

ISSN-0253-3375

No. 40
June 2021

ASIAN STUDIES

Jahangirnagar University Journal of Government and Politics



Jahangirnagar University
Savar, Dhaka-1342

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No. 40

June 2021

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ASIAN STUDIES: Jahangirnagar University Journal of Government and Politics (ISSN-0253-3375) is published annually in June by the Department of Government and Politics, Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dhaka-1342, Bangladesh.

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Printed by Trayee (House of quality printing), 15 Nilkhet Babupura, Dhaka-1205, on behalf of the Department of Government and Politics, Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dhaka-1342, June 2021.

Reflections on the Significance of the Historic Six-Point Movement and its Impact on Bangladesh's Struggle for Freedom and Independence

Mohammad Waheeduzzaman Manik*

Abstract

The historic Six-Point Demand or the Six-Point Formula has been widely credited as the 'charter of freedom' in the history of Bangladesh's struggle for self-determination from Pakistan's shameful colonial domination. Despite the fact that neither the separation of East Pakistan nor the independence of the eastern province of Pakistan was one of the professed objectives of the six-point freedom charter, the historic six-point movement in 1966 was the turning point in Bangladesh's quest for independence. The six-point plan had envisaged a full-blown and creative federal form of Government based on the 1940 Lahore Resolution, a parliamentary system of government to be directly elected by the people on the basis of adult franchise, two separate currencies or two reserve banks for the two wings of Pakistan, and a para-military force for East Pakistan. The spectacular success of the six-point movement in 1966 under the dynamic leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had prompted the ruling coterie of Pakistan to discredit the exponents and organizers of this movement. Although the self-declared diabolical military regime of Ayub Khan had used brutal and punitive measures against the proponents, organizers and supporters of the six-point formula, the six-point anchored mass upsurge in 1966 had seriously impacted and conditioned the subsequent political development in Pakistan. Doubtless, the six-point political movement had effectively transformed the cherished dream of greater autonomy into a sustainable freedom struggle for independent and sovereign Bangladesh. The main purpose of this paper is to assess the significance and relevance of the historic six-point movement and its impact on Bangladesh's struggle for freedom and independence. Once the main contents of six-point formula are summarized, the nature, magnitude, and impact of the six-point movement will be appraised.

Key Words: Six-Point Demand, Six-Point Formula, Six-Point Movement, Freedom Charter, Charter of Independence, Independent Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangabandhu, Awami League

Introduction

Although neither the separation of East Pakistan from Pakistan nor the independence of the eastern province of Pakistan was the professed objective of the six-point charter, the historic six-point movement in 1966 was the turning point in Bangladesh's quest for independence. Doubtless, the six-point political movement had effectively transformed the cherished dream of greater autonomy for the then East Pakistan into a sustainable freedom struggle for independent and sovereign Bangladesh. Notwithstanding the

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deliberate distortions of Bangladesh's political history over a period of more than fifty years, it is widely recognized that the six-point movement was a milestone in the history of Pakistan's Bengali-speaking peoples' relentless struggle for autonomy, freedom and independence (Ahmed, 1991; Ahmed, 2004; Jahan, 1994; Maniruzzaman, 1967, 1988; Rashiduzzama, 1970; Dunbar, 1972).

The six-point plan had envisaged, among other things, a full-blown federal form of Government based on the 1940 Lahore Resolution, a genuine parliamentary system of government to be directly elected by the people on the basis of adult franchise, two separate currencies or two reserve banks for the two wings of Pakistan (Islam, 1977), and a para-military force for East Pakistan. The spectacular success of the six-point movement in 1966 had prompted the ruling coterie of Pakistan to discredit the organizers of this movement. Ayub Khan's diabolical regime had used various brutal and punitive measures against the proponents, organizers and supporters of the six-point formula, the six-point anchored mass upsurge in 1966 had seriously impacted and conditioned the subsequent political development in Pakistan. The main purpose of this paper is to assess the significance and relevance of the historic Six-Point movement and its impact on Bangladesh's struggle for freedom and independence. Once the main contents of six-point formula are summarized, the nature, magnitude, and impact of the six-point movement will be appraised.

The Main Elements of the Six-Point Formula

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the then General Secretary of the East Pakistan Awami League (EPAL), had submitted the six-point program to the All-Party Meeting of the opposition political parties of Pakistan in Lahore on February 5, 1966. Based on Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's "6-Point Formula: Our Right to Live" [March 23, 1966], the main demands of the revised version of the six-point plan (as of March 23, 1966) can be summarized as follows (based on Rahman, Sheikh Mujibur, Amader Banchar Dabi: Chhay Dofa Karmasuchi (Six Points: Our Demand For Survival):

Point 1. "The Constitution should provide for a Federation of Pakistan in its true sense on the basis of [1940] Lahore Resolution, and Parliamentary form of Government with supremacy of legislature directly elected on the basis of universal adult franchise."

Point 2. The Federal Government of Pakistan "shall deal with only two subjects, viz.: defense and Foreign Affairs, and all other residuary subjects shall vest in the federating states."

Point 3. "Two separate but freely convertible currencies for two wings [of Pakistan] should be introduced;" or if this is not feasible, there should be one currency for the whole country, but effective constitutional provisions should be introduced to stop the flight of capital from East to West Pakistan. Furthermore, a separate Banking Reserve should be established and separate fiscal and monetary policy to be adopted for East Pakistan.

Point 4. The power of taxation and revenue collection shall be vested in the “federating units and the Federal Centre will have no such power.” However, the Federation will be entitled to have a share in the state taxes to meet its expenditures. “The Consolidated Federal Fund shall come out of a levy of certain percentage of all state taxes.”

Point 5. There should be two separate accounts for the foreign exchange earnings of the two wings with clear assurance that “earnings of East Pakistan shall be under the control of East Pakistan Government and that of West Pakistan under the control of West Pakistan Government.” And the “foreign exchange requirements of the Federal Government [of Pakistan] should be met by the two wings equally or in a ratio to be fixed. The indigenous products should move free of duty between the two wings.” The Constitution should “empower the units [provinces] to establish trade and commercial relations with, set up trade missions in and enter into agreements with foreign countries.”

Point 6. East Pakistan should have a separate “militia” or “Para-military” force.

Hostile Reaction of the Political Stalwarts of Pakistan to the Proposed Six-point Formula and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Bold Response

The mainstream political leaders of the opposition parties in Pakistan were not even willing to discuss the merits or demerits of the of the proposed six-point formula for ensuring greater provincial autonomy for the eastern province of Pakistan. In fact, no West Pakistani political leaders (not even Nawabzada Nasarullah Khan, the President of the then All-Pakistan Awami League) were willing to lend any support to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s clarion call for maximum provincial autonomy based on the proposed six-point formula (Gull, 2014: 73). It is really appalling to recapitulate even after the lapse more than five decades that the non-Awami League delegates from the then East Pakistan to that historic conference in early February 1966 did not endorse the six-point demand. Like their West-Pakistani counterparts, Bengali-speaking political stalwarts had also sniffed an element of “secession” or “disintegration” of Pakistan in the six-point formula. In fact, the six-point formula could not be pried out of the “subject-matter committee” of that so-called all-party conference (Harun-or-Rashid, 2019; Gull, 2014; Ahmed, 1991).

Instead of endorsing or facilitating a fair discussion on the six-point formula for ensuring maximum provincial autonomy, the self-declared champions of restoration of democracy in the then Pakistan had deliberately launched a vile propaganda campaign against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the chief sponsor and proponent of the six-point plan. Doubtless, those motivated anti-Bengali postures and biased propaganda were essentially characterized by blatant lies, falsehoods, conjectures, distortions, and innuendoes. In fact, the six-point proposal had received frontal attack even from the veteran Pakistani political stalwarts and doyens of most of the political parties at a time when they were clamoring for establishing pure democracy in Pakistan! (Harun-or-Rashid, 2019; Ahmed, 1991; Gull, 2014).

In her celebrated work titled Pakistan: Failure in National Integration, Rounaq Jahan (1994) succinctly summarized the hostile reactions of other political parties to the six-point formula: “The Six-Point demand not only split the [Awami] League but made it

difficult for the East Pakistan wing to form an alliance with any other West Pakistan-based party. The CML [Council Muslim League] decried the Six Points as a demand for confederation, not federation; the Jama'at-i-Islami branded it [Six-point formula] as a separatist design; the Nizam-i-Islam rejected it [Six-point formula] as a unilateral, dictatorial move on Mujib's part; and the NAP (National Awami Party) dismissed it [Six-point formula] on the grounds that it was parochial and did not include any measures to free East Pakistan from imperialists agents" (Jahan, 1994: 139-140),

Despite pungent comments and frontal attacks on the six-point formula, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman refused to be blackmailed or intimidated by the criticisms of his six-point plan. His response to the critics of his autonomy plan was quick and creative. In an impromptu press conference in Lahore on February 10, 1966, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had forcefully argued, as noted by Talukder Maniruzzaman, "The question of (provincial) autonomy appears to be more important after the War (between India and Pakistan in September, 1965). Time has come for making East Pakistan self-sufficient in all respects. He then enunciated a 'six-point charter of survival' program for East Pakistan" (Maniruzzaman, 1967: 876-885). In that historic press conference, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had also clearly articulated that since the proposed six-point demand was not at all designed to harm the common people of West Pakistan, the question of demanding a genuine "provincial autonomy" for East Pakistan based on the six-point formula "should not be misconstrued or dismissed as provincialism". He had pointed out that the 17-day war between Pakistan and India in September 1965 made it crystal clear to the "East Pakistanis" that the defense of East Pakistan couldn't be contingent upon the mercy or courtesy of West Pakistan. He reminded the audience that instead of relying on West Pakistan for its protection from external attack, East Pakistan --- a distant land located one thousand miles away, should be made self-sufficient for defending itself from hostile external aggression. He also made it abundantly clear that his six-point plan for "maximum" provincial autonomy reflected the long-standing demands of the people of East Pakistan. He also pointed out the uselessness and irrelevance of the "All-Party Conference" (Harun-or-Rashid, 2019; Ahmed, 1991; Gull, 2014).

On his return from Lahore to Dhaka on February 11, 1966, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had provided further clarification on his six-point formula in a press conference. He explained why he had disassociated himself from the All-Party conference in Lahore. He had clearly stated that the delegates from East Pakistan Awami League (EPAL) had rejected not only the proposals passed by the All-Party Conference but also severed all ties with the disgruntled leaders of the so-called conference of the opposition parties. He said that it was impossible for him or his party to betray the genuine interests and long-standing demands of the aggrieved and deprived people of East Pakistan. He emphasized that the immediate adoption and effective implementation of his six-point formula "will be quite conducive to foster durable relationship between two provinces of Pakistan" (Harun-or-Rashid, 2019; Ahmed, 1991). In a follow-up press conference on February 14, 1966, he reiterated what he had uttered in his Lahore press conference that the "the question of full-autonomy appears to be more relevant for East Pakistan after the 17-day war between

Pakistan and India. The time is ripe for making East Pakistan self-sufficient in all respects” (Harun-or-Rashid, 2019).

Reaction of Ayub Khan’s Dictatorial Regime to the Six-Point Plan

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s demand for “maximum provincial autonomy” based on the six-point formula seems to have shaken the foundation of Pakistan because this plan had exposed the fact that the real intention of Pakistan’s ruling elite was to “strengthen” the Central Government but not “Pakistan.” He repeatedly said in several public meetings that that the people of Pakistan had always desired to have a “strong Pakistan,” not a “strong Central Government.” However, the anti-Bengali ruling coterie was not at all interested in dealing or negotiating with the Awami League on the issue of provincial autonomy even though Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the proponent of maximum provincial autonomy, had publicly stated that he was willing to negotiate his six-point plan with anyone in good faith provided a meaningful autonomy was ensured for East Pakistan. Yet, the autocratic regime started using repressive tactics to suppress the six-point movement (Harun-or-Rashid, 2019; Ahmed, 1991; Gull, 2014). As noted by Dr. Md. Abdul Wadud Bhuyain, “the Ayub regime’s policy towards the six-point demand of the AL (Awami League) was one of total suppression. It showed once again that the (Ayub) regime failed to respond to the political demand” (Bhuyain, 1982: 104).

Immediately after the provincial autonomy plan based on the six-point formula was unveiled by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Lahore conference of opposition political parties in early February, 1966, Ayub Khan was quick to denounce it as a “separatist or secessionist move” . Aimed at browbeating the dedicated champions of greater provincial autonomy the self-declared guardian of the nation had started discrediting both the message and the messenger of the six-point program. Appearing in the final session of the meeting of the Pakistan (Convention) Muslim League in Dhaka on March 21, 1966, being fully attired in the Army General’s khaki uniform with full display of all of his regalia and medallions, the self declared President of Pakistan had condemned the six-point based plan for maximum provincial autonomy in the harshest possible terms (Harun-or-Rashid, 2019; Ahmed, 1991; Gull, 2014).

Characterizing the six-point formula as a demand for “greater sovereign Bengal,” Ayub Khan had claimed that such a “dubious plan” would put the “Bengali Muslims” under the domination of “caste Hindus” of West Bengal. He had compared the “prevailing situation” in Pakistan [as of March, 1966] with the volatile political situation that had prevailed in the USA before and during the outbreak of a prolonged Civil War in early 1860s. He even arrogated himself by saying that the nation might have to face a “civil war” if such emotive and volatile situations were forced upon “him” by the “enemies of Pakistan”< “secessionists” and “destructionists.” He had threatened the alleged “autonomists” and “secessionists” with “dire consequences” if they failed to shun the idea of six-point based movement for maximum provincial autonomy. Ayub Khan had also the audacity to underscore that the “language of weapons” would be ruthlessly

employed for the sole purpose of exterminating the “secessionist elements from Pakistan” (Harun-or-Rashid, 2019; Ahmed, 1991; Gull, 2014).

Abdul Monem Khan, the then infamous Governor of the then East Pakistan, had publicly stated that “as long as I remain the Governor of this province, I would see to it that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman remains shackled in jail”. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the then flamboyant Foreign Minister of Pakistan, had openly challenged Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to a public debate on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed six-point formula at a public meeting to be held in Paltan Maidan in Dhaka. To the chagrin of the Ayub regime, Tajuddin Ahmed, the number 2 leader in the then Awami League, took up the challenge on behalf of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Unfortunately, it was Z.A. Bhutto who did not show up for a debate! (Harun-or-Rashid, 2019: 126-128).

In response to a variety of false accusations and vile threats, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was quick to respond. In a mammoth public gathering at Paltan Maidan, he thundered: "No amount of naked threats can distract the deprived and exploited Bangalees from their demand for provincial autonomy based on their six-point plan". Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the greatest champion of Bangalees' rights for self-determination, along with top leaders of the Awami League, kept on addressing numerous public meetings in the nooks and corners of the then East Pakistan (Harun-or-Rashid, 2019). Without wasting a moment, the entire Awami League and the East Pakistan Students' League (EPSL), its student front, were geared toward mobilizing and motivating the general masses in favor of demanding self-government and autonomy based on the six-point program (Maniruzzaman, 1988: 25).

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Launches the Six-Point Movement

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had presented not only the bold and creative six-point formula proposal for accruing and securing “maximum autonomy” but he also launched a viable and sustainable mass movement (which he himself led till he was put in jail on May 9, 1966) for popularizing, enlisting, and mobilizing mass support in favor of the six-point program. After proposing his historic six-point program, he had actually invested all of his energies and resources in disseminating the fundamental message of “maximum autonomy” for East Pakistan. He started articulating both the rationale and justification for proposing “maximum provincial autonomy” based on his six-point plan. However, before embarking a mass movement, he had initiated some strategic intra-party and organizational measures. For example, the working Committee of the Awami League party was restructured and revamped in the historic Council Session of the East Pakistan Awami League (EPAL) that met on March 18-20, 1966. While Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Tajuddin Ahmed were unanimously elected the President and General Secretary respectively of the newly revamped Awami League, the proposed six-point program was also fully and formally endorsed by the Council Session (Rashiduzzaman, 1970, Maniruzzaman, 1988; Ahmed, 1991; Harun-or-Rashid, 2019).

To the chagrin of Pakistan's ruling coterie, the six-point formula had generated a great deal of enthusiasm among the people of East Pakistan. Indeed, the six-point movement had instantly garnered spontaneous mass support throughout East Pakistan, and the entire province was galvanized throughout February-March-April-May-June, 1966 (Ahmed, 1991; Rashiduzzaman 1970, Maniruzzaman, 1988; Jahan, 1994, Bhuyain, 1982; Gull, 2014). Harun-or-Rashid, 2019).

As noted by Talukder Maniruzzaman: "To say that this [six-point] programme evoked tremendous enthusiasm among the people of East Bengal would be an understatement. Encouraged by overwhelming popular support, Sheikh Mujib convened a meeting of the (EPAL) Council (March 18-20, 1966) at which his (Six-Point) programme was unanimously approved and he was elected President of the (East Pakistan Awami League) party. With a phalanx of organizers from the Student's League, Sheikh Mujib then launched a vigorous campaign. For about three months (from mid-February to mid-May), the urban centers of East Bengal seemed to be in the grip of a 'mass revolution,' prompting the Central Government to arrest Sheikh Mujib and his chief lieutenants (Tajuddin Ahmed, Khandokar Mustaq Ahmed, Mansoor Ali, Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury, and others) under the [infamous] Defense of Pakistan Rules and put down a complete general strike in Dacca (June 7, 1966) by killing 13 participating strikers" (Maniruzzaman, 1988: 25).

Instead of fairly dealing with the legitimate grievances of the neglected eastern province of Pakistan, the power elite of Pakistan took a deliberate decision to suppress Bangalees' quest for maximum provincial autonomy through the use of colonial types of repressive methods and procedures. Obviously, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had become the main target of various virulent forms of harassment, intimidation and fraudulent cases even though some critics of the six-point plan thought that those repressive and punitive measures were not adequate to suppress the separatist movement (Choudhary, 1974). However, the on-ground reality was that the Government had intensified its policy of retaliation, repression and persecution against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his followers. For example, while Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was touring various districts in April 1966, he was repeatedly arrested in almost all important places on flimsy and fraudulent charges (Ahmed, 1991; Gull, 2014; Harun-or-Rashid, 2019).

Anisuzzaman, a distinguished literary figure of Bangladesh, has summarized the nature of the repressive measures which Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had to confront and endure for starting and sustaining the historic six-point movement at a critical juncture of our history: "During that period (from the middle of February through May 9, 1966), there was hardly any place where Sheikh Mujib was not arrested [on false charges] for addressing public meetings to enlist mass support in favor of six-point program. Today in Jessore, tomorrow in Khulna, day after tomorrow in Rajshahi, and on the following days in Sylhet, Mymensingh, and Chittagong. Once he was released on bail in one place, he rushed to another place. He had no time to waste. The only time wasted was in the process of posting bail for his release. Arrested again, and being released on bail once

again, and then immediately move to another place (to address the public meetings)” (Anisuzzaman, 1995: 11-12).

It was on June 7, 1966 when a full-blown *hartal* was observed in support of the six-point program throughout the urban centers of the then East Pakistan in defiance of various oppressive and repressive measures of the autocratic Government of Pakistan. People from walks of life had lent their whole-hearted support to this *hartal*. Obviously, it was a mass response to governmental repressive measures since the middle of February 1966 when Awami League leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had launched the historic six-point movement. Sheikh Mujib, the most articulate champion of “maximum autonomy” for the then East Pakistan, was already put in jail on May 9, 1966. Several dozen men were shot dead during *hartal* on June 7, 1966. Hundreds of participants were injured. Thousands of Awami League leaders and student workers were put behind bars without any trials. *Hulias* (warrants of arrest) were issued on hundreds of Awami League workers and student leaders. *The Daily Ittefaq*, the most popular Bangla newspaper of the then eastern province of Pakistan, was shut down, its press was confiscated, and its editor, Tofazzal Hossain (Manik Mia), was put in jail. Yet, the repressive police forces could not halt the march of the six-point anchored movement for achieving maximum autonomy (Rashiduzzaman, 1970; Ahmed, 1991; Maniruzzaman, 1988),

In his seminal assessment of the role of the Awami League in the political development of Pakistan, M. Rashiduzzaman had succinctly summarized the significance of the six-point program: “The culmination of the Awami League demand for regional autonomy came in March 1966 when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman put forward his Six-Point Program. The impact of the six-point demand of the Awami League was felt far and wide. The central government [of Pakistan] dubbed it as a demand for the separation of the Eastern Wing from the rest of the country, and launched a propaganda campaign, which called for a strong central government and decried the autonomists. On June 7, 1966, there was a province-wide *hartal* (strike) in East Pakistan sponsored by the Awami League to press the demands embodied in the six-point program. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, along with several lieutenants, was again put into the prison. (Sheikh Mujib was put in jail in early May, 1966). The government also blamed ‘foreign interests’ in the agitation led by the six-pointers ----- After about a year, several East Pakistani civil servants and military officers were arrested on the charge that they had conspired to separate the East Wing by violent means in collusion with India. Eventually, the so-called ‘Agartala Conspiracy case’ was initiated against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and 31 others for alleged high treason” (Rashiduzzaman, 1970: 574-587).

The Impact of the Six-point Movement

The six-point movement had also far reaching effects on the subsequent political development in the then Pakistan. As noted by M. Rashiduzzaman, “The Awami League leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, gave a new turn to Pakistan politics when he put forward a six-point program which would allocate maximum power to the province, and at the same time reduce the strength of the Central Government (of Pakistan). The entire

weight of the party (the Awami League) was thrown in favor of the anti-Ayub movement which spread throughout the country in the early months of 1969, and it is likely that the Awami League will play an even more active role in the future” (Rashiduzzaman, 1970: 574-587).

