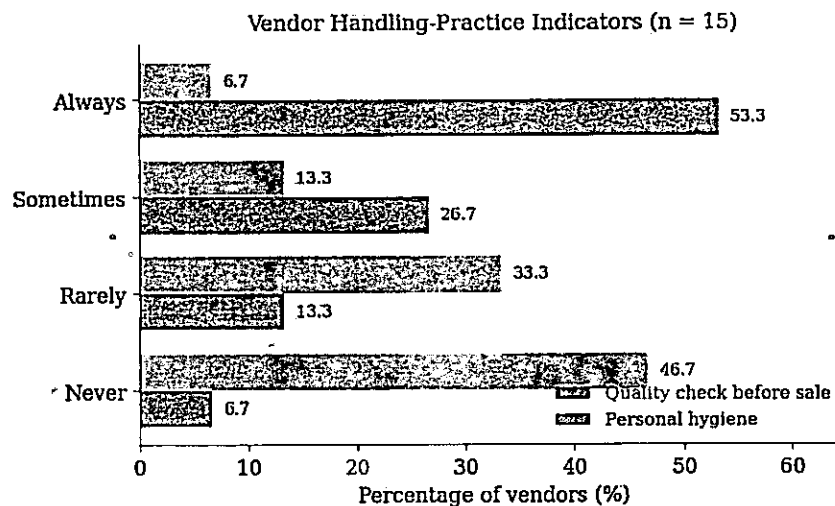


Figure 3: Comparison of vendor quality-checking and personal hygiene practice

Personal hygiene showed the opposite pattern. Only one vendor (6.7%) consistently maintained handwashing and clean clothing; five (33.3%) did so rarely and seven (46.7%) never, so four

in five (80.0%) fell into the “rarely” or “never” categories. Vendors were thus more attentive to practices affecting product appearance than to those protecting consumer health.

Responses on preservative use require careful interpretation. Fourteen vendors (93.3%) stated they never used preservatives and only one (6.7%) acknowledged occasional use. This apparently low level does not align with other evidence: end-of-day handling responses, key-informant views that adulterated inputs often enter from upstream suppliers and widespread consumer awareness of formalin (Section 4.3) together point to a more complex picture. The discrepancy likely reflects reluctance to disclose socially disapproved or legally sanctionable practices. Self-reported adulteration data should therefore be interpreted cautiously and triangulated with laboratory testing and supply-chain investigation).

4.2.3 Knowledge, Awareness and Attitudes

Vendor knowledge was strong in general terms but weak on specifics and regulation. Awareness that adulterated food can cause illness was near universal (93.3%, $n = 14$), but knowledge of the framework was far thinner (Figure 4). No vendor knew the Food Safety Act 2013 fully: nine (60.0%) were wholly unaware and six (40.0%) had merely heard of it. Recognition of BFSA was similarly shallow one (6.7%) clearly aware, seven (46.7%) uncertain, seven (46.7%) unaware. Yet ten (66.7%) had been inspected; inspections reach the market physically without building durable awareness of the law a missed chance to pair enforcement with education.

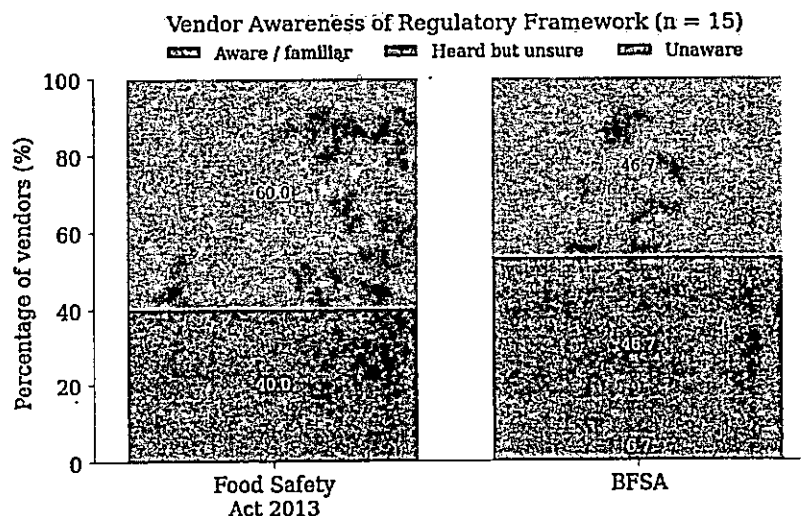


Figure 4: Vendor awareness of the Food Safety Act 2013 and the BFSA

Vendors' attitudes, across nine Likert items, were strongly pro-safety yet exposed a gap between disposition and regulatory understanding (Table 4.2; Figure 4.5). The highest-rated item was preferring to sell safe food even at lower profit ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 0.41$), followed by the value of inspections ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.83$), willingness to report unsafe peers ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.83$), confidence that penalties deter ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.92$) and voluntary compliance ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.74$). Self-rated understanding of the regulations sat only at the midpoint ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.76$), echoing the weak legal awareness above, while agreement that economic pressure limits compliance was lowest ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 0.96$).

Table 2: Vendor Attitudinal Items — Means and Standard Deviations

Attitudinal statement	Mean (M)	SD
Prefer to sell safe food even at lower profit	4.80	0.41
Inspections improve food safety	4.53	0.83
Would report a fellow vendor acting unsafely	4.53	0.83
Penalties deter unsafe practices	4.47	0.92
Would comply with rules without inspections	4.47	0.74
Adulterants give an unfair competitive advantage	3.80	0.86
Most vendors follow safe practices	3.07	0.46
Understand food safety regulations	3.00	0.76
Economic pressure limits compliance	2.73	0.96

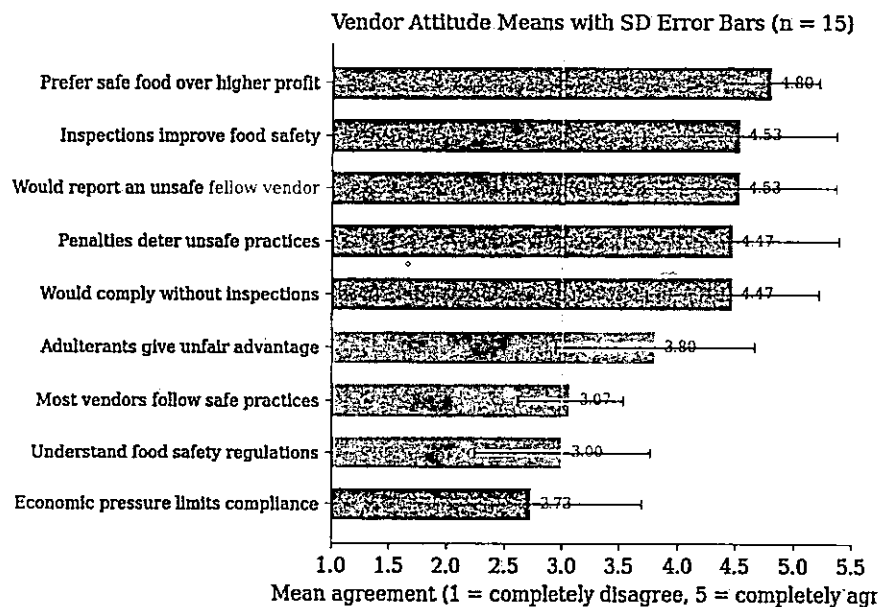


Figure 5: Vendor attitude means with standard deviation error bars

The most policy relevant finding was relational. A strong Spearman correlation linked vendors' voluntary compliance with willingness to report unsafe peers ($r_s = 0.81$, $p < .001$), pointing to a latent 'community champion' cohort whose prosocial orientation could be mobilized through peer led or incentive-based approaches. Read with the practice findings, the data show a clear attitude–practice gap: genuinely pro-safety dispositions alongside shortfalls in hygiene and regulatory knowledge, indicating the binding constraint is the absence of enabling conditions training, infrastructure, guidance not a lack of goodwill.

4.3 Consumer Survey Findings, (n = 15)

4.3.1 Profile and behavior

The consumer sample was predominantly male (73.3%, $n = 11$) and skewed older (40.0%, $n = 6$, aged 55+; 20.0%, $n = 3$, aged 45–54). Income clustered in lower-to-middle bands, the largest at BDT 20,001–30,000 (33.3%, $n = 5$). Shopping was overwhelmingly price-driven: 93.3% ($n = 14$) cited low prices as the main reason for choosing Karwan Bazar, while only one (6.7%) cited food safety the most significant demand-side finding (Figure 7). Most purchased were fish and seafood (93.3%, $n = 14$) and meat and poultry (86.7%, $n = 13$), then vegetables and fruit (73.3%, $n = 11$) and spices and condiments (66.7%, $n = 10$).

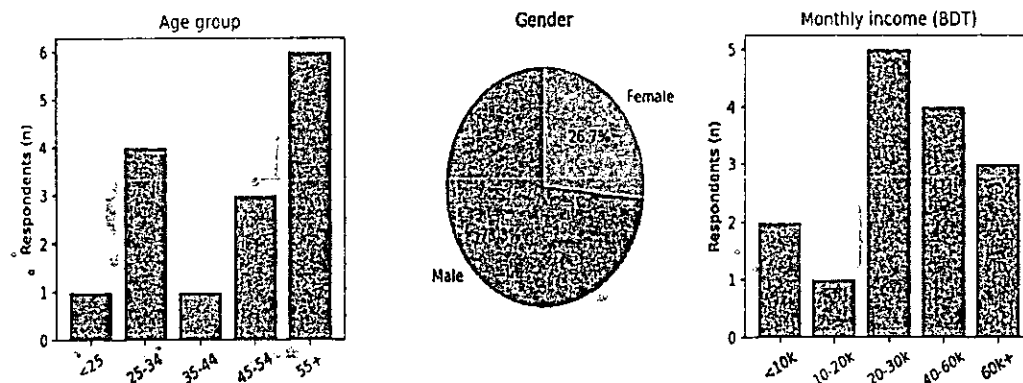


Figure 6: Consumer Profile — Age, Gender and Monthly Income

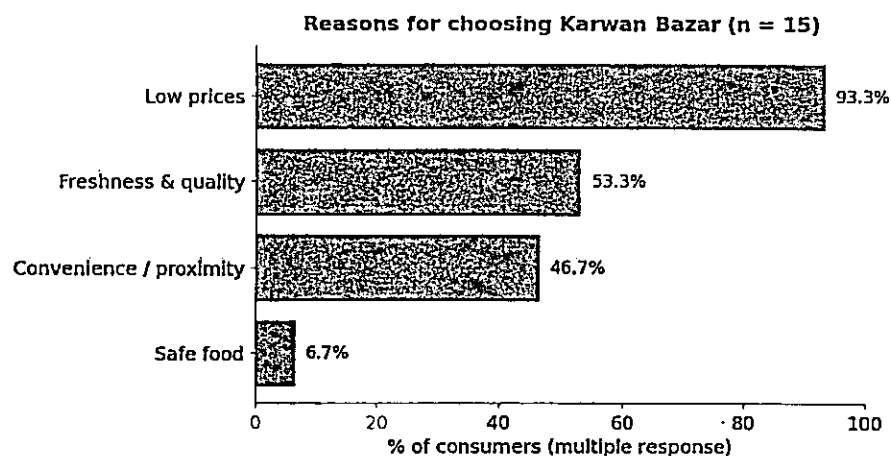


Figure 7: Reasons for choosing Karwan Bazar

4.3.2 Detection and awareness

All 15 consumers (100%) had heard of food adulteration and higher education was associated with deeper awareness. Specific adulterant knowledge was high, formalin in fish (100%), calcium carbide in fruit (100%), chemical preservatives in meat (93.3%), artificial colors (80.0%) (Figure 8). Detection, however, was limited: one consumer (6.7%) could usually detect adulteration by sensory cues, ten (66.7%) only sometimes, four (26.7%) not at all. Six (40.0%) attributed a past illness to adulterated food and nine (60.0%) thought it possible, yet only one (6.7%) had ever reported an incident to any authority; 93.3% (n = 14) had not, it indicates a near complete breakdown of the consumer regulatory accountability loop.

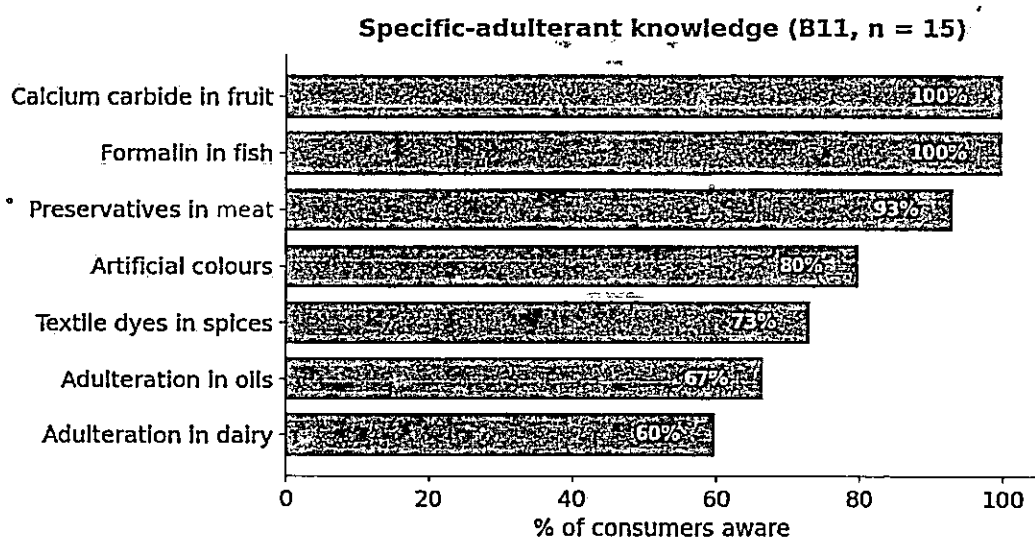


Figure 8: Specific adulterant knowledge among consumers

4.3.3 Attitudes and willingness to pay

Consumers near universally agreed adulteration is a major health threat ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 0.41$), yet rated government efforts lowest ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 1.18$) and trust in Karwan Bazar food low ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 1.19$). They would overwhelmingly stop buying from a known adulterating seller ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 0.26$), though limited detection ability constrains acting on this. On certified safe food, 26.7% ($n = 4$) were definitely willing to pay more and 60.0% ($n = 9$) would accept a modest premium, with only 13.3% ($n = 2$) unwilling, so 86.7% expressed definite or conditional willingness (Figure 9). Concern significantly predicted willingness to pay (Fisher's Exact $p = .011$), as did awareness depth ($p = .026$), while income was not significantly linked to confidence (Kruskal–Wallis $H = 8.39$, $p = .078$).

Table 3: Consumer Attitude Statements Means and Standard Deviations

Statement (1 = completely disagree... 5 = completely agree)	Mean	SD	Stance
I would stop buying from a vendor known to adulterate	4.93	0.26	Strong agree
Food adulteration is a serious health risk	4.80	0.41	Strong agree
Consumers should be proactive about food safety	4.40	0.74	Agree
I check labels and expiry dates	4.33	0.82	Agree
There is enough public information on the dangers	3.07	1.16	Neutral
I always examine food carefully before buying	3.07	0.88	Neutral
I trust the vendors at Karwan Bazar	2.93	1.39	Lean disagrees
I prioritise price over safety when shopping	2.80	1.66	Mixed/polarised
I am confident food at Karwan Bazar is safe	2.53	1.19	Disagree
The government is doing enough about food safety	2.33	1.18	Disagree

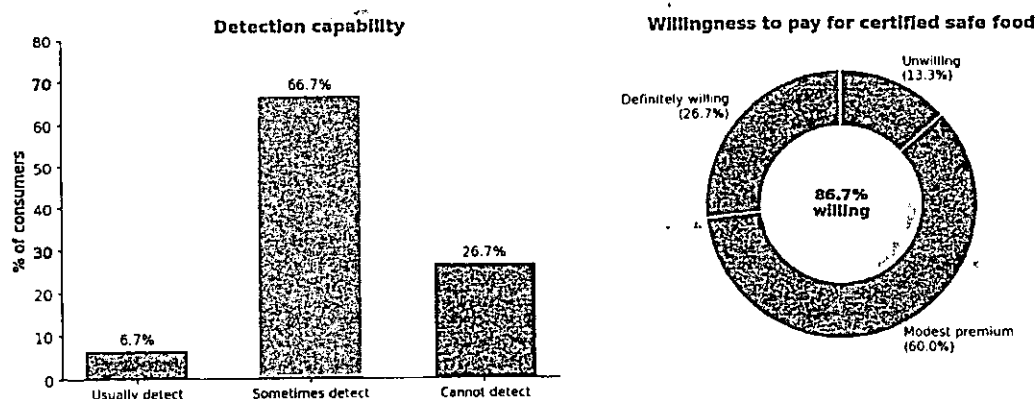


Figure 9: Consumer detection capability and willingness to pay for certified safe food

4.4 Key Informant Interview Findings (n = 10)

Key informants described the framework as legally established but institutionally weak. Insufficient inspection staff and limited legal authority were the leading constraints (90% and 60% respectively), followed by weak inter-agency coordination (50%) and inadequate budgets (40%). Mobile courts were judged largely ineffective, only 10% saw a lasting deterrent effect while 90% saw short-term impact. The leading driver was the supply of already adulterated inputs by upstream suppliers (70%), placing the origin ahead of the individual vendor. Calcium carbide and textile dyes were the most prevalent adulterants 70% each) (Figure 10).

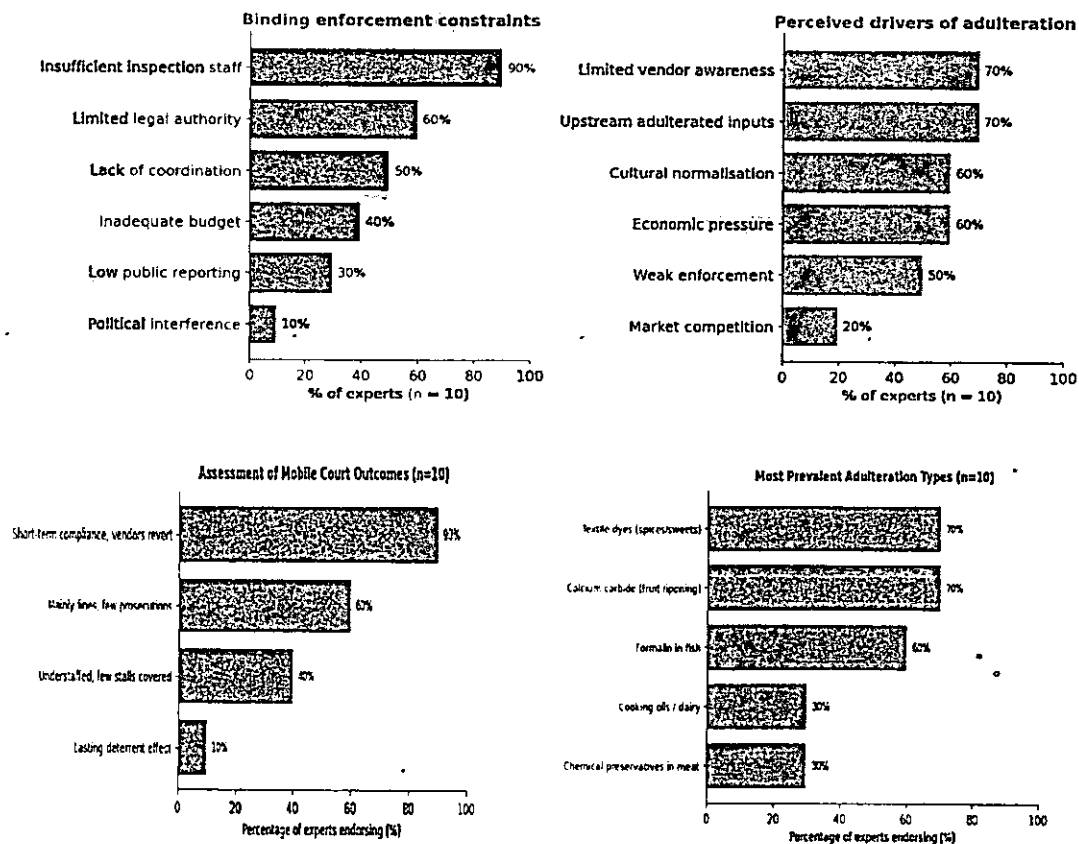


Figure 10: KII report enforcement constraint, perceived drivers of adulteration, assessment of mobile court outcomes and prevalent adulteration types

Table 4: KII Priority Recommendations

Domain	Recommendation	% Yes	Priority
Capacity	Recruit and train more food safety inspectors	90%	Critical
Coordination	Improve inter-agency coordination and data sharing	90%	Critical
Regulatory	Mandatory vendor registration system	80%	High
Capacity	Dedicated market level inspection unit	80%	High
Technology	Rapid food testing and QR traceability	70%	High
Research	Rural supply chain studies	70%	High

4.5 Cross-Source Synthesis

Analysis of the three research instruments revealed four major areas of agreement and two notable discrepancies. First, although awareness of food adulteration was very high among consumers (100%), vendors (93.3%), and key informants (70%), vendors identified far fewer specific adulterants than consumers, indicating that general awareness does not necessarily translate into detailed knowledge. Second, weak regulatory implementation emerged as a consistent concern across all respondent groups. Key informants highlighted shortages of trained personnel and limited legal authority (90% and 60% respectively), consumers rated government action poorly ($M = 2.27$), and no vendor demonstrated complete knowledge of the Food Safety Act 2013. Third, price remained a major factor influencing purchasing decisions, although food safety concerns moderated its effect. While 93.3% of consumers prioritized price, 86.7% reported a willingness, either conditional or unconditional, to pay more for safer food. Fourth, both consumers and key informants indicated a growing demand for safer food products, with 60% of key informants observing an increasing consumer preference for safer options.

The two discrepancies related to differences between vendors' self-reported practices and evidence from other sources, suggesting possible social desirability bias, and the gap between positive food safety attitudes and actual practices, which appears to result primarily from structural constraints rather than a lack of willingness.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter reads the findings against the literature and the frameworks guiding the study. Because the samples are small, purposive and from one market, what follows is analytically grounded argument rather than statistically generalizable conclusion.

5.1 The Vendor Attitude Practice Gap

The vendor data turn on a paradox: a seasoned group of traders who say the right things about food safety yet fall short in practice. They valued safe food and inspections alike (both $M = 4.05$), but only 26.7% kept up consistent handwashing and clean clothing. The pattern is well documented knowledge and good intentions do not, by themselves, produce safe handling when the supporting conditions are missing (Islam & Hoque, 2013; Tey *et al.*, 2021).

The gap is structural, not attitudinal. Two-thirds of vendors (66.7%) had never been trained, and none knew the Food Safety Act 2013 fully, so what limits safe practice is a shortfall of training, information and regulatory support the enabling conditions the study's framework foregrounds (Food Safety Act, 2013; Hossain *et al.*, 2021). One result stands out for policy: the strong correlation between voluntary compliance and willingness to report unsafe peers ($r = 0.81$, $p < .001$) points to a prosocial "community champion" group already in the market raw material for self-regulation and peer supported compliance through co-regulatory approaches (Ayres & Braithwaite, 1992).

5.2 Underreporting and Consumer Behavior

Two linked issues come through: vendors are probably under-reporting and consumer behavior is more tangled than it looks. The mismatch between what vendors said about their own substance use and the rest of the evidence looks like social desirability bias a reluctance to admit anything illegal or frowned upon, exactly what research on sensitive survey topics predicts (Krumpal, 2013). Self-reported adulteration figures therefore deserve a sceptical eye, since the true level may be higher.

The consumer side is similarly knotted. Awareness of adulteration was everywhere, yet it rarely became protective buying, because price kept the upper hand. That is what the Health Belief Model predicts: knowing a risk exists is not enough to change behavior unless people also believe they can pick the safer option and act on it (Rosenstock, 1974; Liu *et al.*, 2013). Where shoppers cannot reliably tell safe food from adulterated, awareness breeds worry without altering the purchase which is why the most exposed stay exposed.

5.3 Willingness to Pay and Governance Failure

One encouraging finding is that price sensitivity, structural as it is, bends under safety concern. Price came first for 93.3% of consumers, yet 86.7% were willing conditionally or definitely to pay more for certified safe products. This points to a latent demand for safe food, responsive to perceived risk, that credible certification could surface (Sun, 2012; Zhang *et al.*, 2018) reinforced by the 60% of key informants who saw demand rising.

Of all the threads, governance failure was the most consistently confirmed. Key informants named insufficient staffing and limited legal authority as the chief constraints (90% and 60% respectively); consumers gave government the lowest rating ($M = 2.33$) and no vendor knew the Food Safety Act 2013 in full. The framework exists; the institutional muscle to implement it does not (Hossain *et al.*, 2021; Grindle, 2007). Only 10% of experts credited mobile courts with lasting deterrence, so punishment alone cannot shift the incentives sustaining unsafe practice (Ayres & Braithwaite, 1992). Tellingly, the most-cited driver was already-adulterated inputs from upstream suppliers (70%), showing much of the problem is born before the retail stall.

5.4 Synthesis

Set within the analytical framework, the pieces fit one explanation. Weak enforcement opens the opportunities; economic pressure and upstream supplier behavior reward taking them; thin vendor knowledge turns those incentives into unsafe handling and consumers hemmed in by price and unable to tell safe food apart cannot push back through the market. Each element feeds the next, and the loop holds food-safety risk in place.

The findings also draw a line between general awareness and functional literacy. Knowing that adulteration happens was common; knowing which substances to watch for, or what the regulations require, was not least of all among vendors. That divide argues for treating vendor education as a policy goal in its own right, not something a general campaign delivers by default (Islam & Hoque, 2013; Henson & Caswell, 1999). Even so, there are levers the prosocial vendor cohort, the willingness to pay for certified safe food, and the growing demand suggesting the present equilibrium is open to well-aimed intervention.

5.5 Limitations and Future Scope

Several limitations temper any generalization. The samples are small and purposive (15 vendors, 15 consumers, 10 key informants) and drawn from one market, so the study is exploratory and its quantitative findings indicative rather than representative. The cross-

sectional design captures a single moment and cannot establish causality, so the reinforcing relationships discussed are interpretations, not verified causal links. Reliance on self-reports introduces social-desirability bias, visible in the gap between reported preservative use and other evidence. Both groups were predominantly male (vendors 86.7%, consumers 73.3%), limiting gender analysis. And without laboratory testing, actual adulteration prevalence could not be independently confirmed.

Those limitations map onto a clear research agenda. Larger, multi-market studies would allow generalizable estimates and cross-market comparison. Pairing surveys with laboratory testing and supply-chain tracing would check self-reports against hard contamination data and pin down where adulteration enters going straight at the upstream supplier problem that 70% of experts flagged. Longitudinal or quasi-experimental designs could test whether training, registration, certification, or QR traceability move practice and switch on the concern driven willingness to pay seen here. A more gender-balanced sample would facilitate a more comprehensive analysis of gender-related factors that could not be fully explored within the scope of this study.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

This study set out to understand food adulteration and its governance at Karwan Bazar, drawing on vendor and consumer surveys and key informant interviews. Its central conclusion is that adulteration endures not because any one group fails but because weaknesses across governance, supply chains, and the consumer market reinforce one another. Governance and regulatory implementation proved the heaviest constraint: experts agreed almost unanimously that inspection staffing is inadequate, legal authority limited, and coordination weak a judgement echoed by consumers' poor rating of government and by no vendor knowing the Food Safety Act 2013 in full.

The vendors generally held sound attitudes toward food safety while falling short in practice—a gap owing less to indifference than to missing training, a shaky grasp of the rules, and the absence of conditions that make safe handling routine. On the demand side, awareness was broad but buying stayed price-led, and since most consumers could not reliably spot adulterated goods, that awareness never became market pressure for safer food. Yet the picture is not bleak: a prosocial vendor cohort, a concern-elastic willingness to pay, and apparently growing demand for safer products all suggest the situation is not fixed and that targeted, coordinated action could shift it.

6.2 Recommendations

The recommendations below follow from what the study found, and they are deliberately modest about what enforcement alone can achieve. Experts were nearly unanimous that the system's weakness is one of capacity rather than law, and the vendor data revealed willing attitudes held back by missing support. The proposals therefore aim less at new rules than at making existing ones workable, and at building on the openings the fieldwork uncovered.

Strengthen inspection capacity.

First, invest in inspection capacity before anything else. With 90% of key informants pointing to a shortage of inspectors as a binding constraint, the most immediate need is simply more trained staff assigned to high-volume markets like Karwan Bazar, supported by a routine rather than occasional monitoring schedule. A dedicated market-level inspection unit, which 80% of experts endorsed, would give a market of this size the steady presence that periodic drives cannot.

Make inter-agency coordination routine.

Second, make the agencies work as one. Responsibility at Karwan Bazar is currently split among the BFSA, Dhaka North City Corporation and parts of the Ministry of Food and the coordination between them is thin a problem 80% of informants raised. Regular, scheduled information sharing and occasional joint enforcement would reduce the duplication and the gaps that let cases slip through and would cost far less than expanding any single agency.

Treat vendor training as a distinct priority.

Third, treat vendor training as its own priority rather than a by-product of awareness campaigns. The study found vendors aware that adulteration is harmful yet unfamiliar with specific substances or the Food Safety Act 2013 and two-thirds had never been trained. Short, practical sessions on the adulterants common to their trade, safe handling and the basics of the law would address a gap that is about know-how, not attitude. The prosocial “community champion” vendors identified here, most willing to comply and to report unsafe peers are the natural place to start and could help carry the message to others.

Give consumers a credible signal.

Fourth, give consumers something they can act on. Shoppers in this study overwhelmingly wanted to avoid adulterated food but mostly could not detect it and 86.7% were willing to pay at least a modest premium for products they could trust. A simple, visible certification or compliance marker for vendors who meet basic standards would convert that latent willingness into real demand, rewarding the vendors who comply and giving buyers a signal, they currently lack.

Move from punishment toward prevention.

A preventive approach should complement enforcement efforts. Since only 10% of experts viewed mobile courts as effective deterrents and 70% identified upstream suppliers as a major source of adulteration, stronger supply-chain monitoring, consumer awareness initiatives, and further research are needed to address root causes effectively

7. Declaration

I declare that this paper contains neither any plagiarized material nor any AI-generated content. The analysis is the author's contribution. Any deviation from this declaration is author's liability.

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Annexures

Annexure-A (Data Collection Questionnaire)

DATA COLLECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Exploring Food Adulteration and Governance Challenges in Urban Markets: A Case of Karwan Bazar, Dhaka

157th Advanced Course on Administration and Development (ACAD)
Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC), Savar, Dhaka
Prepared by: Mohammed Yousuf | Roll No: 109

About This Instrument

This package contains four data collection instruments for a mixed-methods study on food adulteration and governance in Karwan Bazar:

- Questionnaire A — Food Vendors (Structured; ~15 respondents; est. 20–25 min)
- Questionnaire B — Consumers (Structured; ~15 respondents; est. 20–25 min)
- Questionnaire C — Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide (~10 respondents; est. 30–40 min)

Ethical Note: All participation is voluntary. Informed consent will be obtained before each interview. Responses are strictly confidential; no personal identifying information will appear in any published output.

Questionnaire A: Food Vendors

Section A1 — Respondent Profile

1. Vendor Reference Code (not share with respondent)

2. Gender of respondent (tick one)

☐ Male (1)

☐ Female (2)

☐ Prefer not to say (3)

3. Age group (tick one)

☐ Below 25 years (1)

☐ 25–34 years (2)

☐ 35–44 years (3)

☐ 45–54 years (4)

☐ 55 years or above (5)

4. Highest level of education completed (tick one)

☐ No formal education (1)

☐ Primary (Class 1–5) (2)

☐ Secondary (Class 6–10) (3)

☐ Higher Secondary (SSC/HSC) (4)

☐ Graduate or above (5)

5. Nature of business (tick one)

☐ Wholesaler (1)

☐ Retailer (2)

☐ Both wholesale & retail (3)

6. How long have you been operating at Karwan Bazar? (tick one)

☐ Less than 1 year (1)

☐ 1–3 years (2)

☐ 4–6 years (3)

☐ 7–10 years (4)

☐ More than 10 years (5)

7. What food products do you primarily sell? (tick all that apply)

☐ Vegetables / Fruits (A_PROD_1)

☐ Fish / Seafood (A_PROD_2)

☐ Meat / Poultry (A_PROD_3)

☐ Dairy Products (A_PROD_4)

☐ Spices / Condiments / Oils (A_PROD_5)

☐ Packaged / Processed Foods (A_PROD_6)

☐ Other (specify below) (A_PROD_7)

If 'Other', please specify:

8. Have you ever received training on food safety or hygiene? (tick one)

☐ Yes — formal training (1)

☐ Yes — informal / on-the-job (2)

☐ No, never (3)

☐ Not sure (4)

If yes, who provided the training and approximately when?

Section A2 — Procurement, Storage and Handling Practices

9. Where do you mainly procure your food products? (tick all that apply)

☐ Directly from farmers (A_PROC_1)

☐ Local suppliers or agents (A_PROC_2)

☐ Wholesalers or importers (A_PROC_3)

☐ Other (specify below) (A_PROC_4)

If 'Other', please specify:

10. Before putting food on sale, do you check its quality? (tick one)

☐ Always (1)

☐ Sometimes (2)

☐ Rarely (3)

☐ Never (4)

11. How do you typically store food products before selling? (tick all that apply)

☐ Open stall — no storage (A_STOR_1)

☐ Covered indoor storage (A_STOR_2)

☐ Refrigerated storage (A_STOR_3)

☐ Ice or cold packs (A_STOR_4)

☐ Shared storage with others (A_STOR_5)

☐ Other (specify below) (A_STOR_6)

If 'Other', please specify:

12. Do you maintain personal hygiene when handling food (e.g., handwashing, clean clothing)? (tick one)

- ☐ Always (1) ☐ Sometimes (2) ☐ Rarely (3) ☐ Never (4)

13. How do you handle unsold perishable products at the end of the day? (tick one)

- ☐ Discard them (1) ☐ Store for next day without treatment (2)
☐ Apply a preservative substance (3) ☐ Sell at a reduced price (4)
☐ Return to supplier (5)

14. Do you use any substance to preserve food or improve its appearance? (tick one)

- ☐ Yes — regularly (1) ☐ Yes — occasionally (2)
☐ No, never (3) ☐ Unsure / prefer not to say (4)

15. If yes, which substances do you use? (tick all that apply)

Skip to Q16 if the answer to Q14 was 'No' or 'Unsure'.

- ☐ Formalin (A_PRES_1) ☐ Calcium carbide (A_PRES_2)
☐ Artificial colours or textile dyes (A_PRES_3) ☐ Chemical preservatives (A_PRES_4)
☐ Natural preservatives (salt, vinegar) (A_PRES_5) ☐ Other (specify below) (A_PRES_6)

If 'Other', please specify:

16. In your opinion, why do some vendors engage in food adulteration? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ To increase profit margins (A_MOT_1) ☐ Pressure from market competition (A_MOT_2)
☐ To prolong shelf life of products (A_MOT_3) ☐ To make products look more attractive (A_MOT_4)
☐ Weak or infrequent enforcement (A_MOT_5) ☐ Lack of awareness about the risks (A_MOT_6)
☐ All of the above (A_MOT_6) ☐ None of the above (A_MOT_7)

Section A3 — Knowledge of Food Adulteration and Health Risks

17. Have you heard the term 'food adulteration'? (tick one)

- ☐ Yes (1) ☐ No (2)

18. Which of the following are harmful if added to food? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Formalin (A_HARM_1) ☐ Calcium carbide (A_HARM_2)
☐ Textile dyes (A_HARM_3) ☐ Artificial preservatives (A_HARM_4)
☐ All of the above (A_HARM_5) ☐ Do not know (A_HARM_6)

19. Are you aware that eating adulterated food can cause serious illness? (tick one)

- ☐ Yes (1) ☐ No (2)

20. Which illnesses can result from adulterated food? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Food poisoning (A_DSEASE_1)
☐ Liver disease (A_DSEASE_3)
☐ All of the above (A_HARM_5)

- ☐ Cancer (A_DSEASE_2)
☐ Kidney disease (A_DSEASE_4)
☐ Do not know (A_DSEASE_6)

Section A4 — Regulatory Awareness and Compliance

21. Are you aware that Bangladesh has a Food Safety Act (2013)? (tick one)

- ☐ Yes — aware and familiar with its provisions (1) ☐ Yes — heard of it, but not familiar with details (2)
☐ No, not aware (3)

22. Are you aware of the Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA)? (tick one)

- ☐ Yes — very aware of it (1) ☐ Heard of it, but unsure what it does (2)
☐ No, not aware (3)

23. Are you aware that food adulteration is a criminal offence under Bangladeshi law? (tick one)

- ☐ Yes (1) ☐ No (2)

24. Have you ever been inspected by a government food safety authority or mobile court? (tick one)

- ☐ Yes (1) ☐ No (2)

25. Please rate your agreement with each statement below.

Read each statement aloud. Ask the respondent to choose: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Statement	1 Str. Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Str. Agree
I fully understand the food safety regulations that apply to my business.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Regular government inspections help improve food safety in this market.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The penalties for food adulteration are strict enough to deter unsafe practices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I believe most vendors in Karwan Bazar follow safe food handling practices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would follow food safety rules even without regular inspections.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Economic pressure makes it difficult for me to always follow safe food handling practices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Vendors who use adulterants have an unfair pricing advantage over me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would prefer to sell safe food even if it means lower profits.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would report a fellow vendor for unsafe food practices if I witnessed them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Questionnaire B: Consumers

Section B1: Respondent Profile

1. Gender of respondent (tick one)

☐ Male (1)☐ Female (2)☐ Prefer not to say (3)

2. Age group (tick one)

☐ Below 25 years (1)☐ 25–34 years (2)☐ 35–44 years (3)☐ 45–54 years (4)☐ 55 years or above (5)

3. Highest level of education completed (tick one)

☐ No formal education (1)☐ Primary (Class 1–5) (2)☐ Secondary (Class 6–10) (3)☐ Higher Secondary (SSC/HSC) (4)☐ Graduate or above (5)

4. Occupation:

5. Monthly household income (approximate) (tick one)

☐ Below BDT 10,000 (1)☐ BDT 10,001–20,000 (2)☐ BDT 20,001–40,000 (3)☐ BDT 40,001–60,000 (4)☐ Above BDT 60,000 (5)

6. How frequently do you buy food at Karwan Bazar? (tick one)

☐ Daily (1)☐ 3–5 times per week (2)☐ Once or twice a week (3)☐ Occasionally (4)☐ First-time visitor (5)

7. Which food products do you most commonly buy here? (tick all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Vegetables / Fruits (B_PROD_1) | ☐ Fish / Seafood (B_PROD_2) |
| ☐ Meat / Poultry (B_PROD_3) | ☐ Dairy Products (B_PROD_4) |
| ☐ Spices / Condiments (B_PROD_5) | ☐ Packaged / Processed Foods (B_PROD_6) |

8. What are your main reasons for shopping at Karwan Bazar? (tick all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Low prices (B_RSN_1) | ☐ Freshness / quality (B_RSN_2) |
| ☐ Product variety (B_RSN_3) | ☐ Convenience / proximity (B_RSN_4) |
| ☐ Habit / familiarity (B_RSN_5) | ☐ Safe food (B_RSN_6) |
| ☐ Other (specify below) (B_RSN_7) | |

If 'Other', please specify:

Section B2 — Awareness of Food Adulteration and Health Risks

9. Have you heard about food adulteration? (tick one)

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ☐ Yes (1) | ☐ No (2) |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|

10. How would you describe your overall awareness of food adulteration in Bangladesh? (tick one)

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Very aware (1) | ☐ Somewhat aware (2) |
| ☐ Slightly aware (3) | ☐ Not aware at all (4) |

11. Which of the following have you heard about? (tick all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Formalin in fish (B_ADL_1) | ☐ Calcium carbide in fruits (B_ADL_2) |
| ☐ Unapproved Artificial colours in sweets or drinks (B_ADL_3) | ☐ Textile dyes in spices (B_ADL_4) |
| ☐ Chemical preservatives in meat (B_ADL_5) | ☐ Adulteration in milk or dairy (B_ADL_6) |
| ☐ Adulteration in cooking oils (B_ADL_7) | ☐ None of the above (B_ADL_8) |
| ☐ Others (B_ADL_9)----- | |

12. How concerned are you about food adulteration? (tick one)

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| ☐ Very concerned (1) | ☐ Somewhat concerned (2) | ☐ Not concerned (3) |
|---|---|--|

13. Can you usually detect adulterated food by its appearance, smell, or taste? (tick one)

- | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------|
| ☐ Yes, usually (1) | ☐ Sometimes (2) | ☐ No (3) |
|---|--|---------------------------------|

14. Have you personally experienced a health problem you believe was caused by adulterated food? (tick one)

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Yes, definitely (1) | ☐ Possibly, but not certain (2) |
| ☐ No (3) | ☐ Prefer not to say (4) |

If yes, please briefly describe what happened:

15. Have you ever reported or complained to an authority about adulterated food?
(tick one)

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

16. Please rate your agreement with each statement about your purchasing behaviour.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Statement	1 Str. Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Str. Agree
I carefully examine food for signs of adulteration before buying.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I trust vendors in Karwan Bazar to sell safe, unadulterated food.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Price matters more to me than the safety of the food I buy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I check whether packaged food is labelled with ingredients and expiry dates.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would stop buying from a vendor I found out was selling adulterated food.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

17. Please rate your agreement with each statement about food adulteration and governance.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Statement	1 Str. Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Str. Agree
Food adulteration is a serious health risk for my family.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is enough public information about the dangers of adulterated food.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The government is doing enough to protect consumers from adulterated food.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel confident that food sold in Karwan Bazar is generally safe.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Consumers should be more proactive in checking and reporting food safety issues.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

18. Would you pay more for food that is certified safe or guaranteed adulteration-free?
(tick one)

☐ Yes, definitely (1)

☐ Yes, if the price difference is small (2)

☐ No — price is my priority (3)

☐ Unsure (4)

Section B3 — Perceptions of Governance and Regulatory Enforcement

19. Have you ever witnessed a government food safety inspection or mobile court operation in Karwan Bazar? (tick one)

☐ Yes, frequently (1)

☐ Yes, occasionally (2)

☐ No, never (3)

☐ Unsure (4)

20. Have you ever heard about any awareness program of Bangladesh Food Safety Authority.? (tick one)

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

21. If yes in question 20, what type of awareness program you have heard or participated?

☐ Yard meeting (B_PGR_1)	☐ School Seminar (B_PGR_2)
☐ Training program (B_PGR_3)	☐ Guardian meeting (B_PGR_4)
☐ Public Notice (B_PGR_5)	☐ Mobile SMS (B_PGR_6)
☐ Leaflet/Postering (B_PGR_7)	☐ Television Commercial (B_PGR_8)
☐ All of the above (B_PGR_8)	Others (B_PGR_9)-----

Questionnaire C: Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide

Section C1 — Informant Profile

1. Name (optional — leave blank if respondent prefers)

2. Designation and organization:

3. Years of experience in food safety, market governance, or a related field:

4. Primary role in relation to Karwan Bazar or urban food safety (tick one)

☐ Food safety inspection or enforcement (1)

☐ Policy development or regulation (2)

☐ Market management or administration (3)

☐ Public health or laboratory testing (4)

☐ Research or academia (5)

☐ Other (specify below) (6)

If 'Other', please specify:

Section C2 — Governance and Regulatory Enforcement

5. How effective is the current food safety regulatory framework in controlling adulteration in urban markets like Karwan Bazar?

Probe: Which aspects work well? Where are the biggest gaps? (Tick all that apply)

☐ The framework is adequate but poorly enforced (1)

☐ Laws exist but lack operational guidelines for market-level inspectors (2)

☐ Fragmented mandates across multiple agencies weaken oversight (3)

☐ Penalties are too low to deter repeat offences (4)

☐ Resource constraints (staff, equipment) limit effectiveness (5)

☐ All of the above (6)

☐ None of the above (7)

If other, please elaborate:

6. How frequently are food safety inspections conducted in Karwan Bazar? (Tick all that apply)

☐ Routine / scheduled inspections (at least monthly) (1)

☐ Complaint-driven inspections only (2)

☐ Event-based or seasonal (e.g. Ramadan, Eid) (3)

☐ Random / unannounced inspections (4)

☐ Inspections are rare or infrequent (5)

☐ All of the above (6)

- ☐ None of the above (7)

If other, please elaborate:

7. How effective are mobile court operations in deterring food adulteration? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Mobile courts are effective and have a lasting deterrent effect (1)
☐ They create short-term compliance but vendors revert quickly (2)
☐ Outcomes are mainly fines; very few prosecutions (3)
☐ They are understaffed and cover too few stalls per visit (4)
☐ Vendors are tipped off before inspections, limiting impact (5)
☐ All of the above (6)
☐ None of the above (7)

If other, please elaborate:

8. What are the main challenges your agency or the broader system faces in enforcing food safety regulations at the market level?

Probe: Staffing constraints, budget, legal authority, political pressure — which matter most? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Insufficient inspection staff relative to market size (1)
☐ Inadequate budget for equipment and laboratory testing (2)
☐ Limited legal authority to close stalls or seize goods (3)
☐ Political pressure or interference from local leaders (4)
☐ Lack of coordination among responsible agencies (5)
☐ Low public reporting / complaints from consumers (6)
☐ All of the above (7)
☐ None of the above (8)

If other, please elaborate:

9. How is coordination managed across the agencies involved in food safety oversight — such as BFSA, district administration, public health offices, police, and local government?

Probe: Are roles clearly defined? Where do overlaps or gaps arise? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Roles are clearly defined and coordination is effective (1)
☐ There is significant overlap leading to duplication of effort (2)

- ☐ Gaps exist where no agency has clear responsibility (3)
- ☐ Inter-agency meetings or task forces exist but are infrequent (4)
- ☐ Coordination breaks down at the field / market level (5)
- ☐ All of the above (6)
- ☐ None of the above (7)

If other, please elaborate:

10. To what extent do corruption, political interference, or informal pressures affect food safety enforcement in urban markets?

Probe: Can you describe how this manifest in practice, without identifying specific individuals? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Inspectors accept informal payments to overlook violations (1)
- ☐ Local political figures shield certain vendors from action (2)
- ☐ Trade associations exert pressure on inspectors (3)
- ☐ Enforcement selectively targets small vendors, not large traders (4)
- ☐ Corruption is present but limited in scale (5)
- ☐ There is no significant corruption or political interference (6)
- ☐ All of the above (7)
- ☐ None of the above (8)

If other, please elaborate:

Section C3— Vendor Behaviour and Market Dynamics

11. What types of food adulteration or unsafe practices are most commonly encountered in Karwan Bazar? How has the situation changed over time? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Use of formalin in fish (1)
- ☐ Calcium carbide for artificial fruit ripening (2)
- ☐ Textile dyes in spices or sweets (3)
- ☐ Chemical preservatives in meat or poultry (4)
- ☐ Adulteration in cooking oils or dairy (5)
- ☐ Situation has improved over time (6)
- ☐ Situation has worsened or stayed the same (7)
- ☐ All of the above (8)
- ☐ None of the above (9)

If other, please elaborate:

12. In your experience, what are the primary motivations for vendors to engage in adulteration or unsafe food handling?

Probe: Economic pressure, competition, limited awareness, weak enforcement — how do these interact? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Economic pressure / low profit margins (1)
- ☐ Intense market competition drives unsafe shortcuts (2)
- ☐ Limited vendor awareness of health consequences (3)
- ☐ Weak or infrequent enforcement makes it low-risk (4)
- ☐ Suppliers provide adulterated inputs unknowingly (5)
- ☐ Cultural normalisation — 'everyone does it' attitude (6)
- ☐ 'All of the above' (7)
- ☐ None of the above (8)

If other, please elaborate:

13. What proportion of vendors in Karwan Bazar do you estimate to be operating in compliance with food safety regulations? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Less than 25% are fully compliant (1)
- ☐ 25–49% are broadly compliant (2)
- ☐ 50–74% are broadly compliant (3)
- ☐ 75% or more are broadly compliant (4)
- ☐ Compliant vendors tend to be larger / more established (5)
- ☐ Compliant vendors have received training or certification (6)
- ☐ All of the above (7)
- ☐ None of the above (8)

If other, please elaborate:

14. What role do market management committees or trade associations play in supporting or undermining food safety compliance among vendors? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Market committees actively promote food safety rules (1)
- ☐ Committees prioritise trade interests over safety compliance (2)
- ☐ Trade associations provide informal training to members (3)
- ☐ Associations shield non-compliant members from authorities (4)

- ☐ Market management has little influence on vendor behaviour (5)
- ☐ All of the above (6)
- ☐ None of the above (7)

If other, please elaborate:

Section C4 — Consumer Awareness and Demand-Side Factors

15. How would you assess the level of food safety awareness among consumers in Karwan Bazar? Which communication channels have proven most effective in reaching them? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Consumer awareness is very low — most cannot identify adulterants (1)
- ☐ Awareness is moderate — consumers have heard of issues but lack detail (2)
- ☐ Television / social media are the most effective communication channels (3)
- ☐ Community health workers or NGOs are effective (4)
- ☐ Government campaigns have had limited reach (5)
- ☐ All of the above (6)
- ☐ None of the above (7)

If other, please elaborate:

16. How does consumer price sensitivity shape demand for safer food?

Probe: Are there examples where consumer pressure has driven vendors to improve practices? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Price sensitivity means consumers rarely prioritise safety (1)
- ☐ Lower-income households are most exposed to adulterated food (2)
- ☐ Consumer demand for certified safe food is growing (3)
- ☐ Consumer pressure has prompted some vendors to improve (4)
- ☐ Willingness to pay a premium for safe food is very limited (5)
- ☐ All of the above (6)
- ☐ None of the above (7)

If other, please elaborate:

Section C5 — Recommendations and the Way Forward

17. What specific policy or legal reforms would most significantly improve food safety governance in urban markets like Karwan Bazar? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Stronger penalties for repeated violations (1)
- ☐ Simplified compliance guidelines for small vendors (2)
- ☐ Mandatory vendor registration systems (3)
- ☐ Faster legal procedures for food safety cases (4)
- ☐ Greater authority for BFSA inspectors (5)
- ☐ Digital inspection and complaint systems (6)
- ☐ All of the above (7)
- ☐ None of the above (8)

If other, please elaborate:

18. What institutional or capacity changes are most urgently needed — within your agency or the broader regulatory system — to strengthen enforcement? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Recruit and train more food safety inspectors (1)
- ☐ Invest in mobile laboratory / rapid-test equipment (2)
- ☐ Establish a dedicated market-level inspection unit (3)
- ☐ Improve inter-agency coordination and data sharing (4)
- ☐ Introduce independent monitoring by civil society (5)
- ☐ Develop an inspector performance and accountability framework (6)
- ☐ All of the above (7)
- ☐ None of the above (8)

If other, please elaborate:

19. What role can technology, civil society, consumer organisations, or the private sector play in improving food safety at the urban market level? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Digital platforms / apps for consumer reporting of adulteration (1)
- ☐ Rapid food testing, QR-code traceability for produce at point of sale (2)
- ☐ Civil society advocacy and public awareness campaigns (3)
- ☐ Retailer / supermarket supply-chain standards influencing market vendors (4)
- ☐ International donor or NGO support for capacity-building (5)
- ☐ All of the above (6)
- ☐ None of the above (7)

If other, please elaborate:

20. Is there anything else about food safety governance in Karwan Bazar or urban Bangladesh that you feel is important for this study to capture? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ The study should also examine rural supply chains feeding Karwan Bazar (1)
- ☐ Case studies of successful enforcement actions would be valuable (2)
- ☐ Comparative analysis with other urban markets is needed (3)
- ☐ The study should include laboratory testing results for food samples (4)
- ☐ Nothing additional to add (5)
- ☐ All of the above (6)
- ☐ None of the above (7)

If other, please elaborate:

Annexure-B (Photographs During Collection of Data)





Consumer Data Collection



KII



Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre
Savar, Dhaka.

Programme & Studies Division
Evaluation Department

157th Advanced Course on Administration and Development
Individual Assignment

Seal

NAME OF THE MODULE: **Research for Governance**
(Part-II)

MODULE NO: 05

Marks Obtained

DATE: 15/06/2026

Code No.

Code No.



Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre
Savar, Dhaka.

Programme & Studies Division
Evaluation Department

157th Advanced Course on Administration and Development
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Seal

NAME OF THE MODULE: **Research for Governance**
(Part-II)

MODULE NO: 05

DATE: 15/06/2026

Instruction to be followed

(Please read carefully)

1. Please write your Name, Roll No etc. at the specified space.
2. Writing Name, Roll No. etc. at any other place or making the script otherwise may cause cancellation of your answer script.
1. Put tick (✓) marks on Evaluation method and Institute's Name.

Name: MD. SALIMUZZAMAN
Roll No: 110

Human Security in Bangladesh: Assessing the Role, Challenges and Policy Options of Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party (VDP)

Abstract

The concept of human security has fundamentally transformed how we think about safety and protection — moving the focus away from guarding state borders toward safeguarding the lives and dignity of ordinary people.. This change in viewpoint is not just theoretical but also extremely useful in a nation like Bangladesh, where millions of people deal with everyday realities influenced by poverty, climate vulnerability, public health issues, and governance inadequacies. At the center of this problem is the Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defense Party (VDP), the nation's largest auxiliary volunteer group. This essay examines in detail what Ansar and VDP actually do on the ground, the challenges that its members encounter, and the changes that might greatly increase its effectiveness.

This study uses a mixed-method research approach and is based on 77 Key Informant Interviews (KII) with district-level administrators and field supervisors, as well as survey responses from 455 participants, including Ansar members, VDP volunteers, and senior officers. Ansar and VDP members now play significant roles in disaster response, election security, food assistance distribution, health awareness, and community cohesiveness, demonstrating that the organization has already gone well beyond its initial goal. They make particularly significant contributions to communal security (4.44/5) and political security (mean score 4.52/5).

However, the same data shows enduring structural flaws. What the organization can accomplish is limited by obsolete communication methods, poor interagency coordination, inadequate welfare assistance for VDP volunteers, and inadequate training in contemporary threats. Based on the Resilience-Response-Reform (RRR) analytical framework, the report offers eight evidence-based policy proposals that will turn Ansar and VDP into a citizen-centered, digitally empowered organization that can provide human security at scale throughout Bangladesh

Keywords:

Human Security, Bangladesh Ansar & Village Defence Party, Community Security, Disaster Management, Smart Bangladesh 2041, Sustainable Development.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study Security: As a concept, has undergone a quiet but profound revolution over the past three decades. For much of the twentieth century, security was understood primarily in military terms — the defense of territorial borders, the deterrence of foreign threats, the preservation of state sovereignty. This framework made sense in a world defined by interstate conflict. But as the Cold War ended and the nature of threats shifted, it became increasingly difficult to ignore a troubling paradox: millions of people were living in states that were technically at peace, yet were experiencing profound insecurity in their daily lives. They were threatened not by invading armies but by hunger, disease, unemployment, environmental collapse, and the slow erosion of social institutions.

It was against this backdrop that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in its landmark 1994 Human Development Report, articulated the concept of human security. The Report proposed that security must be reconceived around people, not states, and must address both "freedom from fear" — protection from physical violence and conflict — and "freedom from want" — freedom from poverty, illness, environmental harm, and economic marginalization. The Report identified seven interconnected dimensions of human security: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security. This framework rapidly gained international recognition because it offered a coherent and humane response to a world where the most pressing threats were structural, not military.

Bangladesh presents a uniquely important context in which to examine this framework. One of the most densely populated countries on earth, Bangladesh occupies a geography that is simultaneously one of the most fertile and one of the most vulnerable on the planet. It has achieved extraordinary progress in reducing poverty and improving human development indicators over the past two decades, but it continues to face profound structural challenges. Climate change has amplified the frequency and intensity of floods, cyclones, river erosion, and salinity intrusion — threatening both livelihoods and lives. Economic disparities persist between urban and rural populations. Youth unemployment, public health vulnerabilities, cybercrime, and the spread of digital misinformation are emerging as new dimensions of insecurity. These are not problems that armies or traditional police forces are well positioned to address.

It is in this context that Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party (VDP) has acquired a strategic importance that often goes unrecognized in public discourse. Established as an

auxiliary security force, Ansar and VDP has evolved into one of the largest volunteer-based community organizations in the world. With millions of members deployed across urban, semi-urban, and rural areas — including a significant proportion of women, particularly among VDP volunteers — the organization possesses a depth of community presence that no other security institution in Bangladesh can match. Its members are embedded in local communities, familiar with local dynamics and social networks, and trusted by local populations in ways that more formal institutions frequently are not.

Ansar and VDP members maintain law and order, protect critical infrastructure, support election administration, coordinate disaster relief, assist in public health campaigns, and work to sustain social cohesion in times of crisis. As Bangladesh pursues the ambitious goals of the Smart Bangladesh 2041 vision and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the question of how to strengthen and modernize institutions like Ansar and VDP becomes not only a matter of institutional management but a matter of national development strategy.

1.2 Problem Statement

First, there are notable differences in operating capabilities between various regions and districts. While some units suffer with a lack of resources, others have stronger logistical support, equipment, and training.

Second, modern security threats are evolving quickly. Public health emergencies, cybercrime, digital disinformation, and climate-related calamities all call for specific technology skills and talents that are not necessarily sufficiently covered in current training frameworks.

Third, there is frequently still little cooperation between Ansar, the VDP, and other government agencies. Inadequate systems for exchanging information frequently cause delays in emergency responses and lower operational effectiveness.

Fourth, many VDP members continue to serve on a voluntary basis with limited incentives and welfare benefits. This affects morale, motivation, and long-term sustainability. Fourth, many VDP members continue to serve on a voluntary basis with limited incentives and welfare benefits. This affects morale, motivation, and long-term sustainability.

Finally, The effectiveness of Bangladesh Ansar and VDP in advancing human security is constrained by a number of institutional and operational issues, despite its widespread presence and contributions.

The technological modernization has not progressed at the pace required to meet contemporary security challenges. Many reporting and communication systems remain manual, reducing the organization's ability to respond effectively in real-time situations.

These challenges highlight the need for a comprehensive assessment of the role, effectiveness, and future development of Bangladesh Ansar and VDP within the broader framework of human security.

1.3 Research Gap, Objectives, and Questions

Despite its scale and strategic importance, Bangladesh Ansar and VDP has received surprisingly limited scholarly attention. Existing research tends to focus narrowly on specific operational dimensions — disaster management, community policing, or election security — rather than evaluating the organization's comprehensive contribution to the full spectrum of human security. Even less research has examined the implications of digital transformation and technological modernization for the organization's future effectiveness. This study directly addresses these gaps.

Research Objectives

The general objective of this research is to assess the role, challenges, and policy options of Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defense Party in ensuring human security in Bangladesh. This overarching objective is pursued through three specific objectives: first, to examine the contribution of Ansar and VDP across the seven dimensions of human security; second, to identify the operational and institutional challenges faced by members at the field level; and third, to propose evidence-based policy recommendations for strengthening the organization's effectiveness and sustainability.

Research Questions

Three research questions guide the inquiry:

- 1) What roles do Ansar and VDP members perform in ensuring human security for local populations?
- 2) What are the primary challenges they encounter in performing their duties?
- 3) What policy changes or support mechanisms would most significantly improve their effectiveness?

1.4 Rationale of the Study

Human security has emerged as a critical policy concern in Bangladesh due to the increasing complexity of both traditional and non-traditional threats, including natural disasters, public health emergencies, poverty, social instability, and digital vulnerabilities. In this context, Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party (VDP), as the country's largest auxiliary volunteer force, has become an important community-based institution contributing to public safety and resilience. Despite its extensive grassroots presence and multidimensional responsibilities, scholarly research examining its overall contribution to the broader framework of human security remains limited.

Most existing studies focus on isolated functions such as disaster management, election security, or community policing, while neglecting the organization's comprehensive role across the seven dimensions of human security. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to the operational challenges, welfare concerns, and technological preparedness required to address emerging security threats in the era of Smart Bangladesh 2041.

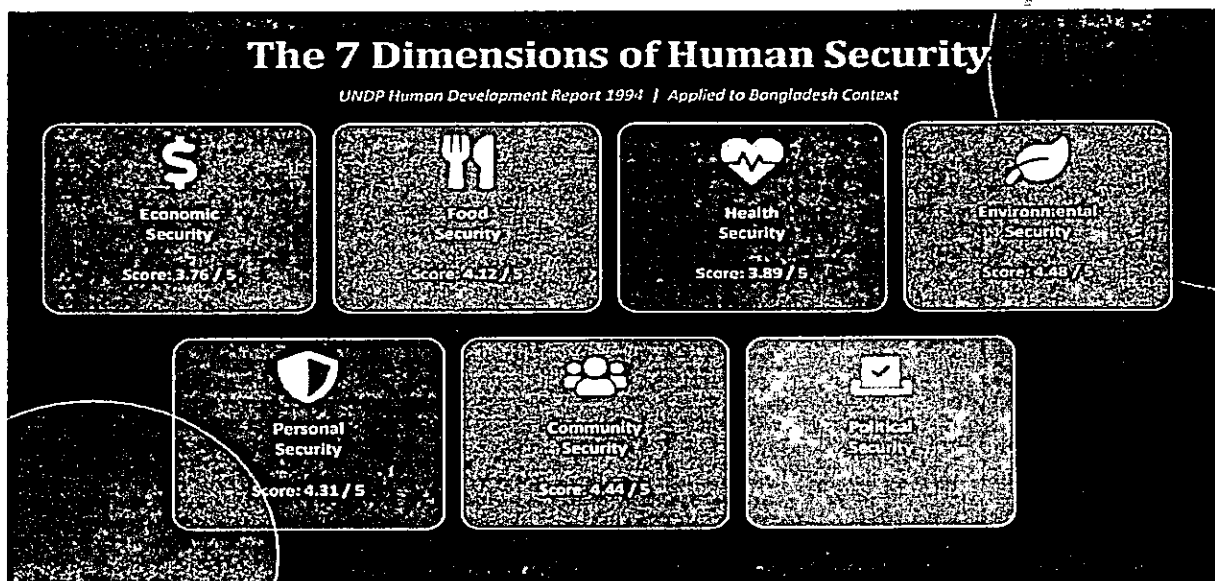
Therefore, this study is justified as it provides an evidence-based assessment of the role, challenges, and future policy options of Bangladesh Ansar and VDP. The findings are expected to contribute to academic discourse, inform policymakers, and support institutional reforms aimed at strengthening citizen-centered human security and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Bangladesh.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Analytical Framework

2.1 Human Security: Conceptual Foundations

The intellectual foundations of human security lie in a recognition that conventional security frameworks were structurally incapable of addressing the most widespread threats to human welfare. As Tad bakhsh and Chenoy (2007) observe, the traditional state-centric security paradigm was designed to answer one question — how do states protect themselves from external threats? — when the more urgent question for most of the world's population was a different one entirely: how do ordinary people protect themselves from the conditions that make their lives unlivable? Alkiré (2003) offers a useful clarification: human security is not simply the absence of violence, but the presence of conditions that allow human beings to live with dignity, autonomy, and freedom from chronic fear and deprivation.

The Commission on Human Security (2003) built directly on the UNDP framework to argue that human security requires both "protection" — institutional structures that shield people from threats — and "empowerment" — mechanisms that enable people to act on their own behalf. This dual emphasis is important for understanding what community-based security organizations like Ansar and VDP actually do. They are not simply enforcement agencies; at their best, they are institutions that build the social infrastructure through which communities protect and empower themselves. Paris (2001) and Owen (2004) have each noted that the breadth of the human security concept has sometimes made it difficult to operationalize, but both acknowledge that this breadth is also a strength: it compels institutions to think about security in multidimensional terms rather than reducing it to any single threat.