The imprisonment of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and other top Awami Leaguers in 1966 could not diminish the mass support for the six-point demand even though the intensity of the movement could be suppressed. The policy of suppression of all forms of political freedoms and dissenting voices had miserably failed to halt the march of the long-term effects and future implications of the six-point movement. In fact, the many forms of governmental repression and the use of police violence against the organizers and participants of the six-point movement had prompted and motivated the general population of the then East Pakistan to render their full support for the six-point formula. The six-point movement had also far reaching effects on the subsequent political development in the then Pakistan

The origins of both the Agartala Conspiracy Case and the 1969 student-mass movement can be traced back to the six-point movement. The Punjabi-Muhajir dominated Central Government of Pakistan had implicated Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the fraudulent Agartala Conspiracy Case. It is now apparent that such a vile conspiracy was hatched out against the most articulate champion of greater provincial autonomy to destroy Bangladesh’s quest for autonomy and self-determination once and for all. Given the fact that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the chief force behind launching a credible mass movement in 1966 for realizing maximum provincial autonomy through the implementation of the six-point formula, Pakistan’s ruling elite wanted to hang this great leader as a “traitor.” In other words, the Government of Pakistan wanted to eliminate him from East Pakistan’s political scene for the purpose of maintaining a status quo in the form of colonial rule in East Pakistan. The success of the six-point movement had prompted the arrogant, debased, and dictatorial regime of Ayub Khan to falsely implicate him in the Agartala Conspiracy Case. However, an anti-Ayub mass movement in late 1968 and early 1969 led to the withdrawal of the so-called Agartala Conspiracy case and unconditional release of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from imprisonment (Rashiduzzaman 1970; Maniruzzaman, 1988; Jahan, 1994; Bhuyain, 1982; Harun-or-Rashid, 2019).

About the profound impact of the six-point program on the professed 11-point charter of the 1969 student-mass movement, M. Rashiduzzaman observed: “For all practical purposes, the eleven-point student program was an expanded version of the Awami League’s six- point demand for autonomy” (Rashiduzzaman, 1970: 574-587). The saliency of the six-point movement in the then Pakistan politics is more evident in the following concluding remarks of M. Rashiduzzaman: "The real strength of the Awami League is not its organizational skill but the growing popularity of its (Six-Point) program for regional autonomy with the 70 million Bengalis in East Pakistan. We have already noted that a popular movement started in East Pakistan following the announcement of Awami League’s six-point program and the changing pattern of Pakistan politics has eventually led to what is undeniably a separatist movement. Even

the stringent repressive measures and centralized administration can't halt the process (of separatism). As the champion of the cause of regional autonomy, the future of the Awami League lies in its capacity to sustain and strengthen the movement" (Rashiduzzaman, 1970: 574-587).

Talukder Maniruzzaman has noted the immediate impact of the governmental repressive measures during the six-point movement on Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's popularity in the following words: "As one might have expected, Sheikh Mujib's arrest in 1966 only served to enhance his popularity to the point where he became the veritable symbol of Bengali nationalism" (Maniruzzaman, 1988: 23).

Rounaq Jahan underscored the following impacts of the six-point movement: "In the spring of 1966, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman launched his now famous Six-Point Movement. The Six-Point demand—especially attractive to the Bengali nationalist bourgeoisie—was to date most radical demand for East Pakistani autonomy. The Six-Point Movement evoked widespread enthusiasm in East Pakistan. Mass Meetings and rallies held throughout the province by the East Pakistan Awami League helped to rejuvenate the moribund party organization and Awami-affiliated student party, the East Pakistan Students League [EPSL]. Predictably, the Six-point Movement broadened the Awami League's base of support in East Pakistan at the cost of West Pakistani support" (Jahan, 1994: 139).

M.B. Nair concludes his authoritative book titled Politics in Bangladesh: A Study of Awami League:1949-58, (New Delhi, Northern Book Center, 1990, p. 257) with the following observations about the far reaching effects of the six-point movement: "However, in 1964 when political activities on party basis were permitted, the Awami League [AL] emerged from its seclusion and reorganized itself, so that in 1966 it [AL] was able to give a concrete shape to its long-standing demand for regional autonomy in the form of 'Six-Point Programme' which subsequently was the harbinger of the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent and sovereign state in 1971" (Nair, 1990: 257).

The significance, relevance, and poignancy of the six-point movement can also be gleaned from some of the comprehensive and documented writings of several reputed and fair-minded Pakistani scholars and political observers (Gull, 2014, 2015; Alqama,1997; Husain, 2010; Mehmood, 1989; Waseem. 1989; Zaheer, 1994); and The Report of the Hamood-ur-Rahman Commission of Inquiry into the 1971 War (2001). For example, in his extraordinary book titled 'What Was Once East Pakistan', Syed Shahid Husain has expressed the opinion that there was nothing wrong with the six-point "demand, because independent economists acknowledge that there had been a massive transfer of resources from East Pakistan to West Pakistan which was one of the causes of ill will between the two wings". Syed Shahid Husain further observes that "asking for a separate currency did not mean to a call for secessionist movement. It was only intended to get guarantee that the non-transfer of resources from an under-developed region to one that was developed. All the people of the East Pakistan had a full legal right on their own

resources. They were also entitled to get subsidies on the basis of being more economically violated and exploited than the West Pakistan” ((Husain, 2010: 24-25; cited by Gull, 2014: 66).

The significance and poignancy of the Six-point plan for the emergence of independent Bangladesh are well reflected in Ayyaz Gull’s thought-provoking article (Gull, 2014: 59-74) titled “Charter of Independence: A Critical Study of Mujib’s Six Point Programme”. It seems most gratifying to note that a scholar of Ayyaz Gull’s stature and ethnic background has preferred to conclude his critical appraisal of the significance of the Six-point freedom charter with the following credible lines: “The critics of the Six Point Programme, (were) more concerned with its political than its economic implications. Mujib’s proposal for substantial control of the economy by the provinces gave birth to an irrational fear in West Pakistanis that the six-point plan would lead to the dismemberment of Pakistan by encouraging dissident tribal and linguistic groups in the west. In reality, Six Point Programme reflected some genuine East Bengali grievances and which were long standing demands of the East Pakistanis who were waiting for these fulfillments for decades. Mujib’s (six-point) movement proved to be a radical departure from the simple autonomy demand of the past. The Six Point Programme aimed towards a confederation, instead of a federation. The demand of full control on rising taxes and expenditure along with the freely convertible currencies and the power to enter into foreign trade relationships, keeping foreign exchange earning separate, was too much for the central government to accommodate. Neither any political party nor the central government of Pakistan gave any detailed explanation why they were opposed to the Six Points Programme” (Gull, 2014: 74).

The Six-point Movement in the Making of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the Sole Spokesman of Bengali-speaking People of the then East Pakistan

Although Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was regarded as the top leader of the Awami League when he had launched the six-point movement in early 1966, he was not yet regarded as the “undisputed leader” of all Bangalees of the then East Pakistan. Nor was he called ‘Bangabandhu’ in 1966. He was not the only political leader of the eastern province of Pakistan who had championed the cause of full provincial autonomy. There were other top political leaders even within his party with impressive credentials who were committed to the pursuit of full autonomy. There were also more senior political leaders in other political parties, including Maulana Bhasani, the original founder of the Awami League, who vocally demanded full provincial autonomy. Being essentially disgusted with West Pakistan’s colonial domination and exploitation of the then East Pakistan, Maulana Bhasani had uttered more than once “goodbye” to West Pakistan --- at least a decade earlier than the historic six-point movement. Maulana Bhasani was never willing to compromise on the issue of full provincial autonomy for the then East Pakistan. However, it was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s’s fearlessness and relentlessness that gave more concrete shape and direction to the autonomy movement. Only a courageous leader of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s stature and caliber could come up with the bold and

creative six-point plan for accruing full autonomy for East Pakistan at a time when Ayub Khan's brute regime was at its pinnacle after consolidating its grip over the entire power structure of the country.

The historic six-point movement had direct bearing and profound impact on the following momentous events: the making of the infamous Agartala conspiracy case against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the 11-point anchored volatile student-mass movement of 1969, the withdrawal of the concocted Agartala conspiracy case and the unconditional release of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from solitary confinement on February 22, 1969, the shameful removal of the infamous provincial governor Abdul Monem Khan, the sudden collapse of Ayub Khan's dictatorship and the rise of Yahya Khan's diabolical regime, the general elections in 1970 on the basis of adult franchise, the landslide victory of the Awami League in the general elections in 1970, the spectacular rise of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the sole spokesperson of the Bengali speaking people of the then Pakistan, the nine-month long liberation war in 1971, and finally the spectacular emergence of Bangladesh as an independent nation-state on December 16, 1971. Doubtless, those tumultuous events were milestones in the history of Bangladesh's struggle for freedom and independence. There is no doubt that the name of the common thread that had firmly connected those memorable milestones was Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Concluding Remarks

The six-point movement was designed to realize full provincial autonomy for East Pakistan, and there is no doubt that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's relentlessness in conceptualizing, starting, and sustaining a pragmatic Bengali nationalistic movement that was deliberately geared toward achieving maximum autonomy had clearly distinguished him from other contemporary autonomists of the then East Pakistan. His fearlessness also made him the most volatile champion of "full provincial autonomy". Despite the most brutal measures that were employed against the chief proponents, organizers and supporters of the six-point movement by the then Central Government of Pakistan and their cohorts and collaborators, the six-point movement had genuinely affected the subsequent political development in Pakistan.

There is no doubt that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman would have remained a top Awami League leader even in the absence of a bold and creative provincial autonomy plan in the form of the six-point formula. Had there been no six-point movement in 1966, there is every doubt if Agartala Conspiracy Case would have been hatched out against Sheikh Mujib at that particular time. Had there been no Agartala Conspiracy Case, the student-mass movement of 1969 would not have gained that much intensity on the issue of unconditional release of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from imprisonment. Thus the six-point movement, Agartala conspiracy case and the 1969 student-mass movement had provided the much-needed ground and context for the emergence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as *Bangabandhu* (Friend of Bengal).

Subsequently, the people of the then eastern province of Pakistan had vested their full trust in their *Bangabandhu* in the general elections of 1970 that made this extraordinary man their legitimate sole spokesperson and undisputed leader. Indeed, it was Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the undisputed leader of his people, who had spearheaded Bangladesh's struggle for full-blown independence. Given the fact that the six-point demand had also reflected the legitimate grievances of the people of the then East Pakistan, the six-point movement had garnered spontaneous mass support throughout the province. The timing, first for framing and articulating the six-point formula, and then launching and sustaining a nationalistic movement for realizing the goals of six-point formula was crucially important. The economic and political demands, as stipulated and enumerated in the historic six-point formula, were the frontal assault on the foundation of Pakistan's colonial administrative structure and the authoritarian modes of governance. Doubtless, the historic Six-Point Demand or the Six-Point Formula has been widely credited as the "Freedom Charter" or "Charter of Independence" in the glorious history of Bangladesh's relentless struggle for self-determination from Pakistan's colonial domination and ignominious subjugation.

Acknowledgement

I would like to gratefully acknowledge that many of the excerpts and generalizations of this article were drawn from my earlier paper titled "The historic six-point movement and its impact on the struggle for independence" that was published in the Daily Star, June 7, 2008. However, I am alone responsible for the accuracy of facts, analysis, and the views expressed in the present paper.

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Can the New Pestilence be the New Equalizer?: Analyzing Covid-19 and Economic Inequality in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The ongoing crisis of the Covid-19 pestilence is undoubtedly one of the greatest crises in living memory that has already created a significant economic, political, and social impact throughout the world. Studies on previous pandemics of such scale have considered them an equalizer of economic inequality. This study, therefore, aims to reevaluate this idea during the great new pestilence of Covid-19 in developing countries, with a special focus on Bangladesh. Following a complementary approach, it argues that the new great pestilence is unlikely to be the new equalizer, especially due to the neoliberal economic system. Instead, it contends that the factors of inequality during the pestilence behave like the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid-19, which becomes more dangerous through mutation. Similarly, the factors of inequality intersecting with neoliberalism exacerbate the pre-existing economic disparities instead of equalizing them. It further argues that Keynesian policies as a response to the economic crisis caused by the pestilence are unlikely to solve economic inequality in developing countries like Bangladesh. And although the pestilence provides an opportunity for policy change to correct the structural deficiencies that cause economic inequality, there also remain serious political-economic barriers to such change. This study is expected to be a starting point for multiple avenues of inequality research in developing countries.

Key Words: Covid-19, Pandemic, Inequality, Neoliberalism, Keynesianism.

1. Introduction

The ongoing transboundary crisis caused by the Covid-19 pestilence has already created an unprecedented economic, political, and social impact throughout the world. After the first known outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 (popularly known as coronavirus) in the Chinese province of Hubei during the dead-end of 2019, the disease was not a primary global concern at the beginning (World Health Organization, 2020). However, as it has caused ravage irrespective of sovereign boundaries over time, the virus has become the primary challenge for global leaders and statesmen to tackle. During the writing of this paper, the pandemic has infected almost 185 million and snatched the lives of nearly 4 million worldwide (World Health Organization, 2021b).

Similarly, despite being on the same continent as the origin of the outbreak, Bangladesh had reasonably enough time to prepare to fight the virus; however, the new and unprecedented nature of the disease, like most other countries, discouraged the government and public health officials from taking the measures of the highest concern (Islam et al., 2020a; Khan et al., 2021). From a rational choice perspective, it also did not

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seem necessary as the crisis was still unfolding. Thus, with free trade and inter-border movement of people, the virus arrived in Bangladesh like any other infectious disease. Although research can be done to trace the timeline of Covid-19's arrival in Bangladesh, the first few cases were identified and reported on the first week of March 2020 (Anwar et al., 2020). Since then, two waves of the diseases and a creeping third wave while writing the paper have infected almost one million and taken 16 thousand Bangladeshi lives, leaving far-reaching political, economic, and social impacts (World Health Organization, 2021b).

Although the Covid-19 pandemic is the worst in the living memory, pestilences are not a new phenomenon. And throughout time, like opportunities in grim disguise, pestilences have corrected many discrepancies of human histories, such as economic inequality. Walter Scheidel (2017), in his book titled "The Great Leveler Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty First Century", provides a similar argument. With a wide range of historical evidence throughout the book, he argues that shocks such as mass mobilization and warfare, transformative revolution, state failure and lethal pandemics- alone or in harmony- have radically reduced income and wealth inequality that developed through hundreds of years. Milanović (2016) similarly argued that malign forces such as wars, natural catastrophes, or epidemics drive inequality down. Other works by prominent inequality scholars Piketty and Saez (2014) and Piketty (2014 in Sayed and Peng (2021) demonstrates that the two world wars and the flu pandemics resulted in the leveling of economic inequality to a great extent. Thus, such a well-established and valid concept requires revisiting during the new great pestilence of Covid-19. As the social, political, and economic world order has gone through a tremendous and continuous transformation since the last mega public health crisis that spreads like wildfire, the new pestilence might produce a different result.

Therefore, with a narrower focus, this paper aims to verify the plausibility of the new great pestilence to be the new equalizer of economic inequality in the context of a developing country, with a specific focus on Bangladesh. The reason for analyzing from the context of developing countries is that the previous studies, as mentioned, were primarily based on western countries. Moreover, the concept of developing countries is relatively new in relation to large scale pestilences. Thus, it is expected to produce new findings that can facilitate future research.

Since the crisis is still unfolding and new statistics are being added on the impact of Covid-19, the paper follows a complementary approach in constructing the core arguments. This commonly used approach in policy studies, according to Cairney (2013), utilizes multiple theories to produce a range of insights or explanations in the scarcity of available academic resources. Thus, following a complementary approach in assessing the economic leveling capacity of Covid-19 in the context of Bangladesh, this paper argues that the new great pestilence is unlikely to be the new equalizer due to the change in context, especially in the economic system. Specifically, it argues that the present neoliberal system will resist the leveling and exacerbate the pre-pestilence economic divide. It further contends that the pestilence provides an opportunity for policy change to

correct the structural deficiencies that cause inequality, but there also remain serious political-economic barriers to such change.

The paper is divided into three major parts. The first illustrates why Covid-19 cannot be the equalizer of economic inequality due to the pathologies of neoliberal economic policies. The second part argues that, just like the coronavirus, the factors of inequality have mutated with each other and Neoliberalism and created some complex variants of economic inequality, which will worsen the pre-existing unequal economic situation in Bangladesh. Lastly, the third part takes up a public policy and political economy perspective and theorizes that the rise of Keynesian economic policies due to the economic loss of the pandemic will have little impact on reducing economic inequality unless the systematic flaws in the system are corrected. Although the pandemic presents an opportunity for such correction, there remains severe uncertainty due to who gets what, when and how.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to clarify at the very outset of the paper that although there remain different forms of inequality in terms of race and gender that Covid-19 has also aggravated. However, this paper only focuses on economic inequality that broadly consists of income and wealth inequality within a country, not between countries. However, as the inequality between countries also influences inequality within the country in a globally integrated system, the issue of inequality between countries appears in the analysis from time to time. Moreover, this paper is not a critic of Scheidel (2017), Milanović (2016) or Piketty (2014). Rather it reevaluates their findings in the context of Bangladesh during covid-19 with the help of previous works done in the broader field of social sciences. As the mega and transboundary crisis of the new great pestilence unfolds in the days ahead, similar work in different contexts following different approaches can be and probably being done; all these will add up to the growing literature of the Covid-19 and work as a starting point for new inequality research in the post-pandemic world.

Why The Covid-19 Is Not The New Eqyakuzer: Times Have Changed

The main reason for Covid-19 not being the economic inequality leveler can be explained through the difference in the number of deaths and the transformation in the financial system since the past major pestilences. According to Scheidel (2017), the massive number of fatalities and diminished capital returns were the major force that flattened inequality during pandemics such as the Black Death. Data (LePan, 2020) show that Black Death killed half the population of Europe and the Spanish Flu took the lives of almost 50 million people, which resulted in the equalization of inequality. However, the ratio of death from Covid-19 so far to pandemics like the Black Death or Spanish Flu is relatively insignificant. Thus, the leveling of inequality by the massive number of deaths caused by Covid-19 is not reasonable in the present context.

Furthermore, previous major pandemics occurred in glaringly different economic contexts than covid-19, helping them to equalize income and wealth disparities to a great extent. For instance, apart from the ongoing HIV/ AIDS pandemic, all the pestilences that caused death in several million took place in a pre-industrial feudal era (LePan, 2020; van

Bavel & Scheffer, 2021). During those times, pandemics caused more damage to landlords than to farmers as the return on capital fell. Thus, the peasants were better off after the pandemic (Milanović, 2016; Scheidel, 2017). However, in the recent time when economies are being dictated by neoliberal policies such leveling, even by unprecedented pandemics like Covid-19 seems few and far between.

The worldwide triumph of Neoliberalism since the 1980s has facilitated economic growth but it has overly complicated the economic relations from the pre-industrial age and pushed income and wealth inequality to such a height which is hard to be levelled by pandemics. Neoliberalism, that replaced the Keynesian economic policies that were responsible for the stagnant and inflated economy of the 70s, is broadly a set of political and economic principles that advocates for and facilitates free markets and free trade in a globalized world through the deregulation of the economy and privatization of state-owned enterprises (Steger & Roy, 2010). Consequently, following the neoliberal principles, a drive for higher profit and growth through entrepreneurship and cut back on welfare spending resulted in a group of winners and losers that further deepened and complicated the economic cleavage. By analyzing data from 1980 to 2018, the latest report by the World Economic Lab shows that the global top 1% have accumulated twice as much growth in comparison with the 50 per cent of the poorest individuals (Alvaredo et al., 2017). Similarly, among many factors, the adaptation of neoliberal policies in Bangladesh in line with the globalized world has given rise to vast economic differences. Thus, even though Bangladesh achieved higher growth over time, inequality increased. According to the Gini coefficient for Bangladesh that measures economic equality, Bangladesh's Gini coefficient fell from 25.88 in 1984 to .482 in 2016 (Mazid, 2019).

Therefore, the highly uneven economic inequality induced by Neoliberalism has made the idea of lower return on capital during pestilences and subsequent leveling obsolete. Due to the high economic inequality, in a neoliberal industrial age, the wealthy can take risks and invest in newer technologies that will be more immune to shocks and bring a higher return on capital. However, the poor are structurally barred from such opportunities and remain more vulnerable to shocks. This assertion is also evident in the Covid-19 data. The Institute for Policy Studies shows that by the middle of 2020, billionaires' wealth in the US was surged by \$584 billion, whereas household wealth was reduced by \$6.5 trillion (Collins, 2020).

Likewise, in a neoliberal setting within an integrated and globalized economic system during transboundary crises, a similar thing is bound to happen in a highly unequal developing society like Bangladesh. Therefore, due to the ratio of death and complex inequality as a result of widespread Neoliberalism, it will be difficult for Covid-19 to be the new equalizer like the past pestilences.

The Mutation Of Inequality: Short And Long-Term Impact

Neoliberalism not only minimizes the opportunity for the new pestilence to be a new leveler, it further exacerbates the pre-existing economic inequality in the developing countries. For example, the factors of inequality during the Covid-19 pestilence acted like

the coronavirus worsening the overall existing status of inequality. Since the first identification of the virus in 2019, following its inherent nature, the virus has mutated several times, giving rise to variants of concern like Alpha, Beta, Gamma and more recently, the Delta (World Health Organization, 2021a). And the mutations made the latest variant more transmissible and lethal than its predecessors (Anthes, 2021). Likewise, among many factors of economic inequality like access to education, healthcare and migration- have taken newer forms worsening the nature of vulnerability and inequality during the pandemic, and the intersection of such factors with neoliberal system have prepared a roadmap for short and long term economic inequality with little or no room for leveling. Figure 1 provides a conceptual diagram of the newer forms of inequality created through the complex intersection of neoliberalism with education, healthcare and migration during covid-19 that have worsened the pre-existing economic inequality. The following section reflects on these newer forms of inequality and their long lingering economic impact from education, health, and migration perspectives, which are three key elements of economic equalizing in the context of Bangladesh.