2.2 Community-Based Security Institutions and Human Security

A growing body of scholarship has examined the role of community-based security organizations in advancing human security. The consistent finding across this literature is that proximity to the population served is itself a security resource. Organizations embedded in local communities possess contextual knowledge, social networks, and relational trust that are extraordinarily difficult to replicate through formal institutional structures alone. They can identify emerging threats earlier, respond to crises faster, and engage with community members more effectively than centralized agencies.

Bangladesh Ansar and VDP exemplifies this model at scale. With members drawn from the very communities they serve, the organization possesses what might be called "institutional social capital" — a reservoir of trust, local knowledge, and informal networks that give it a distinctive operational advantage. This advantage, however, is not automatic. Research consistently shows that community-based organizations maintain their legitimacy only when they are adequately resourced, well-trained, accountable to the communities they serve, and capable of adapting to changing security environments. The question this study investigates is precisely whether Ansar and VDP meets these conditions — and what would need to change if it does not.

2.3 Analytical Framework: The Resilience-Response-Reform (RRR) Model

This study employs the Resilience-Response-Reform (RRR) Model as its analytical framework — a framework developed specifically to evaluate institutional effectiveness in the context of human security. The model examines three interconnected dimensions. Resilience refers to an organization's capacity to absorb shocks, adapt to new threats, and sustain its core functions over time. For Ansar and VDP, resilience is primarily grounded in its extensive volunteer network, its community embeddedness, and the institutional trust it has built over decades. Response refers to the operational capacity to mobilize resources, coordinate with partner agencies, and deliver services effectively during crises. And Reform refers to the extent to which institutional modernization — in training, technology, welfare systems, and governance structures — is needed and being pursued to meet future challenges.

The RRR Model provides a structured basis for interpreting this study's findings. It helps distinguish between dimensions where the organization is performing well (resilience) and dimensions where significant investment and change are needed (response and reform). This

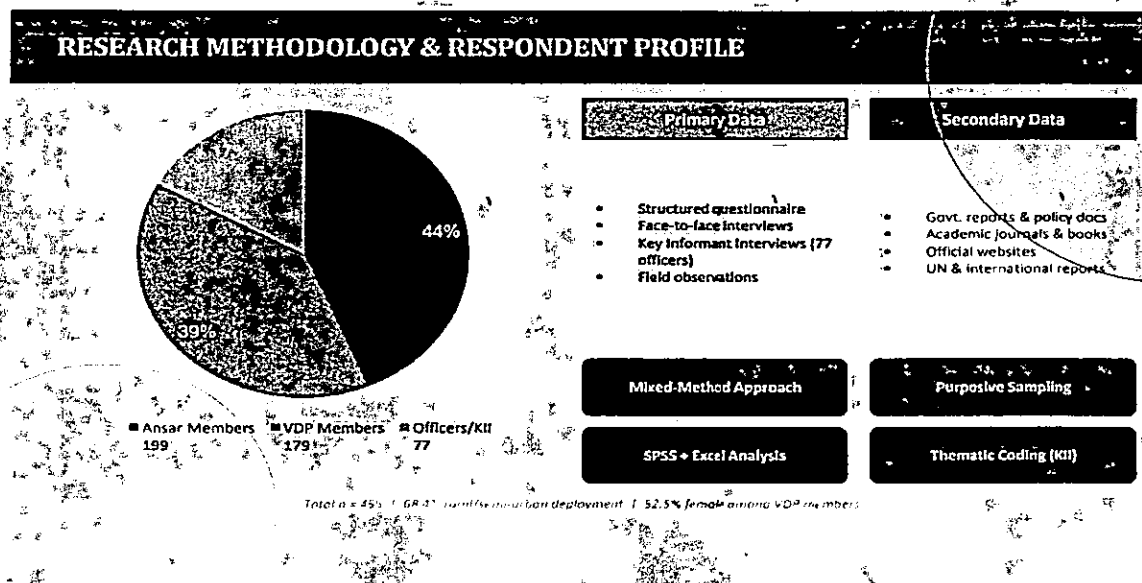
distinction, in turn, provides the logical foundation for the policy recommendations developed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Approach

This study adopts a mixed-method research design, combining quantitative survey methods with qualitative Key Informant Interviews (KII). The choice of a mixed-method approach reflects the nature of the research questions. Quantitative methods enable systematic measurement of perceptions and experiences across a large sample, providing the breadth needed to assess patterns and draw generalizable conclusions. Qualitative methods provide the depth needed to understand why those patterns exist — the institutional realities, lived experiences, and contextual dynamics that survey data alone cannot capture.

The research design is both exploratory and descriptive. The exploratory dimension allows for the investigation of emerging issues — particularly those related to digital transformation and new categories of human security threat — where the existing literature provides limited guidance. The descriptive dimension allows for systematic documentation of existing practices, challenges, and institutional capacities. A cross-sectional design was used, meaning that data were collected at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of the organization's current state.



3.2 Sample and Data Collection

The study's target population comprised field-level Ansar members, VDP volunteers, Battalion Ansar personnel, and administrative officers and supervisors — groups selected because they possess direct experience with human security implementation. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that all respondents had relevant field experience. The final sample of 455 participants was structured as follows:

Respondent Category	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Ansar Members	199	43.7%
VDP Members	179	39.3%
Officers/Key Informants	77	16.9%
Total	455	100%

Table 3.1: Sample Composition

Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, Key Informant Interviews with senior officers and coordinators, informal discussions, and direct field observations. Secondary data were drawn from government reports, policy documents, training manuals, academic journals, and official statistical sources. The study areas were selected to represent both urban and rural deployment contexts, ensuring diversity in respondent experiences.

Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency distribution, percentage analysis, and descriptive statistics. Qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis, with recurring patterns and viewpoints coded and interpreted systematically. Throughout the research process, standard ethical protocols were observed: participants provided informed consent, participation was entirely voluntary, identities were protected, and data were used exclusively for academic purposes.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

The 455 respondents in this study represent a cross-section of the Ansar and VDP workforce — from frontline volunteers to senior administrators. Ansar members constituted the largest group (43.7%), followed by VDP members (39.3%) and officers/key informants (16.9%). A striking feature of the VDP sub-sample was its gender composition: 52.5% of VDP members

were women, reflecting the organization's longstanding commitment to female participation in community security. The majority of respondents (68.4%) were deployed in rural or semi-urban areas, consistent with the organization's grassroots mandate. Service experience ranged from under one year to over two decades, providing a rich mix of perspectives from newer recruits and long-serving veterans alike.

4.2 Contribution to Human Security: Survey Findings

Respondents were asked to rate Ansar and VDP's contribution across each of the seven UNDP-identified dimensions of human security, using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Very Poor to 5 = Excellent). The results are presented in Table 4.1 below.

Dimension of Human Security	Mean Score (out of 5)	% Satisfied
Personal Security	4.31	88.4%
Community Security	4.44	91.2%
Political Security (Elections)	4.52	93.1%
Environmental / Disaster Response	4.48	92.3%
Food Security (Relief Operations)	4.12	84.5%
Health Security (Public Health Support)	3.89	79.6%
Economic Security (Infrastructure Protection)	3.76	75.1%

Table 4.1: Perceived Contribution of Ansar and VDP Across Seven Dimensions of Human Security

The findings are striking in their consistency. Ansar and VDP performs most strongly in precisely those areas where its community embeddedness gives it a structural advantage: political security — particularly election management — achieves the highest rating (4.52/5, 93.1% satisfaction), followed closely by environmental and disaster response (4.48, 92.3%) and community security (4.44, 91.2%). These are areas where local knowledge, trusted relationships, and rapid mobilization capacity translate directly into operational effectiveness.

The relatively lower scores for health security (3.89) and economic security (3.76) tell a different story. These are domains where effectiveness depends less on local presence and more on specialized professional capabilities — clinical training, economic policy expertise, and digital tools — that the current organizational structure does not adequately provide. This pattern is not a failure; it is a diagnostic. It tells us precisely where institutional investment is most urgently needed.

4.3 Key Informant Interview Findings

4.3.1 Theme 1 — Community Embeddedness and Social Trust

Every one of the 77 key informants identified community embeddedness as Ansar and VDP's most fundamental institutional strength. The logic is straightforward: members live in the communities they serve. They know the families, the local leaders, the informal social hierarchies, and the places where tension is most likely to surface. This knowledge is not something that can be created through training alone — it is the product of shared experience and genuine belonging.

KII-01 | District Commandant (Deputy Director), Chuadanga District
"Our members live with the community. They know the families, the local leaders, the troubled spots. When a disaster or conflict happens, they are already there before any instruction from above. That kind of presence cannot be built overnight."

Female VDP coordinators were particularly emphatic on this point. They described how their gender actually enhanced their ability to engage with community members on sensitive issues — domestic violence, health stigma, child protection — in ways that male officers could not easily access.

KII-13 | VDP Female WARD Leader, Narail
"People open their doors to us because we are their neighbors. When we talk about health awareness or disaster preparedness, they listen. A stranger in uniform would get a very different response."

4.3.2 Theme 2 — Operational Challenges: Resources and Training

While community trust emerged as a near-universal strength, operational constraints were equally universally acknowledged. Resource inadequacy was raised by 89% of key informants. Field units frequently lack basic operational necessities — functioning communication equipment, transportation, protective gear — that are taken for granted in more established security institutions. The consequences of these gaps become most visible during crises, when the absence of resources can cost lives.

KII-248 / Union Ansar Platoon Commander, Chuadanga

"During the last flood, our members responded on foot because we had no boats. The relief agencies had boats but coordination was slow. We had the local knowledge but not the tools. That gap costs lives."

Training inadequacy was cited by 76% of informants. The core concern was not the quality of existing training but its relevance. Current curricula were designed for a security environment that no longer exists — focused primarily on traditional law-and-order duties, they do not address the realities of cybercrime, digital disinformation, pandemic response, or climate-related disaster management that members now encounter regularly.

KII-431 | Upazila Assistant Ansar Company Commander, Chuadanga

"Our training curriculum was designed decades ago. The world has changed. Members now encounter cyber harassment cases, misinformation in villages, health crises. We need a curriculum that reflects today's realities, not yesterday's."

4.3.3 Theme 3 — Coordination Gaps with Government Agencies

Inter-agency coordination was identified as a significant operational bottleneck by 81% of key informants. During emergencies — the moments when coordination matters most — the absence of clear command structures and real-time communication protocols frequently creates confusion and delays. Informants described receiving conflicting instructions from multiple government offices during the same crisis event, resulting in fragmented and suboptimal responses.

KII-435 | Union Leader, VDP, Magura

"During Cyclone Strang, I received three different sets of instructions from three different government offices in the same hour. There was no single command center. We did our best, but a coordinated response could have been twice as effective."

The proposed solution most frequently offered by informants was the establishment of integrated community security hubs at the upazila level — permanent coordination spaces where Ansar and VDP, local administration, police, disaster management committees, and health authorities would operate under a unified framework with shared communication systems and clear protocols.

4.3.4 Theme 4 — Welfare and Motivation of Members

Welfare concerns were raised by 78% of key informants and were described with particular intensity. Many VDP volunteers perform demanding and often dangerous duties — including overnight election patrols and emergency disaster response — with minimal financial compensation, no health insurance, and no systematic recognition of their contributions. The sustainability implications of this situation are serious: experienced volunteers are leaving the organization for better-compensated private sector opportunities, and recruitment of motivated new members is becoming increasingly difficult.

KII-404 | General Ansar, Narail

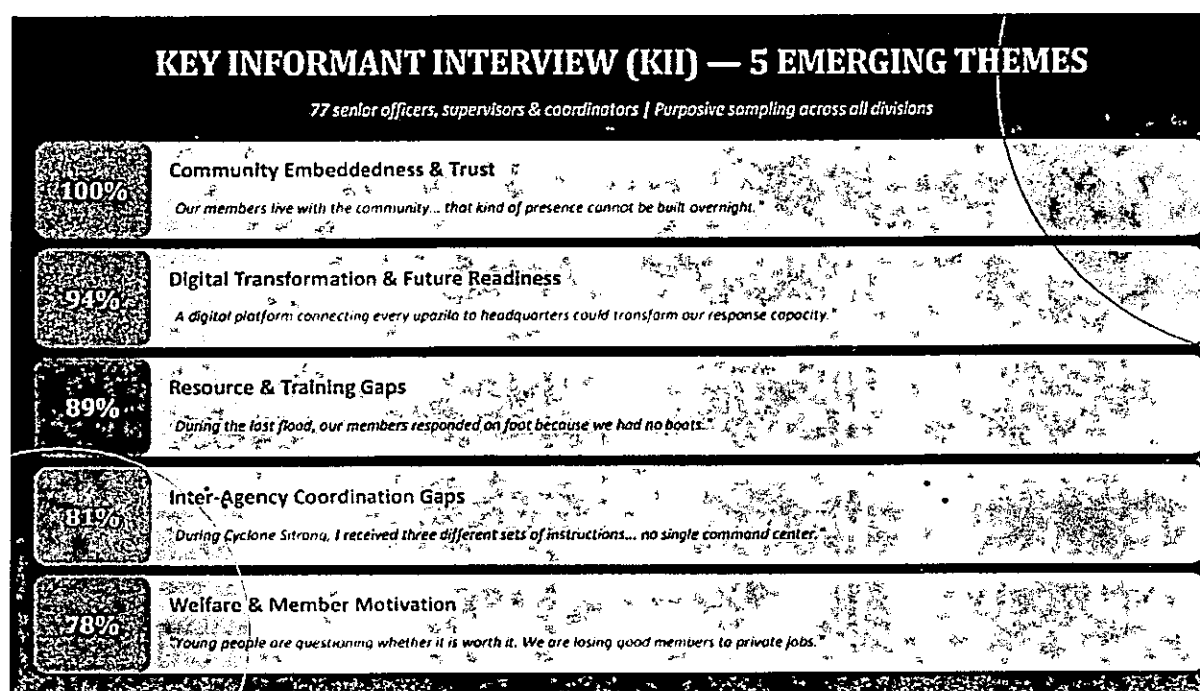
"Our VDP women patrol all night during elections. They face risks. But there is no insurance if something happens, no bonus, no recognition. Young people are questioning whether it is worth it. We are losing good members to private jobs."

4.3.5 Theme 5 — Digital Transformation The urgency of digital transformation was conveyed with striking unanimity across the KII sample: 94% of informants stated that developing a digital platform for Ansar and VDP would significantly improve operational effectiveness. The current reliance on paper-based reporting and manual communication systems creates cascading delays that are particularly costly in time-sensitive emergencies.

KII-381 | General Ansar, Magura

"In a flood, every minute matters. If I have to wait for a paper report to travel up the chain of command before a response is authorized, people suffer. We need real-time systems. A digital platform connecting every upazila to headquarters could transform our response capacity."

The proposed VDP-Connect Digital Platform — a centralized system with real-time incident reporting, GIS-based disaster mapping, volunteer tracking, and performance monitoring — was consistently identified as the highest-priority institutional investment.

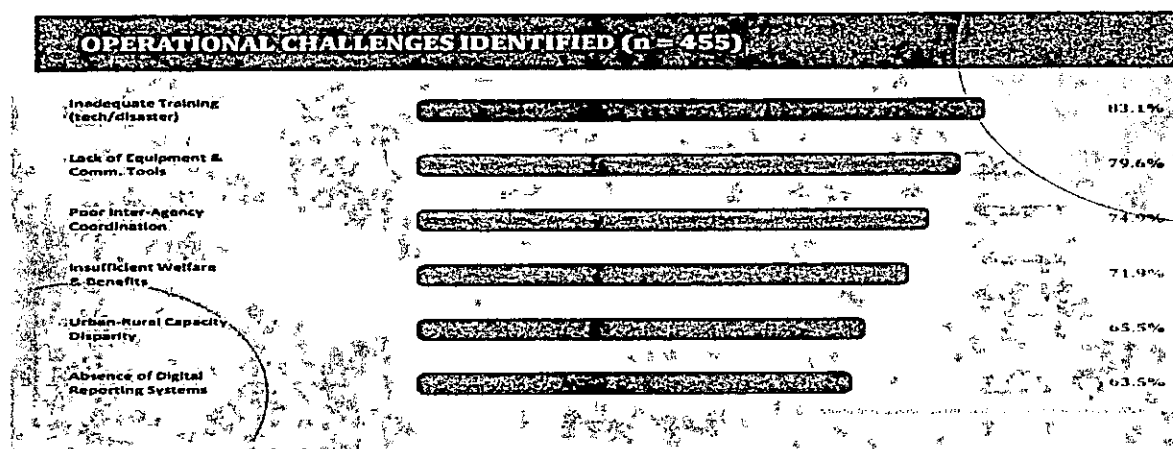


4.4 Survey Findings: Operational Challenges

Challenge	Frequency (n=455)	Percentage (%)
Inadequate training (technology and disaster)	378	83.1%
Lack of modern equipment and communication tools	362	79.6%
Poor coordination with other agencies	341	74.9%
Insufficient welfare and financial benefits	327	71.9%
Urban-rural disparity in operational capacity	298	65.5%
Absence of digital reporting systems	289	63.5%

Table 4.2: Operational Challenges Reported by Respondents (Multiple Response Permitted)

These quantitative findings align closely with the themes identified in the KII analysis. Training inadequacy (83.1%) and equipment gaps (79.6%) emerge as the two most widely experienced challenges — a finding that underscores the need for modernization investment. Poor coordination (74.9%) and welfare inadequacy (71.9%) confirm the institutional structural issues identified by key informants. The urban-rural capacity disparity (65.5%) highlights a dimension of inequality within the organization itself that risks undermining its national effectiveness.



4.5 SWOT Analysis

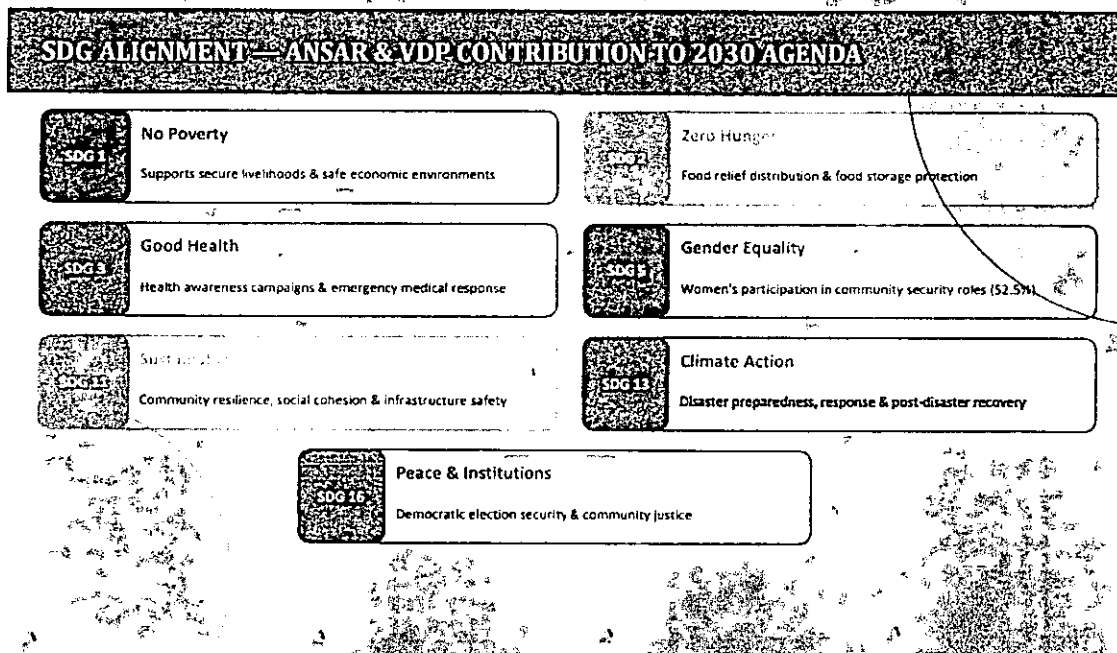
Strengths	Weaknesses
Large volunteer base with nationwide grassroots presence and deep community trust enabling rapid mobilization	Limited technology integration; resource and budget constraints; training gaps in modern security domains; welfare inadequacy; uneven capacity across regions
Opportunities	Threats
Smart Bangladesh 2041 alignment; digital transformation initiatives; international cooperation; public-private partnership potential; community resilience programs	Intensifying climate change impacts; rising cybercrime and digital threats; resource scarcity; recruitment and retention challenges

Table 4.3: SWOT Analysis of Bangladesh Ansar and VDP

SWOT ANALYSIS — BANGLADESH ANSAR & VDP	
STRENGTHS - Large volunteer base (~5 million) - Nationwide grassroots presence - Deep community trust & embeddedness - Rapid mobilization capacity - Strong local networks	WEAKNESSES - Limited technology integration - Resource & budget constraints - Training gaps in modern skills - Welfare & incentive limitations - Uneven regional capacity
OPPORTUNITIES - Smart Bangladesh 2041 alignment - Digital transformation initiatives - International cooperation potential - Community resilience programs - Public-private partnerships	THREATS - Intensifying climate change impacts - Rising cybercrime & misinformation - Resource scarcity pressures - Complex emerging security threats - Recruitment & retention challenges

4.6 SDG Alignment

The activities of Ansar and VDP align directly with multiple Sustainable Development Goals, confirming the organization's relevance to Bangladesh's development commitments. Its contributions to poverty reduction and economic security align with SDG 1; food relief work with SDG 2; health campaigns with SDG 3; women's participation with SDG 5; community resilience with SDG 11; disaster response with SDG 13; and its core democratic security functions with SDG 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. This alignment is not incidental — it reflects the fact that human security and sustainable development address the same underlying reality: that people cannot flourish in conditions of insecurity, and that genuine security requires addressing the structural conditions that make lives insecure.



Chapter 5: Conclusion

This study set out to examine a simple but important question: how effectively does Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party contribute to human security, what holds it back, and what could be done about it? The answer that has emerged from 455 survey responses, 77 in-depth interviews, and extensive secondary analysis is nuanced but ultimately optimistic.

Ansar and VDP is, by any reasonable measure, already a significant human security institution. It contributes meaningfully across all seven dimensions of human security identified by UNDP. Its performance in community security, disaster response, and election management is

genuinely impressive — rated above 90% satisfaction by respondents with direct field experience. Its community embeddedness gives it a form of institutional legitimacy and operational advantage that formal law enforcement agencies frequently cannot replicate. Its female VDP members, in particular, perform security functions in social spaces that remain effectively inaccessible to other institutions.

But the same evidence that reveals these strengths also reveals a clear and urgent institutional gap. Ansar and VDP is being asked to respond to twenty-first century security challenges — cybercrime, climate-driven disasters, public health emergencies, digital disinformation — with a training framework, communication infrastructure, and welfare system that were designed for a very different era. The RRR Model makes this diagnosis precise: the organization's resilience is a genuine asset, but its response capacity and reform trajectory both require concerted investment and structural change.

The eight policy recommendations proposed in this study address each of these dimensions in an evidence-based, practically grounded way. Digital transformation through the VDP-Connect platform would transform the speed and quality of emergency response. Curriculum modernization would equip members to handle the threats they actually face. Welfare reform would retain experienced members and attract committed new ones. Integrated security hubs would eliminate the coordination failures that currently undermine emergency effectiveness. Expanded female participation would deepen community outreach and social inclusion. A research unit would create the institutional capacity for continuous improvement. Regional equity investment would ensure that national capability is not artificially constrained by geographic disparities. And climate security units would position the organization to meet what is arguably Bangladesh's most profound long-term security challenge.

The case for investing in Ansar and VDP is, at its core, a case for investing in the people of Bangladesh. This is an institution with an unparalleled reach into the communities where human security is either won or lost — an institution whose members are already doing remarkable work under significant constraints. With the right reforms, it can do far more. In a country pursuing the ambitious vision of Smart Bangladesh 2041 and the Sustainable Development Goals of 2030, that is not a small prize. It is a foundational one.

CONCLUSION



Ansar & VDP functions as a critical multi-dimensional human security institution, strongest in political security (4.52), environmental security (4.48) and community security (4.34).



Gaps persist in health & economic security, requiring targeted capacity development in digital literacy, climate adaptation, and inter-agency coordination.



The RRR Model confirms that Resilience (community trust) is the key asset, while Response and Reform require concerted investment and modernization.

Eight strategic recommendations — anchored in 94% KII consensus on digital transformation — provide a roadmap to align Ansar & VDP with Smart Bangladesh 2041.

Chapter 6: Recommendations

The evidence assembled in this study points clearly toward a comprehensive modernization agenda for Bangladesh Ansar and VDP — one that builds on the organization's formidable strengths while systematically addressing its most significant institutional gaps. The following eight recommendations are grounded in the study's empirical findings and organized within the RRR analytical framework.

Recommendation 1: Establish the VDP-Connect Digital Platform

The single most impactful reform this study identifies is the development of a centralized digital platform to modernize communication and reporting across the entire Ansar and VDP network. The platform should support real-time incident reporting from field units, GIS-based mapping of disasters and security incidents, automated alert dissemination, volunteer deployment tracking, resource inventory management, and data-driven performance monitoring. Given that 94% of key informants identified this as a priority, and that current paper-based systems create demonstrable costs in emergency situations, this investment should be treated as urgent.

Recommendation 2: Modernize the Training Curriculum

The training framework must be comprehensively redesigned to reflect contemporary human security challenges. This means incorporating cybersecurity awareness and digital literacy, climate adaptation and disaster response techniques, gender-sensitive conflict resolution skills, and community health emergency protocols. Critically, training should not be a one-time intervention — annual refresher programs should be institutionalized to keep members current as the security environment continues to evolve. Training programs should be piloted in selected districts and evaluated before national rollout, incorporating feedback from field members about what they actually encounter in practice.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen Welfare and Incentive Systems

The sustainability of a volunteer-based security organization depends fundamentally on the motivation and commitment of its members. The current welfare gap — particularly for VDP volunteers who perform demanding duties with minimal compensation — represents a long-term institutional risk. Comprehensive insurance schemes covering injury and death in service, health benefits for members and families, performance-based awards and promotions, educational support for members' children, and increased financial honoraria should be introduced as a coherent welfare package. This investment in human capital is not a cost but a multiplier: motivated, valued members perform better and stay longer.

Recommendation 4: Establish Integrated Community Security Hubs

Inter-agency coordination failures during emergencies are too costly and too predictable to remain unaddressed. Integrated community security hubs at the upazila level — bringing together Ansar and VDP, local administration, police, disaster management committees, and health authorities under a shared operational framework — would eliminate the fragmented, often contradictory command structures that currently impair emergency response. These hubs should be equipped with shared communication systems, joint operational planning tools, and clear protocols for different categories of security event.

Recommendations 5–8: Expanding Female Participation, Research Capacity, Reducing Regional Disparities, and Climate Security Units

Five additional reforms deserve prioritization. Strategic expansion of female participation through targeted recruitment, leadership mentorship, and gender-sensitive workplace policies would strengthen community outreach and social inclusion across all seven human security dimensions. A dedicated research and innovation unit within Ansar and VDP Headquarters — collaborating with universities and research institutes — would provide the evidence base for ongoing policy improvement. Priority funding for disadvantaged and remote districts is essential to close the urban-rural capacity gap that currently undermines national effectiveness. Finally, specialized climate security units in coastal and flood-prone districts — focused on risk mapping, early warning dissemination, and community preparedness — would address Bangladesh's most urgent and growing environmental threat.

7. Declaration:

I declare that this paper contains neither any plagiarized material nor any AI-generated content. The analysis is the author's contribution. Any deviation from this declaration is author's liability.

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Programme & Studies Division

Evaluation Department

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On

**Functional Constraints of Zila Parishad in Bangladesh: Measures to
Overcome (A Case Study of Faridpur Zila Parishad)**

Submitted by

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Functional Constraints of Zila Parishad in Bangladesh: Measures to Overcome (A Case Study of Faridpur Zila Parishad)

Abstract

Zila Parishad is an important tier of local government in Bangladesh, entrusted with coordinating development activities and ensuring effective service delivery at the district level. Despite its significance, Zila Parishads often face various administrative, financial, political, and institutional constraints that limit their ability to perform assigned functions efficiently. This study examines the functional constraints of Zila Parishad in Bangladesh, with a particular focus on Faridpur Zila Parishad, and explores possible measures to overcome these challenges. The study adopts a mixed-method research approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues affecting the performance of Zila Parishad. A case study design has been employed to facilitate an in-depth investigation of the real-life governance challenges experienced by Faridpur Zila Parishad. Both primary and secondary sources of data are utilized. Primary data are collected through structured questionnaire surveys, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and observation methods involving Zila Parishad representatives, officials, employees, local government experts, civil society representatives, and general citizens. Secondary data are gathered from academic literature, government reports, policy documents, research articles, newspapers, and relevant legal frameworks. The findings are expected to identify major constraints such as inadequate financial resources, limited administrative autonomy, insufficient skilled manpower, political interference, weak coordination among local government institutions, and lack of public participation. The study further aims to propose practical measures, including strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing financial independence, improving accountability mechanisms, promoting participatory governance, and reforming policy frameworks. The research is expected to contribute to the improvement of local governance by providing recommendations that can enhance the effectiveness, transparency, and service delivery capacity of Zila Parishads in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Zila Parishad, Local Governance, Functional Constraints, Administrative Challenges, Faridpur District.

Introduction:

1.1 Background of the Study:

The Zila Parishad (District Council) in Bangladesh serves as the highest tier of rural local government, but its effectiveness remains severely constrained by financial dependency, political interference, and bureaucratic dominance. According to the Local Government (Zila Parishad) Act 2000, amended in 2011 and 2016, Zila Parishads are responsible for coordinating district-level development activities, infrastructure maintenance, health and education support, and local economic development. However, in practice, many councils exercise limited authority due to centralized administrative control and inadequate institutional capacity. Studies on the Faridpur Zila Parishad reflect broader national trends, indicating an urgent need for decentralization, fiscal autonomy, and participatory governance mechanisms.

Financially, Zila Parishads remain highly dependent on central government allocations. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and Local Government Division reports, over 80–90% of district council development expenditures are financed through Annual Development Programme (ADP) grants and ministry transfers, while own-source revenue contributes only a marginal share. In many districts, locally generated revenue accounts for less than 10% of annual expenditure, significantly limiting autonomous planning and implementation capacity. Funds are frequently released late in the fiscal year, delaying project execution and reducing development effectiveness. Moreover, discretionary control over fund utilization often remains concentrated in the hands of central bureaucratic actors rather than elected local representatives.

Political interference also undermines institutional effectiveness. Members of Parliament (MPs) often exert substantial influence over project selection, tender approval, and resource allocation at the district level. Research on local governance in Bangladesh indicates that MPs frequently bypass formal local government procedures by directly influencing development committees and infrastructure schemes. For nearly three decades after independence, many Zila Parishads were administered by government-appointed officials instead of elected representatives, weakening democratic accountability and citizen participation. Although elections have been introduced in recent years, elected chairpersons and members still face difficulty asserting authority over powerful field administration officials such as Deputy Commissioners (DCs) and Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNOs).

Administrative overlap between the Zila Parishad, Upazila Parishad, and Union Parishad creates additional governance challenges. The absence of clearly defined functional jurisdictions often results in duplication of development projects, inefficient resource utilization, and conflict among institutions. For example, road construction, drainage systems, and market infrastructure projects are sometimes simultaneously undertaken by multiple agencies without proper coordination. Such fragmentation weakens integrated district-level planning.

Another critical limitation is the lack of participatory and evidence-based planning. Development priorities are often determined through top-down political decisions rather than grassroots consultation. In districts such as Faridpur, a large proportion of Zila Parishad expenditures are allocated to physical infrastructure projects including roads, culverts, bridges, and office buildings, while comparatively less attention is given to social protection, environmental sustainability, climate resilience, public health, or employment generation. According to local governance studies, infrastructure-focused development without community participation increases the risks of corruption, elite capture, and politically motivated project distribution. Weak procurement monitoring and limited public disclosure further reduce transparency and accountability.

To improve institutional effectiveness, significant reforms are necessary. First, Zila Parishads should be granted broader statutory authority to generate independent revenue through district-level taxes, tolls, leasing systems, service fees, and local resource mobilization. Establishing a transparent Local Government Finance Commission could ensure predictable, formula-based fiscal transfers and reduce dependency on arbitrary central allocations. Second, legislative reforms are needed to clarify the operational boundaries between MPs and local government bodies, restricting MPs to policy oversight and advisory functions rather than direct implementation control.

Third, democratic continuity must be strengthened by ensuring that all tiers of local government remain under regularly elected leadership. Fourth, participatory planning mechanisms should be institutionalized so that community priorities identified by Union Parishads and Upazila Parishads are systematically integrated into district-level Five-Year Development Plans. Fifth, e-governance systems, online procurement platforms, and public disclosure boards should be expanded to improve transparency in budgeting, project implementation, and tender management.

1.2 Problem Statement:

The Zila Parishad in Bangladesh faces significant functional constraints that limit its ability to ensure effective local governance and sustainable district-level development. Despite being the highest rural local government institution, Zila Parishads remain highly dependent on central government funding and administrative control, which restricts autonomous decision-making and local planning capacity. Political interference by Members of Parliament and excessive bureaucratic dominance often undermine the authority of elected representatives. In addition, unclear functional divisions among Zila Parishads, Upazila Parishads, and Union Parishads create duplication of projects, resource wastage, and weak coordination. Limited public participation, shortage of skilled manpower, lack of transparency, and inadequate revenue generation further reduce institutional effectiveness. Therefore, identifying practical measures to strengthen financial autonomy, administrative efficiency, accountability, and participatory governance has become an urgent necessity for improving the functional performance of Zila Parishads in Bangladesh.

Research Gap

Existing studies on Zila Parishad in Bangladesh mainly focus on decentralization, financial dependency, and political interference, but limited research has comprehensively examined the combined functional constraints affecting institutional performance at the district level. Few studies provide evidence-based strategies for overcoming administrative overlap, weak coordination, manpower shortages, and lack of participatory planning. Moreover, district-specific analyses and practical reform-oriented recommendations for strengthening Zila Parishad effectiveness remain insufficient in the current local governance literature.

1.3 Objectives of the study:

Specific Objectives

- i. To identify the major functional and administrative constraints affecting the performance of Zila Parishad in Bangladesh;
- ii. To examine the impacts of financial dependency, political interference, and bureaucratic control on effective district-level governance; and

- iii. To recommend practical measures for strengthening institutional autonomy, coordination, accountability, and participatory local governance within Zila Parishads.

1.4 Research Question

- i. What are the major functional constraints faced by Zila Parishad in Bangladesh?
- ii. How do financial dependency and bureaucratic control affect the effectiveness of Zila Parishads?
- iii. What role does political interference play in limiting the autonomy and performance of Zila Parishads?
- iv. What measures can be adopted to improve accountability, coordination, and participatory governance in Zila Parishads?

1.5 Justification of the Study:

The study on functional constraints of Zila Parishad in Bangladesh is important because effective local governance is essential for balanced rural development, public service delivery, and democratic decentralization. Despite being the highest tier of rural local government, Zila Parishads continue to face challenges such as financial dependency, political interference, weak coordination, and administrative inefficiency, which limit their institutional performance. Existing governance problems often result in poor development planning, duplication of projects, lack of accountability, and reduced citizen participation. This study will help identify the major barriers affecting the effectiveness of Zila Parishads and propose practical measures to strengthen institutional autonomy, transparency, and participatory governance. The findings may support policymakers, local administrators, and researchers in improving district-level governance and sustainable local development in Bangladesh.

2.0 Literature Review:

The Zila Parishad is considered the highest tier of rural local government in Bangladesh and plays an important role in district-level planning, coordination, and development. However, various studies indicate that Zila Parishads face severe functional constraints due to centralized administration, political influence, financial dependency, and weak institutional coordination. The

situation of Faridpur Zila Parishad reflects many of the broader governance challenges experienced throughout Bangladesh.

Financial dependency is one of the most significant constraints affecting Zila Parishads. According to the Local Government Division, more than 80% of district-level development expenditure in Bangladesh is financed through central government transfers and Annual Development Programme (ADP) allocations, while own-source revenue generation remains very limited. Siddiquee (2005) argued that the centralized fiscal structure weakens local autonomy because district councils cannot independently prioritize or finance development projects. Zila Parishads mainly depend on government grants, market leasing, and small service fees, which are insufficient for large-scale district development activities. In Faridpur, local revenue collection has remained inadequate compared to growing infrastructure and social service demands. Delays in fund disbursement from the central government further slow project implementation and reduce administrative efficiency.

Political interference is another major challenge. Studies by Ahmed (2012) and Panday (2011) found that Members of Parliament (MPs) frequently influence project selection, contractor appointments, and allocation of development resources at the local level. This reduces the decision-making authority of elected Zila Parishad representatives. In many cases, political considerations determine project approval rather than actual community needs. Research on local governance in Bangladesh indicates that political patronage often leads to unequal distribution of resources among unions and upazilas. In Faridpur district, infrastructure projects such as rural roads, culverts, and market development schemes are sometimes influenced by partisan interests rather than participatory planning processes.

Administrative dominance by central bureaucrats also limits the effectiveness of Zila Parishads. The Deputy Commissioner (DC), Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNOs), and line ministry officials exercise significant authority over development administration and financial approval processes. According to Khan (2009), the dual administrative structure in Bangladesh creates conflict between elected local representatives and centrally appointed officials. Although Zila Parishads are intended to function as autonomous local government institutions, many important administrative decisions remain controlled by the central bureaucracy. This reduces accountability to local citizens and weakens democratic decentralization.

Another important constraint is the unclear distribution of responsibilities among the Zila Parishad, Upazila Parishad, and Union Parishad. Rahman (2010) observed that overlapping authority frequently causes duplication of development projects and inefficient resource utilization. In Faridpur, coordination problems among local government tiers have reportedly created delays in implementing rural infrastructure, sanitation, and water supply projects. The absence of a strong coordination mechanism often leads to fragmented planning and administrative conflict.

Limited citizen participation and weak transparency mechanisms further reduce institutional effectiveness. Most development projects are still planned through top-down administrative processes with limited consultation with local communities. According to the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) report (2020), weaknesses in procurement monitoring and project supervision increase the risk of corruption and misuse of public funds within local government institutions. Infrastructure-based development projects are particularly vulnerable to tender manipulation and elite capture. In Faridpur, public participation in district-level budgeting and planning remains limited, reducing accountability and responsiveness to local needs.

Shortages of skilled manpower and technical capacity are also major institutional barriers. Many Zila Parishads lack qualified planners, engineers, financial experts, and IT personnel. As a result, project monitoring, digital record management, and evidence-based planning remain weak. According to the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), inadequate administrative manpower significantly affects service delivery and project implementation at the district level.

Several studies recommend institutional reforms to overcome these challenges. Siddiquee (2005) emphasized the need for fiscal decentralization and greater revenue-generation authority for Zila Parishads. Ahmed (2012) recommended limiting the operational involvement of MPs in local development administration. Researchers also suggest strengthening participatory planning systems where Union Parishads and Upazila Parishads can directly contribute to district development plans. The introduction of e-governance, digital budgeting systems, online procurement, and public disclosure platforms is also considered important for improving transparency and accountability.

Furthermore, experts advocate establishing permanent coordination committees involving Zila Parishads, municipalities, Upazila Parishads, civil society organizations, and local stakeholders to reduce administrative overlap and improve integrated district development. Capacity-building

programs, technical training, and dedicated staffing structures are also essential to strengthen institutional performance.

3.0 Methodology:

This study followed a mixed-method research approach combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the functional constraints of Zila Parishad in Bangladesh, particularly focusing on Faridpur Zila Parishad. Mixed methods were suitable because the study intended to explore administrative, financial, political, and institutional challenges from both statistical and descriptive perspectives. Similar approaches had been used in previous studies on local government institutions in Bangladesh.

Research Design

The study adopted a case study design. The case study method was appropriate for conducting an in-depth investigation of a specific local government institution and understanding real-life governance problems within their actual administrative context.

Nature of the Study

The research was descriptive and analytical in nature. It identified the major functional constraints of the Zila Parishad and analyzed possible measures to overcome those problems for ensuring effective local governance.

Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data were used in the study.

Primary Data

Primary data were collected directly from respondents through:

- Structured questionnaire survey
- Key Informant Interviews (KII)
- Focus Group Discussions (FGD)
- Observation method

The respondents included:

- Chairman and members of Zila Parishad
- Officials and employees of Zila Parishad

- Representatives of Upazila and Union Parishads
- Local government experts
- Civil society representatives
- General citizens of Faridpur district

Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from:

- Books and academic journals
- Government reports and policy documents
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) reports
- Local Government Division publications
- Research articles and thesis papers
- Newspapers and online sources
- Relevant Acts and Ordinances related to local government

Study Area

The study area was Faridpur Zila Parishad because it represented a significant district-level local government institution in Bangladesh and provided suitable opportunities to examine administrative, financial, and political constraints affecting local governance.

4.0 Data Analysis and Findings:

4.1 Data Collection & Procedure of KII:

The first objective of the study was to identify the main functional and administrative constraints affecting the effectiveness of district councils in Bangladesh; the second objective was to examine the impact of financial dependency, political interference and bureaucratic control on effective district-level governance; and the third objective was to recommend practical measures to strengthen institutional autonomy, coordination, accountability and participatory local governance within district councils. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources, prioritizing the objectives. Primary data were collected through interviews (KIIs) with district council chairmen and members, district council officers and employees, upazila and union council representatives, local government experts, civil society representatives and ordinary citizens of Faridpur district.

The main objective of the interviews was to collect information from the chairmen and members of the Zilla Parishad, Zilla Parishad officers and employees, representatives of Upazila and Union Parishads, local government experts, civil society representatives and ordinary citizens of Faridpur district. They expressed their views on identifying the main functional and administrative constraints affecting the functioning of Zilla Parishads in Bangladesh, the impact of financial dependence, political interference and bureaucratic control on effective district-level governance, and recommending practical steps to strengthen institutional autonomy, coordination, accountability and participatory local governance within Zilla Parishads. In order to collect appropriate information, interviews were conducted through checklists and verbally on the objectives and rationale of the research. The interviews were conducted using both open and closed questions. The checklist had a few questions that were simple, and easy to understand.

4.2 Data Analysis:

The researcher himself collected the data by supplying checklist containing few questions among the respondents.

The data analysis has been shown in the table below: -

General Understanding and Perception of Zila Parishad

4.2.1 The main responsibilities of the District Councils

Table-1: Main responsibilities

Primary Responsibilities	Percentage (%)
Coordinating district-level development activities	24%
Infrastructure maintenance (roads, culverts, bridges)	21%
Health and education support	18%
Local economic development	15%
Ensuring citizen participation in planning	12%
Revenue generation for local projects	10%
Total	100%

Source: *Questionnaire Survey, 2026*

The findings indicate that respondents consider **coordinating district-level development activities** as the most important responsibility of Zila Parishads, accounting for 24% of responses. This suggests that people expect Zila Parishads to play a leading role in integrating and overseeing development initiatives undertaken by various government departments and local institutions within the district. The second most emphasized responsibility is **infrastructure maintenance** (21%), reflecting the public's expectation that Zila Parishads should ensure the proper construction, repair, and maintenance of roads, bridges, culverts, and other essential public infrastructure. Respondents also highlighted the importance of **health and education support** (18%), indicating that Zila Parishads are viewed as important contributors to improving access to quality healthcare services and educational facilities. Furthermore, **local economic development** received 15% of responses, demonstrating the expectation that Zila Parishads should promote employment opportunities, support local businesses, and facilitate economic growth at the district level. **Citizen participation in planning** accounted for 12%, suggesting that respondents value inclusive decision-making processes and greater public involvement in local governance. Finally, **revenue generation for local projects** received the lowest proportion (10%). While respondents

recognize its importance, they appear to prioritize service delivery, infrastructure development, and coordination functions over financial resource mobilization. Overall, the results indicate that citizens primarily perceive Zila Parishads as development-oriented institutions responsible for coordinating district affairs, improving public services, and supporting sustainable local development.

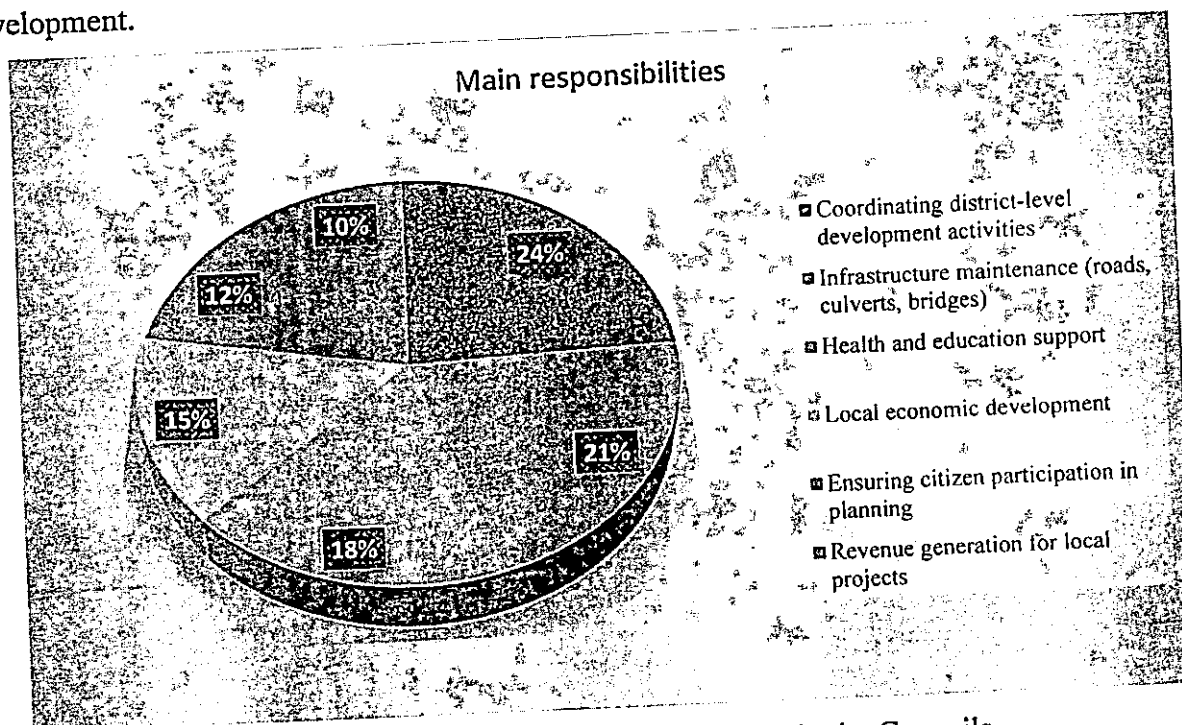


Chart-1: The main responsibilities of the District Councils

Functional Constraints of Zila Parishad

4.2.2 District councils are constrained by their financial dependence on the central government

Table-2: Limited due to financial dependence

Response Category	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	5%
Disagree	10%
Neutral	15%
Agree	40%
Strongly Agree	30%
Total	100%

Source: Questionnaire Survey, 2026

The findings reveal that a significant majority of respondents believe that Zila Parishads are constrained by their financial dependency on the central government. Specifically, 40% of respondents **agreed** and 30% **strongly agreed** with the statement, indicating that 70% perceive financial dependence as a major challenge affecting the effectiveness and autonomy of Zila Parishads. A smaller proportion of respondents remained **neutral** (15%), suggesting uncertainty regarding the extent of the issue or a lack of sufficient information about the financial structure of local government institutions. Meanwhile, only 10% **disagreed** and 5% **strongly disagreed**, indicating limited support for the view that Zila Parishads possess adequate financial independence. The results suggest that respondents view inadequate fiscal autonomy as a key obstacle to effective local governance. Dependence on central government allocations may restrict the ability of Zila Parishads to plan and implement development projects according to local priorities, respond quickly to emerging needs, and maintain sustainable service delivery. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening local revenue generation mechanisms and enhancing financial decentralization to improve the operational efficiency and accountability of Zila Parishads.

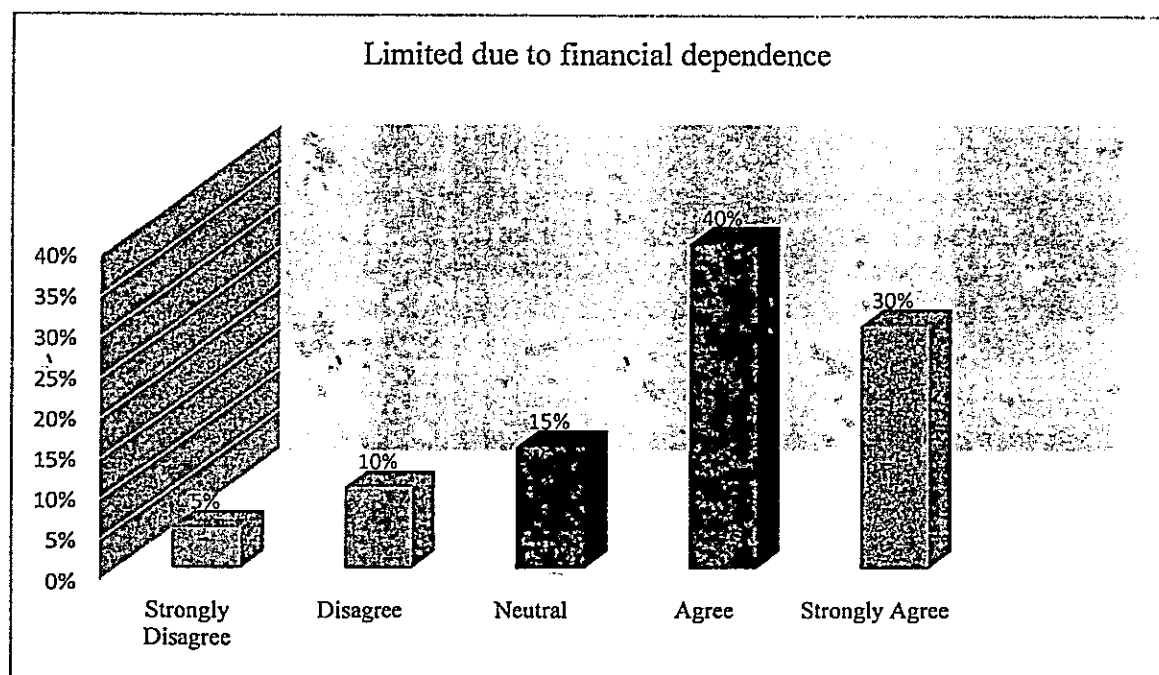


Chart-2: District councils are constrained by their financial dependence on the central government

4.2.3 Perceived Impact of Political Interference on Zila Parishads

Table-3: Perceived impact of political interference

Response Category	Percentage (%)
Not Significant	6%
Slightly Significant	12%
Moderately Significant	18%
Very Significant	34%
Extremely Significant	30%
Total	100%

Source: Questionnaire Survey, 2026

The findings indicate that political interference is widely perceived as a significant factor affecting the autonomy and decision-making capacity of Zila Parishads. A majority of respondents (64%) considered political interference to be either **very significant** (34%) or **extremely significant** (30%), suggesting strong concerns regarding the influence of political actors on local governance processes. Meanwhile, 18% of respondents viewed 'political interference' as **moderately significant**, indicating that although its effects may vary across districts, it remains an important issue. In contrast, only 12% considered it **slightly significant**, while a small minority (6%) believed it was **not significant**. These findings suggest that political influence, particularly from powerful stakeholders and elected representatives, may limit the independence of Zila Parishads in setting priorities, allocating resources, and implementing development programs. Excessive political intervention can undermine institutional accountability, reduce local participation in decision-making, and weaken the effectiveness of decentralized governance. Therefore, strengthening legal safeguards, enhancing administrative independence, and ensuring transparent governance mechanisms may help improve the operational autonomy and effectiveness of Zila Parishads.

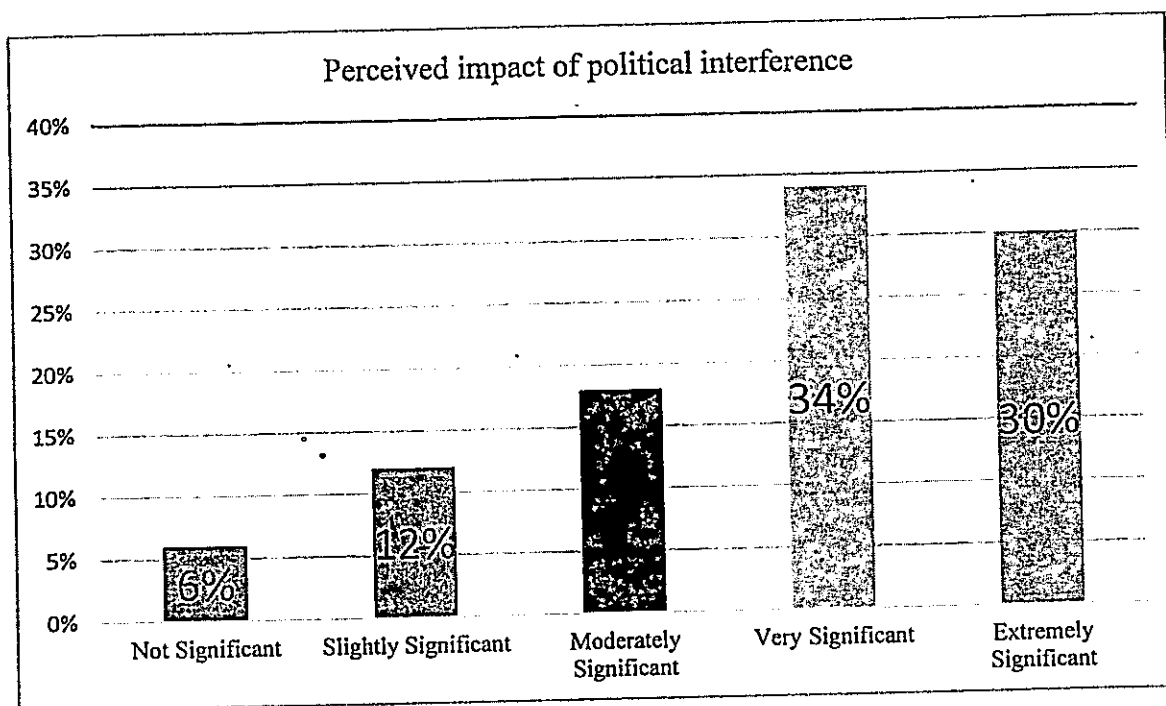


Chart-3: Perceived Impact of Political Interference on Zila Parishads

4.2.4 Administrative Overlap among Local Government Bodies

Table-4: Administrative overlap between organizations

Response Category	Percentage (%)
Not Problematic	5%
Slightly Problematic	10%
Moderately Problematic	20%
Very Problematic	35%
Extremely Problematic	30%
Total	100%

Source: Questionnaire Survey, 2026

The findings reveal that respondents perceive administrative overlap and unclear functional divisions among Zila Parishad, Upazila Parishad, and Union Parishad as a major challenge to effective local governance. A substantial majority of respondents (65%) considered the issue to be either **very problematic** (35%) or **extremely problematic** (30%), indicating widespread concern regarding the duplication of responsibilities and lack of clear jurisdiction among local government institutions. Additionally, 20% of respondents viewed the problem as **moderately problematic**,

suggesting that while some coordination exists, significant ambiguities remain in the distribution of functions and authority. In contrast, only 10% considered the issue **slightly problematic**, and a small minority (5%) believed it was **not problematic**. These results suggest that overlapping administrative responsibilities often create confusion, delays in decision-making, inefficient use of resources, and challenges in service delivery. The lack of clearly defined roles may also lead to conflicts among local government bodies and reduce accountability. Therefore, respondents emphasize the need for clearer legal and administrative frameworks, improved coordination mechanisms, and a more precise allocation of responsibilities among different tiers of local government. Such measures could enhance efficiency, strengthen accountability, and improve the overall effectiveness of decentralized governance in Bangladesh.

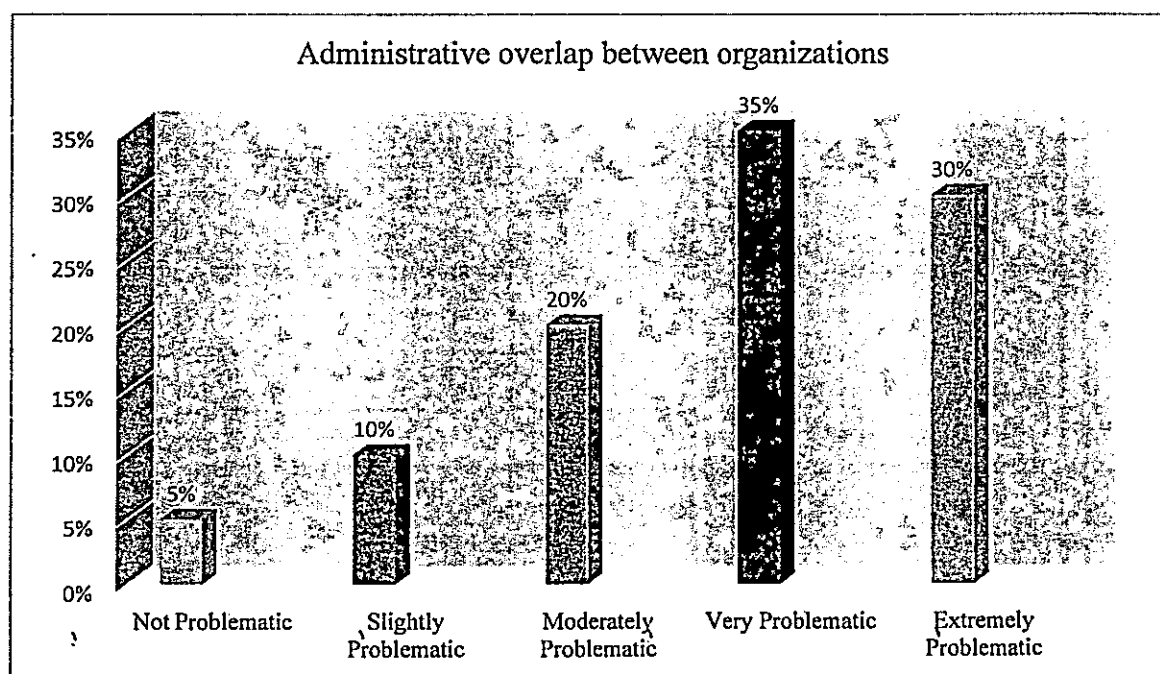


Chart-4: Administrative Overlap among Local Government Bodies

4.2.5 Major Consequences of Functional Constraints in Zila Parishads

Table-5: The main consequences of the limitation

Consequences	Percentage (%)
Delayed project execution	22%
Inefficient resource utilization	18%
Duplication of development projects	14%

Lack of accountability	16%
Reduced citizen participation	10%
Poor development planning	12%
Corruption/Misuse of funds	8%
Total	100%

Source: Questionnaire Survey, 2026

The results indicate that functional constraints within Zila Parishads have multiple serious consequences on local governance and development effectiveness. The most frequently identified issue is **delayed project execution (22%)**, suggesting that administrative bottlenecks, overlapping authority, and bureaucratic complexities significantly slow down development implementation at the district level. The second most highlighted consequence is **inefficient resource utilization (18%)**, which reflects concerns that available financial and human resources are not being used optimally due to poor coordination among local government bodies. Respondents also pointed to **lack of accountability (16%)** and **duplication of development projects (14%)**, indicating structural weaknesses in governance that lead to overlapping responsibilities and reduced transparency in decision-making. Furthermore, **poor development planning (12%)** and **reduced citizen participation (10%)** were also identified as important consequences, suggesting that functional inefficiencies weaken both the quality of planning and the inclusiveness of local governance processes. Although **corruption/misuse of funds (8%)** received the lowest percentage among the listed issues, it remains a critical concern affecting public trust and institutional credibility. Overall, the findings demonstrate that functional constraints within Zila Parishads not only hinder efficient service delivery but also undermine accountability, coordination, and participatory governance. Addressing these challenges requires clearer institutional roles, stronger monitoring mechanisms, and improved inter-governmental coordination to ensure more effective and transparent local development management.

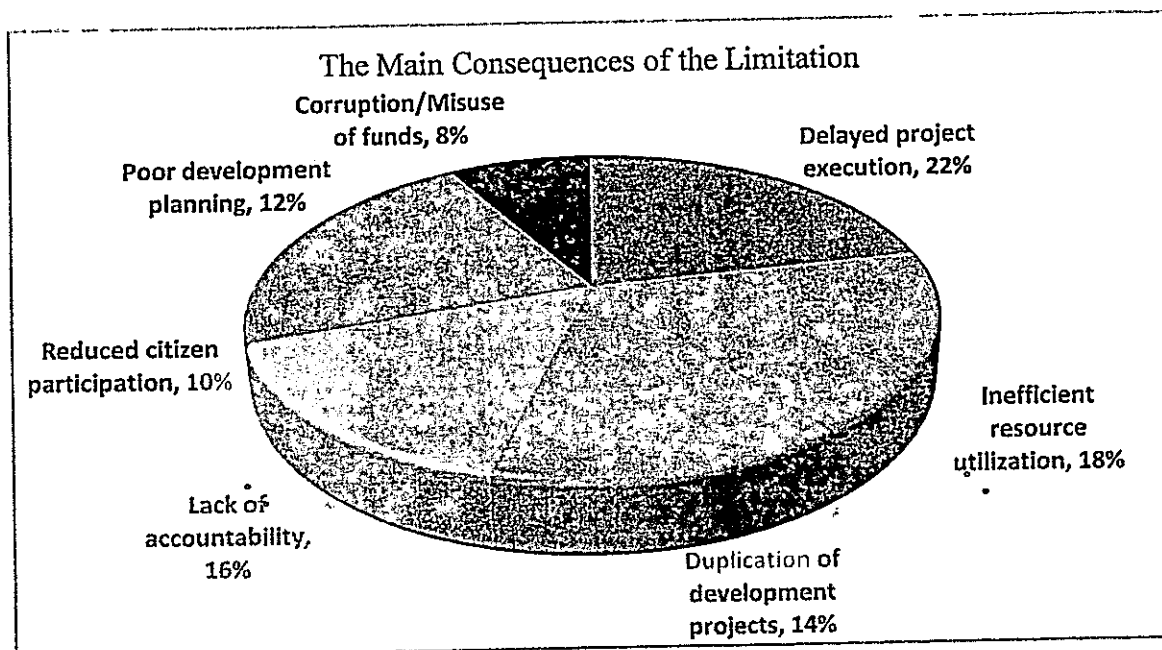


Chart-5: Major Consequences of Functional Constraints in Zila Parishads

Measures to Overcome Constraints and Strengthen Governance

4.2.6 Measures to Strengthen Financial Autonomy of Zila Parishads

Table-6: Steps to strengthen

Measures	Not at all (%)	Slightly (%)	Moderately (%)	Significantly (%)	Very Significantly (%)	Total
Granting broader authority for own-source revenue	3%	7%	15%	35%	40%	100%
Establishing a transparent Local Government Finance Commission	2%	6%	18%	34%	40%	100%
Timely and predictable fiscal transfers from central government	1%	5%	14%	30%	50%	100%

Source: Questionnaire Survey, 2026

The findings clearly indicate strong consensus among respondents that all proposed measures would significantly enhance the financial autonomy of Zila Parishads. Among them, **timely and predictable fiscal transfers from the central government** received the highest level of support, with 50% of respondents rating it as **very significant**. This highlights the critical importance of stable and timely fund disbursement in ensuring uninterrupted development planning and project implementation at the district level. Similarly, **granting broader authority for own-source revenue generation and establishing a transparent Local Government Finance Commission** were also highly supported. In both cases, around 40% of respondents rated these measures as **very significant**, indicating strong public demand for increased fiscal decentralization and institutional reform to ensure transparency, accountability, and efficiency in local government finance. Very few respondents considered these measures as having little or no importance, which suggests a broad recognition of the structural financial limitations currently faced by Zila Parishads. Overall, the results emphasize that strengthening fiscal autonomy requires a combination of enhanced revenue authority, improved institutional oversight, and reliable intergovernmental fiscal transfers.