Fig. 1: Intersection of Factors of Inequality with Neoliberalism during Covid-19 Pandemic in Bangladesh



Source: Author

(a) Digital Divide in Education: Kicking Away the Equality Ladder

Preventive measures to combat the spread of Covid-19 has exacerbated the existing inequality in the education sector worldwide and developing countries like Bangladesh are more likely to bear the long-lasting impact of it. Studies (Glaeser, 2006; Milanović, 2016) have often considered education a ladder to attain economic equality. However, the

online shift of education during the pestilence has made it inaccessible to a large number of poor as well as peripheral students overnight. More specifically, the shift has created a digital divide among the have and have nots and the urban and rural population due to the inevitability of devices and poor internet infrastructure (Zheng & Walsham, 2021). Evidence (Talukder, 2021; The Daily Star, 2021b) from the middle of August 2020 shows that only half of the total urban household in Bangladesh had some sort of internet access, whereas the rate is lower than 30 per cent in rural areas due to poor internet infrastructure and digital skills. Therefore, the inaccessibility to education due to the digital divide is barring many students from climbing the ladder to equality.

Furthermore, when the digital divide intersects with neoliberal principles, it is likely to cause severe unemployment and subsequent income inequality in the future. For instance, the pestilence has resulted in a dissonance between Bangladesh's public and private education systems. The private education providers in primary, secondary, and tertiary levels were very swift in the online transition of education, and since the beneficiaries of private education mainly were from well off urban backgrounds having access to comparatively better online services (Byron & Habib, 2021). Thus, they could continue business as usual.

On the contrary, the public education system, especially at the tertiary level, is going through serious uncertainties as the digital divide, insufficient digital skill, and consecutive waves of Covid-19 has made the transition to online learning troublesome (Alamgir & Habib, 2020). Consequently, public university students' graduation and entry to the job market have been delayed compared to the students from private universities. A simulation by the World Bank (Rahman & Sharma, 2021) has estimated a 6.8 per cent yearly reduction in the income of an average Bangladeshi student due to Covid-19. Nevertheless, the digital divide and subsequent delay to enter the formal labor force is likely to multiply the reduction rate for the students of public institutions depending on the length of such stagnation in the public education system.

(b) Inequal Access to Healthcare: A Complex Variant for Exacerbating the Existing Economic Inequality

It is not unusual for any state to go through a health crisis during pestilences, but factors like economic inequality and access to healthcare before the pandemic greatly influence its length and outcome. Although due to the democratic nature of the coronavirus, none is immune to it irrespective of their financial status, the financial status dictates access to healthcare and the opportunity to recover- especially in a neoliberal system where the public healthcare system is not developed enough (Boin et al., 2021; Keane, 2020). Thus, when the pre-pandemic vulnerability and economic inequality intersect with inadequate public healthcare and social class- it gives rise to a complex variant of inequality that feeds both into short- and long-term income inequality.

It is impossible for poor people to completely adhere to health standards that prevent the spread of covid-19, which makes them more likely to be infected. And once infected, the

recovery becomes extremely expensive, throwing them into a vicious cycle of poverty, further exacerbating the pre-pandemic economic inequality. In the context of Bangladesh, as more than half of its workforce is engaged in wage-based employment, they cannot afford to stay home and stay safe (Islam et al., 2020b). Therefore, it makes them more likely to contact the virus and being infected makes them temporarily unemployed and puts strain on their savings. Moreover, these wage earners cannot afford to isolate themselves properly due to their poor living conditions, as 55 per cent of the urban population in Bangladesh lives in slums (Islam et al., 2020b). Thus, there also remains a high chance of quickly spreading the virus among the poor households, which stresses their pre-existing vulnerable economic condition even further, slightly pushing them towards extreme poverty.

Moreover, the widened economic inequality over time in Bangladesh has somewhat alienated the poor and further stifled them to greater vulnerability. For instance, by mid-2021, only 2 per cent of the garment workers have been vaccinated against Covid-19. However, the RMG (Ready Made Garment) sector was mostly kept outside lockdown measures to remain in the competition in the RMG business with India, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, and China (Islam, 2021; The Daily Star, 2021c). But considering the vulnerability of these workers' living and working conditions, the statistics should have been different. In such circumstances, the longer the vaccination process will take, the more vulnerable the wage-earning working class would be, which will cause temporary unemployment from time to time and have an adverse economic impact on their lives. However, due to the digital divide, there also remains an enormous uncertainty to vaccinate these segments of the population in a short time, as vaccine registrations are being done online. Such complexities testify to the implausibility of the pestilence to be a leveler of inequality.

As the poor are more likely to infect, conversely, they are more unlikely to get the proper treatment due to inadequate public healthcare and influential network. For example, the public healthcare system in Bangladesh was already insufficient in terms of its colossal population (Islam et al., 2020b), and the Covid-19 crisis worsened the overall situation. Data (Rahman, 2021) show that 52 per cent of the dedicated Covid-19 public hospitals did not have ICU facilities, and 75 per cent among them were located in the hospitals of Dhaka city. Moreover, due to such inconsistencies in the supply and demand of public healthcare, it is necessary to have influential networks containing political elites, which the upper economic strata of the country usually possess (Al-Zaman, 2020; Aziz et al., 2020). Thus, with no network and for the sake of saving lives, the economically vulnerable are often compelled to go to the private healthcare providers that are extremely expensive and ruin their savings causing long term economic impact (Sultana & Tithlia, 2021). Consequently, in other words, the inadequate public healthcare in

Bangladesh will either result in a class of new poor or damage the pre-existing economic vulnerability beyond recovery.

(c) Reduced Opportunity to Migration: Less Return on Citizenship Premium Resulting in More Inequality

The global scale of the pestilence and strict restrictions on inter-border movements to prevent it has severely impacted labor migration, which is likely to worsen economic inequality in the migrants' home countries both in the short and long term. The citizens from poorer countries, according to Milanović (2016), hold citizenship premium that provides them with the opportunity to multiply their real income many a time by migrating to a richer or developed country. Similarly, almost seventy thousand Bangladeshi workers migrate to more affluent countries for jobs, and the total number of 13 billion Bangladeshi workers contribute 13 per cent to the country's GDP through remittance (Karim et al., 2020) . Therefore, migration, and its return on citizenship premium lead to significant remittance flow, which is a key to reduced economic inequality in countries like Bangladesh. However, travel restrictions and border closure in many developed countries will decrease citizen premium and its return which will eventually result in less remittance flow and more economic disparities.

Unemployment in host countries, forced return, as well as immigration uncertainties are also causing less return on the citizenship premium and more economic inequality in Bangladesh. Due to the monopoly of neoliberal economic policies in most developed countries, immigrant workers are usually kept out of social protection entitlements and remain at greater risk of unemployment amidst economic shocks (MacGregor, 2015, p. 147). Similarly, when the pestilence started to ravage the world with severe economic impact, the Bangladeshi immigrant workers faced salary cuts and unemployment. Subsequently, many of them returned to Bangladesh due to consequent financial hardship and the absence of welfare entitlements. IOM (International Organization for Migration) (2021) data from April to December 2020 shows that 408,408 immigrant workers returned to Bangladesh. Until they can go back, these returnees either survive on their savings and wealth or debt, whereas some have switched their professions. Such economic stagnation and transformation for the migrant workers completely bars their return on citizenship premium, which aggravate their vulnerability from pre-pandemic and pre-migration times (The Daily Star, 2021a).

Also, the worsening of the covid-19 situation in Bangladesh and upcoming waves might lead to new travel and immigration restrictions for Bangladeshi workers even if they are vaccinated. Such uncertainties will also stress the savings of these potential migrant workers causing greater economic inequality for them for an uncertain period. The following table 1 provides a summary of the newer forms of inequality and their long lingering economic impact from education, health, and migration perspectives in Bangladesh.

Table 1: Short and Long-Term Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Economic Inequality in Bangladesh

Primary Issues and Perspectives	Intersecting Issues During the Pestilence	Impact	Impact on Economic Inequality
Access to Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequal access to digital devices and Internet connectivity • Spatial inequality between urban and rural areas • Lack of expertise in the online transition of education • The discrepancy between public and private education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital divide • Uncertain future and the risk of unemployment 	Increased economic inequality for long term
Access to healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unhealthy living condition • The nature of wage-based employment • Less rational distribution of vaccine • Digital divide • Underdeveloped public healthcare • Inequal access to an influential network of elites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher infection risk • Temporary unemployment • Stress on savings and wealth 	Increased economic inequality in the short and long term
Opportunity to Migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel restrictions • Border Closure • Unemployment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return to home countries • Uncertainty in Migration • Stress on savings and wealth 	Increased economic inequality for the long term

Source: Author

What Can Be Done?: Policy Responses And Probable Solutions

The exacerbation of pre-existing economic inequality in the time of Covid-19 have led to a financial crisis in developed and developing countries alike, and the typical policy solutions to tackle it are unlikely to work, especially in developing countries which may further aggravate the economic inequality. The previous section emphasized the role of neoliberal policies in inciting the crisis and driving inequality. And in such critical junctures of Neoliberalism, governments tend to go back to Keynesian policies, which emerged as a solution to the great depression, based on the works of economist John Maynard Keynes. These policies support government intervention to generate aggregate

demand, employment, and investment in the time of economic crisis to keep the circular flow of money undisturbed to avoid falling into a recession, which is an antithesis of Neoliberalism (Skidelsky, 2020). For instance, to keep the economy not going into recession, Bangladesh similarly has taken public policy interventions by employing several stimulus packages of a total of taka 1,48,441 crore (approximately 4.2 per cent of the GDP) since the beginning of the pandemic, which is substantial considering the developing status of the country (Kamal, 2021, p. 22).

However, returning to Keynesian policies to save the economy does not guarantee a solution to growing inequality in developing countries like Bangladesh; instead, they are likely to turn burdensome and a sustainer of economic inequality. Also, the unprecedented nature of the pestilence makes things worse. For instance, it will be difficult for Bangladesh to manage and distribute the colossal stimulus as administrative corruption is a major issue in the governance of this country. Thus, it is very likely that there will be a significant transaction cost in its management. In addition, many corrupt elites and large firms are likely to exploit and benefit from poor management and widespread corruption. As a consequence, the distribution of the stimulus will be highly polarized.

Moreover, since almost 85 per cent of the Bangladeshi labor force is involved in the informal sector of the economy, they are likely to be left out of the packages and thus left behind (Mujeri, 2020). As a result, unemployment will rise, and they will become more vulnerable over time. In addition, targeting the beneficiaries of the safety net packages included in these stimulus packages will be difficult due to the emergence of new poor during the pestilence. Also, as there is a severe scarcity of usable data in developing countries like Bangladesh, it is more likely that the new poor will also be left out from the Keynesian support system. Therefore, even if the total stimulus package is gigantic and will probably save the growth of the Bangladeshi economy through saving the big businesses in the formal sector like Ready Made Garment, the Keynesian policies are less likely to level the economic inequality due to deficiencies in the system like administrative corruption, informal economy, and targeting.

Although the Keynesian concept of pumping money into the economy to generate investment and employment can be argued as a step towards leveling. However, the inherent nature of Covid-19 nullifies such opportunities. The digital divide along with the low rate of vaccination, especially among the lower economic strata in the developing countries- have made the typical mode of work and employment implausible, making even the slightest of economic leveling difficult during the pandemic.

On the flipside, following the complementary approach, the idea of the great new pestilence as the new equalizer can also not be rejected entirely. Specifically, the Keynesian policies fail to equalize because they do not address the structural flaws responsible for inequality through the interventions. However, economic inequality can be levelled highly through time if the economic system can be regulated following the Keynesian principle and correcting the elementary form of structural flaws that fuel inequality. Thus, the unprecedented nature of the pestilence, by revealing the flaws of the present system, can provide an opportunity in to correct it. In such circumstances, welfare policies that ensure equal opportunity to education and healthcare can significantly equalize economic inequality, not overnight but gradually in the post covid period. Scheidel (2017, p. 18) also supports such restructuring in his book, arguing that crises like pandemics work as initiators of policy changes, unionization, and expansion of the welfare state. In other words, pandemics might work as an economic inequality leveler by ensuring equal access to basic services through collective bargaining and welfare spending.

However, similar to the arguments presented in the beginning of the paper, such theoretical idea is likely to face profound uncertainty if considered in the context of modern time. More specifically, the general question in public policy asked by Harold Laswell of 'who gets what, when and how' gets into the idea of correcting the flaws in the system that has been revealed by the pestilence (Marvick, 1980). As the pandemic produces a new set of winners and losers and enables a certain group to profit from the vulnerability of the poor by exploiting the neoliberal system, the neoliberal economic and the existing power structures are unlikely to be revamped by the pestilence both in developed and developing world. Therefore, the access to basic means to equalize through welfare policies become jeopardized. Moreover, the nature of the Covid-19 pandemic and the current political-economic system makes unionization and collective bargaining difficult, which is a catalyst for leveling, as expounded by Scheidel (2017).

Unionization and collective bargaining can initiate policy changes by forcing the elite to rectify some structural flaws, but it is unlikely to be successful for a few reasons. First, the concept of social distancing has created a new form of alienation among the workers that will make unionization and collective bargaining in the form of social movements difficult. Second, the very nature of Neoliberalism opposes unionization. And as there is expected to be a surge in formal gig-based economy in the post-pandemic world that gained momentum through the pandemic, will further strengthen alienation and make policy changes through unionization and collective bargaining implausible. Most importantly, the government's everywhere in the world will deliberately try to avert a political crisis during or after the mega-crisis of managing the pestilence that can

destabilize their status-quo. The global decline in democracy scores worldwide during the pestilence as per major democracy indices foreshadows this phenomenon (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021; Repucci and Slipowitz, 2021). In other words, the pestilence to be a great equalizer again falls in limbo due to the question of who governs not only in Bangladesh but everywhere.

Conclusion And Future Directions

Based on available data and established theories, this paper analyzed the inability of the great new pestilence of Covid-19 to be the equalizer of economic inequality in the context of Bangladesh and developing countries, in general. It demonstrated that the changes in context, especially Neoliberalism and its creation of complex inequality, is greatly responsible for not leveling the pre-pandemic economic inequality but aggravating it, which can hardly be fixed through policy changes. As the arguments presented in the paper encapsulates a vast and far-reaching issue and are based on causal links, they open avenues for multiple primary types of research in developing countries with narrower focuses. The difference in the social, political, and economic structure and their impact on covid-19 in different developing countries are also likely to produce different results. Moreover, it can facilitate further research on other forms of inequality, such as gender or racial inequality, that are closely associated with economic inequality, both during and after the pestilence. Most importantly, this paper constructs a broad hypothesis that can later be evaluated in the post-pandemic world through statistical research with widely available data. And the result of those studies will further evaluate the credibility of the arguments presented, as well as previous researches and theories used in this paper.

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Effectiveness of Public Hearing in Bangladesh: Complainers Experience and Institutional Response

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Abstract

Public hearing is one of the key instruments of social accountability mechanism which has brought some positive impact for the citizens of Bangladesh. It ensures the accountability of government agencies through citizen engagement. Public hearings enable citizens to confront leaders of service-providing government agencies about their promises and obligations, which improves and sustains the quality of services. This paper is based on mixed-method using service receiver surveys, institutional surveys and in-depth interviews. The study has found that public hearing has some positive outcomes in making service providers accountable and improving the service provisions. However, it has also certain procedural and institutional challenges, and successful public hearings need the support of the political leadership, local elites, local administration.

Key Words: Public Hearing, Anti-Corruption Commission, Bangladesh.

Introduction

Public hearing is one of the important instruments of social accountability mechanisms. It has become an effective tool to improve service provisions and combat corruption by creating social accountability of service providers. Legal and policy frameworks of Bangladesh support accountable, responsive and corruption-free public services. The constitution [Article 7(1)] of Bangladesh stipulates that all powers in the Republic belong to the people. Also, the Seventh Five Year Plan 2016 – 2020 (GoB, 2015) and National Integrity Strategy underscore the need to provide services free of corruption and establish feedback and grievance redress system (GoB, 2012). But, unfortunately, the National Household Survey on Corruption 2015 shows that 67.8 per cent of households experienced corruption while receiving services from different public and private services. The survey found the passport, law enforcement, education, BRTA, land services as the most corrupt services (TIB, 2016). In this context, the Cabinet Division issued a circular on 1st June 2014 to conduct a public hearing for improving integrity and

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preventing corruption in public offices.⁴ Equipped with these mandates, the Seventh Five Year Plan (2016 - 2020) of the ACC highlighted the importance of public hearing in ensuring corruption-free public service delivery. Realizing its efficacy in curbing corruption and improving service provisions, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) started holding a public hearing on different public service provisions in December 2014. Therefore, the main objective of the study is to assess the effectiveness of ACC's public hearing through exploring the complainer experience and responses of government institutions according to the public hearing.

Public hearing as social accountability tools: Conceptual clarity

Over the last few decades, the idea of governance has been evolving. Once it empathized on technocratic measures to improve government effectiveness and develop legal framework for market-oriented development. However, the problem was that sometimes institutions were taken over by corrupt political networks, self-serving bureaucrats and other interest groups and economic inefficiency, corruption and arbitrary rule in developing countries mushroomed. In this context, the next phase of governance thinking emphasized on civic participation and social inclusion (Sundaram and Chowdhury, 2012). Thus, social accountability has evolved as a process to check the performance of government officials, politicians and service providers through civic engagement (Ahmed, 2017).

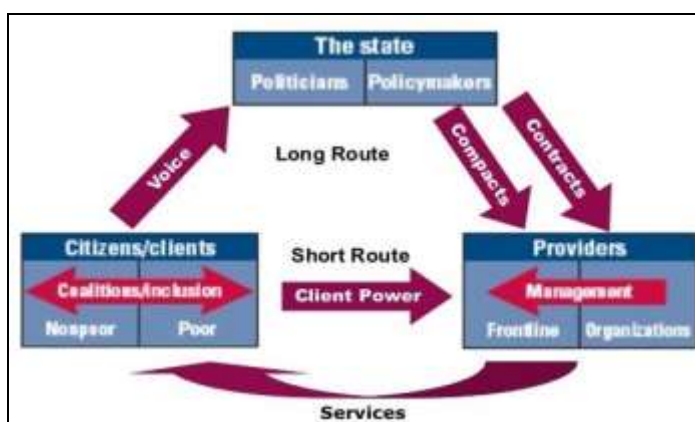
The conventional hierarchy-based accountability mechanisms have increasingly become ineffective to hold government officials and service providers accountable. To overcome the ineffectiveness of the traditional hierarchy-based accountability mechanisms, various forms of social accountability have been developed and practised over the past decades. Different social accountability mechanisms have brought about lights of hope for the common citizen in many countries (Islam, Nasrullah and Haq 2018). There are several tools of social accountability, of which the following are considered to be important: community scorecard, social audit, public budget tracking system, citizen report card, public hearing and town hall meeting (CBGA, 2012). Public hearing, is a social accountability tool, a multi-stakeholder formal process where aggrieved service recipients raised specific deviances in service delivery provisions that prompt service providers to take corrective measures.

Economist Hirschman (1970) combining economic and political dimensions gave a theory about the remedial on the decline of goods and services. The model is known as *Exit* and *Voice*. The basic concept of the model is; customers have essentially two possible responses when they perceive that an organization is demonstrating a decline in quality or benefit to customers. They can *exit* through withdrawal from the goods and services; or, they can raise their voice to repair or improve the services through the communication of complaints, grievances or proposals for changes. *Exit* works well in private provision when there are substitutes and high quality-elasticity to demand prevails

⁴ Letter issued on 1 June 2014, Cabinet Division, The Government of Bangladesh

i.e customers are quality conscious. In such conditions, due to the effect of the ‘invisible hand’⁵, the firms or organizations try to improve goods and services to avoid losing of customers or market share. *Voice* works when there is a monopoly; and thus, customers have little or no scope to withdraw. In such a condition, customers need to raise their voices to repair the services. *Voice* works well when customers with higher consumer surplus actively participate to recuperate a service (Hirschman, 1970). Thus, in line with the *voice* component, several tools (public hearing, report card surveys, community scorecards, face the public, social audit etc.) have been practised across the world to recuperate goods and services from a decline by building accountability of service providers through civic participation.

In a Weberian state mechanism, politician and policymakers implement their agenda through service-providing organizations and frontline managers. Politicians and policymakers hold frontline managers accountable through some formal and informal rules. However, because of gaps in formal and informal rules and prevailing norms and behaviours in society, sometimes policymakers and frontline managers are motivated by their self-interest and thus are engaged in collusive practices. In those cases, people can only make the policy-makers accountable in the long run through demonstrating their concerns and displeasure in the general election. In such a context, social accountability tools can make frontline managers accountable in the short run to improve public services which are shown in the figure-1 (World Bank, 2004).



Source: Making Services Work for Poor People, The World Development Report 2004

According to the Principal-Agent theory, policy-makers or supervisors (principle) expect that public officials (agents) would help them to attain their pronounced goal. However, public officials sometimes indulge in corruption and other deviances sometimes because

⁵ According to Adam Smith, whenever there is a perfect competition the *invisible hand* works to make goods and services efficient to the benefit of customers, Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, (1776).

of their self-interest; and supervisors (principle) sometimes fail to detect those deviances for the information asymmetry that prevails among themselves. Thus, social accountability tools can help to reduce information asymmetry that prevails between policy-makers or supervisors and public officials, so that policy-makers can detect public officials' deviances and thereby make them accountable. On the other hand, economist Becker (1968) mentioned that self-interested public officials seek out bribes so long as the expected gain from corruption accedes the expected cost. In this view, he stated that one of the ways through which corruption can be mitigated is through increasing the probability of detection. Therefore, social accountability tools can help to reduce information asymmetry between policymakers and frontline managers and increase the detection of corruption. Moreover, social accountability can strengthen the relations between government and citizens and can contribute to improving the process of delivering public services to the people, fostering efficiency, transparency and accountability within public institutions and exposing government failure and corruption (UNDP 2010). The government, however, has to create a positive and enabling environment for citizens to the success of the social accountability mechanism. There are four conditions to create this enabling environment for social accountability to succeed: organized and capable citizen groups; government champions who are willing to engage; context and cultural appropriateness; and access to information (ANSA-EAP 2017).

Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative research techniques were applied in this study. The quantitative technique involves two surveys – complainers survey and institutions survey, and key informant interviews. The complainers survey interviewed people who raised complaints at the public hearings and the institutional survey interviewed concerned authority/officials at institutions on which people raised complaints.

Up to December 2016, the ACC had conducted 35 public hearings- of which 1 was in 2014, 5 in 2015 and 29 in 2016. 17 public hearings were considered for the study giving six months' gestation periods to allow institutions enough time to solve or address raised complaints. However, the contact information on the 4 public hearings was not found available. Thus, 13 public hearings (detail in Table 1) were considered for the study. In total, 299 participants raised complaints and 59 public officials of different offices attended in 13 public hearings covered by this study.

Table 1: Number of public hearing by years, organizers and locations

Year		Organizers		Location		
2015	2016	ACC & TIB	ACC	Upazila	District	Dhaka Metropolitan
5	8	5	8	9	1	3
Total = 13		Total = 13		Total = 13		

Source: Author

Finally, the complainer survey collected interviews with 195 aggrieved persons out of 299 complainers. Regarding the institutional survey, interviews were conducted with 51

institutions out of the targeted 59 institutions. Some targeted respondents in the complaint survey could not be interviewed because of the wrong address, phone number etc. Thus, it can be said that the surveys were sorts of census with some non-responses. Two different structured questionnaires were used for collecting data from both surveys. Analyzing the background of public hearing attendants who participated in the survey, it is found that 66.7 per cent were from rural areas and 33.3 per cent from urban areas. Regarding sex, it is found that 7.8 per cent were female and 92.2 per cent male. Among the survey participants, majority of them belong to age groups 20-30 (6.3%), 31-40 (19.2%), 41-50 (25.3%), 51-60 (24.7%) and 61+ (24.2%).

On the other hand, some qualitative techniques were applied to collect information for the study including key informant interviews and cases studies. Key interviews were done with a Commissioner of ACC, Deputy Commissioners (DC), Additional Deputy Commissioners (ADC), Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNOs), the concerned supervisory authority at the district level, ACC officials at district and Upazila levels, members of Corruption Prevent Committees, a representative of the World Bank and TIB's CCC members. Different checklists were used for conducting these key informant interviews and case studies. The indirect sources of information include relevant books, laws, circulars and different documents.

One of the major limitations of the research is that the survey with complaint raisers could not be done with all the participants. In 13 public hearings, around 299 participants attended, of those 195 could be reached for the questionnaire survey. The remaining 165 participants could not be reached because of the absence of participants' detailed contact information including cell numbers.

An overview of public hearings conducted by ACC in Bangladesh

As per Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Act, 2004, the ACC is mandated to prevent corruption. According to the Act, corruption prevention has seven dimensions that include *inter alia* raising mass awareness, promoting integrity and identifying the sources of corruption. ACC's public hearings on different institutions serve all these dimensions in varying degrees. Thereby, the ACC conducts public hearings as a social accountability tool aiming at promoting transparency and accountability of public institutions and combating corruption. The Corruption Prevention Committees (CPCs)⁶ constituted by the ACC and TIB's Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) at districts and *Upazilas* have been helping it to conduct public hearings. The World Bank and JICA have given financial resources for their implementation.

Thus, embolden with the different legal and policy frameworks, the ACC started to conduct a public hearing on public service provisions from 15 December 2014 to curb

⁶ According to the ACC policies, each district and metropolitan Corruption Prevention Committee comprises 13 members and a Upazila Corruption Prevention Committee comprises nine members. One-third of the members are women. One President, two Vice-Presidents and a General Secretary are nominated by the members of the committee.

corruption and improve public services. Up to December 2016, the ACC had conducted public hearings on AC Land offices, Sub-registry Offices, Rural Electrification Board (REB), RAJUK, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), Department of Immigration and Passport (DIP) etc. at both local and central level.

The public hearings conducted at Upazila and district levels were attended by major public services. They include AC Land offices, Sub-registry Offices, Settlement Offices, Rural Electrification Board (REB), health complexes etc. The public hearings in Dhaka Metropolitan City were on RAJUK, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), Department of Immigration and Passport (DIP). The reasons for selecting these institutions are that they have been believed to be infested with corruption from where a large number of citizens receive services and they are very essential for ensuring human development and citizens' well-being.

Research finding and Discussion

Effectiveness of public hearing

The effectiveness of hearing depends on multiple factors including active participation of the participants, positive nod and commitment of the concerned authority against whom the complaints were raised, the environment of the hearing session to read out complaints, institutional responses, etc. Findings of the research are presented through synthesising information from two surveys done with the complainers and authorities, and key informant interviews. The findings showed that public hearing helps the *principals* (government) to make accountable the *agent* (public officials/concerned authorities) and take initiatives to detect their deviances. Moreover, public hearing is also effective for the citizens since it enables them to raise complaints against the service providers or concerned authorities and make them accountable in the short route to improve public services. As public officials are the only service provider, customers (citizens) *voices* through public hearings can repair the services.

Submission, raising and nature of complaints

One of the key elements of a public hearing is to raise complaints on service delivery provisions. The complaints made the concerned institutions accountable that eventually created a space to resolve raised complaints and initiate institutions response to prevent recurrence of those problems again. For this purpose, the ACC asks service recipients to put their complaints into designated complaint boxes usually installed at District Commissioner (DC) or Upazila Nirbahee Officer (UNO) office and headquarter of the particular institution. Organizers receive complaints before the hearing event so that they can invite concerned institutions or authorities to ensure their presence and give their responses to the complaints. After proper scrutiny, a certain number of complaints are allowed to be presented at a public hearing event. The purpose of the scrutiny is to avoid duplication, validity and cogency. Moreover, some complaints are encouraged to raise instantly at a hearing session.

Modes of complaints submission

Out of 299 targeted participants who participated in the public hearings 65.2 per cent (195) could be reached through this survey - of which 66 per cent submitted their complaints before the public hearing in the written form in their respective designated complaint box and the remaining 34 per cent submitted their complaints on the day of the public hearing session.

Submission of complaints before the public hearing

The study found that majority of the complaints in 13 public hearings were raised before the hearing event. In response to the question-how complainers submitted their complaints, it is found that a considerable percentage of complaints was (66%) submitted in designated complaint boxes before the scheduled time. The remaining complaints (34%) were submitted during hearing sessions.

Getting the opportunity to voice complaints during hearing sessions

The study found the environment in the hearing events was very conducive and friendly to voice complaints. This was adequately demonstrated as almost all complainers got the opportunity to read out their complaints. According to survey findings, an overwhelming percentage of complainers (96%) could read out their complaints at the public hearing events. Only a few complainers (i.e., 4%) could not do so for some unavoidable reasons like the eruption of a scuffle between complainers and opponent parties/quarters, shortage of time, a similar type of complaints were raised beforehand etc.

However, there were few instances where complainers were persuaded not to voice their complaints. It was observed that some public officials approached complainers beforehand and prevent them to raise their complaints with the promise of solving or settling the problem within a short time.

Deliberation status of complaints at hearing sessions

Raising complaints against public officials during a public hearing is a matter of courage and a new experience for service recipients as well. Despite this, the study found that an incredible percentage of complainers (85.9%) could raise or read out their complaints fully.

There were few instances where complainers were interrupted at the time of raising their complaints. However, no corrective measures were taken to prevent those interruptions. Moreover, once a public hearing session was postponed due to scuffle and chaos among the complainers, aggrieved quarters and concerned authority. Thus, the remaining complainers missed their opportunity to present complaints.

Raising of complaints without fear

A very high percentage of complainers who attended the hearing programmes could voice their complaints without fear and favour. According to the complainer survey, 94

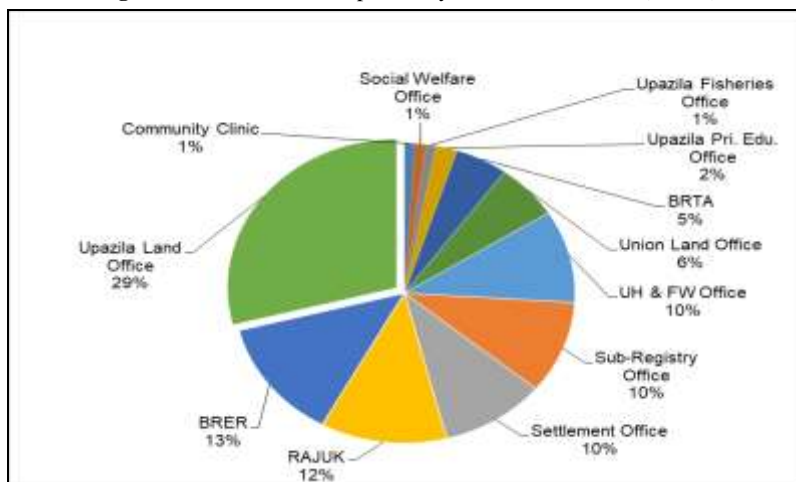
per cent of complainers could raise their complaints during the public hearing programmes without fear.

The reasons for which complainers feared to raise complaints include pessimism about getting the solution on the problem after the hearing, scare about the authority, risks of experiencing harassment afterwards from concerned authority, pressure from local political leaders and influential people.

Complaints raised against institutions and officials

The survey findings reveal that complainers in 13 public hearings made complaints against diverse institutions and individuals. The majority of the complaints were made

Fig. 1: Distribution of complaints by offices/institutions (n=195)



Source: Author

against institutions and individuals involved in land services (67%). Among land offices, the majority of complaints were against Upzilla Land Offices (29%). Other notable institutions against which complaints made complaints include BREB⁷ (13%), RAJUK⁸ (12%), health services (10%). (please see figure No. 1).

Nature of the complaints

Analysing the types of complaints, it was found the most common types of complaints were bribery; harassment of the complainer by a section of public officials, negligence of duties of public officials; unlawful behaviour of the public official's fraudulence and unlawful behaviour. In the land sector, most complaints were relating to illegal occupation or grabbing of land with illegal documents and muscle power. Health service-related complaints centred on the negligence of duties by doctors and other service

⁷ Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board.

⁸ Rajdhani (Capital city of Bangladesh) Unnayan Kotripokha (RAJUK)

providers, scarcity of medicine and bribe paid for receiving services at hospitals. Major complaints against REB services include delays in giving electricity connections for households and bribes paid for getting services. Regarding the services of RAJUK, the dominant complaints made by complainers were the occupation of plots by illegal means, not getting of plots allotted by RAJUK. The BRTA⁹ related complaints were mostly related to bribery experienced by the complainers.

Resolutions of complaints

Decisions delivered on complaints during hearing events

Public hearing is a platform through which ordinary service recipients raised complaints on service deviations of service provisions so that institutions can take remedial measures to solve raised problems. The survey findings of the complainer survey reveal that the majority of the complainers got decisions or commitments during hearing events from concerned authority against which complaints were raised.

It is observed that among the complainers who got the decision on raised complaints, 69 per cent received commitments to solve the problems from concerned authorities. Other notable solutions include the setting of deadlines for the solutions of the complaints (15%) and an order given by the ACC to conduct an inquiry on the allegations by concerned authorities (19%).

Reasons for getting no commitment to the solution during public hearings

According to the complainer survey, 22 per cent of complainers did not receive any promise for resolving their problem. The most prominent reason for which some complaints did not receive commitment include authority did not take the complaint seriously (51%), beyond the jurisdiction of concerned authorities (11%) and negligence of authorities (9%).

Authorities' initiatives to solve complaints

It is found that after the public hearings authorities took encouraging initiatives to solve complaints. For almost two-thirds (72%) of the complaints, concerned authorities took the initiative to solve them. The most notable measures taken by authorities include concrete measures taken to solve the complaints, setting of deadlines for the resolutions of complaints and orders given to conduct inquiries as per the directives given by the ACC.

Status of complaints solved after public hearings

One of the aims of public hearing events is to create a space for resolving raised complaints. If complaints are solved, creating social accountability through public hearing would pronounce and participants' trust in the effectiveness of public hearing would enhance. This study shows an encouraging picture of responses made by

⁹ Bangladesh Road Transport Authority.

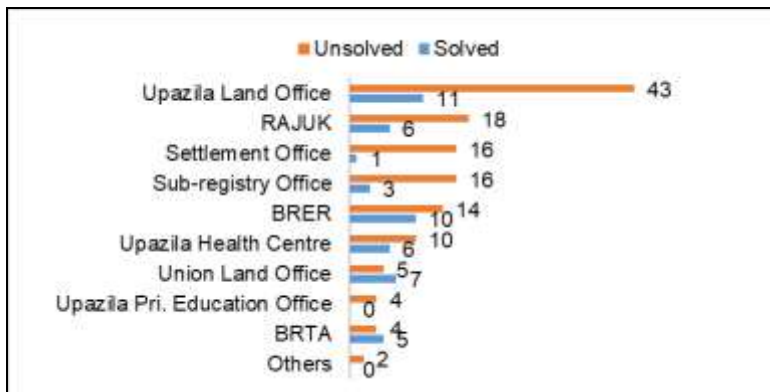
concerned authorities. According to the complainers' survey, the majority of the complainers (78.0%) got commitment or assurance to solve the problems during the hearing sessions. Afterwards, about one-third of the complainers (27.2%) said that they got solutions on their complaints afterwards and around one-tenth (14.0%) were under process. However, more than half of the complaints (59%) remained unsolved up to the survey period.

The survey findings reveal that complainers received solutions because of the active measures taken by concerned authorities. There were instances where complainers got back bribe money paid to certain public officials.

Status of complaints solved by institutions

According to the complainer survey, most of the unsolved complaints were relating to land services. Empirically, 43 complaints raised against Upazila Land Offices remained unsolved out of 54 complaints. Similarly, RAJUK could not solve 18 complaints out of 24 complaints. Only small numbers of complaints against Settlement Offices (1 out of 17) and Sub-registry Offices (3 out of 19) were solved. The number of solved complaints was found higher than the unsolved complaints in cases of Union land office and BRTA.

Fig. 2: Status of complaints solved by institutions (n=181)



Source: Author

Reasons for complaints unresolved after a public hearing

The major reasons for which no solution on the complaints observed include non-cooperation from concerned authorities (69%), inability or refusal to pay bribe as demanded by authorities (27%) and lack of initiatives by authorities (24%). In view of non-response on complaints, a complainer opined that 'authorities do not bother complaints raised in the public hearing'.

While discussing with the key informants it was evident that it had been possible for concerned authorities to ignore promises due to lack of process tracking or monitoring on the progress of the commitments given at public hearing events. It is also alleged that a

section of public officials made commitments to appease ACC officials attending the events, they were not willing to implement those promises.

Post-public hearing experiences by Complainers

Difficulties experienced by complainers

The empirical information of this study reveals that complainers encountered challenges during receiving services after the hearings. According to the complainers' survey, 43 per cent of complainers faced difficulties when they again received services from those institutions.

The notable types of challenges include not being enthusiastic and active enough for solving the problem (70%), non-cooperation of concerned authorities (60%), bad behaviour compared to their earlier encounters (42%), create obstacles in deliveries of services (15.9%), demand of unauthorized payment (12%) etc.

The case study reveals that sometimes complainers had to face untoward situations e.g., receiving life threats from local counterparts and influential people after public hearing events. There is also evidence of physical assault experienced by a complainer.

In one case, the life of a complainer became endangered at a public hearing event before the arrival of ACC personnel and local administration. Thus, the security of complainers has become a matter of concern for organizers.

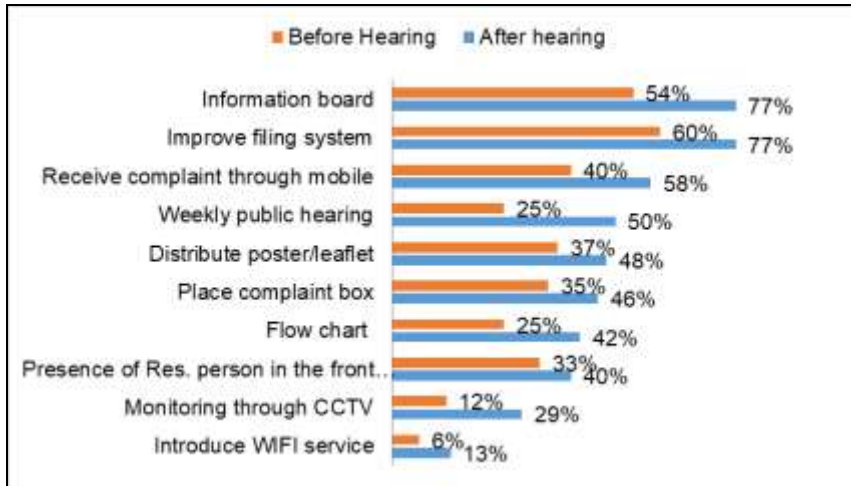
Individuals involved in harassing complainers

Complainers who voiced complaints during the public hearing events experienced negative responses from concerned authorities. Among the complainers 75 per cent experienced from officials/staffs of concerned authorities. This is followed by complainers against whom (40%) complaints were made. A complainer whose land had been occupied by an influential quarter was forced to leave his place after facing a threat for making the complaint on the occupation. The complainer did not receive the necessary security and support from the local administration too.

Post-public hearing institutional responses

Measures were taken by concerned institutions

The surveys conducted with complainers and authorities reveal that after public hearing institutions took certain measures for improving the quality of services. Almost all the measures pertained to improving transparency and accountability of public services. They exhibited positive trends regarding some indicators that include improved filing system, receiving of the complaint through mobile, conduction of weekly public hearing, distribution of posters/leaflets, placing of complaint box, flowchart, ensure the presence of a responsible person in the front desk, monitoring through CCTV and introduction of WiFi services. For example, 77 per cent of the institutions had information boards after public hearings whereas the corresponding figure before hearing events was 54 per cent. Similar trends were observed in other areas.

Fig. 3: Measures taken by authorities after the public hearing

Source: Author

Participants' opinion on the arrangement of public hearing events

Publicity on hearing programme

The organizers of 13 public hearings used multiple mediums of publicity to invite local people to attend and come up with complaints. The highest percentage of complainers were informed about public hearing events from friends/neighbours/acquaintances (29%) and use of loudspeakers/miking (29%) followed by information dissemination through leaflets and posters (23%) and ACC officials or members of Duprok representatives (22%), etc.

Time allocation for raising complaints

Getting the opportunity to raise or read out complaints can be considered as one of the key determinants of a successful public hearing. Although the majority of the participants (96%) got the opportunity to raise complaints, 4% of complainers could not raise their complaints. The findings of the complainer' survey demonstrate that the majority of the complainers (97%) got sufficient time to raise and read out their complaints during the public hearing events. Complainers who could not get enough time to do the same due to shortage of time and presence of the influential persons and concerned authority. In those cases, organizers sometimes forced complainers to read out their complaints hurriedly. However, in a few public hearings, a considerable time was spent for giving guests to deliver their long speeches.

The seating arrangements of public hearings were found highly satisfactory. According to the survey, 95.8 per cent of the participants viewed that the seating arrangements in the public hearing venue were comfortable and satisfactory. A little percentage (i.e., 4.2%) expressed their dissatisfaction. Almost all the participants (97.4%) expressed their

satisfaction with the quality of the sound system arranged for public hearing events. All 13 public hearings were arranged at district and *Upazila* headquarters, and central offices of the concerned institutions (e.g., RAJUK). Therefore, the location of the arrangements was found convenient by the complainers. The survey shows that almost all complainers (97.4%) were satisfied with the location of the venues as they were easy to locate and commute. Almost all participants (94.2%) opined that public hearing events commenced in due time.

No complainer was found to dislike public hearing events. The reason for the liking was it created opportunities for making authorities accountable before the public (75%) followed by the opportunity to raise complaints before officials (69%) and commitment to solving complaints (20%) etc.

Challenges of Public Hearing

Public hearing is a multi-stakeholder event involving different stages. It needs to mobilize ordinary people and institutions and other stakeholders at different stages of public hearing such as collecting complaints, organizing the event, raising complaints at the event and facilitating their solutions. Moreover, complaints on deteriorating public services sometimes create anomalous situations with the prevailing state of affairs, especially with various rules, regulations and practices. Sometimes, the interests of different stakeholders are intertwined. Therefore, a public hearing event needs coordination, mobilization and persuasion of different stakeholders which sometimes poses different challenges.

Challenges during organizing the events

One of the main challenges of organizing public hearings is the Lack of citizens' awareness on the public hearing processes. Ordinary complainers do not know exactly what the public hearing is, why the public hearing is arranged and what benefit it would bring. Therefore, some people were not forthcoming and enthusiastic enough to raise complaints at the public hearing. Moreover, people don't have enough knowledge about the services provided by government institutions. Sometimes service recipients do not know how to get a service, who is responsible for the service, the jurisdiction of the concerned office etc. Therefore, service recipients raised complaints against one office that should be against another office. Such types of complaints created confusion at public hearing events and institutions fall into dilemmas to solve them.

Generally, public hearings are arranged at *Upazila* and district headquarters, therefore publicity of public hearing (Lack of sufficient publicity) events are mostly confined within the periphery of *Upazila* and district headquarters. Thus, people from remote and disadvantaged areas got less opportunity to learn about public hearing events and thereby lessening their participation. Additionally, public hearings were shown less participation of people from the marginalized areas. The location of the hearing events is also found to pose constraints to people living in remote areas. Thus, people from disadvantaged regions got less opportunities to participate in public hearing events.