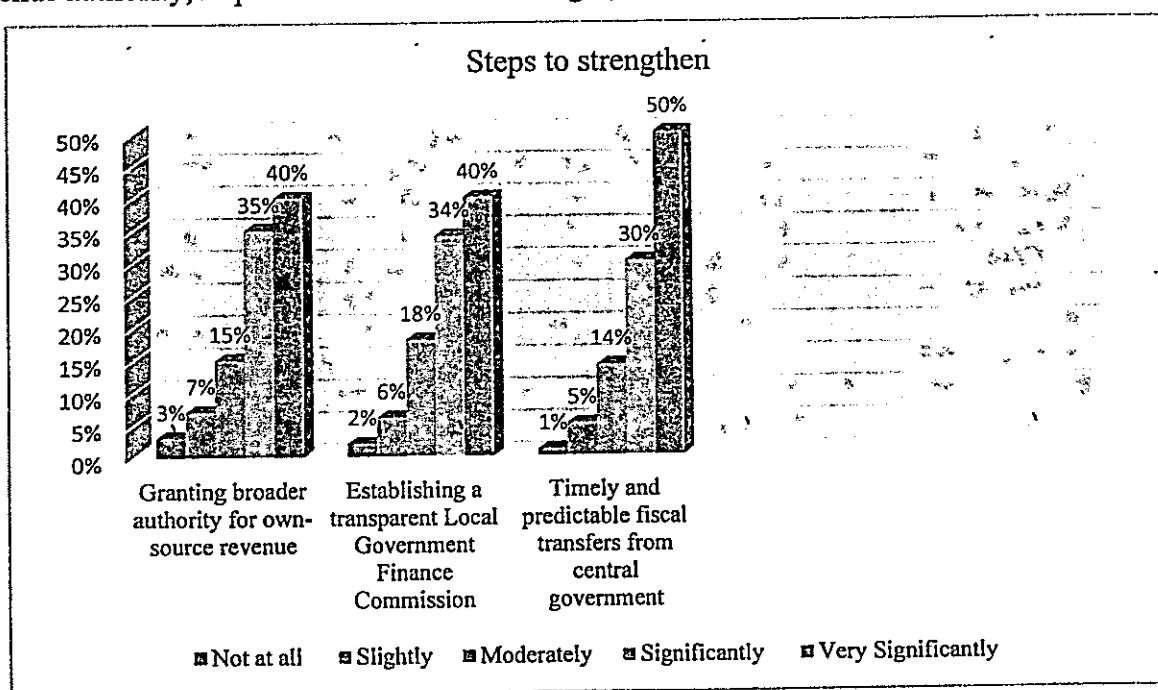


Chart-6: Measures to Strengthen Financial Autonomy of Zila Parishads

4.2.7 Importance of Institutionalizing Participatory Planning in District-Level Planning

Table-7: The importance of institutionalizing planning

Response Category	Percentage (%)
Not Important	3%
Slightly Important	7%
Moderately Important	15%
Very Important	40%
Extremely Important	35%
Total	100%

Source: *Questionnaire Survey, 2026*

The findings indicate a very strong consensus among respondents regarding the importance of institutionalizing participatory planning mechanisms in district-level development processes. A combined **75% of respondents** rated it as either **very important (40%)** or **extremely important (35%)**, highlighting widespread recognition of the need to incorporate community voices into planning and decision-making. This strong level of support suggests that respondents believe participatory planning is essential for ensuring that development initiatives accurately reflect local needs, priorities, and socio-economic conditions. It also indicates that greater citizen involvement is seen as a key mechanism for improving transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in Zila Parishad activities. Only a small proportion of respondents considered it **moderately important (15%)**, while very few viewed it as having low importance (**10% combined for slightly important and not important**). This further reinforces the perception that participatory approaches are not optional but necessary for effective local governance. Overall, the results emphasize that strengthening participatory planning systems would enhance legitimacy, improve development outcomes, and bridge the gap between local government institutions and citizens in district-level governance.

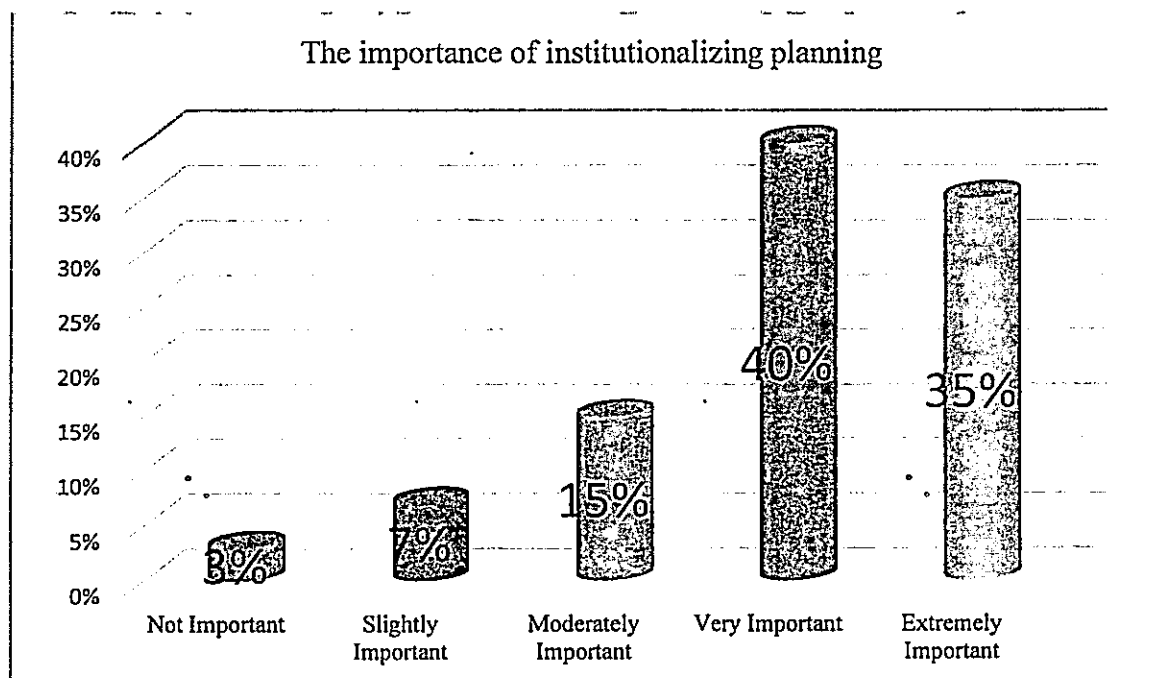


Chart-7: Importance of Institutionalizing Participatory Planning in District-Level Planning

4.2.8 Role of Digital Tools in Improving Transparency and Accountability in Zila Parishads

Tabel-8: Introduction to digital tools

Response Category	Percentage (%)
No Role	2%
Minor Role	6%
Moderate Role	14%
Significant Role	38%
Crucial Role	40%
Total	100%

Source: Questionnaire Survey, 2026

The findings show a very strong belief among respondents that e-governance systems, online procurement platforms, and public disclosure mechanisms play a vital role in enhancing transparency and accountability in Zila Parishads. A combined 78% of respondents rated their role as either significant (38%) or crucial (40%), indicating widespread agreement that digital governance tools are essential for improving institutional performance and reducing irregularities.

This strong support suggests that respondents view digitalization as an effective way to minimize corruption risks, ensure real-time monitoring of development activities, and improve the accessibility of information related to public spending and procurement processes. By making administrative processes more transparent and traceable, these systems can strengthen public trust in local government institutions. Only a very small proportion of respondents considered these tools to have no role (2%) or a minor role (6%), indicating that skepticism toward digital governance is minimal. A moderate level of support (14%) reflects some concerns regarding implementation challenges such as technical capacity, infrastructure limitations, or digital literacy gaps.

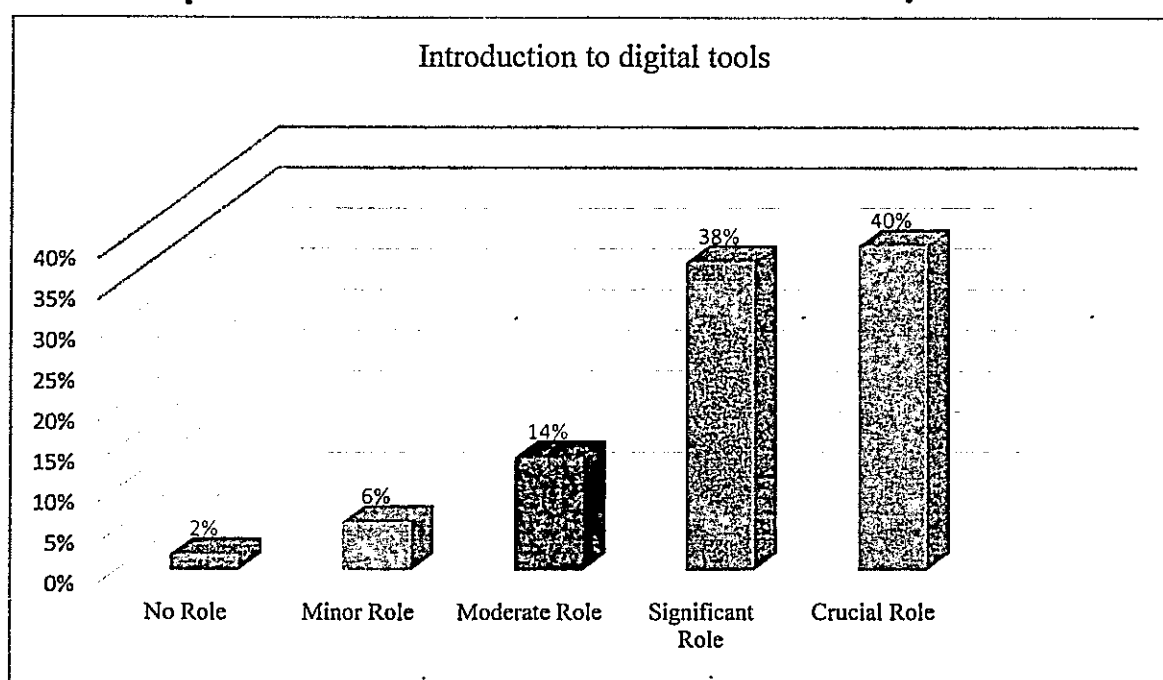


Chart-8: Role of Digital Tools in Improving Transparency and Accountability in Zila Parishads

4.2.9 Advice on strengthening district councils and local governance

The question was about suggestions or comments on strengthening Zilla Parishad and local governance in Bangladesh. All respondents expressed their opinions and comments on this issue. Respondents stated that,

No.	Suggestions / Comments
1	Financial autonomy of Zila Parishads should be increased to ensure faster implementation of local development projects.
2	Regular audits and an online reporting system should be introduced to ensure transparency and accountability.
3	Mandatory training and capacity-building programs should be provided for elected representatives and officials.
4	Coordination among Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad, and Zila Parishad needs to be strengthened further.
5	Public participation should be enhanced through open budget meetings and public hearings.
6	Expansion of digital services and e-governance systems is necessary for better service delivery.
7	Political interference should be reduced to ensure administrative autonomy.
8	Transparent tendering and mandatory e-procurement should be enforced in project implementation.
9	A strong monitoring cell should be established at the local level to prevent corruption.
10	An effective grievance redressal system should be introduced for quick resolution of public complaints.

4.3 Qualitative data analysis

The qualitative data analysis on the functional constraints of Zila Parishad in Bangladesh, with a case study of Faridpur Zila Parishad, reveals several institutional, administrative, and operational challenges. Key findings indicate that limited financial autonomy significantly restricts the ability of the Zila Parishad to initiate and implement development projects independently. Respondents also highlight bureaucratic delays and overlapping responsibilities between Union, Upazila, and Zila-level institutions, which often lead to inefficiency and duplication of efforts. Political interference in project selection and resource allocation further undermines transparent governance and priority-based planning.

Another major constraint identified is the shortage of skilled human resources and inadequate capacity of officials in project management, procurement, and digital governance systems. Weak monitoring and accountability mechanisms contribute to delays and substandard implementation of development activities. Additionally, low citizen participation in planning and decision-making processes reduces the responsiveness of the institution to local needs. To overcome these challenges, respondents suggest strengthening fiscal decentralization, enhancing administrative autonomy, and improving coordination among local government tiers. Capacity-building training, introduction of e-governance and e-procurement systems, and strict enforcement of transparency mechanisms are also recommended. Furthermore, encouraging participatory planning and establishing effective grievance redress systems can improve accountability. Overall, institutional reforms and technological integration are essential for making Zila Parishad more efficient, transparent, and service-oriented.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations:

5.1 Conclusion:

The study on the functional constraints of Zila Parishad in Bangladesh, focusing on Faridpur Zila Parishad, highlights a range of structural, administrative, and governance-related challenges that hinder effective local development. The findings reveal that limited financial independence, overlapping institutional roles, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and political interference significantly weaken the operational capacity of the Zila Parishad. In addition, inadequate human resource capacity, weak monitoring systems, and low levels of citizen participation further reduce the effectiveness and responsiveness of local governance. Despite these constraints, the study identifies several practical measures that can significantly improve the performance of Zila Parishads. Strengthening fiscal decentralization and ensuring greater administrative autonomy are essential for enhancing decision-making efficiency. Improving inter-tier coordination among Union, Upazila, and Zila Parishads can reduce duplication and ensure better service delivery. Moreover, capacity-building initiatives for officials, along with the introduction of e-governance and digital procurement systems, can improve transparency and operational efficiency. Encouraging participatory planning and strengthening accountability mechanisms, such as grievance redress systems and regular audits, are also crucial reforms.

The study concludes that comprehensive institutional reforms, combined with technological modernization and inclusive governance practices, are necessary to transform Zila Parishads into effective, transparent, and citizen-responsive local government institutions in Bangladesh.

5.2 Recommendations:

- ✓ Increase financial autonomy of Zila Parishad for faster project implementation.
- ✓ Strengthen fiscal decentralization policies at the local government level.
- ✓ Reduce bureaucratic delays in project approval and execution.
- ✓ Ensure clear division of responsibilities among Union, Upazila, and Zila Parishads.
- ✓ Limit political interference in development planning and resource allocation.
- ✓ Introduce mandatory e-governance systems for all administrative functions.
- ✓ Implement e-procurement to ensure transparency in tendering processes.
- ✓ Enhance capacity-building and training programs for officials and staff.
- ✓ Recruit skilled human resources for technical and managerial roles.
- ✓ Strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for all projects.
- ✓ Increase citizen participation through open budget meetings and consultations.
- ✓ Establish an effective grievance redress system at the district level.
- ✓ Ensure regular audits and public disclosure of financial information.
- ✓ Improve coordination among different tiers of local government.
- ✓ Promote accountability through performance-based evaluation systems.

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157th Advanced Course on Administration and Development Individual Assignment

NAME OF THE MODULE : Research for Governance, (Final Seminar Paper Submission) Part-II

MODULE NO: 5

Marks Obtained

DATE: 15.06.2026

Code No.....

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Instruction to be followed

(Please read carefully)

1. Please write your Name, Roll No etc. at the specified space.
2. Writing Name, Roll No. etc. at any other place or making the script otherwise may cause cancellation of your answer script.
3. Put tick (✓) marks on Evaluation method and Institute's Name.

Name: Golam Md. Shahnewaz

Roll No: 112

Abstract

This study examines the potential of establishing an international airport with cargo facilities in Bogura, Bangladesh, as a catalyst for regional resource mobilisation and inclusive growth in northern Bangladesh. Using a mixed-method research design combining a structured questionnaire survey of 30 experienced professionals with qualitative thematic analysis, the research investigates the economic, social, strategic, and environmental dimensions of the proposed airport across six thematic sections.

The findings reveal an overwhelmingly positive consensus. An exceptional 93.3% of respondents express support for the airport; positive response rates range from 85.3% (Geopolitics and Security) to 98.0% (Economic Development and Employment), with an overall average of 91.0%. Key findings include: 96.7% currently fly from Dhaka — confirming the acute connectivity deficit in North Bengal; 80.0% cite cargo infrastructure deficiency as the primary obstacle to agricultural exports; 83.3% project export growth exceeding 25%; and all 30 respondents (100.0%) anticipate employment creation. The study recommends an immediate feasibility study and Environmental Impact Assessment, a cargo-first infrastructure strategy, a Public-Private Partnership financing model, and a phased 5–10-year implementation roadmap. The evidence strongly supports designating Bogura Airport as a national infrastructure priority capable of unlocking the region's enormous but constrained economic potential.

Keywords: Bogura Airport, North Bengal, agricultural exports, regional development, cargo terminal, Bangladesh, inclusive growth, resource mobilisation, Public-Private Partnership.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Bangladesh has achieved remarkable economic growth through infrastructural development, export expansion, and urbanisation. Yet this growth remains overwhelmingly concentrated in Dhaka, creating a structurally unequal geography of opportunity. Northern Bangladesh — comprising the Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions — remains disadvantaged in investment, connectivity, and industrial development despite immense agricultural productivity. Residents must travel five to six or more hours to Dhaka for international air access.

Bogura, historically known as the 'Gateway to North Bengal,' is the region's foremost commercial hub. Strategically located at the centre of the north, it is proximate to major agricultural production zones producing rice, potatoes, vegetables, fish, dairy, and mangoes in abundance. The Bogura-centred region is often termed the granary of Bangladesh, yet the absence of cargo and logistics infrastructure prevents it from accessing global markets efficiently. The proposal for an international airport with cargo facilities in Bogura has therefore emerged as a potentially transformative infrastructure intervention.

1.2 Problem Statement

North Bengal faces three interconnected structural disadvantages. First, the total absence of international air connectivity forces virtually all residents to depend on Dhaka, imposing prohibitive time and cost burdens. Second, the region's agricultural and agro-industrial potential is constrained by inadequate cargo logistics, producing post-harvest losses and restricted export market access. Third, these deficits perpetuate unequal regional development by keeping investment concentrated in Dhaka. Significant tourism potential linked to heritage assets such as the UNESCO-listed Somapura Mahavihara (Paharpur) and Mahasthangarh also remains unrealised due to inaccessibility.

1.3 Objectives and Research Questions

This study pursues three objectives:

- To examine the potential economic and social impacts of a Bogura international airport with cargo facilities.
- To assess the airport's contribution to regional resource mobilisation and inclusive growth in northern Bangladesh.
- To identify opportunities and challenges associated with developing Bogura as a regional hub for trade, tourism, education, healthcare, and agro-industrial expansion.

Three research questions guide the study: (i) What is the nature and extent of the connectivity deficit in North Bengal? (ii) What are the perceived economic, social, and strategic impacts among experienced professionals? (iii) What policy measures and implementation strategies are required for successful realisation?

1.4 Justification and Rationale

Balanced regional development is essential for sustainable national progress. Bogura possesses compelling strategic advantages — central location within northern Bangladesh, road links to Rangpur, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, and Sylhet; proximity to agricultural surplus zones; a growing industrial base; and a large migrant worker population. The study provides empirical evidence from primary survey data to inform this critical policy discourse.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Infrastructure and Regional Development: Conceptual Framework

Infrastructure development is a foundational driver of economic growth. Hirschman (1958) emphasised 'backward and forward linkages' created by strategic investments; Rostow (1960) identified transportation infrastructure as prerequisite for the economic take-off stage. Contemporary scholarship accounts for network effects — airports generate agglomeration economies concentrating skilled labour and capital while simultaneously producing dispersion effects that spread development to hinterland regions (Button & Taylor, 2000). Kasarda's (2001) aerotropolis concept captures how modern airports function as comprehensive drivers of industrial clusters, logistics hubs, and economic zones.

2.2 Airport-Led Economic Development

Airport-led regional development generates direct benefits — employment, cargo handling, tax revenues — and indirect multiplier effects as airport-related income circulates locally (Button & Taylor, 2000). Cargo airports are particularly relevant to agricultural regions, reducing transaction costs, enabling rapid movement of perishable goods, and attracting FDI in agro-processing (UNDP, 2021). The development of Sylhet Osmani International Airport in Bangladesh catalysed increased remittances, tourism, and business investment in the Sylhet region — a directly analogous developmental dynamic.

2.3 Regional Inequality and Infrastructure in Bangladesh

Research consistently identifies infrastructural concentration in Dhaka as a key driver of Bangladesh's regional inequality (BBS, 2022). Northern Bangladesh experiences lower per capita income, industrial investment, and service access relative to the Dhaka-Chittagong corridor. Efficient transport systems reduce transaction costs and encourage investment in agricultural value chains (Ahmed & Hossain, 1990). Heritage tourism — including the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Paharpur — is constrained by transport inaccessibility, leaving significant economic potential unrealised.

2.4 Public-Private Partnership in Infrastructure

PPP models have demonstrated efficacy in airport development across Asia, enabling governments to leverage private capital and expertise while retaining public oversight (World Bank, 2020). Transparent, well-governed PPP structures with clear risk-sharing arrangements

produce more sustainable outcomes than purely public or purely private financing, and align with Bangladesh's current infrastructure policy framework.

2.5 Research Gap

While substantial literature addresses regional development, airport economics, and agricultural logistics in developing countries, no research specifically examines an international airport's developmental implications for Bogura or comparable secondary cities in northern Bangladesh. This study fills that gap through primary survey data from 30 experienced professionals across diverse occupations.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopts a mixed-method approach combining quantitative survey analysis with qualitative thematic interpretation. An exploratory and descriptive design is used to assess the economic, social, and developmental implications of establishing the proposed airport — appropriate given the forward-looking, policy-oriented nature of the research.

3.2 Study Area

The study focuses on Bogura and selected districts within Rajshahi and Rangpur Divisions; selected for Bogura's strategic location, economic significance, and centrality to the policy proposal under examination.

3.3 Sampling and Respondent Profile

A purposive stratified sampling technique ensured representation across stakeholder groups. The 30 respondents comprised: public servants (10, 33.3%), business professionals (9, 30.0%), physicians (3, 10.0%), engineers (3, 10.0%), house wives (2, 6.7%), lawyer (1, 3.3%), teacher (1, 3.3%), and college teacher (1, 3.3%). Gender: 25 male (83.3%), 5 female (16.7%). Age ranged from 28 to 65 years, largest bracket being 35–44 (33.3%). All respondents are participants of the 157th ACAD at BPATC.

3.4 Data Collection Instrument

A 30-question structured questionnaire covering six thematic sections was used: (1) Transport and Regional Connectivity; (2) Agriculture, Cargo and Exports; (3) Economic Development and Employment; (4) Tourism, Heritage and Social Development; (5) Geopolitics, Security and Strategic Importance; and (6) Policy, Implementation and Overall Assessment. Each question offered four response options (A–D) on a positive-to-negative spectrum. The questionnaire was administered on 19 May 2026.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed through frequency distributions, percentage calculations, and cumulative analysis across all 30 questions. Thematic aggregation calculated the average positive response rate (combined A+B responses) per section. Results are visualised through pie charts, stacked bar charts, grouped bar charts, and horizontal bar charts. Qualitative dimensions were analysed thematically for recurrent concerns, opportunities, and policy priorities.

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Respondent Profile

The 30 respondents represent a professionally diverse, experienced cross-section of Bangladesh's governance and business community. Public servants constitute the largest occupational group (33.3%), followed by business professionals (30.0%). The sample is predominantly male (83.3%), reflecting BPATC cohort composition. The 35–44 and 55–65 age brackets dominate, ensuring a combination of recent professional experience and senior governance perspective.

Table 1: Respondent Profile Summary

Category	Sub-Category	Count (%)
Occupation	Business	9 (30.0%)
	Public Service	10 (33.3%)
	Physician	3 (10.0%)
	Engineer	3 (10.0%)
	House Wife	2 (6.7%)
	Lawyer / Teacher / College Teacher	3 (10.0%)
Gender	Male	25 (83.3%)
	Female	5 (16.7%)
Age Group	Under 35	6 (20.0%)
	35–44 years	10 (33.3%)
	45–54 years	5 (16.7%)
	55–65 years	9 (30.0%)

Figure 1: Respondent Distribution by Occupation (n = 30)

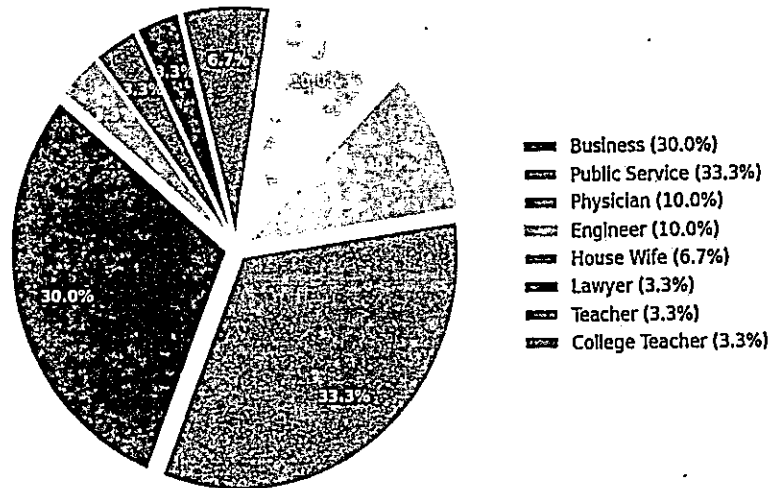


Figure 1: Respondent Distribution by Occupation (n = 30)

Figure 2: Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

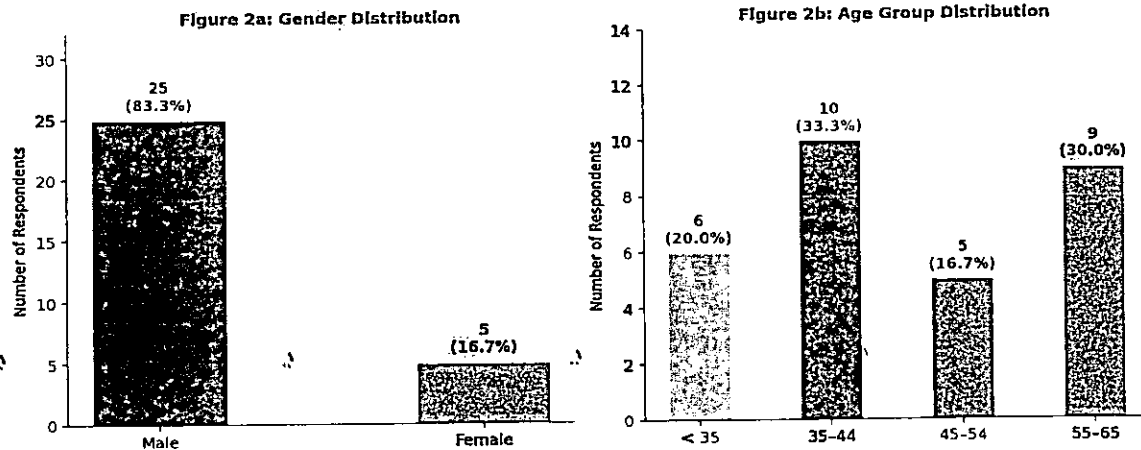


Figure 2: Demographic Profile — Gender and Age Group Distribution

4.2 Transport and Regional Connectivity (Q1–Q5)

On current flight access (Q1), 96.7% use Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Dhaka — confirming near-total reliance on Dhaka for international travel. On travel burden (Q2), 80.0% combined find the journey to Dhaka significantly burdensome (5–6 hours with very high cost: 53.3%; 6+ hours and unbearable: 26.7%). Connectivity improvement (Q3) achieved a 100.0% positive response — 73.3% expecting 'tremendous' improvement and 26.7% 'moderate' improvement — the highest consensus of any question. Professional inconvenience (Q4) is rated 'a great deal' by 53.3% and 'some' by 33.3%. Migrant worker benefit (Q5) records 86.6% combined positive response.

Table 2: Section 1 — Transport & Connectivity Response Summary

Q	Question	A (%)	B (%)	C (%)	D (%)
Q1	Current Flight Location Used	96.7	0.0	3.3	0.0
Q2	Travel Cost/Time to Dhaka	20.0	53.3	26.7	0.0
Q3	Regional Connectivity Improvement	73.3	26.7	0.0	0.0
Q4	Professional Inconvenience	53.3	33.3	10.0	3.3
Q5	Migrant Worker Benefit	63.3	23.3	10.0	3.3

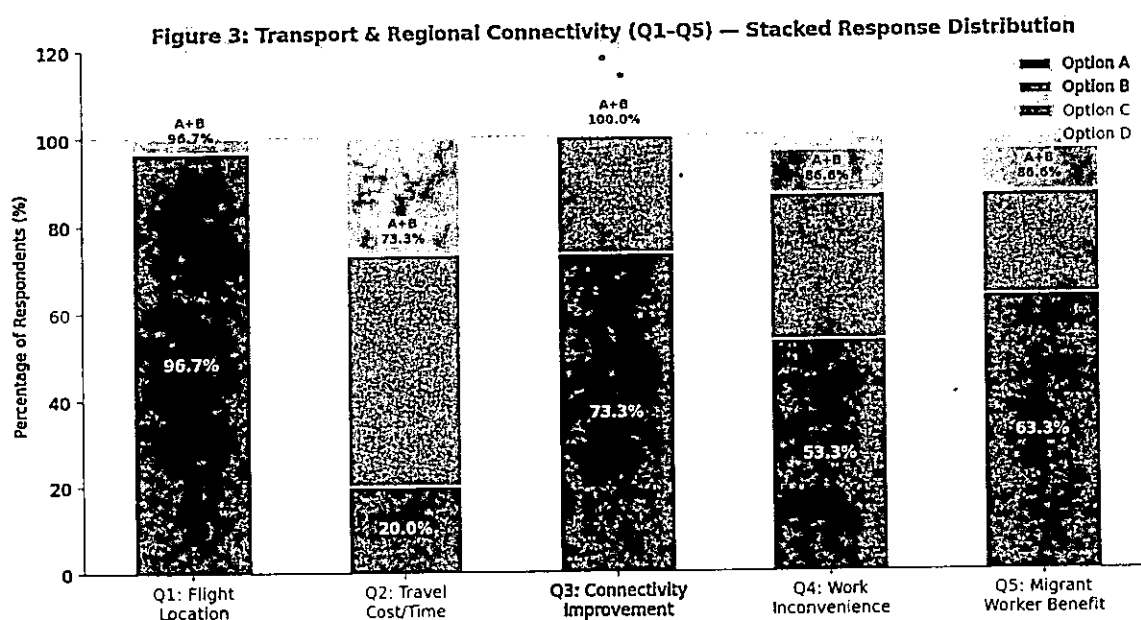


Figure 3: Transport & Regional Connectivity (Q1-Q5) — Stacked Response Distribution

4.3 Agriculture, Cargo and Exports (Q6-Q10)

A decisive 80.0% identified 'lack' of rapid transport and cargo facilities' as the single biggest obstacle to agricultural exports (Q6). Expected cargo airport export growth is substantial: 43.3% project over 50% growth and 40.0% project 25–50% growth — a combined 83.3% projecting significant uplift (Q7). The agro-processing and cold-storage industry is expected to develop most rapidly (60.0%, Q8). Transport delays cause significant produce loss for 93.3% (Q9). Foreign investment in agro-industry is rated likely or certain by 73.3% (Q10), yielding a section average of 93.3% positive.