Furthermore, service recipients feel hesitate to submit complaints. As compliant boxes were installed at DC offices, UNO offices or the head office of concerned institutions, ordinary people hesitated to submit complaints fearing repercussions from public officials and influential. Besides, in some cases, concerned authorities, brokers or influential political persons prevented or intimidated a few complainers to raise complaints. Eventually, few complainers kept themselves away from raising their complaints.

On the other hand, the lack of interest of public officials was found to participate in the public hearing. Some responsible officials of some institutions or offices were found to be reluctant to participate in some public hearing events due to other businesses. As a result, some complaints could not be responded during the public hearing events in a proper manner and administrative measures to resolve them lingered. Moreover, not all public institutions are invited to public hearing events. It is observed that some local offices/institutions that are found to be corrupt and delinquent i.e. police, tax, custom, Roads and Highway, Water Development Board were not invited at the public hearing events. There is a lack of logistics, human resources and enough budget allocation for the ACC to arrange public hearings.

Challenges during the public hearing

Sometimes public hearings started late in some places because of late attendance of guests and giving them protocol. Moreover, in some places, considerable time was lost because of lengthy speeches given by some guests and to accommodate all guests to deliver their speech. It is observed that sometimes public hearing sessions were often interfered with and interrupted by a section of local influential political and elected preventatives. There was an instance of postponing a public hearing event because of a scuffle between the supporters of a political party and complainers.

Challenges after the public hearing

Sometimes the resolution of complaints went into oblivion due to transfers and retirements of a concerned public official. The ACC and participating institutions undertook weakly or less follow up to ensure resolution of complaints raised at public hearing sessions even with a specific deadline. It is observed that almost two-thirds of the complaints (73%) raised at public hearing events have not received solutions from concerned institutions. At public hearing events, authorities gave commitments to solve problems. However, some of them exhibited negligence or lack of interest in solving those complaints.

Sometimes, solutions to raised complaints rested with the jurisdiction of the court therefore the solutions were beyond the jurisdiction of authorities. It is highly visible in cases of land disputes. However, complainers attended the hearing programme with the hope of getting the solution to their complaints. There is a lack of interest of newly deputed officials to execute decisions were made by the public hearing. This study reveals that the rotation of public officials causes an obstacle to resolving the complaints. The public officials who join after the public hearing events often do not feel comfortable

or show interest to execute the decision or commitment given by their respective authorities. In some cases, they are found fully uninformed.

Some people who attended and raised complaints at public hearings felt repercussions from institutions and other powerful quarters. Sometimes, they felt insecure about their life and post-hearing harassment. The types of uncertainty people felt included intimidation by concerned authorities, risks of being harassed and pressure from political leaders and locally influential people.

Concluding remarks

Public hearing has found as a powerful tool for creating social accountability through mutual interaction of service providers and service recipients. Thus, it can be considered as an effective intervention for fighting corruption and improving public services that eventually enhance public trust in service delivery institutions. It is found that public hearing events in 13 areas were organized in a good manner though there are some challenges. They have created considerable enthusiasm among the recipients of the services. Despite some positive outcomes, this initiative has suffered from certain procedural and institutional deficiencies. The challenges might not be surmountable to overcome. The research would embolden policymakers and public managers to bring changes in the attitude and building professionalism of public officials that would make a significant difference in curbing corruption and reducing service recipients' miseries.

Acknowledgement

Data used in this article were collected as part of TIB's research that was published through a press conference.

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Skill Recognition of Overseas Migrants in Australia and Scope for Bangladesh Government: A Policy Analysis to Explore Australian Labor Market

Md. Foysal Jaman Shishir *

Abstract

This paper focuses on the Australian governments' skill recognition policy of migrants coming from overseas. In this policy domain, the stakeholders' position and what policy instruments are required to fully utilize migrants' skills and previous professional knowledge have been concentrated. The study also illustrates how the Bangladesh government can explore the Australian labor market and match the global standard of the skillset of potential migrants. Recognizing skills and professional knowledge of overseas people is essential to make a vibrant Australian community, and addressing the skill shortage problem in the post-pandemic era would be the most challenging task of the Australian government. Therefore, it opens the windows of opportunity for other developing countries like Bangladesh to explore the Australian labor market as it could be the new source of foreign currency. This research paper is developed through in-depth interviews and secondary sources including government documents, books, journals, literature, and reports. From Bangladesh's perspective, the socio-economic significance of this research is immense as the research demonstrates a potential new source of employment which is key to make a stable society and will be a useful guideline for different stakeholders, especially those involved in decision-making.

Key Words: Skilled Migration, Skill Recognition Policy, Australia, Bangladesh, Labor Market, Covid-19.

Introduction

Employment is an integral part of migrant's settlement as it fosters economic security and enables a positive sense of belonging in the new host country (Cebulla and Tan, 2019). However, many skilled and professional experienced migrants finding themselves trapped in doing such jobs where they cannot fully utilize their skills and professional abilities (Barraket, 2007). Barriers like racism and discrimination, English proficiency, ineffective government policy, and a rigid system of skill recognition grasp newly arrived migrants from experiencing preferable employment. Both refugees and skilled migrants contribute immensely to the Australian economy as they key to unlock the skill shortage problems (Seet, and Jones, 2021). Although travel restrictions due to the recent pandemic have brought skilled migration programs to a standstill, but the Australian government is seriously considering overhauling the migration program in favor of skilled workers who would bring massive economic benefits to Australia (Coates, 2021).

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In this paper, firstly made an attempt to address the problem of skill recognition in terms of overseas migration employment and design a policy regarding this issue. The purpose of the policy is to recognize the skill and professional experience of newly arrived migrants and find the quickest way possible to be employed where they can utilize their previous skills, knowledge, and professional abilities. A significant part of this paper will also discuss proper criteria to evaluate if the proposed policy to implement in full motion. Moreover, the views of stakeholders, policy makers' constraints to design an appropriate policy regarding the skill recognition issue, and probable problems before implementation will be discussed briefly. In other words, how their overseas knowledge and skill could be fully utilized to make a vibrant Australian economy is also the aim of the paper. On the other hand, due to the lack of employment opportunities in Bangladesh, the people of Bangladesh consider migration as a lucrative and safe livelihood source (Siddiqui, 2003). from the Bangladesh government's point of view, it is an opportunity as well because this brings scope for the Bangladesh government to expand its labor market to Australia. Although this paper focuses on skills recognition of overseas migrants, a detailed analysis would give us an idea of the nature of the Australian job market, what scopes and the opportunity it provides for the migrants, and how the Bangladesh government could capitalize the labor market in the current circumstance.

Methodology

This research is an analytical one and therefore, it is analyzed through using secondary data from a wide range of sources like research articles, books, review articles, and NGO reports. In addition, some grey literature sources like newspaper articles, government documents, and reports are also used with a view to analyzing current and unique data. Because those several government documents, journal papers, research articles help to develop a concrete web of meaning through analyzing secondary data. In addition interviews of top Bangladesh government officials, representatives of NGOs, representatives of migrant workers' associations, and private recruiting agencies' officials are taken to unveil the concrete insight of Bangladesh government's skilled migrants' policy and how Bangladesh is planning to fill the void of the existing policy. In-depth interviews provide a vivid picture of a situation and allow stakeholders to share their thoughts and offer some useful insights. Therefore, for this research 15 in-depth interviews of different stakeholders who are closely involved in policymaking were taken. However, due to the ongoing pandemic, those interviews had to take through over the phone or email communication. Those communications were lasted 10-15 minutes depending on their answers.

Economic and Social Impacts of Skilled Migrants to Australia

Employing newly arrived migrants and utilizing their previous skills and experience is crucial as it can contribute immensely to the Australian economies. A report (2018) from Deloitte and Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) Australia illustrates that better use of experience and skill of migrants in Queensland could contribute a massive

\$250 million to the regional economy over a decade. This indicates that there is an opportunity for the Australian government to utilize newly arrived migrants as human capital and maximizing the benefits. Australia's skilled migrant intake program has been contributing immensely to the structural transition of Australia's economy, productivity, and labor market outcomes (Wright et al. 2016). As per the current trends, by the end of 2050 migrants will have contributed a staggering 1.6 trillion to Australia's GDP. There is a chance that without skilled migrants, the population of Australia would stagnate which would affect the economy severely (Sherrell, 2015). It is unfortunate, when considering the skilled migration program through the lens of cost and benefit, policymakers often miscalculate the whole situation, but skilled migrants have plenty of things to offer to the Australian economy and society (Tani, 2017).

When a person is given chance to utilize his skill, he would show less frequent job dissatisfaction than those who are victimized by skill underutilization. Job dissatisfaction can always be a small factor but impacts a big magnitude on the social and even physical and mental health of a newly arrived migrant (Wright et al. 2016). Here, mental health is as important as physical in terms of impacting the social lives of a person. Factors influencing the social life of a new migrant include job satisfaction which plays a big role as well as effect unemployed newly arrived family members. Workers suffer from skill underutilization tend to score low in mental health scale due to various reason such as job dissatisfaction, lower salary due to not recognizing previous experience, low self-esteem and many more. A family falls victim to skill underutilization and inadequate employment also affects parenting. Reduced income and negligence in nurturing behaviors result in a risk of lower educational accomplishment of the future generation which makes the family stuck in the same social class forever (O'Dwyer and Mulder, 2015). In the matter of settlement in a new country, the sense of belonging is a very important factor for a new migrant family. But working long hours on lower wages devalues their previous higher education qualification and skill which hardens their adjustment circumstances, creates instability and frustration which affect the social and personal life of the migrant in various ways. In many instances, they find the expectation of migrating and settling with a job in their expert areas very misaligning with the challenges in the job market of the host country (Wanigathunga, 2018).

Policy Analysis: Skill Recognition of Overseas Migrants in Australia

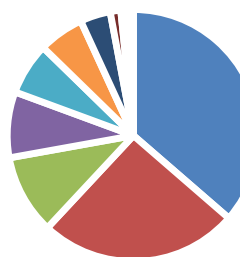
There are several entities and organizations currently accountable for recognizing the skills of overseas migrants. Responsible organizations mainly categorize the overseas skills into health profession, non-health related professions, and generalist occupations. The detailed analysis of the skill recognition policy of overseas migrants in Australia would uncover the clear image of the newly arrived migrants' resettlement process, the nature of the Australian labor market, and potential problems of policy implementation.

Problem Definition of Skill Underutilization

The migrants suffer from various problems and discriminations within the course of settlement in the host country and skill underutilization are one of the critical problems

among many which undermine their previous experiences and skill (Weller, 2017). The host countries' work credentials often are so rigid towards overseas migrants that their previous skills or education has no value in the new place and causes new distresses for them to be settled in the unknown and unwanted workforce (Deloitte, 2018). The underappreciation of experience and skills of the migrant's community first needs to be recognized to define skill underutilization. The concept of skill underutilization describes such circumstances in which the newly arrived workers do not get the chance of using their previous work experiences or skills or knowledge from their past education. Often the host country's work credentials bar many migrants to utilize their skills or post-graduate degrees obtained overseas. As a result, the migrants are bound to work in a lower-skilled job arena which affects their economic, mental, and social life (Shirmohammadi *et al.* 2019). However, there are potential net economic and social benefits are lying in many aspects which can be achieved by fitting these skilled experienced migrant workers in their expert areas in term of employment.

**Figure 1: Top 10 job Barriers fo
(Reasons nominated by 1333 newly arrived M
their difficulties in finding work matching**



Source: Adapted From - Cebulla, A. and Tan, G., 2019. Skilled migration to South Australia 2010-2014: profile and employment outcomes of recent permanent and temporary migrants.

A survey of more than 1700 skilled migrants took place in the research suggests that (Figure-1), almost 53% felt they were failing to utilize their skill and other abilities. Even worse, more than 15% confirmed they were unemployed at the time of the survey (Cebulla and Tan, 2019). Many skilled programs are not providing potential outcomes as there are significant disparities between the expectations of newly arrived migrants and the reality of the job market. Now, this survey about skilled migrants shows how difficult it is for the refugees in a new country to settle with a preferred job in their habituated work area to utilize their skills and expertise. The circumstances in which the migrants leave their countries are very unfavorable to bring a skill certificate to their newly arrive country. Even if they manage to bring necessary documents to prove their professional qualifications is still hard to convince various Australian employers. Though the

Australian authority leaves some options like study or training, but those opportunities are too expensive and only accessible in the cities (Tian *et al.* 2018). Newly arrived migrants even need to take a reskilling program which is sometimes different from their primary field of experience. Skill underutilization greatly affects the economy and social aspects in many ways and the cost is more vivid than the regular eyes can see it. According to Weller (2017), overseas migrants are motivated to work hard and serve for a longer period. Also, the years of work experience they gain from home countries help employers earn more. As a multicultural nation and having employees from different cultures, Australia provides a competitive business advantage. Therefore, they can attract other customers from different communities which is profitable.

Stakeholder's Position

Successful settlement is defined by some parameters such as participating in the labor market as well as developing a sense of belonging within the community or a feeling that life is back to normal (Boese, 2015). However, many skilled and professional experienced migrants see them stuck in doing such jobs where they cannot fully utilize their skills and professional abilities (Barraket, 2007). Several Australian governments funded settlement service organizations work to support the process of adjustment to life in a new country. In this process, other stakeholders like public servants, employers, newly arrived migrants, and taxpayers influence to different degrees as well. Though not all the stakeholders have the same view regarding the skill matching of the migrants in the settlement process.

Australia has always been carrying the world's largest skilled migration program and provides a wide range of facilities like economic stability, social security, better education, and overall good quality of life which attract skilled migrant applicants (Settlement Council of Australia, 2019). The Australian government provides significant supports to migrants to settle successfully in society through various services. Therefore, the settlement service organizations have a greater influence on their settlement. As a part of two-tier settlement support, an initial set of services is delivered on arrival through several mainstream services provided by governments and community organizations to pass the immediate settlement period which is considered as an orientation to Australian society. After the initial program, the second set of services are provided to help migrants to become self-reliant and participate actively in Australian society (Boese, 2015). These government-funded settlement service organizations not only provide migrants to find long-term housing, property induction but also help them to find work by their skills (SCoA, 2019). For example, Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) formed a connection between the employer and the community to employ them in the labor market. However, migrants feel that the limited time frame for government-funded settlement services should be extended (Rajendran *et al.* 2020).

Australia gives utmost importance to the migrant policy as the current policy receives support from the major political parties (Seet, and Jones, 2021). However, several contextual factors can affect the settlement process. For example, during 2013, the

elected conservative Liberal party declared ‘stooping the boats’ based on its economic austerity agenda (Davidson, 2019). Hence, it created consternation among several stakeholders. In addition to that, public servants execute the government policy; therefore, their ideas and beliefs can be magnified by in which context they are formulating and executing the policy (Howlett, 2011). A bureaucratic rearranging can fragment settlement portfolio across different public departments, hence, create further interruption.

From the migrants’ point of view, they believe in most of the cases they cannot utilize the skill and work experience they earned from their home countries. Skill underappreciation often leads them to tangible and intangible costs in proficiency and settlement issues. Failing to recognize the skill leads them to reskill to a field different from their prior working experience. On the other hand, employers play as host and cultural ambassadors and want a new labor source to assist the development of their business (Boese, 2015). Therefore, employing a skilled migrant is considered an opportunity that can contribute to developing local business as well as the Australian economy. Though the Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA, 2019) has suggested that migrants settlement services in Australia face a constrain in balancing the interests of several sectors but there is no denying that, Australian economy needs a new workforce, and migrants want their skills to be recognized. This is supposed to be a win-win situation. However, different contexts and interests of different actors can affect the settlement process and bring different outcomes.

Policy Instruments

Policy instruments are considered as one of the most vital components in policy design where a policymaker can pick appropriate instruments according to the policy problem from a wide range of options. Professor Howlett (2018) argued that policy instruments have a huge impact on policy development by altering both political and policy behavior and at the same time selecting appropriate instruments to ensure delivery of services and goods to the public. Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) has classified five types of policy instruments hence, policymakers can choose the most effective, equitable, and acceptable policy instruments to both community and the government. According to the APSC those five categories are ‘direct government regulations’ - laws and regulations which draw directly from the government, ‘self-regulation, quasi-regulation and co-regulation – rules and codes of conduct which can be magnified by government-industry cooperation or government involvement, ‘voluntarism’- it refers a policy instrument which depends on the responsibilities from an industry to act in a specific manner, ‘education and information’- the range of education and information-based instruments are broad and can be done through several means like training, campaigns, product certification, and award schemes, and finally ‘economic’- provided incentives can be negative or positive and it depends in which context the instruments are used.

From a policymaker’s point of view, it is vital to consider the factors like public opinions, socio-economic system, political culture, and the existing systems of the government

institutions. Because while designing the policy it is necessary to understand in which context the policymaker is taking the decision and at the same time policymaker needs to look beyond the traditional system despite the availability of regulatory and non-regulatory policy instruments as it helps to deliver better services and goods to the public (APSC, 2009). However, considering policy tools is consistently constrained by the existing array of government interventions hence, the information related to skilled migrant settlement can be extremely difficult to gather on regular basis (Marsh and McConnell, 2010). This barrier can be overcome by a good working relationship with other Australian government agencies (APSC, 2009). Professor Howlett (2011) argued that a better delivery can be incorporated through a perfect mix of the substantive instrument and procedural instrument as each category has something valuable to contribute to responding effectively to a particular issue. These two instruments can design a successful policy as irrespective of the origins of goods and services their quality, quantity, cost, and price can be affected by the substantive instruments, and on the other hand procedural instruments affect goods and services formed by the government and focused on changing policymaking process to define and proper implementation of policy goals (Howlett, 2011). In addition, the focus should be given to the wider aspect like an improvement as it is directly connected to the delivery of goods and at the same time it determines the success or effectiveness of the policy relying on the interests of the policymaker as well as the receiver of the services.

When it comes to formulating a successful migrant and refugee settlement policy (Including skill matching) Shergold (2019) urges to bring collaboration between procedural and substantive instruments to overcome barriers like language, funding sources for entrepreneurship, and valuing previous experience. In addition, there should be greater collaboration between government and non-government sectors to provide better service delivery. Both independent and sponsored migrants should be aware of their rights to come under the campaigns the government has started for them which needs education and information instruments like training, product certifications and various award schemes (Wright *et al.* 2016). David Collins (2016) executive director of training, NSW agrees that greater collaboration between private and government sectors is vital to successful migrants' settlement where skill matching and providing a favorable working environment is not possible without policy instruments like awards or grants.

Potential Delivery Issues and Evaluation of the Policy

Service delivery is incorporated with greater overall government accountability, communication with associate organizations, and transparency in public services (Young, 2013). However, this is hard to ensure as legislature often influences executive branch in decision making. On the other hand, bureaucrats want their proposals to become law even if the proposals contradict the public demand (Marsh and McConnell, 2010). Another constraint may arise while delivering services and goods if the stakeholders' engagement remains minimum. This is an important issue to address as greater stakeholder engagement and consultation can help to find out how government interventions are

affecting the relevant sectors which are involved in service delivery (APSC, 2009). A multi-level collaboration approach is needed to avoid unnecessary interactions of the government agencies and potential delivery issues. However, these forms of policy mixes can become too complex but quasi-governmental policy tools can overcome such problems by establishing partnership working groups (Shergold, 2019). This process involves key actors from the government, non-government, community, and private sectors to introduce migrant employment programs that help them to enter the labor market, utilize their previous skills, and even become entrepreneurs (Collins, 2016).

To focus on positive state-society relations and greater actor engagement there is a trend to install policy mixes that incorporate both substantive and procedural instruments (Howlett, 2011). In addition, this acknowledges migrants as human capital and allows them to contribute per their skills. This is needed to overcome political influence as it can shape policy delivery and maintenance (Marsh and McConnell, 2010). This can be described from the democratic point of view, greater participation is vital to address the policy problem and avoid potential delivery issues (Collins, 2016). At the same time, from a policymaker's point of view, it is hard to formulate a concrete policy design that successfully addresses the skill recognition problem and at the same time reduces delivery issues. Even though Peter Shergold (2018) stated that such a problem can be avoided by installing a collaborative approach. But failing to recognize the perfect blend can lead to mismanagement at the implementation level and different goals of different actors can lead the policy outcomes in different directions.

Evaluation is a vital component in the policy-making process as it helps to identify the policy gap (Howlett, 2018). Now when it comes to skill recognition, newly arrived migrants often complained that their overseas qualifications and skill are not valued. Therefore, it hampers their successful settlement and the process of belonging in society. From a policymaker point of view the following areas need to be focused to address the problem:

- Needs to expand the authorization processes.
- Governments' skill development programs like study and re-training should be cost-friendly and easy to access both in Urban and regional areas.
- Review the skilled migrant employment policy of other developed countries and find the policy gap of Australian skilled migrant employment policy.
- Develop sound communication between employment agencies and accreditation bodies. (Shergold, 2018; Deloitte, 2018; SCoA, 2019)

From the migrants' point of view in Australia, the evaluation process is an opportunity to develop leadership commitment and individual receptiveness as well as actively participate in the decision-making process (Maloney, 2017). For example, Career Pathways Pilot Program has provided such a platform where migrants can express their opinion regarding the services they get from the program (Deloitte, 2018). Such participation increases migrants' involvement in the decision-making process and at the same time government could use the feedback to spot the policy void. Successful

migrant's settlement requires securing employment as soon as possible, hence developing sound communication between employment agencies and accreditation bodies is vital (Shergold, 2018). At the same time, developing mutual trust and work under a common purpose is important to achieve the goal of successful migrants' settlement. From the pilot project experience, migrants want the project to run for a longer time (Deloitte, 2018). However, from the settlement service organization's point of view, it is very difficult to run the project for the longer period. Therefore, an alternative pilot program that would help refugees to reskill and involve in the labor market in accordance with their previous experience needs to be run. Peter Shergold (2018) urges that the culture of collaboration must be embedded into different agencies' structures to provide a positive outcome and secure its longevity. This process needs to be transparent, though biased information flow can disrupt the communication as different types of migrants in Australia often expressed their concern about the role of media. For example, During the 2013 federal election, the role of media was questionable as they represented refugees as a threat to national security (Lippi *et al.* 2017). Such biased representation of the migrants and humanitarian entrants turns their opinions into distorted messages to the government. As a result, it fluctuates public insights towards migrants and obstructs the development of migrant's sense of belonging to the new community (Griffith, 2019). Australians have mixed opinions regarding migrant's settlement as a result of the 2017 Lowy Institute poll suggests that almost half (48%) of 1200 Australian participants expressed their strong concern about migrants' settlement in Australia (Davidson, 2019). Such opinion related to the migrants shown by the Australian is due to never-ending terrorist concern around the world. As a society Australians seem to be inclined to ponder taking migrants as a sacrifice. In that case, media has a huge role to play as public opinion can be magnified by different kinds of media. A positive perception of different migrants helps to develop their sense of belonging. Therefore, embedded in a network creates social capital and ensures safety in an uncertain environment as well as quicken participation in the labor market (Cebulla and Tan, 2019). Professor Shergold (2018) argued the government needs to install end-to-end approaches to coordinate services better. Because, both community organizations and industries expressed their dissatisfaction about migrant support programs as those programs are often labeled as disjointed due to a lack of information (Tudge, 2020). Therefore, greater coordination amongst stakeholders through a transparent flow of information is needed to address the issue. Improving the accountability of the concerned agencies and organizations will ensure the flow of authentic information. In turn, forming a centralized knowledge hub based on this information will help government agencies to formulate and provide better services (Deloitte, 2018).

Scope for the Bangladesh Government

Bangladesh is the eighth-most populous country in the world and almost 62 percent population lies in the age group of 16 to 49 years. However, the Bangladesh government is struggling to accommodate such a huge workforce which is exposing a problematic social environment. As a result, high rates of unemployment, poverty, underemployment,

and land scarcity have become common issues in Bangladesh (Barkat and Ahmed, 2014). It is forcing a good number of Bangladeshi people to search for jobs overseas. In Bangladesh's perspective, migration is considered one of the important livelihood strategies for the people as the population of Bangladesh has risen to such an extent, where securing a means of living is no longer guaranteed. Choice of destinations, employment in the host country, benefits, and risks all depend on both the socio-economic and educational capacity of the migrant (Siddiqui, 2003). Nevertheless, it has created a window of opportunity for the Bangladesh government to explore the overseas job market which could solve the unemployment problem at large. In addition to that, the demand for cheaper and skilled workers in host countries has also provided a scope for the Bangladesh government to promote better policy intervention and work towards the expansion of vocational education and skill training. In that case, the government's intervention should start from finding Bangladeshi workers' employment tendencies in overseas job markets. This will provide the initial settings to coordinate between the labor market and human resource planning which is unfortunately not functioning at all in Bangladesh (Barkat and Ahmed, 2014).

A survey which is conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) illustrates that in the last decade among approximately 54,084,000 individuals, only 12.5% were able to involve in formal employment, and on the other hand, the rest of the workers were in the informal sectors (Barkat and Ahmed, 2014). It indicates that a significant number of workers are somehow forced to involve in the informal sector where they have limited opportunities to utilize their previous skills and knowledge. Above all English language proficiency still holds a key to employment overseas. A common assumption is if workers/migrants want to enjoy a successful settlement and ensure socio-economic wellbeing in the host society English language proficiency is a must (Roshid and Chowdhury, 2013). Research suggests English speaking ability is so important that not knowing it may lead to job loss. Apart from the language proficiency proper employment success depends on some other elements like profession-specific skills and workers' characteristics, attributes, and adaptability.

The Australian government is positive about having employees from different cultures as it ensures a competitive business environment and at the same time peoples from different communities help to make a vibrant Australian community. Because migration has always been considered as a quick solution for skill shortage to the Australian government. However, recently the process has been hampered by the ongoing pandemic as Australian prime minister Scott Morrison has indicated that lifting the skilled migration process would be the biggest challenge in the post-pandemic era. In addition to that, The Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) has also urged to increase the number of skilled migrants to tackle the situation (Seet, and Jones, 2021). Recently, the Australian government has announced that Australia would employ a good number of workers from Bangladesh in the horticulture sector through TSS (Temporary Skill Shortage) visa, ENS (Employee Nomination Scheme) visa, and SESR (Skilled Employer-Sponsored Regional) visa programs.

It identifies that the Bangladesh government has room for policy interventions to foster more opportunities for workers to migrate to Australia which could be a great source of foreign currency. The Bangladeshi migrant track records in Australia also provides a promising scenario. A report from The Department of Immigration and Citizenship of Australia (DIAC) has suggested that during the last decade Bangladesh was one of the top ten source countries of skill migration. With the average growth rate of Bangladeshi people lives in Australia hit almost 19% per annum since the 1990s, hence, Bangladeshi community growing faster than expected in Australia (Chowdhury and Hamid, 2016). Now Bangladesh government needs to focus on the in-demand job for skilled migration in Australia and develop the local labor force according to the demand. A recent study suggests that nursing, plumbers, electricians, chefs, bricklayers, and stonemasons are amongst in-demand jobs in Australia in which Bangladesh can easily provide skilled workers through proper training (Witham, 2020). However, the training government agencies and other institutions provide to the potential migrant workers especially in the middle east countries are not recognized by the overseas countries. Therefore, the Bangladesh government needs to maintain a global standard of skillset through proper training which could match the standard of the Australian labor market. In addition to that, the Bangladesh government requires to uphold the diplomatic efforts and convince the Australian government to run partnership training programs which would make it easier to access the Australian labor market.

Key Challenges and Possibilities

Bangladesh's government is missing the opportunity of exploring the Australian job market by not collaborating between procedural and substantive tools. For example, the higher proportion of less-skilled workers are the reason why the remittance flow is low in Bangladesh. This could be solved through expanding technical and vocational education. However, enrollment in those institutions is only 1.8% of the total number of students in Bangladesh (Barkat and Ahmed, 2014). It shows Bangladesh government is not emphasizing generating human resources by expanding vocational and technical education. In addition to that, lack of coordination is evident in several government organizations, hence the standard of measuring the skills of the workers loses its acceptance abroad (Bint Shafiq, 2017). Even a few senior government officials from the ministry of expatriates' welfare and overseas employment, the government of the people's republic of Bangladesh have agreed to the abovementioned statement. One of them who wished to remain anonymous stated that,

It is hard to collaborate different decisions from different departments and turn it into a core policy. Because decisions of the different departments become policy only after crossing different layers. Hence, the taken policy often loses acceptance due to time constraints. (Personal communication, 29 September 2021).

For example, the Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) is then responsible for assuring the quality of training institutions like the Technical and Vocational Education

and Training (TVET). However, such training institutions have their own set of standards which indicates there is a lack of coordination between government and informal institutions (Barkat and Ahmed, 2014). Despite having several types of training courses in TVET to meet the need-based employment skills, migrants often do not get desirable recognition value overseas. Different actors from different levels provide vocational and technical training to promote skill development. However, the curriculums, the certifications, and the standard they maintain vary from one actor to another. This implies apart from the coordination problem, there is a lack of policy implementation strategy and inadequate infrastructure in policy delivery planning in both urban and regional areas in Bangladesh (Bint Shafiq, 2017). Therefore, it raises supplementary difficulties like duplication of coursework and discrepancy between the demands of employment and potential migrants being taught in vocational and training institutions. Bangladesh government needs to upgrade the certified skills development program to match the global standard as most migrants who leave the country do not have the necessary skills and training. Without matching the host nation's standard of skills certification migrants are forced to slot into positions with fewer responsibilities and salaries. On the other hand, countries like Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and India have set their bar on par with host nations hence migrant workers from these countries can negotiate salaries and other facilities due to their skills being recognized (Ahmed and Omar, 2018).

Another key stakeholder Refugee and Migratory Movement Research Unit (RMMRU) recommends, the government should upgrade the skilled facility to match the global standard. A spokesperson from RMMRU has stated that,

We provide the current data and evidence to the government on matching global skills and how skilled migrants can negotiate better and earn a lot more than those who do not have the necessary skills. However, we tend to believe that the government is not prompt in taking decisions and falls behind in the global competition of holding the labor market. (Personal communication, 15 October 2021).

Bangladesh's National Development Policy focuses on developing training facilities, provide a standard framework for assessments and certification which would be recognized in the host nation. However, to achieve that and explore the Australian job market Bangladesh government needs to coordinate between policy and service delivery as it is essential to maintain the global standard of skills and other technical abilities. Usually, a third party maintains the linkage between sending countries and receiving countries which creates miscommunication between both ends. However, installing a digital platform for linking major stakeholders would bring transparency in the recruitment process, and at the same time sending countries would get a clear idea about growing demands for labor in host countries (Ahmed and Omar, 2018). A host country like Australia needs migrants with the right skills with a view to making a vibrant socio-economic condition (Campbell *et al.* 2019). Hence, it promotes the scopes for the Bangladesh government for collaboration and cooperation among major stakeholders like the government, manpower agencies, and foreign labor industries. Direct and transparent communication would provide a clear idea about the current labor market and the

demands of the host nation which in the end would help the Bangladesh government to formulate proper policy and work on the existing policy drawbacks.

Conclusion

Host countries need to understand the importance of the social and economic inclusion of the migrants because those newly arrived can offer a range of professional skills, education, and human capital which is vital to make a culturally vibrant Australian Society and a strong economy. A country like Australia needs to realize the possibility of gaining brain and money in the long run by skill recognition while settling the humanitarian entrants and migrants. However, Australia facing challenges to keep a balance between the Government and other organizations while upholding the dignity of overseas migrants. From the Australian governments' side, a solid policy needs to be formulated to recognize the migrants' skills and professional experiences. On the other hand, Bangladesh's policymakers need to collaborate their policy with other stakeholders to keep the pace of the global labor market and expand more markets to solve the internal employment problem. However, not being able to collaborate all taken decisions from different departments and make it a core one is what failing the Bangladesh government to take full advantage of exploring the Australian labor market. Prompt decision-making in all layers and collaborating with them should solve the problem.

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Youth Participation in Elections of Bangladesh

Hasibur Rahaman *

Abstract

This investigation is looking at the participation of Bangladeshi youth in politics generally, and election specifically. The young populace across the world has arrived at a pinnacle of more than one billion out of seven billion and the vast majority of them living in non-industrial nations like Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi youth establish 33% of Bangladesh populace, while they are regularly included inside the formal political interaction, however, less interested to participate in election. This is an unfortunate trend of democratic culture of the country. Various components are prevalent to clarify the low degrees of political participation by the youth. It is identified in the research that the young recognized different kinds of obstructions for their participation in politics of Bangladesh. Lack of finance, lack of political awareness and negative notion (i.e political intolerance, confrontational politics, political violence, criminalization of politics, politicization of criminals, present political difficulties etc.) about politics are predominant in the society. Finally, this article recommends how the youth apathy of participation can be dealt to make them dynamic accomplices in Bangladesh's political framework.

Key Words: Youth, Politics, Representative Democracy, Elections, Vote, Voters as well as candidate.

Introduction

Bangladesh gained independence on 16th December, 1971 through a long struggle and the great Liberation War. Since then Bangladesh has failed to build viable political institutions. In absence of viable political institutions democracy did not become institutionalized. When democracy fails army intervenes in politics. Like others recently free states in Asia, Africa and Latin America, Bangladesh has been influenced such a crossroads where vote-based system was more than once overshadowed. As such political territories were packed with different kinds of delegated systems, including military, one-party, and customized tyranny (Rahaman, 2014:1). Allegations are raised against different Governments for rigging election and abusing power to influence election results. Generally, the occupant party sets out on this sort of illicit demonstration. Ideological groups like political parties can unlawfully cause the outcomes to be in support of themselves to hold power (Rahaman, 2014:1). Thus, effective political participation is long ways in Bangladesh.

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[This research was financially supported by UGC and allocated by the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University, Gopalganj, for the financial year of 2019-2020. The supporting and allocating authority had no role within the design or conduct of the study]

In absence of viable political institutions democracy did not become institutionalized (Rahaman, 2014: 3). Awami League (AL) held a factious election in 1973 with horrific party assertion over electoral process. From 1975-90 Bangladesh was ruled by military or civil-military government. In the period of military and civil-military governments, most of the elections were held for legitimizing or demilitarizing power (Rahaman, 2009:104). Even in the democratic regime the party in power rigged elections followed by violence which has far reaching negative political consequences. The establishment of Care Taker Government (CTG) opened a new chapter in the electoral history in Bangladesh in 1991. However, the CTG has not been totally impartial and free from controversy to organize totally impartial election. Without holding free and fair election proper representation is impossible. If the youth lack representation they are deprived of upholding their views and protecting their own interests (Hussain, 2013: 15). In this context, the focus of the study is to remove barriers in the way of youth participation.

The adventure, all things considered, to build up the Bengali nationhood is heavenly with the extraordinary penances of youth in 1952. The youth assumed a crucial part at all basic points of the nation. However, Bangladesh didn't make any stride for youth to make them comprehensive in the political cycle. That could be the low degree of participation of youth are constantly being addressed in Bangladesh. In this unique situation, the target of this investigation is to investigate the significance of the role of youth inside the political process generally and electoral process particularly.

Significance of the Study

The young populace across the world has been reached at top 1.8 billion out of 7 billion and the vast majority of them living in agricultural nations like Bangladesh. As indicated by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), "the current youth populace of Bangladesh is around 52 million; very 33 percent of the whole populace. Some 4.6 million or 30 percent of the whole 158.5 million individuals in Bangladesh are youth (10-24 years), and it'll be somewhere in the range of 10 and 19 percent by 2050, predictable with it". The youth of Bangladesh constitute one-third of Bangladesh's population. This demographic structure poised her for 'Demographic Dividend'. We have more people who are able to work than those who are not. 'Demographic Dividend' is linked to the development and empowerment of youth. On the other side, in Bangladesh, there are approximately 48 million youth according to UNFPA (2014), a huge percentage which is often ignored in socio-political discussion. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) additionally expresses that "as of now there are 27 lakh jobless individuals in the nation and despite the fact that per annum 20 lakh individuals enter the job market, new position openings are made only for some 13-lakh individuals". As per the ILO, "in the most recent seven years, the pace of youth joblessness has multiplied". Most of the youth are exposed to Media like television. Side by side they are also exposed to Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, IMO and Messenger). The gender sensitivity of youth is not up to the mark. Youth attitude to gender roles is not egalitarian than that of patriarchal. Thus, the preparation of youth to participate in the political process and

electoral process are limited. Notwithstanding, it's a matter of optimism that around 23.5 million youthful Bangladeshis are enrolled as voter. Predictable with Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) information, around 30% of absolute populace of the nation is matured somewhere in the range of 18 and 30 and around 15% of the whole citizens are somewhere in the range of 18 and 24.

Without proper participation democracy is inconceivable. Proper choice to hold office of authority depends on effective participation of people. Political participation of the people is over emphasized in order to protect citizen's rights. Through Political participation people can influence the political authorities. Political participation is a question of democratic equality (Hussain, 2013: 15). So, representation of youth is required to establish their rights. Political participation increases the credibility of the political system. In absence of proper representation, the gap between the state structure and disadvantaged becomes wider (Hussain, 2013: 15). The incorporation of youth inside the formal political construction is essential to limit the hole between the state design and youth. In this circumstance, present exploration is time qualified to search out the methodologies to ensure the correct portrayal of youth.

The Theoretical and Conceptual Notes

The present study raises the issue of youth participation in election as it is necessary to clarify certain relevant concepts and our understanding of existing perceptions. The present research draws a conceptual nexus between the concepts of democracy, representation, political participation of youth, and youth participation in election. The conceptual framework is drowned in accordance with the spirit of liberation war, 1971 and its reflection in the constitution of 1972. It aims at determining democratic institutions provided inclusivity of youth participation in politics in general and election in particular.

The Youth

The idea of youth has been analyzed through different window of interpretations. Noted sociologist, Y.B. Damle, recognized 'student youth' and 'non-student youth' (Damle, 1989). As per Obi, youth are conceptualized considering their modern job as leaders of the general public. He takes note of that: "*The arrangement of youth as future leaders the non-interrogation of the existing power-relations inside the general public and might be a formula for setting up the youth to sustain a particular method of power-relation that recommend a perpetual quality of constructions of strength and interests, however with the passage and exit of inhabitants' additional time*" (Abba, et al 2016: 21). Age is the solitary boundary to characterize youth. The meaning of youth fluctuates from public law of a state and of global associations. The United Nations (UN) characterizes youth as the age section somewhere in the range of 15 and 24 years. The Commonwealth characterizes youth as 15 to 29 years matured persons. As per National Youth Policy 2017 of Bangladesh Government checks those between 18 to 35 years matured (The

National Youth Policy, 2017: 6). In this research, age checks those between 18 to 35 years as meaning of the youth.

Participation

To comprehend young peoples' participation requires clearness and openness on what calculated way to deal will be utilized. How best to characterize political participation and the best approach to separate it from related ideas like representative democracy and election. To understand a straightforward comprehension of the ideas, it is imperative to analyze those concepts. Political participation by and large is regularly evolved as citizens' exercises influencing politics. Activities has gotten for all intents and purposes limitless and incorporates activities like voting, illustrating, reaching public authorities, boycotting, going to party rallies, guerrilla planting, posting sites, chipping in, joining streak crowds, signing petitions, purchasing reasonable exchange items, and even self-destruction fights. Political participation is a significant element of the democracy. From this thought, Verba and Nie said that "*where not many take parts in choices there's little democracy; the more participation there's in choices, the more democracy there is*" (Verba and Nie, 1972). Verba, Nie and Kim likewise characterized political participation in *The Civic Culture*, they referenced "*legitimate demonstrations by private citizen that are pretty much straightforwardly pointed toward affecting the selection of administrative work force as well as the moves that they make*" (Verba, S.; Nie, N.H.; Kim, J.O.1978). Verba and Nie recorded four kinds of participation, including casting a ballot, participating campaign activity, reaching public authorities and taking part in agreeable or mutual exercises (Verba and Nie, 1972). By influenced of Verba and Nie's work, Teorell, Torcal and Montero proposed an indistinguishable typology enveloping five exercises for example electoral participation, party-based action, fight movement and connect with action (Teorell, J.; Torcal, M.; Montero, J.R., 2007). In this research, political participation implies the participation of youth in both formal and informal process of the politics.

Representative Democracy

Defining democracy is a great challenge. It is subjected to variety of interpretations. However, there is no controversy; democracy is first invented in Greek. Greek democracy was direct. But in modern world, direct democracy is impossible due to rise of big states or nation states. Even if there has been also a representative democracy in ancient times particularly in Germany, Holland and Hungary. Someone argued representative democracy originated in the Middle Ages as a devise to select the members of certain bodies consulted by the king on some important issues. As per the idea of representative democracy, it contains such a vote-based system and hypothesis of civics wherein voters pick (in free, secret, multi-party elections) agents to act to their greatest advantage, however not as their intermediaries i.e., not really as guided yet with enough power to practice activity inside the substance of changing conditions. Modern liberal democracies are significant examples of representative democracy.

It very well may be contended that this term is inseparable from "republic." In characterizing representative democracy, Madison said that by designating government to somewhat number of citizens "whose insight may best perceive truth interest of their country-the public voice, articulated by the delegates of individuals, will be more consonant to the overall public good than if articulated by individuals themselves" (Ali Raisa,1966). By defining representative democracy, W. F. Willoughby makes a valuable comment- "representation in government is regarded today as a process whereby individuals within the state have the capacity to upon discussion and position to those in office. Instead of government officials being virtual representatives, they are considering 'responsible' representatives" (Willoughby, W. F., 1936). In this article, representative democracy implies a sort of government which chose by individuals or their agents. Viable portrayal in politics is pivotal in many developing nations. Youth are regularly underestimated from formal electoral cycle. For example, youth are less inclined to be an individual from ideological groups and that they are less inclined to be enrolled as citizen and to decide on polling day. Be that as it may, compelling portrayal or participation is vital to democratic advancement all throughout the planet. In this specific situation, youth participation in democratic process by and large and in election particularly is getting more critical to professionals, as EMBs, political parties as ideological groups and CSOs and help suppliers. Something else, proper participation would have ended in hullabaloo.

Election

An election can mean different things, depending on what country you come from. Be that as it may, truth importance of the word must be acknowledged where there's genuine democracy. Along these lines, election could likewise be a process wherein a vote is held to choose contender for an office. It is the system by which a democracy fills elective workplaces inside the assembly. As indicated by Rahman, "*the word election' has been characterized by both a wide and a limited significance. In the limited sense, it is used to mean a definitive determination of a candidate which can accept the aftereffects of the poll when there's polling or a particular candidate being returned unopposed when there's no poll. In the wide sense, the word is utilized to mean the entire process finishing in a candidate being announced chosen*" (Rahman, Saidur Md., 2001). Harrop and Miller characterized "*political decision as power of gathering exercises and strengthen political familiarity with individuals*". As such the educate voters, provide the foundations for representation and grant legitimacy to the government" (M. Harrop & W. L. Miller, 1998).The idea of free and fair conveys an exceptional significance in politics, particularly in electoral politics. It utilized as a modifier to clarify the validity of an election. It is important for the citizens to be were permitted to practice their franchise free from a wide range of pressing factor, terrorizing, obstacle, influence, power, compulsion, brutality, or any methods could unduly impact their choice to cast a ballot or to project their decisions in favor of a particular candidate. Free and fair additionally incorporates the manner in which an election is controlled by the specialists. The whole cycle engaged with an election falls inside its degree. Each phase of the election cycle ought to be as per law, or without law, as per past points of reference or custom, and

should be free, fair as well as transparent. In this research, election means making political choice by voting in free fair means. In order that no strata of voters are neglected of voting. Especially youth ages between 18 to 35 years, make it essential to educate themselves on political issues and go for the polls. It thus is accommodative of individuals' share within the political process generally and thus the governmental process especially. In a sense, election means the national election only by which the govt is formed.