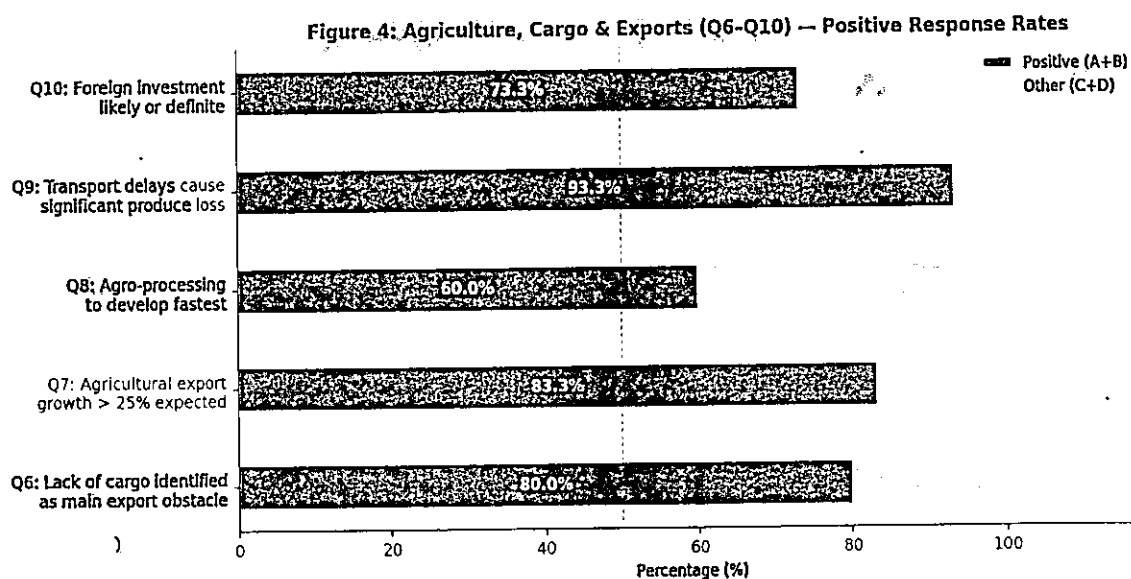


Figure 4: Agriculture, Cargo & Exports (Q6-Q10) — Positive Response Rates

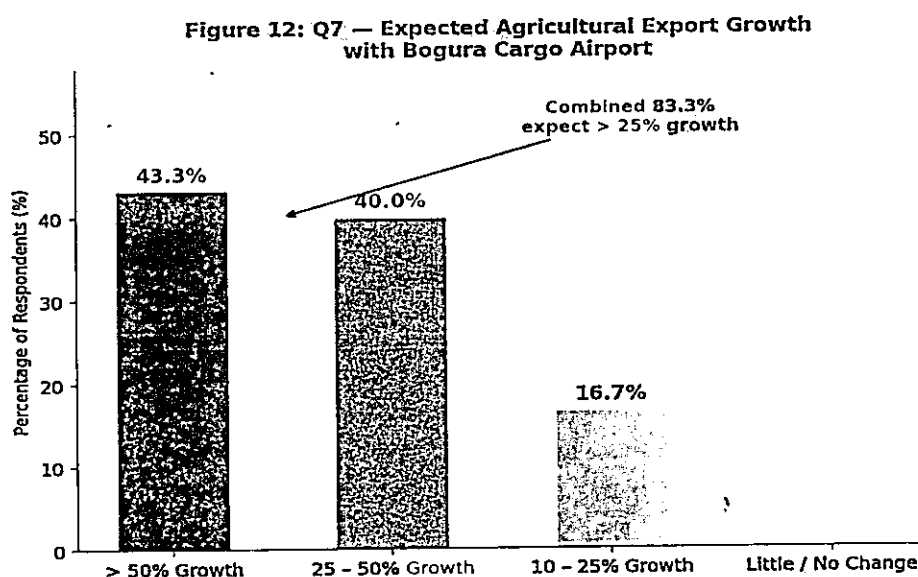


Figure 12: Q7 — Expected Agricultural Export Growth with Bogura Cargo Airport

4.4 Economic Development and Employment (Q11-Q15)

This section achieves the highest thematic average of 98.0% — the strongest consensus in the study. All 30 respondents (100.0%) anticipate employment creation: 80.0% expecting 'many new jobs' and 20.0% 'some new jobs' (Q11). Economic zone transformation is rated 'significant' or 'radical' by 66.7% (Q12). Government investment priority is strong (93.3% positive, Q13). The airport is expected to reduce economic disparity between North Bengal and Dhaka by 73.3% of respondents (Q14). Property price increases are anticipated by 83.3%, a proxy indicator of investment confidence (Q15).

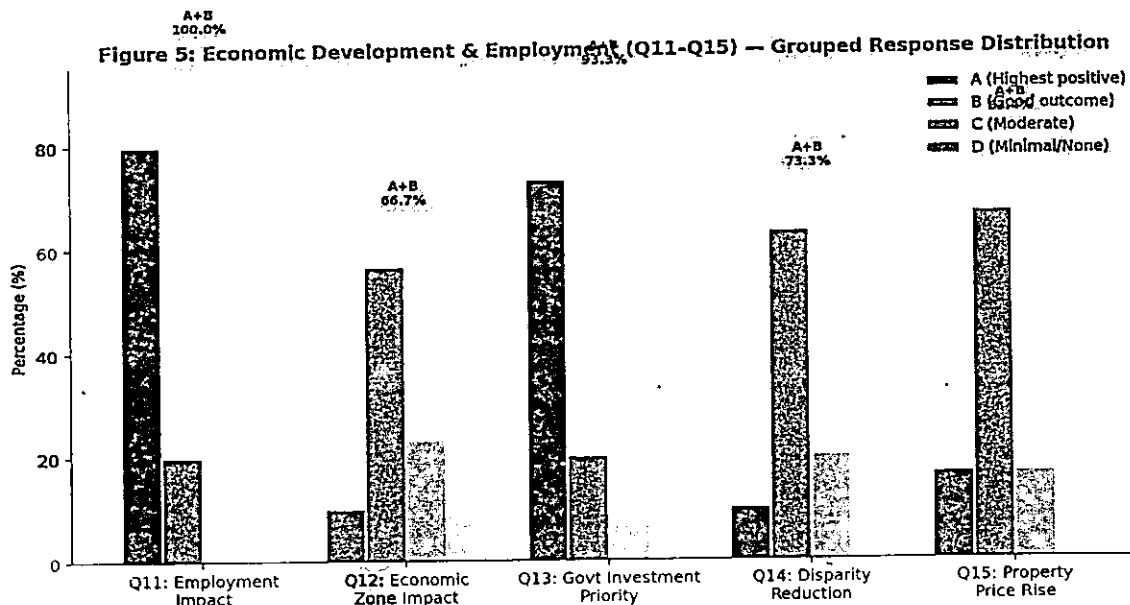


Figure 5: Economic Development & Employment (Q11-Q15) — Grouped Response Distribution

4.5 Tourism, Heritage and Social Development (Q16-Q20)

Airport access is considered 'absolutely essential' (23.3%) or 'important' (40.0%) for international tourism — 63.3% combined — around heritage sites including the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Paharpur and Mahasthangarh (Q16). Tourism services are expected to expand by 90.0% combined (Q17). Women's empowerment through airport-driven employment is anticipated by 60.0% (Q18). Educational institutions are expected to be attracted by 56.6% (Q19) and healthcare quality improvement by 56.7% (Q20). Section average: 88.7%.

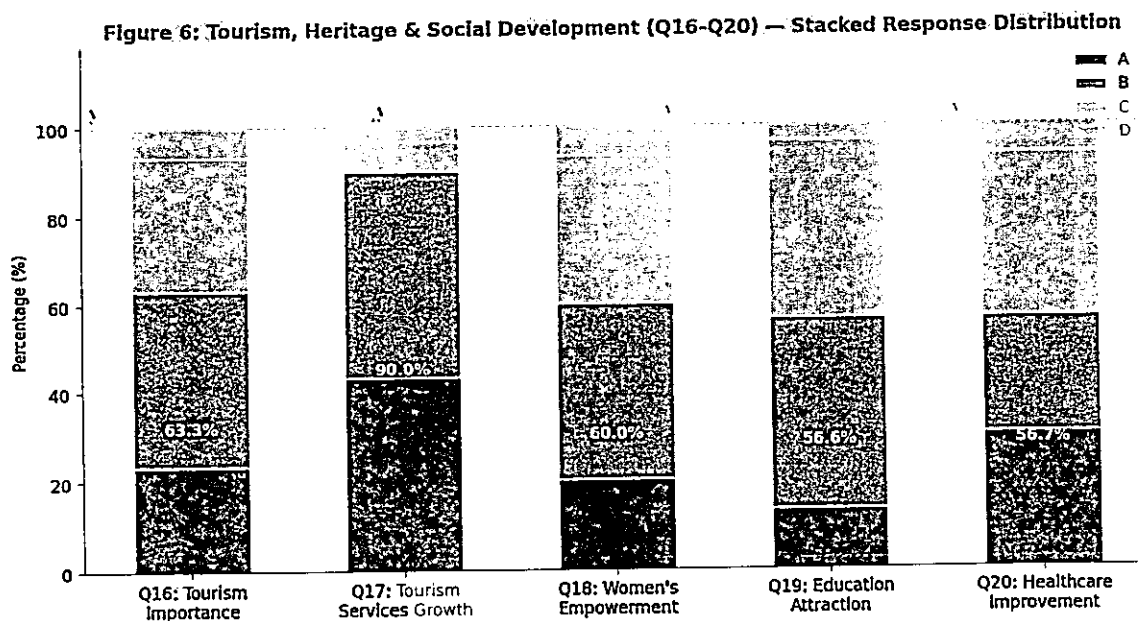


Figure 6: Tourism, Heritage & Social Development (Q16-Q20) — Stacked Response Distribution

4.6 Geopolitics, Security and Strategic Importance (Q21–Q25)

Bogura Airport is considered strategically important for trade with China, India, the Middle East, and East Asia by 63.3% (Q21). Environmental protection receives high priority: 76.7% favour maximum environmental standards or a careful balance (Q22). A significant military and national security role is anticipated by 56.7% (Q23). PPP financing is supported by 83.4% (Q24). On implementation challenges (Q25), funding and financing leads at 43.3%, followed by skilled workforce shortage (26.7%), land acquisition (23.3%), and political will (6.7%). Section average: 85.3%.

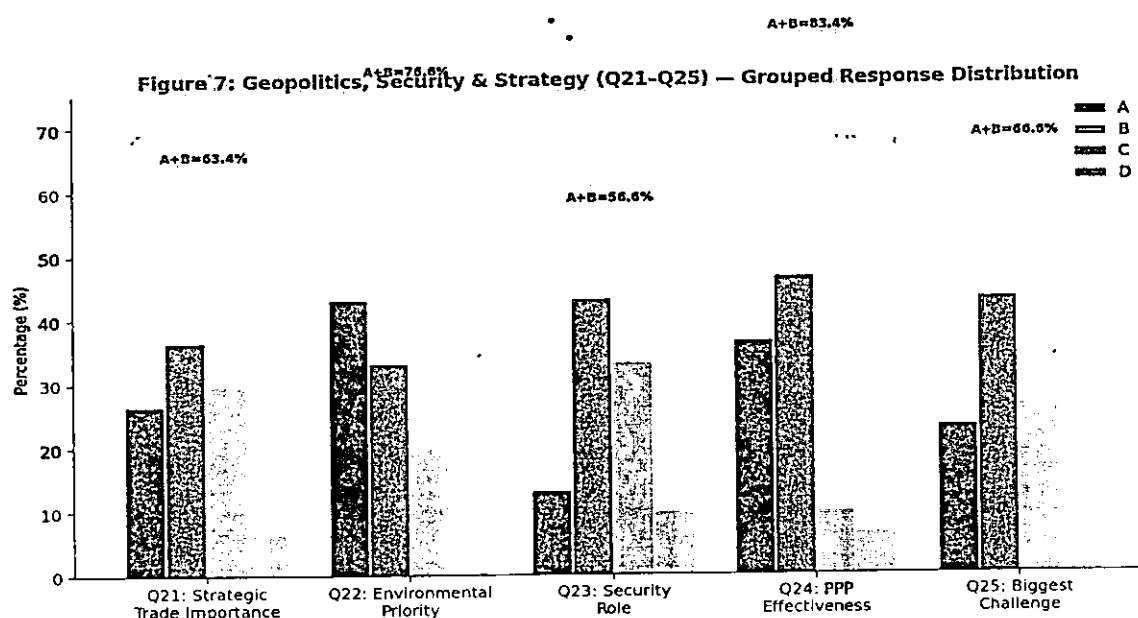
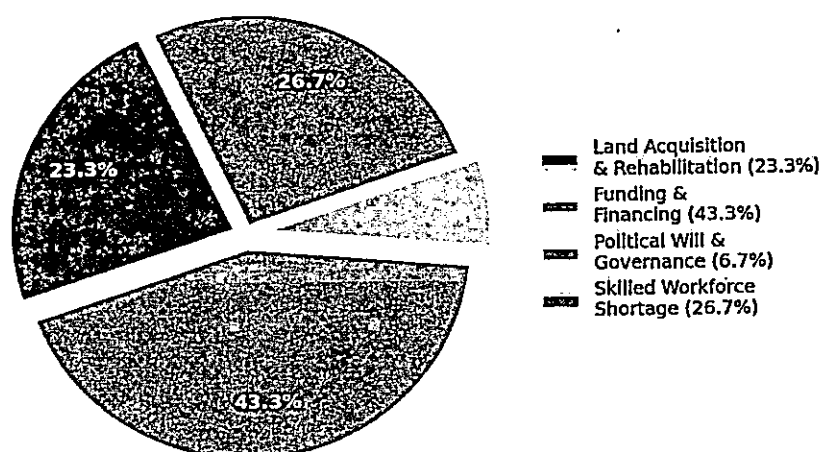


Figure 7: Geopolitics, Security & Strategy (Q21–Q25) — Grouped Response Distribution

**Figure 11: Q25 — Biggest Implementation Challenge
(as perceived by respondents)****Figure 11: Q25 — Biggest Implementation Challenge (Respondents' Perception)****4.7 Policy, Implementation and Overall Assessment (Q26–Q30)**

A phased 5–10-year timeline is preferred by 46.7%, with a further 26.7% favouring completion within 5 years — 73.4% combined within a decade (Q26). A full feasibility study and EIA is the preferred precondition by 53.3% (Q27). Living standards improvement is anticipated by 76.7% (Q28). The airport should be a national priority according to 70.0% (Q29). Overall, 93.3% support the airport: 43.3% fully and 50.0% conditionally (Q30). Section average: 92.0%.

Table 3: Q30 — Overall Opinion on Establishing Bogura International Airport

Opt	Response	Count	Percentage
A	Fully supportive — indispensable for North Bengal	13	43.3%
B	Supportive — but with well-considered planning	15	50.0%
C	Neutral — more information needed	2	6.7%
D	Not supportive — priorities should differ	0	0.0%
	Total	30	100.0%

Figure 8: Policy, Implementation & Overall Assessment (Q26-Q30) — Stacked Response Distribution

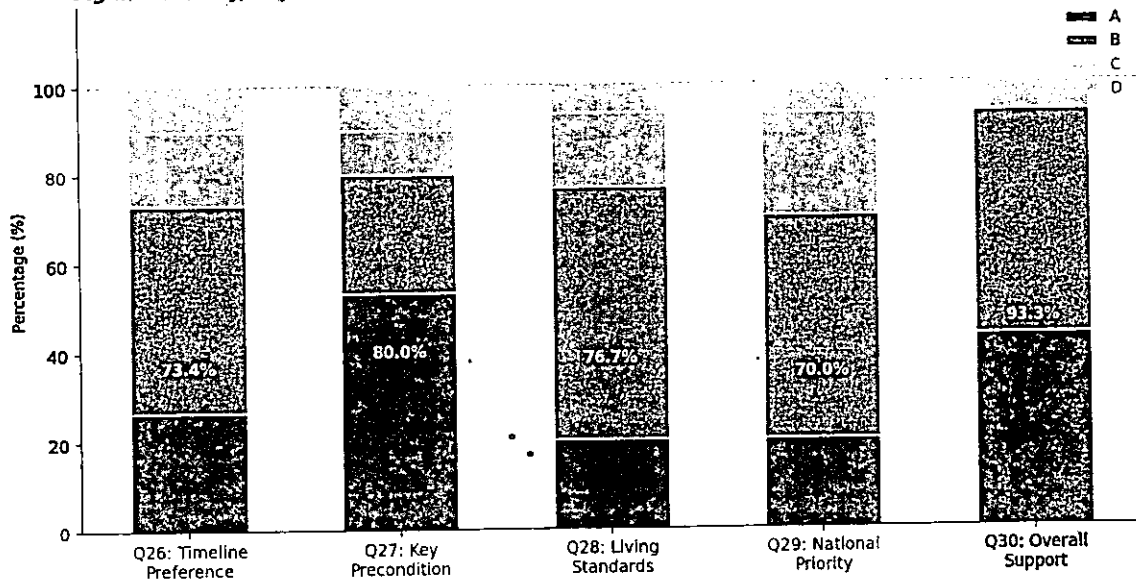


Figure 8: Policy, Implementation & Overall Assessment (Q26-Q30) — Stacked Response Distribution

Figure 9: Q30 — Overall Opinion on Establishing Bogura International Airport (n = 30)

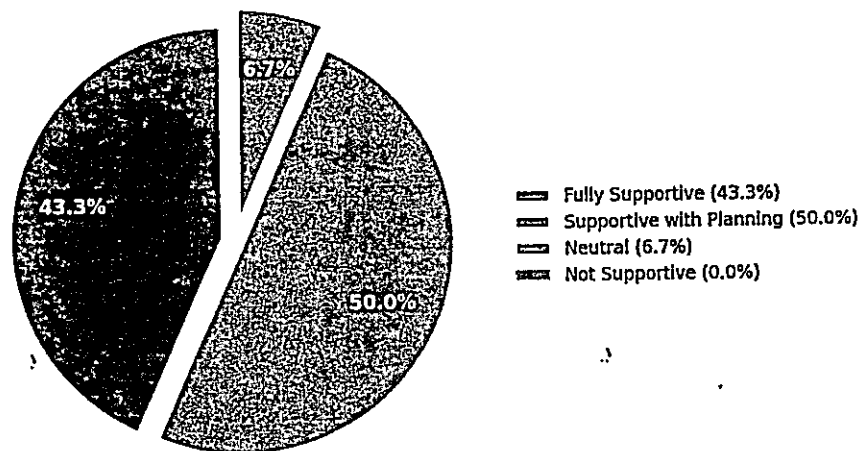


Figure 9: Q30 — Overall Opinion on Establishing Bogura International Airport

4.8 Thematic Summary

All six thematic sections record 'Very Strong Support,' with positive response rates ranging from 85.3% to 98.0% and an overall average of 91.0%. Economic Development & Employment leads at 98.0%, Agriculture, Cargo & Exports at 93.3%, Policy & Implementation at 92.0%, Transport & Connectivity and Tourism & Social Development tied at 88.7%, and Geopolitics & Security at 85.3%. The consistency across themes confirms broad-based, multi-dimensional consensus for the proposed airport.

Table 4: Thematic Summary — Average Positive Response Rate (A+B) by Section

#	Theme	Q Range	Avg. Positive (%)	Assessment
1	Transport & Connectivity	Q1–Q5	88.7%	Very Strong Support
2	Agriculture, Cargo & Exports	Q6–Q10	93.3%	Very Strong Support
3	Economic Dev. & Employment	Q11–Q15	98.0%	Very Strong Support
4	Tourism, Heritage & Social Dev.	Q16–Q20	88.7%	Very Strong Support
5	Geopolitics, Security & Strategy	Q21–Q25	85.3%	Very Strong Support
6	Policy & Implementation	Q26–Q30	92.0%	Very Strong Support

Figure 10: Thematic Summary — Average Positive Response Rate (A+B) by Section

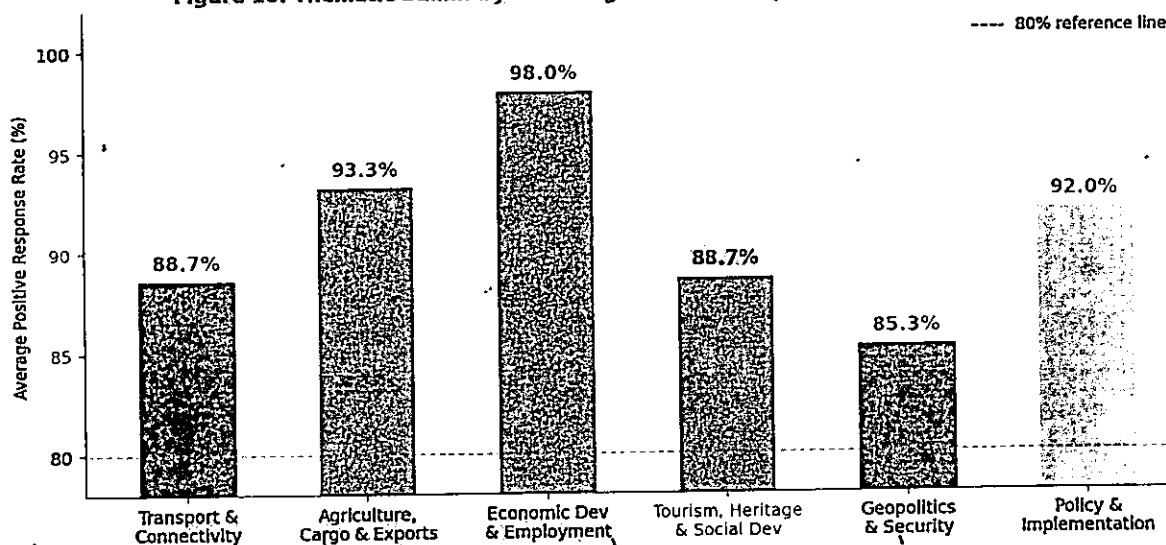


Figure 10: Thematic Summary — Average Positive Response Rate (A+B) by Section

5. Conclusion

This study examined the potential of an international airport with cargo facilities in Bogura to catalyse regional resource mobilisation and inclusive growth in northern Bangladesh. The evidence gathered from 30 experienced professionals across business, public administration, and technical occupations produces a compelling and consistent finding: the proposed Bogura Airport commands overwhelming support from precisely the population that understands the region's constraints and potential most directly.

The connectivity deficit is severe and verifiable: 96.7% currently travel to Dhaka for international flights, enduring 5–6+ hours and prohibitively high costs. This inequality constrains every development dimension — agricultural exports, business investment,

healthcare, education, and tourism. The economic case is particularly strong: all 30 respondents (100.0%) anticipate employment creation; 83.3% project agricultural export growth exceeding 25%; and the economic development theme achieves a 98.0% positive response rate. The cargo airport is positioned to unlock agro-processing, cold-storage, and FDI-driven industrialisation at scale.

The social case is equally robust: tourism, women's empowerment, healthcare access, and educational development are all expected to benefit significantly. Implementation challenges — primarily financing (43.3%), workforce capability (26.7%), and land acquisition (23.3%) — are addressable through structured policy responses. The 93.3% overall support rate and 91.0% average positive response rate across all themes constitute a decisive policy mandate. The Bogura Airport has the potential to fundamentally rebalance Bangladesh's development geography, transforming northern Bangladesh from an underserved agricultural periphery into a dynamic, connected regional growth engine.

6. Recommendations

The following eight priority recommendations are advanced based on empirical findings:

6.1 Immediate Feasibility Study and EIA

Commission a comprehensive feasibility study and Environmental Impact Assessment within 12 months, covering demand forecasting, cargo volume projections, environmental mitigation, land requirements, and financial viability — as demanded by 53.3% of respondents.

6.2 Cargo-First Infrastructure Strategy

Prioritise temperature-controlled cargo terminals, cold storage, refrigerated transport links to agricultural zones, and fast-track customs processing for perishable goods from the outset, addressing the 80.0% who identify cargo infrastructure deficiency as the primary export obstacle.

6.3 Public-Private Partnership Financing

Establish a transparent PPP model with clear risk-sharing, performance-based concession terms, government traffic guarantees, and competitive procurement to leverage private capital for the primary financing gap identified by 43.3% of respondents.

6.4 Fair Land Acquisition with Community Participation

Develop a legally robust land acquisition framework with above-market compensation, resettlement support, livelihood restoration programmes, and meaningful consultation mechanisms to address the 23.3% who identify land acquisition as a key challenge.

6.5 Airport-Centred Special Economic Zone

Plan a co-located SEZ targeting agro-processing, cold-storage, pharmaceutical manufacturing, and IT-enabled services with fiscal incentives, capitalising on the 98.0% economic development consensus to attract domestic and foreign investors.

6.6 Integrated Tourism and Heritage Development Plan

Link the airport to heritage assets including Paharpur (UNESCO World Heritage Site) and Mahasthangarh through a comprehensive tourism master plan addressing hospitality infrastructure, heritage preservation, and international marketing, responding to the 63.3% who regard the airport as important or essential for tourism.

6.7 National Priority Designation and Phased Roadmap

Formally include Bogura Airport in the national infrastructure agenda with dedicated budgetary allocations. Adopt a phased roadmap: Phase I (Years 1–2) feasibility and EIA; Phase II (Years 3–5) land acquisition and cargo terminal; Phase III (Years 6–10) passenger terminal, SEZ and full operations — consistent with the 73.4% preference for a within-decade timeline.

6.8 Gender-Responsive and Skills Development Strategy

Embed gender-responsive hiring requirements in airport-related industries and establish targeted skills training programmes for women in operations, tourism, hospitality, and export sectors, responding to 60.0% who anticipate women's empowerment benefits.

7. Declaration

I declare that this paper contains neither any plagiarized material nor any AI-generated content. The analysis is the author's contribution. Any deviation from this declaration is author's liability.

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Annexure

Annexure A: Survey Questionnaire Summary — All 30 Questions

Table A1: Complete Survey Question Map by Thematic Section

Q#	Section	Question Topic
Q1	Transport	Current flight location used for international travel
Q2	Transport	Travel cost and time assessment to Dhaka Airport
Q3	Transport	Regional connectivity improvement expectation
Q4	Transport	Professional inconvenience from absence of local airport
Q5	Transport	Migrant worker benefit from Bogura Airport
Q6	Agriculture	Biggest obstacle to agricultural exports
Q7	Agriculture	Expected agricultural export growth percentage
Q8	Agriculture	Industry expected to develop most rapidly
Q9	Agriculture	Impact of transport delays on agricultural produce
Q10	Agriculture	Foreign investment likelihood with cargo airport
Q11	Economic	Employment impact of the airport
Q12	Economic	Economic zone development impact
Q13	Economic	Government investment priority perception
Q14	Economic	Economic disparity reduction between North Bengal & Dhaka
Q15	Economic	Property price impact in Bogura
Q16	Tourism	Tourism attraction importance of airport
Q17	Tourism	Tourism services sector expected change
Q18	Tourism	Women's empowerment contribution
Q19	Tourism	Educational institution attraction potential
Q20	Tourism	Healthcare quality improvement expectation
Q21	Strategic	Strategic and geopolitical importance
Q22	Strategic	Environmental concern priority level
Q23	Strategic	Security and military role of the airport
Q24	Strategic	PPP effectiveness for airport financing
Q25	Strategic	Biggest implementation challenge
Q26	Policy	Recommended implementation timeline
Q27	Policy	Key precondition before airport establishment
Q28	Policy	Expected improvement in living standards
Q29	Policy	National priority status opinion
Q30	Policy	Overall opinion on establishing Bogura Airport

Annexure B: Detailed Respondent Breakdown by Occupation

Table A2: Occupation Profile of Survey Respondents

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Public Service	10	33.3%
Business	9	30.0%
Physician	3	10.0%
Engineer	3	10.0%
House Wife	2	6.7%
College Teacher	1	3.3%
Teacher	1	3.3%
Lawyer	1	3.3%
Total	30	100.0%

Researcher: Golam Md. Shahnewaz | Roll: 112 | Module: 5 | 157th ACAD, BPATC | 15 June 2026



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NAME OF THE MODULE: Research for Governance

MODULE NO:05

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Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre

Savar, Dhaka.

Programme & Studies Division

Evaluation Department

157th Advanced Course on Administration and Development

Individual Assignment

Seal

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Seminar paper

1.Title: The role of Ansar & Village Defence party in the empowerment of VDP women member: A socio-economic study.

2. Abstract:

The Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party (VDP), through its Project Training Wing, conducts 28 types of vocational training programmes throughout the year to promote skill development and socio-economic empowerment among its members. Among these programmes, tailoring and fashion design, woven machine operation, and Nakshi Kantha training are specifically designed for female VDP members. Between 2020 and 2025, approximately 11,500 female VDP members received hands-on training under these initiatives.

In addition to technical skill development, trainees were provided with awareness and educational sessions on human and child trafficking prevention, gender equality, women's rights, reproductive health and rights, prevention of child marriage and dowry, communicable diseases, and the organizational activities of Bangladesh Ansar and VDP. These interventions aimed to enhance not only economic capacity but also social awareness and community participation among women.

This study examines the extent of socio-economic development and women's empowerment achieved through these training programmes. Primary data were collected through direct and telephone interviews with 20 female VDP members who participated in training programmes during 2024 and 2025. The findings reveal that the trainees are earning between BDT 7,000 and BDT 20,000 per month on average by utilizing the skills acquired through the training. Their earnings have contributed significantly to meeting household needs, supporting family members, and improving their financial independence and self-reliance.

Furthermore, the respondents reported actively sharing their acquired knowledge with family and community members, raising awareness on social issues such as child marriage, dowry, trafficking, public health, and crime prevention. The study concludes that VDP vocational training programmes have made a meaningful contribution to women's socio-economic empowerment, income generation, community engagement, and overall social development in Bangladesh.

3. Introduction:

(a) Background Information :

Women's empowerment has emerged as one of the central pillars of sustainable development in Bangladesh. Among various state-led grassroots institutions, Bangladesh Ansar & Village Defence Party (VDP) has been playing a significant role in integrating rural and marginalized women into socio-economic development activities. Through basic training, vocational education, social awareness programs, micro-credit linkage, community security participation, and income-generating initiatives, VDP women members are gradually transforming from dependent household actors to productive socio-economic contributors. Bangladesh Ansar & VDP conducts dozens of vocational and self-employment training programmes annually and includes a very large female volunteer based in development work.

Particularly, women VDP members have emerged as active agents of change in rural society. By participating in various trainings like fashion craft and product development & woven machine operating training the VDP women are gaining income opportunities, social dignity, leadership qualities, and decision-making confidence. This seminar paper explores this transformative role in a socio-economic perspective.

(b) Problem statement:

Despite remarkable national achievements in female education and labor force participation, many rural women in Bangladesh still suffer from:

1. Economic dependency.
2. Low access to formal employment.
3. Limited mobility.
4. Exclusion from local decision making.
5. Low confidence in leadership role.
6. Social discrimination

Traditional NGO interventions have made progress, but state-backed disciplined volunteer institutions such as VDP offer a comparatively under-researched empowerment pathway. While millions of women are enrolled as VDP members, there is inadequate scholarly focus on how this membership actually changes their socio-economic conditions, family status, and community role.

Therefore, the key problem is: To what extent and through what mechanisms does Bangladesh Ansar & Village Defence Party empower its women VDP members socio-economically?

(c) Objectives:

1. To identify the training and development programmes provided to VDP women members.
2. To examine the contribution of Ansar-VDP activities in enhancing women's economic self-reliance.

Objective 1:

The training and development programs conducted by Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party play a significant role in improving the socio-economic condition of women members in Bangladesh. These programs are designed to enhance the knowledge, practical skills, confidence, employment of women, especially those coming from rural and disadvantaged backgrounds. Through various institutional and community-based initiatives, Ansar and VDP aim to transform women into productive, skilled, and self-reliant citizens.

The development programs are often implemented through local training centers, upazila-level VDP offices, and collaborative initiatives with government and non-government organizations. The training methodology generally combines theoretical instruction with practical demonstrations and field-level activities, making the programs more effective and participatory.

Overall, the training and development initiatives of Ansar and VDP contribute significantly to women's capacity building. These programs help women acquire employable skills, improve their social awareness, strengthen their leadership ability, and increase their participation in

socio-economic activities. As a result, women members become more capable of improving their living standards and contributing positively to national development.

Objective 2 : The activities undertaken by Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party have made a remarkable contribution to women's economic empowerment and self-reliance in Bangladesh. Through training, employment opportunities, awareness-building activities, and community engagement, the organization has created opportunities for women to become financially independent and socially empowered.

One of the major contributions of Ansar and VDP is the creation of income-generating opportunities for women. After receiving vocational and technical training, many women members engage in small-scale businesses, tailoring work, handicraft production, poultry farming, and other entrepreneurial activities. Some women also become involved in cooperative groups and local markets, which help them earn regular income and support their families financially.

Economic empowerment through Ansar and VDP activities has increased women's decision-making power within the family and society. Financially independent women are more capable of participating in household decisions related to education, healthcare, savings, and investments. This empowerment also reduces women's dependency on male family members and enhances their dignity and social status.