Interrelationship of the Concepts

Political participation is viewed as unavoidable conditions for representative democracy (Barrett, M.; Zani, B., 2014). However, political participation has received tremendous attention in politically institutionalized countries where representative democracy is existed. Representative democracy is inconceivable without credible election in the context of proper representation. Defining proper representation is subject to variety of interpretations. In general sense, proper representation means inclusive mode of participation. Political participation is the question of the credibility of the political system. In absence of proper political participation, the gap between the state and disadvantage citizens becomes wider (Hussain, 2013:15). The youth becomes the disadvantage citizen in the same way. The youth between the ages 15 and 25 establish a fifth of the total populace, while they are often associated with formal politics. *"They aren't officially addressed in public political establishments like parliaments and bunches of them don't take an interest in election"* (UNDP, 2017).

Methodology

The methodology applied in this study is a combination of historical and analytical approaches. As a historical approach, political participation in Bangladesh is analyzed. In this research, analytical approach is used on the basis of both qualitative data and quantitative data. Period of data collection for this study ranged from November 2019 to December 2019. The data came from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included interview of the respondents on basis of convenient sampling. It was also included Key Informants Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) of the stakeholders. To collect primary data from student youth, this study has been conducted on two selected public university (Islami University, Kushtia and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahaman Science and Technology University, Gopalganj) in Bangladesh. To collect primary data from non-student youth, there are several areas in Dhaka, Gopalganj, Faridpur, Madaripur, Narail, Barishal, Bagerhat as well as Pirojpur District. From every area, 1 KII and 1 FGD were picked that permitted the investigation to watch their social and reaction components. In all out 10 respondents partook in inside and out Interview and 10 respondents enlisted for FGD. In study strategy, 123 individuals within the age range of 18-35 has been taken part. In the first phase of secondary sources, a wide-range

of literature was reviewed to conceptualize the subject. In this phase data were collected through intellectual writings, different books, journals, and research papers relating to youth participation in election to build framework of the research. In second phase of secondary source, data was collected from reports of governmental institutions and agencies. Lacks of reliable and impartial sources of data turns the study not an easy task to complete.. In such juncture, daily newspapers were widely used as the source of data.

Research and Analysis on Youth Participation in Election

The motivation behind this investigation was to show up the participation of Bangladeshi youth in politics by and large and election particularly. The political situation prevails is that young people are politically 'disinterested' as contrasted more established ages. Why do young people have a negative insight with respect to current politics? Different elements are responsible for the low degrees of political interest existing in the youth. Initially, the allure of most recent sorts of political participation has made more youthful individuals redirect conventional sorts of political activities. Secondly, political violence, political corruption, low trust on political parties, criminalization of politics, politicization of criminals, use of muscles and money in politics are predominantly causing declining youth participation in politics. In the present circumstance, it very well may be referenced here that youth need to be brought back change yet they feel their voices inside the political way of talking. Thirdly, absence of finance diversely impacts to stray the youth political participation. The average Bangladeshi youth faces numerous battles to ensure their occupations. They're extensively occupied with their carrier. In this circumstance, politics is by all accounts a discretionary to them.

Political Contacting

The concept of political contacting may be a way to ensure political participation. Thus, political contacting is closely related with representative democracy. Contacting public authorities as one of the types of local political participation. Two factors partner fundamentally with political contacting: (1) education level, which includes a more grounded relationship with contacting, and (2) interest in government, which includes a more grounded relationship with political contacting (Vedlitz, Arnold, 1980:1).

To know the state of youth political contacting, a question can be posed here that in solving your local problems, do you personally maintain contact with local Members of Parliament (MP), local governmental officials, other local public representatives, minister? Perception of youth about political contacting is given in Table 1 which illustrates such perception of youth. If we look at the table 1, it reveals that 'Yes' category (46.3%) of political contacting and 'No' category of political contacting is very

close. In this respect, the battle between ‘yes’ and ‘No’ clearly indicates the volatile character of youth mind, and youth mind largely depend on the performances of the political system and governance in relation to the satisfaction of the youth (M. Khan, 2009:279-310).

Table:1 Youth perception about the political contacting

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	57	46.3	46.3	46.3
	no	66	53.7	53.7	100.0
	Total	123	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field study

Political Protesting

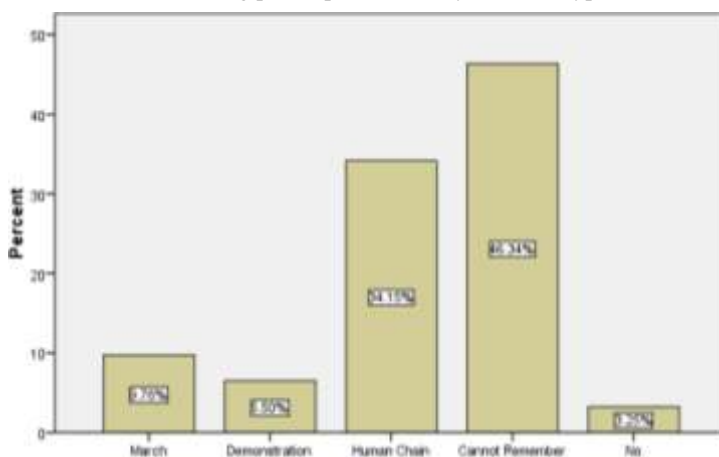
At the start of our discussion, we intent to understand the modes of political protesting as independent variables for better understanding of the political participation. Political protest includes endeavors by people or gatherings to manage or stop apparent treacheries inside a political framework without toppling the existing authority .Political protest are often two broad categories, i.e. violent and nonviolent. Nonviolent protest includes social, economic, and political nonviolent intervention. Nonviolent protest incorporates petitions, paper articles, show-stoppers, protests, strikes, and serene exhibitions, walk, human chain while violent protest incorporate annihilation of property, real damage, and demonstrations of psychological warfare. In this study, protest called a peaceful demonstration, march, human chain and so on. The preference of views and results for political protesting are mentioned here.

Types of political protesting is given Figure-1 which illustrates respondents’ perception about the political protesting which is one of the pivotal indicators to analysis the political participation. If we look at the Figure 1, it reveals peculiar scene that ‘Cannot Remember’ of the political protesting by the youth stands high (46.3%). This high percentage indicates that the youth generation is apathetic to participate in politics. ‘Human Chain’ category is stands second highest (34.1%). It considered as the peaceful protesting. Protesting ratio is much lower among the ‘March’ (9.8%) and ‘Demonstration’ (6.5%) category. While another 3.3% belonging in the ‘No’ category (Figure 1).

For an in depth understanding of the protest activity, is obvious to know the personal role of the respondents. In this context, it was the question that what is your personal role in such protest activity? If we look at the Table 2, it reveals that ‘No Role’ is the highest category (45.5%) compared to all other categories. It implies that they did participate in

protest activity but had no role in such activity. The ‘Participant’ category stands second highest category (43.1%). They did just participant only. While another 10.6% belonging in ‘Observer’ category and 0.8% belonging in ‘Organizer’ category. ‘Organizer’ category is very low compared to others category. The youth intend to participate in protest activity, but not want to become an organizer.

Fig. 1: Taking part in protest activity and what types?



Source: Field study, 2019

Table 2: Youth personal role in protest activity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Role	56	45.5	45.5	45.5
	Observer	13	10.6	10.6	56.1
	Participant	53	43.1	43.1	99.2
	Organizer	1	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	123	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field study, 2019

Participation in Election as Voter

Participation in election largely characterized by the voting pattern in any democracies of the world. But participatory activities don't solely depend on voting (M. Salimullah Khan, 2018:23). Bangladesh isn't an exception from above these notions. From the very beginning of the political process, Bangladesh tried to execute elections regularly but failed. Therefore, political trains were loaded with various sorts of unelected regimes. In

absence of free and fair election, voting process did not institutionalized also. Lack of institutionalization, the voting process could not include the youth. As said earlier, the current youth populace of Bangladesh is around 52 million; very 33 percent of the whole populace. In this context, most of young people think voting just for political participation. Quality of voting is in question also. But there are many variations. Some youth are sure to vote while other are barred from it. Why are such variations?

In this context, a comparative analysis is given in Table 3 which describes the voting behavior pattern of the youth. If we look at the Table, it reveals that ‘always’ category of voting in the local and national election both stands high (40.7%) as compared to all other categories. It seems that the youth are very conscious in exercising their voting. The second highest respondents are belonging in ‘First Time Voter’ category (28.5%). The first-time voters generally remain very enthusiastic to cast their vote. ‘Very Rare’ category of voting stands low compared to other categories, while another 12.2% and 10.6% belonging ‘Not Yet’ and ‘Occasional’ categories respectively.

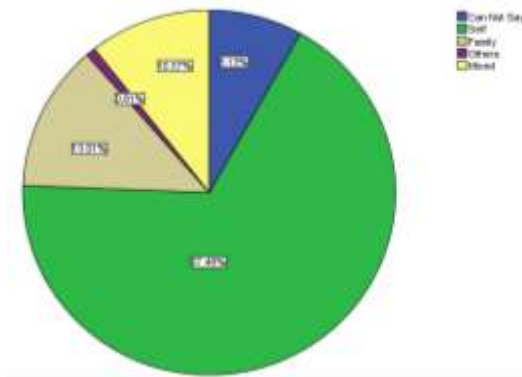
Table-3: Comparative pattern of voting during

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Yet	15	12.2	12.2	12.2
	First Time Voter	35	28.5	28.5	40.7
	Very Rare	10	8.1	8.1	48.8
	Occasionally	13	10.6	10.6	59.3
	Always	50	40.7	40.7	100.0
	Total	123	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field study, 2019

There was another contingency question to the respondent that whose opinion do you consider most during voting? The prevailing belief is that the young people hardly pursue their own decision during voting. Data clearly reveals that the majority youth (67.48%) belonging in the ‘Self’ category. They take their self-decision during voting. While another (13.01%) youth take their decision during voting by the influence of family. Data also reveals that the 10.57% youth belonging in ‘Mixed’ category and 8.94% belonging in ‘Others’ category. Details data shown in the Figure 3 below.

Fig. 3: Preference of views during voting



Source: Field study, 2019

Participation in Election as Candidate

Participatory activism also determined the participation in election as candidate. Along these lines, our constitution validates that every one who is qualified for vote in the election and must have attained 25 years aged, he or she can stand for national and local election. The nature of "candidate contending at the election delivers a positive effect on citizen turnout" (Marco Alberto De Benedetto and Maria De Paola, 2014:1). Some empirical studies have considered whether candidate's quality matters to shape voter's behavior. In this context, it is safely said that the quality of electoral participation can ensure quality election. This study tried to know the interest of the youth people in participating upcoming elections and study reveals that 'No' category is stands high (78.0%) as compared to other categories. It implies that the young people are no longer interested to participate in the election as candidate. There are many reasons, most notably for recent electoral debate, negative notion of politics, present political difficulties, and political intolerance etc. are responsible for that. The second highest respondents are belonging in 'Yes' category (19.5%), while another 2.4% belonging 'Don't Know' category. Details data shown in Table 4.

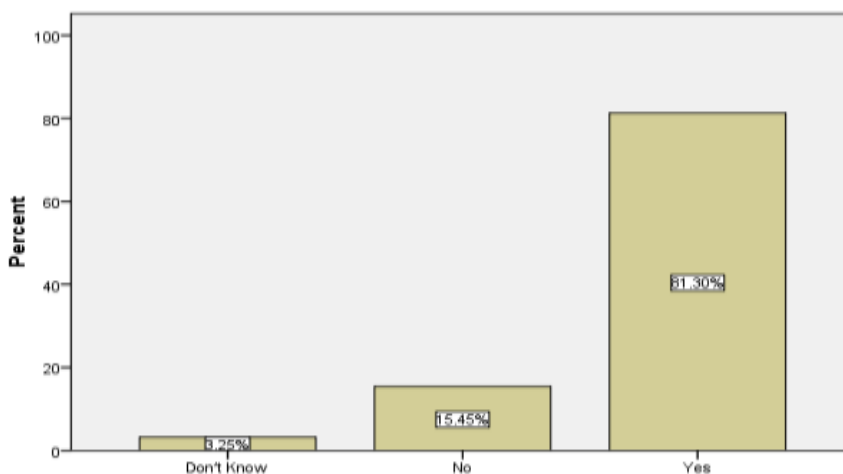
A number of youths cannot participate in elections for various reasons, mostly for personal reasons, professional obligations, recent electoral debate, negative notion of politics, present political difficulties and political intolerance, confrontational politics, lack of finance, political violence, lack of awareness and so on. In this respect, it was quaries that are you aware of the recent electoral management debate? The difference between 'Yes' and 'No' is very far (Figure 4). There is another question for in-depth study that do you think this debate is caused for youth electoral participation? Answer between 'Yes' (47.2%) and 'No' (40.7%) is very close (Figure 5) which indicates the volatile character of the youth minds. Sometimes they are hesitated to decide whether recent political debates are caused for youth electoral participation or not.

Table 4: Interest of candidature in election

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Don't Know	3	2.4	2.4	2.4
	No	96	78.0	78.0	80.5
	Yes	24	19.5	19.5	100.0
	Total	123	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field study, 2019

Fig. 4: Awareness of the recent electoral management debate



Source: Field study, 2019

Table 5: Caused for youth electoral participation

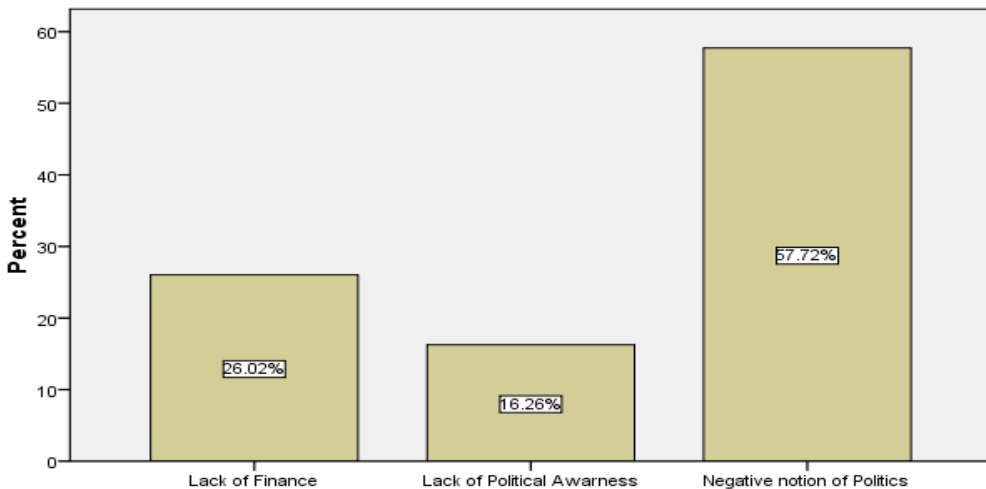
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Don't Know	11	8.9	9.2	9.2
	No	50	40.7	42.0	51.3
	Yes	58	47.2	48.7	100.0
	Total	119	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	4	3.3		
Total		123	100.0		

Source: Field study, 2019

The youth are less inclined to be a member of political party and that they are more averse to be enrolled as voters and to cast a ballot. We've seen that the young recognized different kinds of obstructions for their participation in politics of Bangladesh. Lack of finance, lack of political awareness and negative notion (i.e political intolerance, confrontational politics, political violence, criminalization of politics, politicization of criminals, present political difficulties, recent electoral debates) about politics are predominant.

The youth feels barriers to participate in politics, as it appears from figure 5, in this case, 'Negative Notion of Politics' remains very high (57.7%). The respondents belonging 'Lack of Finance' category (26.0%) mentioned that there is a barrier to the youth participation in politics, while another 16.3% believes that 'Lack of Political Awareness' is the barriers for the youth to participate in politics.

Fig. 5: The barriers of youth participation in Bangladesh politics



Source: Field study, 2019

Youth participation in politics generally and in election particularly are crucial to the battle against new patterns in the negative parts of politics. The politicians should actively engage the youth to take their opinions into consideration. The politicians should also come forward to remove existing barriers to youth participation. It has been seen that in new and arising democracy, the consideration of youth in formal political cycle is more significant. In this context, it can be safely said that without insuring maximum people's participation, political and electoral system cannot be institutionalized. Institutionalization of political and electoral system is pivotal in the third world democracies. In the context of declining participation of youth, seven key principles initiated by Shari K. Bryan for effective engaging youth in the politics, such as *“design a programme that reflects the priorities of youth participating in it, provide facilitation and training for youth, encourage actioned-oriented activities, facilitate the*

connection between youth and political and community leaders, working in a multi-party setting, ensure that 50% of participant are women as well as establish buy-in and the consensus of political and community leaders” (UNDP, 2017: 29). Furthermore, an effort is now being made by the present study for the stakeholders to increase youth participation in the political process in general and electoral process in particular.

Effective Youth Participation: The Way Forward For Bangladesh Election Commission

1. The EC may diminish the Voting age from 18 to 16 years. The EC may also determine to attract the young electorate through the social media like Facebook and Twitter.
2. Election schedules should be fixed on such convenient days like weekends or public holidays so that the youth people may cast their vote without any kind of problem and obstacle.
3. Allowing voters to exercise their voting right from out of the country which would foster the youth participate in the political process.
4. To make enlistment and data center point on grounds to advance student youth participation in the election cycle.
5. Youth must be included in the party’s candidature through quota system for competing in election.

For Civil Society Organizations

1. Conducting the research following the legal framework that would be conducive to increase youth participation.
2. To ensure effective implementation of policies to encourage more youth in the electoral process.
3. To generate a fund for providing financial support to the youth-based programs that focuses on youth development.
4. To establish community-based organization that can afford substantial benefits for them.
5. To promote constant youth participation in electoral process and to promote civic education in school, colleges as well as universities.
6. Provide scholarship to the youth for advanced education that focuses on democracy, governance and election.

Conclusion

Elections are a special component of democracy. Democracy only can ensure all strata of people’s effective participation. The effective participation of youth in politics could carry changes to the present political situation. This examination was the possibility to reveal the young political movement as far as politics, vote based system, casting a ballot and participation. This study generally emphasized the youth participation in politics for bringing the possible changes for effective democracy in Bangladesh. What are 'the essentials for youth participation in politics? The study reveals some of the issues which

included couple of things that are: free and fair election, opportunity of articulation, upkeep of the rule of law, satisfaction of essential necessities, equivalent privileges of all and nonattendance of pay off and no viciousness against youth.

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E-Governance in Bangladesh: Public Service Delivery Challenges

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Zarin Tasnim**

Abstract

E-governance enables citizens to participate in decision-making processes, improve communication within government agencies, businesses, and engages the public as a whole. Bangladesh government has taken many initiatives to enhance public services through ICT (Information and Communications Technology) in recent time within the goal under “digital Bangladesh” with a target to make Public Administration speedy, effective, transparent, accountable, and facilitate sustainability. Digital Bangladesh goal has four pillars: Digital Government, Human Resource Development, IT Industry Promotion, and Connecting Citizens. However, the digitalization process of public services in Bangladesh faces some obstacles while implementing the process to connect the citizens. This paper has tried to examine the government's current position on e-governance to facilitate public services at the doorsteps of people through online platforms. In doing so, this study concentrates on the advantages of the digitalization process; identify the primary barriers to e-governance and recommends strategies for overcoming those barriers in the country. This study is qualitative in nature and methodology comprised of content analysis, in-depth interviews, and a robust internet search for the purpose of the research.

Key Words: E-governance, Development, ICT, Digitalization, Administration.