Another important contribution is the promotion of self-reliance and self-confidence among women members. Participation in training programs, community activities, and social development initiatives encourages women to become more confident, independent, and socially active. Many women develop leadership skills and actively participate in community development, disaster response, and social awareness campaigns.

One of the core development priorities of the present Government in its vision of building "A Bangladesh for All", where equal rights, dignity, participation and opportunities for women are ensured in every sphere of national life. To analyze the role of Bangladesh Ansar & Village defence in translating the Government vision of women empowerment into practical outcomes at the grassroots level.

Research questions:

The questionnaire mainly focuses on variables such as:

1. What type of training the selected VDP women took participated ?
2. Has personal income increased after Ansar VDP handcraft, sewing and woven machine training?
3. Does the participant engaged in any income -generating activities?
4. Have she been able to save money reguarly after receiving training from Ansar & VDP?
5. Does she fill more confident in managing household expenses independently?
6. Does she feel that her family and community now respect her opinion?
7. Does she become able to participate in family or community decision-making?
8. IS she aware about legal rights such as domestic violence, inheritance, marriage registration etc?
9. What is her thinking about Ansar & VDP training? Does she belive that Ansar & VDP has played a positive role in changing her socio economic empowerment?

(d) Justification / Rationale of the Study.

Women's empowerment is an essential prerequisite for sustainable socio-economic development in Bangladesh. Despite significant progress in education, employment, and social participation, many women, particularly in rural areas, still face poverty, unemployment, gender discrimination, and limited access to economic opportunities. In this context, Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party has been playing an important role in promoting women's empowerment through training, skill development, income-generating activities, and community participation programs.

The rationale of this study lies in the need to assess how the activities and initiatives of Ansar and VDP contribute to improving the socio-economic condition of women members and promoting self-reliance. Although several studies have been conducted on women's empowerment in Bangladesh, limited research has specifically focused on the role of Ansar and VDP in empowering women through institutional training and community-based development programs.

This study is significant because it will explore the effectiveness of the training and development programs provided to VDP women members and evaluate their contribution to economic empowerment, social awareness, and decision-making capacity. The findings of the study may help policymakers, administrators, and development practitioners formulate more effective strategies for enhancing women's participation in socio-economic development activities.

The study will contribute to the existing academic literature by addressing the research gap regarding the role of Ansar and VDP in women's empowerment in Bangladesh.

4. Literature Review. [Conceptual/Theoretical/Analytical Framework]:

Women's empowerment has emerged as one of the central development concerns in Bangladesh, particularly in the context of socio-economic development, poverty reduction, and gender equality. Empowerment generally refers to the process through which women gain access to resources, develop decision-making capacity, improve economic independence, and participate actively in social and public life. Researchers and development practitioners have emphasized that empowerment is multidimensional, encompassing economic, social, political, and psychological aspects.

Kabeer (1999) argued that empowerment involves the expansion of people's ability to make strategic life choices in contexts where such opportunities were previously denied. Her framework highlights three important dimensions of empowerment: resources, agency, and achievements. This theoretical perspective is highly relevant to the activities of Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party because the organization provides women with training, institutional support, and opportunities for socio-economic participation.

Hasan (2018) observed that women in Bangladesh still face various barriers, including poverty, social discrimination, restricted mobility, and limited access to economic resources. The study emphasized that government and community-based organizations play an important role in reducing gender inequality and enhancing women's participation in development activities.

Economic empowerment is considered one of the most effective dimensions of women's empowerment. According to Mostari et al. (2021), women's participation in income-generating activities contributes positively to household income, decision-making capacity, and social recognition. Their research found that vocational training and small-scale entrepreneurship programs help rural women become financially independent and self-reliant. The literature also highlights the importance of institutional support and community participation in empowering women. Community-oriented organizations create opportunities for women to engage in local governance, social awareness campaigns, disaster management, and development activities. In Bangladesh, Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party has been recognized as one of the largest auxiliary and community-based forces contributing to rural development, social security, and public awareness activities.

Existing studies indicate that the organization plays a notable role in women's development through various training and capacity-building programs. Women members of Ansar and VDP receive vocational and technical training in areas such as tailoring, handicrafts, poultry farming, food processing, embroidery, agricultural activities, and small business management. These programs aim to develop employable skills and create income-generating opportunities for women, especially in rural and disadvantaged communities.

Naziz (2021) emphasized that training functions as an important mechanism for transferring practical knowledge and improving administrative and social performance within public institutions. This observation is relevant to the activities of Ansar and VDP because the organization heavily relies on training-based approaches to enhance women's socio-economic capabilities.

Although numerous studies have examined women's empowerment in Bangladesh, limited research has specifically focused on the direct role of Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party in empowering women members through training, community participation, and socio-economic activities. Most existing literature discusses women's empowerment from a broader NGO or microfinance perspective, while the contribution of Ansar and VDP remains comparatively underexplored.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this research gap by examining how the activities, training programs, and development initiatives of Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party

contribute to women's economic empowerment, social participation, and self-reliance in Bangladesh.

(5) Methodology of the Study:

This study follows a **descriptive and analytical research design** to examine the role of Bangladesh Ansar & Village Defence Party (VDP) in the empowerment of VDP women members. Since women empowerment is a multidimensional issue involving economic, social, and psychological changes, the study adopts a **mixed-method approach**, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques for comprehensive analysis.

Nature of the Study

The research is both **exploratory and evaluative** in nature. It explores the various empowerment initiatives undertaken by Ansar & VDP and evaluates how these initiatives influence the socio-economic condition, leadership ability, and decision-making power of female VDP members.

Sources of Data

Both **primary and secondary data** is being used in this study.

Primary data has been collected directly from the field through:

- ✧ Structured questionnaire survey among selected VDP women members.
- ✧ Face-to-face interviews with Ansar & VDP officials.
- ✧ Informal discussions with local trainers and beneficiaries.

Secondary data has been collected from:

- Bangladesh Ansar & VDP official reports,
- Government publications,
- Journal articles,
- Books,
- Seminar papers,
- Newspapers,

➤ And relevant online sources related to women empowerment.

A **purposive sampling method** is being used for selecting respondents because only active female VDP members who have received Ansar & VDP training are relevant for this study.

Approximately 20-25 VDP women members those who have taken training like fashion craft & product development and woven machine operating had been interviewed either directly or by telephone.

Data Analysis Method:

Collected quantitative data is analyzed through:

- ✧ Percentage analysis,
- ✧ Tabulation,
- ✧ Comparative charts.

Qualitative interview data is analyzed through:

- ✧ Descriptive interpretation,
- ✧ Thematic analysis,
- ✧ And policy evaluation.

The study mainly measures women empowerment through the following indicators:

1. Economic self-reliance,
2. Participation in household decision-making,
3. Social awareness,
4. Mobility,
5. Leadership role,
6. Self-confidence.

6. Results/Findings:

The study collected data from 20 respondents belonging to different age groups in order to assess their income-generating capacity and level of economic participation. The analysis

reveals significant variations in monthly income among the respondents, reflecting differences in employment opportunities, skills, and socio-economic conditions.

Among the total respondents, 10 participants reported earning more than BDT 10,000 per month. This indicates that a large proportion of the respondents have achieved a moderate level of financial stability and are actively contributing to their household economy. Furthermore, 5 respondents reported a monthly income of approximately BDT 20,000, representing the highest income group within the study. Their comparatively higher earnings may be associated with better skills, greater work experience, or involvement in more profitable economic activities.

In contrast, the remaining 5 respondents earn around BDT 6,000–7,000 per month, which they primarily use to meet their personal and daily expenses. Although their income level is relatively lower, their participation in income-generating activities still demonstrates a degree of economic engagement and self-reliance.

The findings of the study suggest that the majority of respondents are economically active and capable of generating income at varying levels. The differences in income distribution may be influenced by several factors, including age, educational background, vocational training, access to employment opportunities, and individual capabilities.

Overall, the analysis indicates a positive trend toward economic empowerment and financial independence among the respondents. The study also highlights the importance of skill development and employment support programs in improving the socio-economic condition of individuals from diverse age groups.

The study findings reveal that the training and support provided by Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party have created income-generating opportunities for women respondents through tailoring and clothing-related activities. Among the twenty respondents interviewed, seven respondents reported that they receive clothing orders from outside clients and work on a contractual basis. This indicates that a portion of the participants has successfully entered the local market and developed customer networks beyond their family environment.

In addition, five respondents stated that they mainly produce clothes for their own family members. Although this activity generates limited direct income, it reduces household expenditure and contributes to family welfare through self-employment and skill utilization.

The remaining eight respondents mentioned that they produce and sell clothes through online platforms and social media. This finding reflects the growing involvement of women in digital entrepreneurship and small-scale online business activities. Their engagement in online marketing demonstrates the positive impact of vocational training in enhancing both technical and entrepreneurial capacities.

The respondents further stated that their average monthly income ranges from BDT 8,000 to BDT 25,000 depending on the quantity of orders, seasonal demand, and level of business engagement. Most importantly, the respondents acknowledged that after completing training from Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party, they received sewing machines, which played a significant role in enabling them to start their tailoring activities immediately. The provision of sewing machines as post-training support reduced financial barriers and increased opportunities for self-employment and economic empowerment.

Therefore, the analysis suggests that vocational training combined with logistical support has contributed positively to women's income generation, self-reliance, and participation in small-scale entrepreneurship.

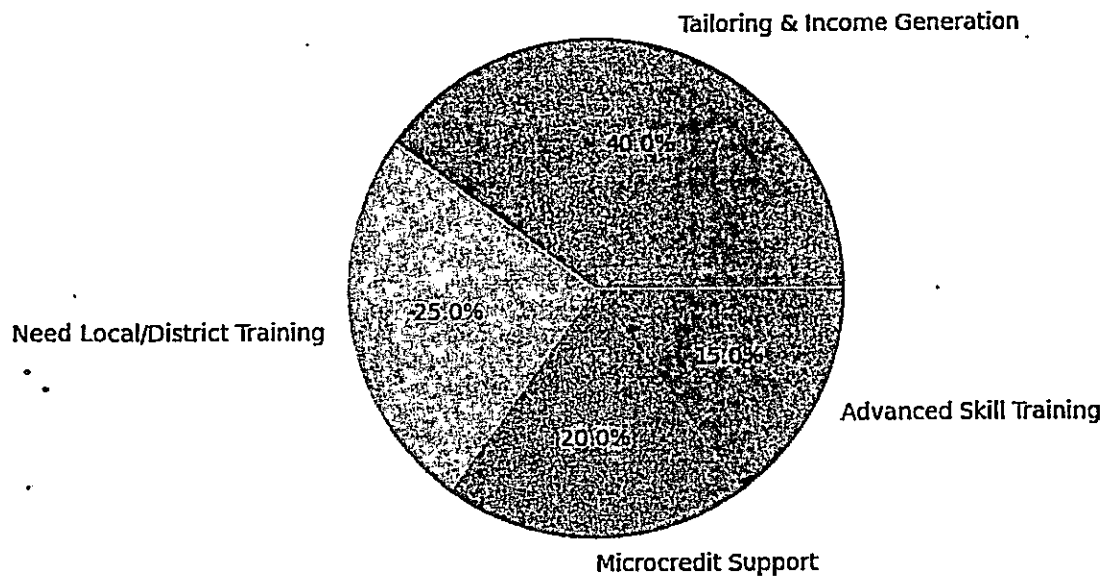
Economic empowerment is widely recognized as one of the most important indicators of women's overall empowerment. The study reveals that participation in Ansar-VDP vocational training programmes has significantly enhanced the economic capacity of women participants.

The income distribution among respondents demonstrates a positive relationship between vocational training and economic participation.

Table 6.1: Monthly Income of Respondents:

Monthly Income	Number of Respondents	Percentage
BDT 6,000–7,000	5	25%
Above BDT 10,000	10	50%
Around BDT 20,000	5	25%
Total	20	100%

Opinions of 20 VDP Members on Training Impact



The findings indicate that 75 percent of respondents currently earn more than BDT 10,000 per month, while 25 percent have achieved monthly earnings approaching BDT 20,000. Such income levels demonstrate that vocational training has enabled many participants to engage in productive economic activities and generate regular income.

The findings further suggest that vocational skills serve as an important mechanism for reducing financial dependency and increasing household economic resilience.

Several respondents reported that prior to receiving training, they had little or no independent income. Following completion of the programme, however, they became capable of contributing financially to their households and meeting personal expenses through their own earnings.

This transformation represents a significant shift from economic dependency to economic self-reliance.

Social Status and Community Recognition

The findings of the study indicate that the training provided by Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party has not only enhanced the economic capabilities of VDP members but also increased their social status and community recognition. All respondents reported that they actively participate in various social awareness activities within their communities. These activities include preventing child marriage, raising awareness against eve-teasing, discouraging drug abuse, and motivating people to avoid different forms of anti-social and criminal activities.

The respondents stated that they regularly communicate with local people and provide guidance on social and moral issues. As a result, community members respond positively to their initiatives and often seek their advice regarding social problems. Their active involvement in community development activities has created a sense of trust, respect, and acceptance among local residents.

Furthermore, the respondents mentioned that after receiving training from Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party, they became more confident, socially aware, and capable of speaking publicly on important social issues. The training helped them develop leadership qualities, communication skills, and a sense of social responsibility. Consequently, they are now viewed differently and more respectfully within society compared to before joining the program.

Therefore, the study demonstrates that the empowerment initiatives of Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party have contributed significantly to enhancing the social dignity, leadership role, and social acceptance of VDP members at the community level.

The VDP trainees further reported that, in addition to tailoring, they are engaged in skills such as Nakshi Kantha, embroidery, and batik work. They believe they perform better compared to others in similar activities, which has already become known among local community members. The respondents also expressed optimism that their skills will gradually lead to increased work opportunities in the future."

A number of respondents reported that they have reinvested their earned income to purchase an additional sewing machine alongside the one provided by the Ansar and VDP programme.

With these resources, they have formed small informal working groups by engaging 2–3 female relatives and assisting them in joint production activities. This collective approach to work reflects an emerging pattern of micro-entrepreneurship and resource pooling at the household level. Such initiatives not only enhance their productive capacity but also contribute to income diversification, social cooperation among women, and gradual economic empowerment within the local community.”

After becoming members of the Ansar and VDP programme, the respondents reported that they became aware of the availability of credit facilities from the Ansar-VDP Development Bank. Following this training-based awareness, three participants accessed small-scale loans from the institution with the intention of expanding their income-generating activities. This access to microcredit has enabled them to invest further in their existing ventures and attempt to scale up their production capacity. From an impact perspective, this reflects a positive linkage between institutional training and financial inclusion, where awareness of formal credit opportunities contributes to entrepreneurial development, livelihood expansion, and gradual economic empowerment of rural women.

The progress achieved by the trainees has created a positive demonstration effect within their local community. Observing their improved skills and income-generating activities, a considerable number of villagers have expressed interest in participating in similar training programmes and have sought information from them regarding the process. As the training is residential in nature, the respondents also shared detailed information about the training structure, learning process, and available facilities with interested individuals. This informal dissemination of knowledge has contributed to raising awareness about vocational training opportunities at the grassroots level. From a socio-economic perspective, such peer-to-peer information sharing acts as a catalyst for increasing community participation in skill development programmes and promoting wider acceptance of institutional training initiatives.”

When asked about how the Ansar and VDP training programmes could be made more contemporary and effective, the respondents suggested that conducting training at the district level would significantly increase participation. They opined that many potential trainees are currently unwilling to join residential training due to distance and associated constraints. If the training opportunities were made available closer to their localities, individuals would be able to participate more conveniently at suitable times. The respondents further believed that such decentralization of training would not only increase the number of participants but also enhance

the overall socio-economic impact of the programme by improving accessibility, inclusiveness, and community engagement in.

Training Programme of Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party plays a significant role in socio-economic development and human resource enhancement in Bangladesh through its diversified vocational and technical training programs. Under its Project Wing, the organization provides nearly twenty-eight categories of skill development training aimed at empowering both men and women, particularly the rural and underprivileged population.

These training programs include Auto Mechanics, Welding, Plumbing, Construction Work, Painting, Electrical Installation and Maintenance, Diving, Freelancing, Catering Services, and several other technical and vocational courses. The primary objective of these initiatives is to create self-employment opportunities, reduce unemployment, and enhance the socio-economic conditions of the trainees through practical skill acquisition.

Special emphasis has been placed on the empowerment of women members of the Village Defence Party (VDP). For female VDP members, separate and specialized training programs are conducted in areas such as Tailoring and Fashion Design, Nakshi Kantha, Product Development, Oven Machine Operating, and Sweater Machine Operating. These women-oriented training programs are designed to improve economic independence, develop entrepreneurial capacity, and encourage participation in income-generating activities.

The training sessions are conducted at different training institutions and vocational training centers of Ansar-VDP located in various districts of Bangladesh. Major training venues include Ansar-VDP Academy, Safipur, Gazipur; Kushtia; Jashore; Jamalpur; Chapainawabganj; Madaripur; Dinajpur; and the vtcs at Kalakopa and Gazipur. These institutions provide both theoretical and practical training facilities to ensure effective skill development among the participants.

Through these comprehensive training initiatives, Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party is contributing significantly to poverty reduction, women empowerment, employment generation, and sustainable community development in Bangladesh. The programs also support the national development goals by creating skilled manpower and promoting inclusive socio-economic participation at the grassroots level.

Socio-Economic and Legal Awareness Outcomes of Ansar-VDP Training Programs

The vocational and skill development training programs provided by Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party have created significant positive impacts on the socio-economic condition and empowerment of VDP members, particularly women participants.

After receiving technical and vocational training from Ansar-VDP, many beneficiaries became involved in small-scale businesses and various income-generating activities. As a result, they are now able to contribute financially to their families and achieve a degree of economic self-dependence. Several respondents reported that they were able to purchase personal assets such as mobile phones and domestic animals through their own income, which indicates an improvement in their economic capacity and living standards.

The training programs have also enhanced the decision-making ability of the participants within their families and communities. Due to their economic contribution and increased awareness, the social status and respect of the trainees have improved significantly. The respondents stated that they are now more confident in participating in family and community-level discussions and decision-making processes.

Furthermore, local Ansar and VDP members have played an important role in resolving various social and family-related disputes, including issues related to dowry, domestic conflicts, child marriage, and other social problems. Their active participation in community mediation and awareness-building activities has strengthened social harmony and community cooperation at the grassroots level.

In addition, after receiving VDP training, many participants became aware of the legal procedures related to filing complaints and seeking legal remedies. They are now capable of informing and educating other community members regarding legal rights, complaint mechanisms, and access to justice. This increased legal awareness has contributed to greater civic consciousness and social empowerment among rural populations.

Overall, the training initiatives of Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party have not only contributed to economic empowerment but have also enhanced social leadership, legal awareness, and community participation among the trainees. These programs play a vital role in promoting sustainable socio-economic development and grassroots empowerment in Bangladesh.

7. Conclusion [Including discussion]

The socio-economic study on the role of Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party in the employment and empowerment of VDP women reveals that the organization plays a significant role in improving the economic and social conditions of rural women in Bangladesh. Through various vocational and skill-development training programs such as tailoring, handicrafts, poultry farming, food processing, and small business management, many women have gained opportunities for self-employment and income generation.

The study findings indicate that trained VDP women have become more financially independent and socially aware. Many respondents stated that their participation in income-generating activities has increased their contribution to family income, improved their decision-making ability within the household, and enhanced their social status in the community. In addition, VDP activities have helped women develop confidence, leadership qualities, and community participation.

The discussion also highlights that VDP women contribute not only to economic development but also to social development activities such as child marriage prevention, awareness building, sanitation promotion, disaster management support, and maintaining social discipline in rural areas. This demonstrates that the role of Ansar-VDP extends beyond employment creation and contributes to broader community empowerment.

However, despite these positive outcomes, the study identified several challenges affecting the long-term success of women's employment programs. Many trainees face financial limitations, lack of access to markets, inadequate technical support, and social barriers after completing training. In some rural areas, conservative social attitudes still restrict women's mobility and participation in economic activities. Furthermore, insufficient follow-up mechanisms and lack of start-up capital reduce the practical application of acquired skills.

The discussion further suggests that sustainable empowerment requires not only training but also continuous institutional support, monitoring, technical assistance, leadership development, and access to financial resources. Women-friendly training environments, childcare support, communication networks among trainees, and awareness programs can significantly improve the effectiveness of VDP initiatives.

8. Recommendations:

Based on the findings of the socio-economic study on the role of Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party in the employment and empowerment of VDP women, the following recommendations are suggested for improving the effectiveness and sustainability of women's development programs:

1. Introduction of Post-Training Follow-Up Programs:

After completing training, regular follow-up programs should be conducted to monitor the progress of trainees. Many women face difficulties in applying their acquired skills due to financial, social, or family-related barriers. Therefore, follow-up visits and continuous communication can help identify challenges and provide necessary support for successful employment and self-reliance.

2. Monitoring the Practical Application of Skills

A proper monitoring system should be established to evaluate whether trainees are practically applying their acquired skills in income-generating activities. Field officers and local supervisors may observe trainees' activities and provide guidance regarding business management, production quality, and marketing strategies.

3. Establishing Communication Networks Among Trainees:

A communication network among trainees should be developed to promote cooperation, experience sharing, and mutual support. Through local groups, mobile communication, or social media platforms, women can exchange ideas, solve common problems, and learn successful business techniques from one another.

4. Small Loans and Start-Up Support:

One of the major barriers faced by trained VDP women is the lack of capital. The government and related organizations should provide small loans, microcredit facilities, or start-up financial assistance to help women establish small businesses and self-employment initiatives. Easy loan conditions and low-interest financial support would encourage greater participation in economic activities.

5. Collection and Promotion of Success Stories:

Successful examples of VDP women entrepreneurs should be documented and widely promoted through seminars, local meetings, media, and training centers. These success stories can motivate other women to participate in training programs and become economically independent.

6. Childcare Support Facilities:

Many women are unable to attend training programs regularly because of childcare responsibilities. Therefore, childcare support or temporary child supervision facilities should be arranged at training centers to ensure greater participation of mothers in training activities.

7. Increasing Awareness to Remove Social Barriers:

In many rural areas of Bangladesh, VDP women still face social and cultural barriers regarding employment and mobility. Awareness campaigns involving local leaders, families, and community members should be conducted to change negative attitudes toward women's economic participation and empowerment.

9. Declaration: I declare that this paper contains neither any plagiarized material nor any AI-generated content. The analysis is the author's contribution. Any deviation from this declaration is author's liability.

10. References:

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Name: Sharmin Akhter Jahan

Roll No. 114

**Research Title: Livelihood Transformation among Fishing Communities in
Response to Climate Change: Evidence from the Mithamoin Haor Areas of
Bangladesh**

Submitted by:

Name: Sharmin Akhter Jahan

Roll: 114

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATION

BHWDB	Bangladesh Haor and Wetland Development Board
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
KII	Key Informant Interview
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
Ijara	Lease system for fishing rights in haor/beel areas
Haor	Bowl-shaped floodplain wetland ecosystem in north-eastern Bangladesh

Title: Livelihood Transformation among Fishing Communities in Response to Climate Change: Evidence from the Mithamoin Haor Areas of Bangladesh

Abstract:

Climate change poses an existential threat to inland fisheries, forcing traditional fishing communities to alter their generational socio-economic practices. This study investigates the dynamics of livelihood transformation among fishing communities in response to climate change, focusing on the ecologically vulnerable Mithamoin Haor areas of Bangladesh. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, primary data were gathered through structured household surveys, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and Key Informant Interviews (KIs) across selected fishing villages.

The findings reveal that shifting climatic parameters—primarily erratic rainfall patterns, prolonged droughts, and the increasing frequency of flash floods—have severely depleted natural fish stocks and disrupted seasonal fishing cycles. Consequently, relying solely on capture fisheries has become economically unviable for the majority of artisan fishers. To cope with declining yields, significant structural shifts in livelihoods are occurring. Fishers are increasingly adopting alternative income-generating activities (IGAs), including a transition to seasonal agriculture, daily wage labor, automated rickshaw driving, and small-scale aquaculture. Furthermore, out-migration to urban centers during the dry season has emerged as a critical survival mechanism.

Despite these adaptive shifts, the transformation process is severely constrained by institutional barriers, including restricted access to formal credit, a lack of alternative technical skills, and inadequate localized climate adaptation policies. The study underscores that while autonomous diversification provides temporary resilience, it often results in low-income traps rather than sustainable long-term adaptation. Ultimately, this research highlights the urgent need for targeted policy interventions, including the provision of micro-credit, climate-resilient vocational training, and community-based co-management of Haor fisheries, to support sustainable livelihood transitions and safeguard the socio-economic well-being of vulnerable Haor communities.

Keywords: Climate Change Adaptation, Livelihood Diversification, Haor Fisheries, Mithamoin, Vulnerability, Bangladesh.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Climate change is an inevitable challenge that societies will confront in the coming decades. Globally, fish communities and fisheries resources are increasingly being altered by climate change and various human-induced disturbances. Fisheries play a vital role in sustaining the livelihoods, food security, and economic well-being of nearly half a billion people worldwide, particularly in developing countries where small-scale fishing communities are highly dependent on natural resources (Islam, *et al.*, 2022). Climate change has emerged as one of the most critical global challenges affecting the sustainability of fisheries and fisheries-dependent livelihoods (Galib, *et al.*, 2026). The increasing occurrence of cyclones, floods, droughts, sea-level rise, riverbank erosion, and irregular rainfall patterns has significantly disrupted fishing activities and intensified the vulnerability of fishing communities (Islam, *et al.*, 2022). In addition to climatic threats, fisheries are also increasingly affected by non-climatic pressures such as overfishing, pollution, habitat degradation, and ecosystem loss, which collectively threaten aquatic biodiversity, fisheries productivity, and livelihood sustainability (Galib, *et al.*, 2026).

For developing countries such as Bangladesh, the impacts of climate change are particularly severe. Bangladesh is widely recognized as one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world due to its geographical location, low-lying topography, ecological characteristics, and heavy dependence on natural resources for livelihoods. Among the most vulnerable regions are the haor areas of northeastern Bangladesh, which are highly exposed to climate-induced environmental changes. Haors with their unique hydro-ecological characteristics are large bowl-shaped floodplain depressions located in the north-eastern region of Bangladesh covering about 1.99 million hectares of area and accommodating about 19.37 million people (Abedin *et al.*, 2022; BHWDB, 2012). The Haor ecosystems of Bangladesh are highly dynamic wetland environments that sustain fishing-dependent communities through seasonal water cycles and rich aquatic biodiversity (Ismail *et al.*,). However, climate change has disrupted these ecological patterns through erratic rainfall, early flash floods, prolonged inundation, and temperature variability.

However, these changes have not only reduced fish availability but also altered the socio-economic fabric of fishing communities. Such changes have adversely affected fish habitats, breeding cycles, and fish availability, thereby threatening the sustainability of fisheries-dependent livelihoods. Thus, traditional livelihoods are increasingly becoming unsustainable, forcing communities to adopt new livelihood strategies. Understanding these transformations requires an in-depth exploration of lived experiences, perceptions, and local knowledge systems, making this research particularly suitable. Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to explore how climate change influences livelihood transformation among fishing communities in Haor areas through an explorative lens.

1.2 Problem Statement

The haor regions of northeastern Bangladesh are highly vulnerable to climate-induced environmental changes due to their fragile ecological characteristics and recurrent exposure to floods, excessive rainfall, riverbank erosion, and seasonal climatic variability. Fishing communities residing in these areas depend heavily on fisheries resources for their livelihoods, food security, and income generation. However, the increasing frequency and intensity of climate-related hazards, coupled with declining fish availability and environmental degradation, have significantly disrupted the traditional fishing-based livelihood system. Consequently, many fishing households are being compelled to diversify or transform

their occupations in response to environmental stress, economic uncertainty, and growing livelihood insecurity (.....).

Very few studies have focused on how climate change is changing the occupations of fishing communities in the haor areas of Bangladesh. Most existing studies mainly use quantitative methods and focus on issues such as production loss, economic damage, or vulnerability levels. As a result, the real-life experiences, local perceptions, adaptation practices, and challenges faced by fishing communities are often overlooked. Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap by exploring the experiences, perceptions, coping strategies, and occupational changes of fishing communities in the Mithamoin Haor region of Kishoreganj District, Bangladesh. The findings of the study are expected to contribute in developing effective and locally adaptation and livelihood support strategies for climate-vulnerable fishing communities (...).

Despite the growing body of literature on climate change impacts, much of the existing research relies heavily on quantitative approaches, focusing on production losses, economic damage, or vulnerability indices: There is a notable lack of qualitative studies that capture the lived experiences of vulnerability, context-specific perceptions, adaptation practices and local knowledge systems of fishing communities in haor regions. This research is planned to contribute to understanding these human dimensions for designing effective and context-sensitive adaptation strategies.

1.3 Objectives

The main objective of the research is:

To explore how climate change is influencing occupational changes among fishing communities in the Mithamoin Haor region of Kishoreganj District, Bangladesh.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

- To identify the major climate-related problems affecting fishing communities in the Mithamoin Haor area.
- To assess the socioeconomic effects of occupational transformation on fishing households.
- To examine the occupational changes taking place among fishing households due to climate and environmental challenges.
- To understand the coping and adaptation strategies adopted by fishing communities to deal with livelihood insecurity.

1.3.2 Research Questions

1. How do fishing communities perceive climate change and its impacts?
2. In what ways are traditional fishing livelihoods changing?
3. What factors drive livelihood transformation in Haor areas?
4. How do communities adapt to environmental and economic change

1.4 Justification/Rationale of the Study

The haor regions of Bangladesh are ecologically fragile and socio-economically vulnerable, yet they play a critical role in sustaining millions of livelihoods, particularly among fishing communities. Climate change poses a serious threat to this balance by disrupting aquatic ecosystems and reducing the reliability of traditional livelihood sources.

Despite the importance of this issue, there is limited context-specific, qualitative evidence on how fishing communities experience and respond to these changes. Most policy interventions are designed based on generalized or quantitative data, often overlooking local knowledge, cultural practices, and community-level dynamics.

This study is justified on several grounds. First, it seeks to generate in-depth, context-rich insights into livelihood transformation processes that cannot be captured through quantitative methods alone. Second, it will document indigenous coping and adaptation strategies that are crucial for designing effective, locally grounded interventions. Third, the findings will contribute to bridging the gap between policy and practice by providing evidence that reflects the voices and realities of affected communities.

Furthermore, this research will support policymakers, development practitioners, and NGOs in designing more inclusive and climate-resilient livelihood programs tailored to haor ecosystems. By focusing on qualitative insights, the study will add significant value to existing literature and contribute to a more holistic understanding of climate change impacts in Bangladesh.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review for this study was conducted to establish a comprehensive understanding of the environmental, social, and economic factors influencing fishing livelihoods. It examined regional and global research and project reports on climate change impacts, declining fish stocks, and the socio-economic vulnerabilities of small-scale fishing communities. Particular attention was given to studies addressing livelihood diversification, migration patterns, and generational shifts away from fishing, as well as institutional responses to disaster risks and resource management. By synthesizing these sources, the review provided a critical understanding within broader debates on sustainability, poverty reduction, and adaptation strategies, ensuring that the analysis is both contextually grounded and academically informed.

Recent literature recognized that Bangladesh one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world, with wetland ecosystems such as the haor areas being particularly exposed to climatic variability and extreme events. These extreme events creating pressure on local community's the traditional livelihood which forcing a shift through continuous adaptation and changes.

Fishing communities in haor areas are highly dependent on natural resources, making them particularly vulnerable to environmental changes (Iglesial et al. 2012). Rahaman et al. (n.d.) found that climate change has led to declining fish availability and ecosystem degradation in Tanguar Haor, forcing communities to adopt alternative livelihood strategies such as wage labor, agriculture, and seasonal migration. Similarly, Allison et al. (2009) argue that small-scale fishing communities globally are among the most vulnerable to climate change due to their limited adaptive capacity and high dependence on climate-sensitive resources.

Livelihood transformation in response to climate change is a complex process influenced by multiple socio-economic and institutional factors. The Sustainable Livelihood Framework (Chambers & Conway, 1992) emphasizes that vulnerability is shaped by access to various forms of capital—natural, financial, human, and social—as well as institutional support systems. In the context of Bangladesh, studies suggest that limited access to resources, weak governance structures, and social inequalities further constrain the adaptive capacity of fishing communities (Islam et al., 2014).

Despite the growing body of literature on climate change impacts, much of the existing research relies heavily on quantitative approaches, focusing on production losses, economic damages, or vulnerability indices. There is a notable lack of qualitative studies that capture the lived experiences, perceptions, and local knowledge systems of fishing communities in haor regions. As highlighted in your concept note, understanding these human dimensions is crucial for designing effective and context-sensitive adaptation strategies.

This study seeks to address this gap by adopting a qualitative approach to explore how climate change is reshaping livelihoods, social relations, and resilience strategies among fishing communities in the haor areas of Bangladesh.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative survey data with qualitative insights from focus group discussions (FGDs) to examine changes in fishing activities, livelihoods, and socio-economic conditions of fishing households. A structured questionnaire was administered to 61 respondents across selected fishing communities, capturing multiple-response data on fishing practices, income, migration, and perceptions of environmental change. To complement and contextualize these findings, 02 FGDs were conducted with local fishers, allowing for the inclusion of verbatim statements that reflect lived experiences and community perspectives. This methodological design ensured both quantitative data and narrative depth, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the drivers and effect of livelihood transformations in the study area.

3.1 Primary Data Collection Methodology Development

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were followed to collect primary data for the study. Quantitative methods like questionnaire surveys were conducted and qualitative methods such as KII and FGD were used to collect primary data.

3.2 Defining Target Population and Sampling for Quantitative Data Collection

In order to capture reliable and representative insights into the changing livelihoods of fishing households, this study carefully defined its target population and employed a structured sampling strategy for quantitative data collection. The target population consisted of active fishermen and their families residing in selected fishing-dependent communities, as they are directly affected by ecological changes, market pressures, and institutional arrangements. A purposive sampling approach was adopted to ensure inclusion of households with diverse socio-economic backgrounds and varying levels of dependence on fishing. A total of 62 active traditional fishery households were selected as sample size for the quantitative survey in Sutarpara village of Mithamain Upazila of Kishoreganj district. The villagers are fishery-dependent and they practice fishing traditionally across local haors and beels.

Within this framework, respondents were selected to reflect differences in age, occupation, education, and household size, thereby allowing the survey to generate data that is both statistically meaningful and contextually rich. This design ensured that the quantitative findings could be generalized to the broader fishing community while also highlighting variations across demographic and livelihood categories.

3.3 Qualitative Data Collection

To complement the quantitative survey findings, this study employed **qualitative methods** to capture the lived experiences, perceptions, and narratives of fishing households. Two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with fishermen, community leaders, and household members to explore themes such as changes in fishing practices, livelihood diversification, migration, and climate-related challenges. These discussions provided rich, contextual insights that go beyond numerical data, allowing participants to express their concerns in their own words. Verbatim statements from FGDs were incorporated into the analysis to illustrate key findings and highlight the voices of the community. This qualitative approach ensured that the research not only measured trends statistically but also understood the social meanings and human dimensions behind livelihood transformations.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data collected through both quantitative surveys and qualitative focus group discussions (FGDs) were systematically analyzed to ensure accuracy, reliability, and depth of interpretation. Quantitative data were coded and tabulated, with frequency distributions and percentages generated to identify patterns and trends across demographic variables, livelihood changes, and perceptions of environmental impacts. These tables provided a clear statistical overview of the responses. Qualitative data, including verbatim statements from FGDs, were thematically coded to capture recurring ideas, community narratives, and contextual insights that enriched the numerical findings. By integrating statistical analysis with thematic interpretation, the study was able to present a comprehensive picture of the processes and drivers influencing fishing livelihoods, highlighting both measurable outcomes and lived experiences.

4. RESULT/FINDINGS

4.1 Demographic and Socioeconomic Information

Most of the surveyed respondents were male as they are usually the household heads. Fishing in the Mithamoin Haor region appears to be a male-exclusive occupation, reflecting traditional gender roles where men are primarily responsible for fishing activities. Women may be involved indirectly (e.g., processing, selling, or household support), but they are not represented as direct respondents.

The data shows a wide span, with the youngest fisherman at 18 years and the oldest at 90 years, giving an average age of about 43 years. Most respondents fall within the 40–59-year range (37.1%), highlighting that the workforce is concentrated in middle age. Overall, the age profile illustrates fishing as a lifelong livelihood, sustained mainly by middle-aged men but with limited generational renewal.

The overwhelming majority of the respondents were married men (90.30%), which suggests that fishing is not only an occupation but also a family-sustaining livelihood. The small proportion of unmarried (8.10%) and widowed respondents (1.60%) highlights that fishing is typically carried out by household heads and other male household members who bear responsibility for family income and survival.

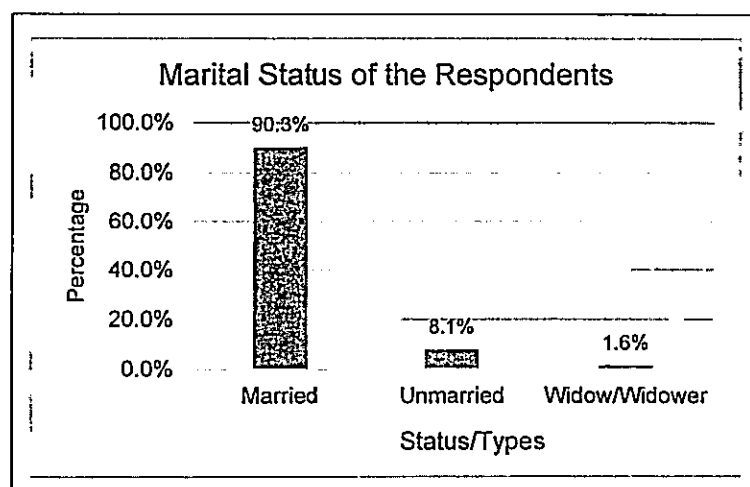
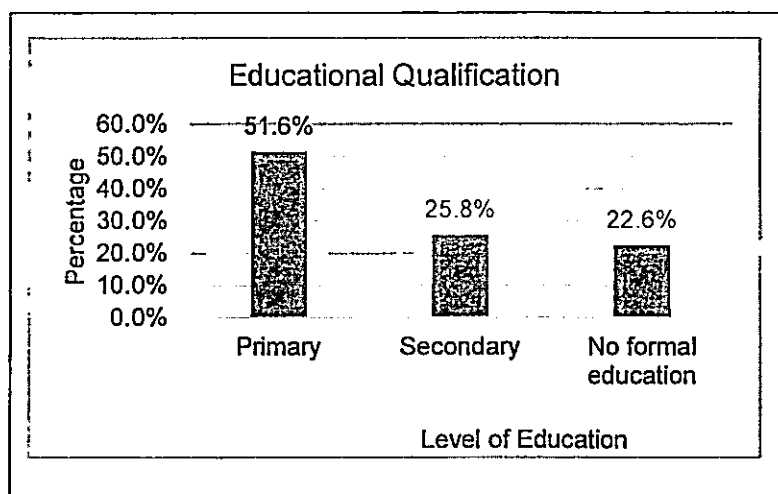


Figure 2: Marital Status of the Respondents

Over half of the fishermen have only primary education (51.6%) followed by secondary education (25.8%), while nearly one-quarter have no schooling at all (22.6%). This shows a low educational profile, which limits alternative livelihood opportunities and makes them more vulnerable to climate and economic shocks. Only a small proportion reached secondary education, suggesting limited upward mobility.



4.5 Type of Changes Respondents Perceived and Noticed due to Climatic Effect

Fishing is the dominant livelihood, but diversification exists. About 29% combine or shift into agriculture, day labour, or small business, reflecting adaptation strategies. Still, dependence on fishing remains high, making them highly exposed to climate-driven changes in fish availability.

Table 4.1: Occupational Diversity in the Mithamoin Haor Area

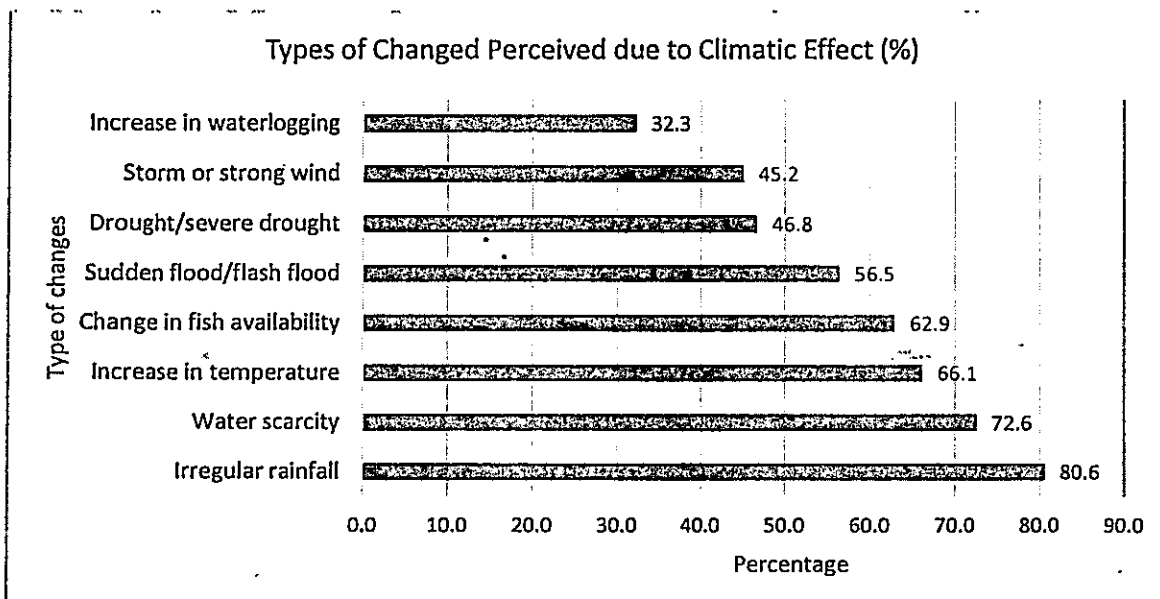
Primary Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Fishing	44	71.00
Agriculture	8	12.90
Day labour	4	6.50
Small business	2	3.20
Other (Van driver, etc.)	4	6.40
Total	62	100
Type of Fisher	Frequency	Percentage
Full-time	36	58.10
Part-time	21	33.90
Seasonal	5	8.00
Total	62	100

Source: Primary Data/Questionnaire Survey 2026

Every single respondent reported that they have heard about climate change (100%) in different time from different sources like media news, NGOs or some local people. All agreed that they have perceived changes in their area over the past 10–20 years (100%). This highlights that climate change is not an abstract concept for them, but a lived reality directly observed in their environment. Their perceptions reflect practical experiences such as irregular rainfall, water scarcity, rising temperatures, and declining fish stocks that they connect to climate change. In essence, the data reveals a community that is fully conscious of climate change and its impacts, seeing it as a tangible and serious threat to their livelihoods.

Respondents were further asked that what type of changes they perceived and noticed over the time as a climatic effect, the most widely mentioned change were irregular rainfall (80.6%), followed by water scarcity (72.6%) and rising temperatures (66.1%), all of which directly disrupt fishing conditions and water ecosystems. A large share also pointed to a decline in fish availability (62.9%), linking climate variability to reduced catches. Other significant concerns

include sudden floods (56.5%), droughts (46.8%), and storms (45.2%), while increased waterlogging (32.3%) was noted by fewer respondents but still represents a localized hazard. Altogether, these perceptions highlight that fishermen see climate change as a multi-dimensional threat, with rainfall irregularities, water shortages, and declining fish stocks as the most urgent challenges undermining their livelihoods.



Source: Primary Data/Questionnaire Survey 2026

Figure 3: Type of Changes Respondents Perceived and Noticed due to Climatic Effect

4.6 Findings from FGD

Respondents in the FGDs emphasized that flash floods and rainfall patterns have become increasingly uncertain and unpredictable compared to the past. What used to follow more regular seasonal cycles is now marked by sudden, erratic downpours and unexpected flooding events. As one respondent put it,

"We cannot predict the rain or flood like before; now it comes suddenly and destroys everything."

This unpredictability disrupts fishing activities, damages breeding grounds, and undermines the stability of local ecosystems. For fishermen, the irregularity of rainfall and flash floods is not just an environmental issue but a direct threat to their livelihoods, as it reduces fish availability and makes planning for fishing seasons far more difficult. In their perception, climate change has transformed these natural events into uncontrollable hazards, intensifying the risks they face year after year.

4.7 Traditional Fishing Livelihoods Changing

Fishing practices in the community is going day by day a major transformation from traditional, open-access methods to regulated, lease-based systems in the cases of many haors/beels. Respondents consistently highlighted that fishing now requires obtaining a lease (Ijara) or auction rights, which was not that much common in earlier times. This shift has restricted participation, as only a limited number of fishers are allowed to operate, reshaping the social fabric of fishing livelihoods.

Another dominant change is the widespread adoption of Chinese nets and traps, and some other equipment often described as 'banned' or 'unsustainable'. These modern gears have largely replaced fishing rods and thread-made nets, signaling a move toward mechanized and intensive fishing. While efficient, their use is perceived as harmful to breeding grounds and long-term sustainability. As one FGD participant expressed:

"We cannot predict the rain or flood like before; now it comes suddenly and destroys everything. And with these Chinese nets, fish disappear faster than they can grow."

This illustrates how environmental unpredictability and unsustainable gear compound the challenges faced by fishers. Respondents also noted that traditional methods have disappeared, with awareness and regulation discouraging older practices. Instead, modern techniques such as barriers, bait, and odor-based attractants have emerged, reflecting innovation but also intensification of fishing pressure. One fisher in the FGDs lamented:

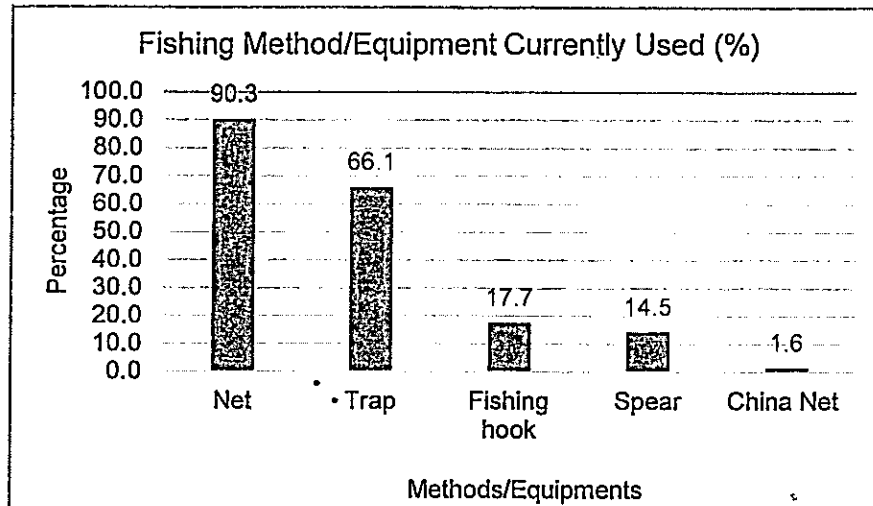
"No one uses the old thread nets anymore; now it is all traps and barriers. The river is not the same."

A smaller but notable group emphasized calls for support and conservation, mentioning financial assistance, provision of boats and nets, and the need to conserve sanctuaries. This reflects a growing recognition that current practices are unsustainable without external intervention. As one respondent put it:

"If the government helps us with sanctuaries and proper nets, maybe our children will still have fish to catch."

Fishing in the area is overwhelmingly net-based (90.3%), showing that nets dominate as the primary method. Traps (66.1%) are also widely used, reflecting their role as a strong secondary technique. Traditional tools like hooks (17.7%) and spears (14.5%) are still present but play a minor role compared to nets and traps. The use of boats (6.5%) is limited, suggesting fishing remains largely shore-based. Finally, China nets (1.6%) appear rarely, but their presence signals the influence of banned or unsustainable practices.

Figure 4: Fishing Method/Equipment Currently Used



Source: Primary Data/Questionnaire Survey 2026

An overwhelming majority of fishers reported that their catch has decreased (92%) over time. This decline is attributed to several interlinked factors such as climate change, overfishing, the use of illegal nets, water pollution, and destruction of breeding grounds. The perception of reduced catch is nearly universal, with only a small minority indicating that their catch has remained unchanged (8%).

In FGDs, fishers expressed this decline in stark terms. One participant noted:

“Ten years ago, we could fill our nets in a single day, but now even after a week, the catch is not enough to feed our families.”

Another respondents added that-

“The water is not the same, the fish are not the same. Every year, the catch becomes smaller.”

These statements highlight both the ecological stress and the livelihood insecurity tied to declining fish stocks.

Most families reported that their **income from fishing has decreased** over time. This decline is closely tied to reduced fish catch, rising competition under the lease/auction system, and the widespread use of unsustainable gear such as Chinese nets and traps. The shrinking availability of fish directly translates into lower earnings, leaving households more vulnerable.

A smaller proportion indicated that their income has **remained the same**, but these cases are exceptions rather than the norm. No respondents reported an improvement in income, underscoring the severity of the livelihood crisis.

4.8 Findings from FGD:

FGD participants expressed this reality in stark terms. One fisher explained: "Before, fishing was enough to feed the family and send children to school. Now, even after long days in the water, the income is not enough for rice." Another added: "Our earnings have fallen with the fish. Every year it gets worse, and many of us are forced to look for other work."

4.9 Changes in Fishery-based Livelihood

Table 4.2: Changes in Fishery-based Livelihood

Changes	Amount of Fish Catch Changed	Family Income from Fishing Changed
Decreased	91.94%	89%
Unchanged	8.06%	11%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Primary Data/Questionnaire Survey 2026

A little over half of the families reported that someone has left fishing, while the rest indicated that all members remain engaged in the occupation. This reflects the growing pressure on fishing livelihoods due to declining catches, reduced income, and the restrictive lease/auction system.

Those who left fishing most often shifted into agriculture, followed by day labor and small businesses. These alternatives, while not always secure, are perceived as more stable than fishing, which has become increasingly uncertain.

FGD participants described this shift with concern and resignation. One fisher explained:

"My son does not fish anymore; he works in the fields because the river cannot feed us." Another added: "Many young men are leaving fishing for day labor. They say fishing is no longer a future."

These statements highlight both the generational shift away from fishing and the erosion of fishing as a sustainable livelihood.

4.10 Perceived Drivers of Livelihood Transformation among Fishers

Fishermen identify a range of interconnected pressures driving changes in their livelihoods and making it vulnerable day by day. The decline in fish numbers (61.3%) and shortages (58.1%) highlight ecological stress that directly reduces catches. Water pollution (45.2%) and wetland destruction (11.3%) further erode natural habitats, while

population growth (35.5%) intensifies competition for limited resources. Economic burdens also weigh heavily: rising production costs (29.0%) fish culture fishery, debt pressure (19.4%), and market problems (14.5%) compound the crisis. In short, fishermen see their livelihoods being squeezed by a combination of environmental decline, financial hardship, and institutional constraints, leaving them increasingly vulnerable.

Table 4.3: Shifting from Traditional Occupation to Alternative Occupation for Adaptation

Table : Family Member Left Fishing			Table : Transformation in Occupation that they Started for Living		
Response	Frequency	Percentage	Alternative Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	32	51.61%	Agriculture	22	68.75%
No	30	48.39%	Day labor	6	18.75%
Totals	62	100.00%	Small business	4	12.50%
			Totals	62	100.00%

Source: Primary Data/Questionnaire Survey 2026

Table 4.4: Perceived Reasons for Fishermen's Livelihood Vulnerability (Multiple Answer Taken)

Cause	Frequency	Percentage
Decrease in number of fish	38	61.30%
Shortage of fish	36	58.10%
Water pollution	28	45.20%
Population growth	22	35.50%
Increase in production costs	18	29.00%
Debt pressure	12	19.40%
Government restrictions	10	16.10%
Market problems	9	14.50%
Destruction of wetlands	7	11.30%
Climate-related risks	1	1.60%

Source: Primary Data/Questionnaire Survey 2026

The majority of respondents indicated that young people are not interested (72.6%) in continuing fishing as an occupation, while only 27.4% expressed interest. This shows that fishing is losing its appeal among the younger generation, who increasingly view it as an unsustainable livelihood.

The most common reason is low income (56.5%), showing that fishing no longer provides a sustainable livelihood. Closely tied to this are the shortage of fish (45.2%) and the decline in fish availability (32.3%), which reflect the ecological stress

undermining catches. Environmental issues such as water pollution (19.4%) and wetland destruction (8.1%) further reduce opportunities, while population growth (16.1%) adds competition for limited resources. Financial burdens like rising production costs (9.7%) and debt pressure (6.5%) compound the problem, and a smaller share pointed to better job opportunities elsewhere (8.1%), drawing youth toward alternative livelihoods in cities.

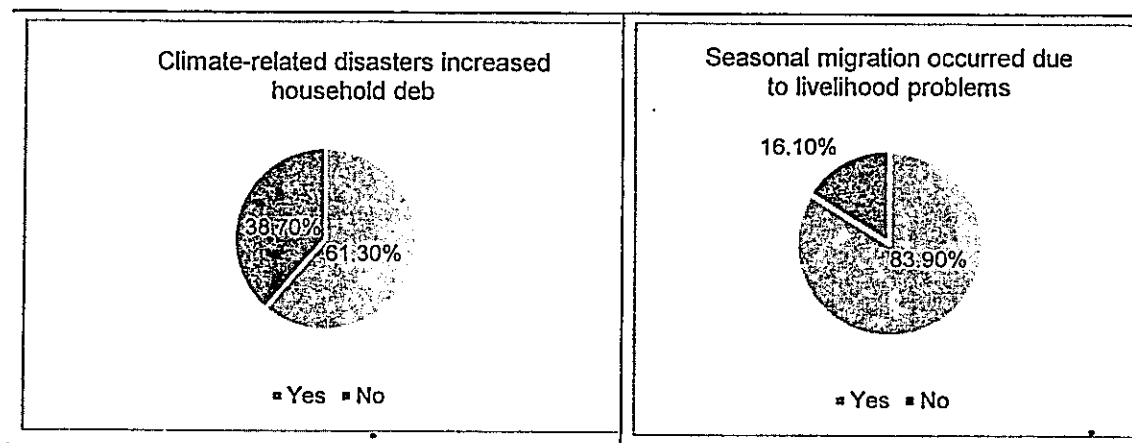
Table 4.5: Reasons why Young People are Losing Interest in Fishing/Traditional Occupation (Multiple Answer Taken)

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Low income	35	56.50%
Shortage of fish	28	45.20%
Decrease in fish availability	20	32.30%
Better job opportunities elsewhere	5	8.10%
Debt pressure	4	6.50%
Increase in production costs	6	9.70%
Population growth	10	16.10%
Water pollution	12	19.40%
Market problems	7	11.30%
Destruction of wetlands	5	8.10%

Source: Primary Data/Questionnaire Survey 2026

In essence, young people are leaving fishing because it is seen as low-paying, insecure, and environmentally degraded, with urban migration offering more stable prospects. As one FGD participant put it: *"Our sons say fishing cannot feed a family anymore; they prefer city jobs."* This reflects a generational shift away from fishing toward occupations perceived as more reliable and rewarding.

The findings highlight how climate stress and livelihood decline are reshaping fishing households. A majority of respondents reported that climate-related disasters have increased household debt (61.3%), showing how shocks like floods and storms push families deeper into financial vulnerability. This economic strain is closely linked to migration patterns: most households indicated that seasonal migration has occurred due to livelihood problems (83.9%), reflecting the need to seek alternative income sources when fishing is no longer viable. When asked where migrants usually go, the dominant response was Dhaka or other cities (77.4%), underscoring the pull of urban centers as destinations for work opportunities. In essence, these questions reveal a cycle where climate disasters drive debt, debt fuels migration, and migration leads families away from traditional fishing toward uncertain urban livelihoods.



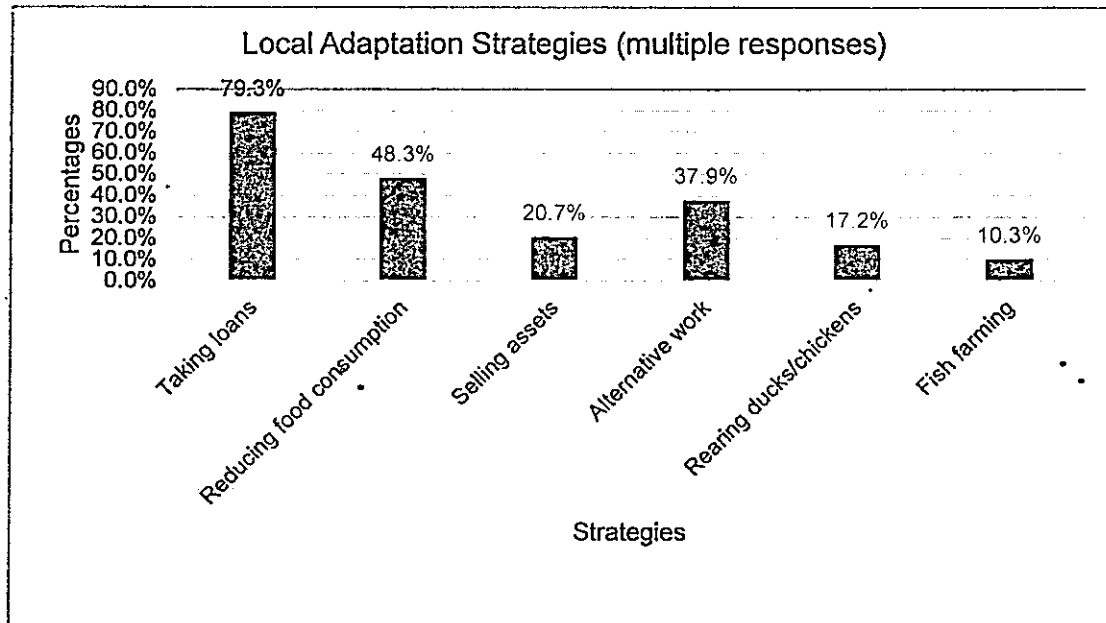
Source: Primary Data/Questionnaire Survey 2026

Figure 5: Increasing Household Debt and Seasonal Migration as a Result of Climatic Pressure on Livelihood

4.11 Local Adaptation Strategies

The data shows that fishermen rely heavily on short-term coping mechanisms that reflect both financial vulnerability and livelihood insecurity. The most common strategy is taking loans (79.3%), underscoring the dependence on credit to survive shocks. Nearly half reported reducing food consumption (48.3%), a clear indicator of household stress and compromised nutrition. Others resort to selling assets (20.7%), which erodes long-term resilience, while a significant share turn to alternative income-generating work (37.9%) such as agriculture, day labor, or small businesses. Smaller but notable groups have adopted duck/chicken rearing (17.2%) and fish farming (10.3%) as adaptive measures. Altogether, these responses highlight that coping with climate crises is dominated by reactive financial strategies and livelihood diversification, with households balancing immediate survival needs against longer-term adaptation efforts.

Figure 6: Local Adaptation Strategies



Source: Primary Data/Questionnaire Survey 2026

The findings further highlight both livelihood adaptation and awareness of climate risks among fishing households. In terms of livelihood change, a majority of respondents reported adopting new occupations (58.6%), with agriculture, day labour, small businesses, and rickshaw/auto driving emerging as the most common alternatives. This shift reflects the declining viability of fishing and the need for more stable income sources, particularly as younger generations move away from traditional practices.

The findings also reveal that fishermen overwhelmingly view financial assistance (69%) as the most critical support for coping with climate change impacts, reflecting the deep economic vulnerability of their households. Alongside this, many emphasized the importance of training and awareness programs (37.9%) to build knowledge and skills for sustainable practices, while fishing equipment support (31%) was also highlighted as essential for maintaining livelihoods. A significant proportion pointed to establishing fish sanctuaries (25.9%) as a long-term ecological solution, and others mentioned food assistance (20.7%) and housing support (13.8%) as vital for immediate survival during crises. Taken together, these perceptions show that communities prioritize a mix of economic relief, capacity building, and ecological conservation, underscoring the need for integrated adaptation strategies that address both short-term survival and long-term resilience.

Table 4.6: Effective Adaptation Measure

Measure	Frequency	Percentage (Multiple Responses)
Financial assistance	40	69%
Training & awareness	22	38%
Fishing equipment support	18	31%
Establishing fish sanctuaries	15	26%
Food assistance	12	21%
Housing support	8	14%

Source: Primary Data/Questionnaire Survey 2026

4.12 Suggestions from Fishing Community for Improving Livelihoods

Respondents also provided with some important recommendations for Improving Livelihoods revealing a strong call from fishing communities for both structural reforms and direct support to sustain their livelihoods under climate stress. The most frequently mentioned recommendation is to update or reform the lease (Ijara) system (69%), which fishers perceive limiting their access to water bodies. Alongside this, an overwhelming majority emphasized the need for financial assistance (79.3%), reflecting the economic vulnerability of households. Many also urged authorities to ban illegal nets and traps (55.2%) and to establish fish sanctuaries (37.9%), highlighting ecological conservation as a priority. Other common suggestions include training and awareness programs (34.5%), food and housing support (25.9%), and improving the local market system (13.8%) to ensure fair pricing. Taken together, these recommendations show that fishers envision a comprehensive strategy combining policy reform, financial relief, ecological restoration and capacity building, underscoring their desire for both immediate survival support and long-term sustainability.

Table 6: Recommendation from Fishing Communities

Recommendation	Frequency	Percentage (Multiple Responses)
Reform lease (Ijara) system	40	69.00%
Provide financial assistance	46	79.30%
Ban illegal nets/traps	32	55.20%
Establish fish sanctuaries	22	37.90%
Provide training & awareness	20	34.50%
Food/housing support	15	25.90%
Improve local market system	8	13.80%

Source: Primary Data/Questionnaire Survey 2026

5. CONCLUSION AND

5.1 Conclusion

This study reveals that fishing livelihoods in the haor areas of Bangladesh are undergoing significant transformation due to the combined pressures of climate change, ecological degradation, and socio-economic constraints. Erratic rainfall, flash floods, rising temperatures, and declining fish stocks have disrupted traditional fishing practices, reduced catches and incomes while intensifying household vulnerability. Communities have responded through coping strategies such as loans, reduced consumption, and migration, with many households diversifying into agriculture, day labour, or small businesses. Qualitative insights highlight a generational shift away from fishing, as younger members increasingly view it as unsustainable. Overall, the findings underscore that fishing households are caught in a cycle of environmental stress, financial hardship, and institutional limitations, forcing them to adapt in ways that are often reactive rather than transformative.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study provides with the following specific recommendations for improvement of fishery based population in the study area:

- Provide financial assistance, easy loan facilities, and debt relief programs to reduce household vulnerability.
- Promote alternative livelihoods such as climate-resilient agriculture, aquaculture, and small-scale enterprises.
- Establish and maintain fish sanctuaries and restore wetlands to protect breeding grounds.
- Enforce restrictions on pesticide and chemical use in agriculture to safeguard aquatic ecosystems.
- Update leasing system ensuring more engagement of traditional fisheries and fishery-dependent households in beel/haor managements.
- Organize training and awareness programs to build knowledge of sustainable fishing and adaptation strategies through coordinated attempts from governments and NGOs.
- Support youth with vocational training to encourage diversified and resilient livelihoods.
- Incorporate local knowledge and coping strategies into climate adaptation planning.
- Facilitate participatory approaches that empower communities to design context-specific solutions.
- Engage women in haor/beel management committees, capacity building and community based livelihood training.
- Expand food and housing assistance during crises to safeguard basic needs.

- Improve local market systems and linkage to ensure fair pricing and better income opportunities for fishers

7. DECLARATION:

I declare that this paper contains neither any plagiarized material nor any AI-generated content. The analysis is the author's contribution. Any deviation from this declaration is author's liability.

8. REFERENCES

Please note that your seminar paper needs to match the structure given below. The structure features one new item in the 7th section, as shown below. The texts of this declaration are the same for every paper:

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