Introduction

E-Government uses information and communication technologies (ICTs) to help government agencies enhancing their operations. Today, governments all over the globe use a variety of e-communication tactics to manage public and private operations efficiently. With the introduction of government websites in the late 1990s, the notion of e-government was born. It is usually defined as the use of information technology to exchange data, administer services, and negotiate with the citizens, the private sector, and other government agencies. E-Governance is defined as using government agencies' information and communication technology (ICT) to improve the quality and breadth of knowledge and services accessible to people. The goal is to foster public empowerment while also improving government openness, efficiency, and accountability. E-governance is essential to distribute various benefits of economic growth to all the sects of society. It blends technology and citizen centricity, catalyzing government operations to create a safer, more efficient, and sustainable community. Governments are under pressure to become more effective, integrated, responsive, and speedier to satisfy people'

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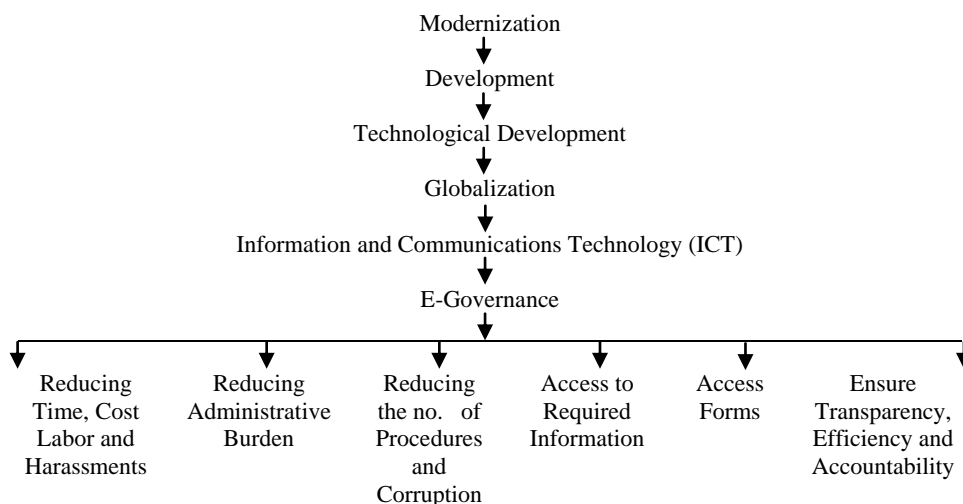
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expectations in today's world. They are under pressure to function and react to respect people's freedom of choice and speech. In many circumstances, they must be as quick as constantly being ready to serve at the click of a citizen's mouse. In this position, no government in the modern world has a choice except to adopt new technology at random. In light of the technological revolution and globalization, governments throughout the globe are adopting creative efforts to confirm desirable improvements in the domain of public administration to stay up with people's newer expectations. In today's world, no government can resist such developments. Instead, they must reconsider how they should be structured from the standpoint of the people. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are considered as new instruments for governments in this course. Governments are becoming more electronic due to the possibilities of ICTs, a process known as "E-government." The implementation of e-governance, on the other hand, impacts not only systems, procedures, and processes of relevant services, but also the manner and relationships in which people and the business community, or society as a whole, interact with government agencies. Bangladesh's government has already begun working toward e-governance to provide better citizen services. The purpose of this research paper is to assess the present posture of the government on e-governance, find out what it has to offer; identify the critical obstacles to e-governance, as well as the ways for overcoming them, from the perspective of Bangladesh. This research is qualitative in nature, and it has used data and information from primary and secondary sources. A case study approach is followed to investigate with the support of in-depth interviews. Besides in-depth interviews, a robust internet search to carry out this research and compare to another country's e-services was executed.

Conceptual Framework

Modernization is an excessively popular notion and an idea. At present, the sense of illumination describes values such as freedom, individuality, the dignity of man, tolerance, and reason (Bernhard, 2007). Development is an event constituting a new stage in a changing situation. In the 18th century in Europe technological development started. Technological development plays a vital role to different development stages. Globalization is a process of change that makes people more interconnected and interdependent. Also, globalization focuses on the interaction and integration promoted by international trade, investment, and information technology (Levin, 2015). ICT is an integrated system that incorporates the technology and infrastructure required to store, manipulate, active and transmit information. The use of ICT for promoting more efficient and cost-effective government, more public access to information and more government accountability to citizens are called e-governance (Uddin, 2012). Four stages characterize e-governance. a) Government has a presence on the Internet. b) Government will be able to interact with its citizens via the Internet. c) About public service delivery, communication between the government and its citizens is essential. d) Government will transform its organizations and institutions to support e-service delivery. (As_Saber, Srivastava & Hossain, 2006)

Fig. 1: Stages of e-governance Development



Background of e-governance in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the first Internet service was introduced by Drik ICT as an offline email service in 1992. Bangladesh has taken affirmed stance in favor of ICT since late 1996 (Sadik, 2014). In 1996, Information Services Network (ISN) Limited started the first online Internet service in the country. At that time, World Wide Web (WWW) services were the first of their kind of service. In 1996, the country saw only two ISPs (Internet Service Providers), but in 1997, it reached to over a dozen IPS because of client demand. In August 2004, BDIX (Bangladesh Internet Exchange) started its operation. The country was connected to the SEA-ME-WE 4 (South East Asia–Middle East–Western Europe) submarine cable in 2006 which bring a big change in the speed and connectivity of internet in the country (The Daily Star, 17 January 2019). To set up an ICT operate nation, knowledge-based society and empowered people, escalate democratic values and sustainable development, Bangladesh introduced The ICT Policy-2002 in 2009 which was amended later in 2015 and 2018 respectively. To ensure more accessibility to government services and information, Bangladesh aims at e-governance and highlights “Digital Bangladesh” to achieve the vision of transforming Bangladesh to a digital economy by 2021, and a knowledge-based economy by 2041 implementing the policy. (The Plan of Bangladesh 2021-2041, 2020). It has four key objectives such as a) Digital Bangladesh, b) Human Resource Development, c) IT Industry Promotion d) Connecting Citizens. In 2008 national election, Bangladesh Awami League (AL) pledged in its election manifesto to achieve Vision-2021 which is closely intertwined with Digital Bangladesh. Nowadays, “Digital Bangladesh” has become the central political commitment of the government of Bangladesh because of the election promise of AL (Hasan, 2014).

E-governance Prospects in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has the 9th position in top 20 countries with the highest number of internet users in 2020 (Internet world stats, 2020). In 2000, the internet user in Bangladesh was 1,00,000, when the total population was 13,15,81,243, and in 2020 the internet user in Bangladesh is 9,41,99,000, when the total population is 16,46,89,383. The Internet growth rate from 2000 to 2020 is 94.199% (Digital 2020: Bangladesh, 2020). The tremendous growth of internet users and facility in Bangladesh has creates more potentiality to Bangladesh to use different digital technological measures of E-governance for effective public service delivery in the country. In order to reach out to the government services at the grassroot level without consuming time and cost, there are union digital centers (UDC) for the people who living in rural areas and cannot get access to the internet, for poor livelihood impact. UDC also ensures the information for rural women, physically disabled, the elderly illiterate, or ICT illiterate people. Besides providing information, this citizen-centric service helps to decentralize the government services to the field level. In this regard, 5,292 UDCs are providing 150+ public and private services that entrepreneurs earned \$32.95 million (a2i.gov.bd/publication/union-digital-centers). The internet and video chat capabilities at UDCs are particularly helpful to a lady whose spouse works in the United Arab Emirates whom we interviewed, "It used to be really difficult for me to contact my husband. I need to go to the Upazila, and have to pay 200 takas for it." *"I can now chat to him for just 10-20 taka and not only communicate with him, but also see him through the video call. With the support of UDCs, it is feasible". "The government has done a lot for us."*

Digitalization of Government save time of the citizens and is an effective instrument to ensure hassle-free services to people by directly connecting people to government services "**my gov**" web forms portal of the government creates a digital platform for bring all government services in one place where all government forms are available (eksheba.gov.bd/). This web portal of government forms is accessible to 1721 forms (forms, the portal.gov.bd/). Using internet people can get all types of government forms covering trade forms, treasury forms, and so on. In this portal 417 services are available where the registered members are 2155627. **Shebakunjo** is the platform where also all digital link of all government services are provided (<https://services.portal.gov.bd>) It is yet another one-stop service portal, with fifty-four agricultural, fisheries, and related animal services; seventy securities and disciplinary-related services; forty-two infrastructure and communication interconnected services; fifty-eight services on loan, allowances, grants, distribution, and rehabilitation; thirty-two services on land correspondent services; eighty-nine services on education, information, and certification; and eighty-nine services on health-related facilities.

Furthermore, essential government files and data can be entered transparently through tabs without direct human contact. Any government decision can be taken rapidly through virtual government meetings sitting anywhere. That seems to have slowed down red-tapism while at the same time increasing transparency and accountability among the public servants. Furthermore, without any physical reporting at the inter-ministerial level,

one can connect from one ministry to another through government-certified e-mail, making for a flexible working procedure. Not only is it a flexible working procedure for inter-ministerial matters, but it is also responsive to any inter-country correspondence. The biggest notable thing is that the use of paper is declining in the office. What inspires an eco-friendly working environment? The data input is quick, ensuring real-time information that decreases the likelihood of calculating errors and improves resource quality. A government official discussed the advantages of e-Government; one famous e-Government service is "e-Nothi" or "e-Filing." It also explains how e-filing ensures transparency and accountability in government, workflow and reduces the possibility of corruption in government files. Because the real-time uploading and downloading of any files can be seen, that enables accountability.

“But high-speed Internet service and adequate Wi-Fi/Broadband connection could further accelerate the government's digital services”, said a official as a recommendation to make effective fast e-governance services. Besides providing these services to the people, it is important to make people aware of these services too. About the overall performance of e-governance, the government official further describes that this way they were able to provide very high-quality updated information and services by the saving time, cost, and without visiting the spot, by using the government website in order to achieve the goal of SDG (2030) and the DELTA plan (2041) along with the governments' 8th Fifth Year Plan.

E-governance in Public Service deliveries in Bangladesh

Land Records information services

In Bangladesh, the land system is dependent mostly on the age old British time Colonial enacted directions. Most of the rules are paper-based and the process is time-consuming. Yet, in the era of digitalization, land possession, enrollment, movement, planning, charge installment, will or confirmation, and other authoritative records enrolled in an electronic framework has been started to make the process more effective and time saving. In the e-governance system of Bangladesh, people are getting digital land record facilities along with E-Namjari, Mouza Map, NamjariKhatiyani, R.S Khatiyani, and so on important filing (land.gov.bd). Besides these services, there is an “Uttaradhikar Calculator” and an emergency Hotline number 16122 for making the process easy and accessible.

Education and Training Services

By introducing the online admission system students, teachers, and guardians now can get any kind of public examination result by just typing a common number and get the result on mobile any time and any place without presenting any academic institutions. Besides, through the online education system, students can get all educational directions from school, college, and admission process (www.shed.gov.bd). During Covid-19's lockout, students and instructors got attached in virtual classroom for any training or lesson which was administered through Access to Innovate (a2i) program of the government (www.teachers.gov.bd). Rajna Begum, a 20-year-old girl from Noldory

village of Karmodha Union completed her HSC with a GPA 5 result from Science group in 2019. She envisioned to get admitted to any public university of the country and have benefited from the digitalized admission process. According to her "*One of my cousins recommended me to use the internet to fill out the form. So, I went to the Union Parishad Information Service Centre (UISC) and filled up my application. Following the admissions exam, I was offered a spot in Shahjalal University of Science and Technology in Sylhet to pursue my honors in Physics*". Students now can apply to any university or college by going to that institute's website and filling up an application, which saved their time and money. An integrated university admissions exam is in the plan to take in the coming days. It will save time, money, and many forms of harassment if it is adopted.

The Passport and Immigration services

In Bangladesh, corruption in passport office is a major problem to reach effective services to citizens. Migrant workers contribute heavily in the economy of the country and provides the source of remittances. Unfortunately, harassments at passport offices is very common and for that, digitalization of passport and immigration procedures target to bring transparency and accountability in the whole procedure. Passport process can now proceed within a short time by self-applying online enrolment. Not only one ordinary citizen can apply, but also can cross-check any Immigration information(<http://www.dip.gov.bd>).

Tax Management

The NBR (National Board of Revenue) has started digitalizing the complex tax administration where citizens can now get access to the information and can submit the tax returns online. Registering for TIN (Taxpayer Identification Number) is already digitalized and mandatory for all people who are in the threshold of eligible tax payers as per the tax policy. The government e-service initiative is to get this pivotal service at the hand of the people. (secure.incometax.gov.bd/Registration).

Health information

To get all types of health-related information, E-health assistance services in Bangladesh provides multiple services for the citizens. The call center for health service named "Telemedicine" provided by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare can be connected for any type of health-related query at 16263 numbers available for all citizens. During the Lockdown of Covid-19, this service provides services actively. In order to get the fastest identification of Corona Patient, there is a mobile application "Corona Tracer BD", an emergency number 333 and 16263 to call (dghs.gov.bd/index/bd/).

Circulation of Government Jobs

The government creates a one-stop job portal to reduce the cost and time in the job circulation process. Almost all government job circulation processes are proceeded with

some simple steps using mobile network where job seekers apply within the transparent circulation process with self-processing (<https://bangladesh.gov.bd/site/view/eservices>).

Emergency Call Service

Among the e-services provided by the government of Bangladesh, the emergency call service 999 is the most popular among the people. This service is actively connected with the emergency sections of the Hospitals, Ambulance, Fire Services, and the Police. People can get other services over the phone using these following phone numbers: 106 for anti-corruption commission (toll-free); 16123 for agricultural (including charge); 16402 (With Charge) for BTCL; 16263 (With Charge) for health Information; 10922 (With Charge) for Women welfare issues, 10941(with charge) for advance disaster news; 1098 (Toll-Free) for child help; 16236 (With Charge) for Bangladesh Bank; 109 (For all Operator) & 10921(without GP & Banglalink) for the cell of “Women and Child Abuse Prevention”; 09654333333 (with charge) for Immigrants; 100 (Toll-free) for BTRC; 01799090011(With Charge) for immigrant welfare and foreign correspondence; 105 (With Charge) for NID, 16430 for Government Laws services; 16162 (With Charge) for Dhaka Wasa and 16256 (With Charge) for Union Parishad Services (www.999.gov.bd/call-centers). Rumena is a 15-year-old girl from Karmodha Union's Husonabad village . Her parents arranged her marriage. Rumena, on the other hand, wisely called the national hotline number 333 to call off her marriage. The mobile court fines Rumana's father 30,000 takas. *"It was hard for me to quit marriage without support 333,"* according to Rumena.

The Agriculture sector

The Bangladesh Agricultural sector contributes a pivotal role in the economy of the country. In order to provide the appropriate information to the farmers at right time, “Krishi Batayan” a single platform for agriculture information is established by the government. “Krishi Batayan” web portal is resourceful for the farmers of the country that is enriched with 178 seasonal crop’s information with 1000 disease names and prescribed information; and 861 video tutorials . Farmers and agriculture entrepreneurs can get in touch with the agriculture expert for any kind of agriculture-related problem with an inexpensive 25 paisa/minute phone call by just dialing 16123. A farmer can access that information in the field with a mobile phone to get information from the union digital center.

Mobile Banking Transactions

The Mobile Financial Service or MFS in Bangladesh has brought a revolutionary change in financial sector of the country. As day-by-day people are dependent on using mobile phones, the number of mobile phone subscribers is increasing rapidly. In March 2020, the number of mobile phone subscribers was 165.337. At the end of the year of December 2020, the number of mobile subscribers increases to 170.137. The number of mobile subscribers has reached 173.357 Million at the end of February 2021

(www.btrc.gov.bd/telco/mobile). So, this huge number of people can easily access to the services of Mobile Financial Services at any time with Bkash, Nagad, and Rocket at a reasonable charge. During the Covid-19 lockdown, online transactions were getting more popular in Bangladesh.

Laws of Bangladesh in online

Citizens will be highly benefited if all laws can be accessible easily . In this regard, all law-related information is now available on the 'Laws of Bangladesh' website at bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/laws-of-bangladesh.html. The 'Laws of Bangladesh' website has provided a search system to find out any law, Act, Ordinance, or any law related documents.

Challenges faced in implementing E-governance Endeavors

1. Illiteracy

According to Bangladesh Statistics Bureau 2019, the literacy rate of the population (7+years) in 2018 was 73.2 (www.bbs.gov.bd) where the rest of the population is far behind the light of education. To spread the government services at the doorsteps of all people, these people are important to connect through e-governance services. In addition, the need for technological education is essential for all the citizens of Bangladesh. However, the illiterate portion of population is a major challenge to provide technological expertise to reach an inclusive digital society.

2. Misinformation and online scam

Technology makes our daily life easy and simple. Besides using smart technologies, it is important to adapt to the technology in a positive manner which is not against the norm of society. Sometimes people are deceived by misinformation, sometimes technology left some rooms for online swindle. The problem of justification of real information is difficult for general people. Without a lack of exact knowledge, people can also be involved in such misleading activities.

3. Lack of publicity of the digitalization initiatives

A lot of people still do not aware of the e-governance initiatives of the government. It is crucial to spread the initiatives of the E-governance to the grassroot level in an inclusive manner so that no people are left from the benefits of information technologies. However, the government digitalization ventures got limited promotional activities and left out of the reach of people for the reason.

4. Building Trust

Building trust on digital platforms and e-governance procedures is difficult from the perspective of involving a vast number of population in Bangladesh who are familiar with paper-based work system. Therefore, building trust on e-governance platform can be crucial for the success of the system with engaging more people online for better

governance and transparency. Connecting people depends on building trust and a consistently positive image of the online platform can bring technological benefits to people's door.

5. The consistent quality of services

It is hard to provide a consistent quality of online services to the citizens. Because of the inefficient bureaucracy and red-tapism, the digital way of providing services sometimes failed to work which is seen in many occasions. Sometimes lack of technology supports and workforce, the consistent e-governance services are hampered.

6. Digital Security Law

In the era of the internet and technology, the Digital Security Act, 2018 is a new term for the purpose of resisting cyber-crime and building IT-related safe environment for the people of Bangladesh. However, it is difficult to ensure safety for all in online spaces because of the global nature of interconnectedness. Moreover, the law is highly debated in political sphere for the allegation of misusing the law. However, to establish "Digital Bangladesh", providing digital security is very crucial.

7. Cost and Slow Internet

The high cost of internet services and the speed of the internet services is matter of big concern for proving e-governance in the country and reaching to the people from grassroot. Transforming "Digital Bangladesh" can not be possible without reaching the internet to general citizen in an affordable cost and ensuring good speed.

8. Updated information, limited IT infrastructure, and regular electricity problems

The expensive cost of smart phones, laptops, internet services, and other computer accessories comes as barriers to bringing government services to people's doorsteps. The consistent availability of the internet is a critical aspect of altering Bangladesh's digital transformation. People are unaware of government services that may be obtained at their doorsteps due to lack of updated information on service provider websites. As a result, finding correct information is difficult.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Bangladesh working hard to integrate ICT into all parts of government operations, especially those that deliver public services and sustain inter-agency collaboration. However, some of the necessary components for the development of e-government are absent. Even if national government seems to have the political will and commitment to adopt ICT-friendly policies in order to advance the IT sector and establish e-government, there are still some obstacles to overcome. Some policy suggestions are made here to overcome the obstacles

1. IT Infrastructure development

Competent IT infrastructure is one of the crucial requirements for Bangladesh to accelerate the growth of the economy as well as to connect the government services at the doorsteps. Establishment of IT infrastructure with support of private sectors can generate sustainable growth in this sector and also generate development from the root. In this regard, providing technological support, building strong networks, and ensuring instant power facilities is a first and foremost priority to penetrate development at the root.

2. Ensure Continuous Power Supply

Uninterrupted power supply is important for the digital dream of the nation and Government is working to ensure power generation in the country. For that, Government should focus not only on electricity generation using fossil fuels, but also should concentrate on alternative power generation such as using Solar panels, renewable using natural resources, etc.

3. Proper Publicity and connectivity

One of the major challenges of e-governance in Bangladesh is to bring general citizens under the umbrella of digitalization process and ensure participation. However, lack of publicity makes the process difficult as citizens are not aware of the benefits of e-governance initiatives. To spread the activities of e-governance at the grassroots level, government should come with more promotional activities for citizen attentions. In this regard documentary, strong campaign activities should be given priorities to bring the people to the digitalization boons.

4. Ensure Accountability & Transparency

Getting impartial, accountable, and transparent information is the right of the citizens. The more transparent information is available to the citizens in online platform, accountability will be ensured. So it is important to ensure impartial and transparent information and procedure to the people in digital form to establish better governance in all sort of life.

Bangladesh has attained some notable achievements over the years implementing the digitalization process that contributes in Reducing public harassment; ensuring efficiency and providing accountability and transparency. E-governance has provided services to the people's doorsteps and reach the citizens evading hassles providing some important public services. Government should prioritize the digitalization process in other sectors of the government for efficiency and ensuring accountability.

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Examining Religious Extremism and Political Violence in Myanmar: An Experience from Rohingya Crisis

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Abstract

This paper aims to understand the relationship between religious extremism and political violence in the Rakhine state of Myanmar where Rohingya Muslims were discriminately executed by the majority Buddhist community with the support and direct participation of the Military. An alliance between Buddhist monks and the military is clearly behind the ethnic cleansing in 2017. However, Buddhist monks were not in favor of the Military rule and protested the military dictatorship. It is argued in this paper that the landslide victory of NLD (National League for Democracy) in 2012 election changed the scenario. To strengthen their side, the military donated millions of dollars to monks and temples as well as politically patronized them. As feedback, the monks formed a nefarious strategic alliance with the military, which is a mutual and win-win situation because of this alliance both sides paid off. As either a reward, monks built a hegemonic leadership like as Nazi party of Germany over the ordinary people, allowing the military to persecute the Rohingya people. Nevertheless, Ma Ba Tha and the 969 movement played a role in the atrocities against Rohingya Muslims, this was done so that NLD could not take over power from the Military. The result of this Buddhist extremism was the uprooting of millions of Rohingya Muslims from their home in Rakhine, which forced the Rohingya Muslims to take shelter in Bangladesh.

Key Words: Buddhists, Monks, Rohingya Muslims, Political Violence and Religious Extremism

Introduction

In Myanmar, a mostly Buddhist country, the Rohingya¹ ethnic Muslim minority people have endured institutionalized discrimination for decades. Millions of Rohingya Muslims fled to Bangladesh when Myanmar's army unleashed a deadly crackdown on them in August 2017. The exodus took place on August 25, 2017, after Rohingya ARSA insurgents massacred more than 30 police posts. Survivors risked everything to flee by water or on foot from a military onslaught later dubbed a "*textbook example of ethnic cleansing*" by the United Nations. The International court of justice of the UN ordered the Buddhist-majority country to take measures to protect its Rohingya people from genocide in January 2020. However, the Myanmar (previously Burma) army has stated that it is battling Rohingya insurgents and that civilians are not being targeted. Aung San Suu Kyi, the country's leader, and a former human rights champion has frequently dismissed charges of genocide. (BBC, 2020) Albeit the authority and supreme leaders denied ethnic cleansing, the reality was very different from what the authority said, and a number of

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scholars, media, and international organizations demonstrated that the problem had a lengthy history and also many explanations. Regardless, most of the influential monks in Myanmar are instigating dogmatism and fanaticism against Muslims, this contradicts the ethos of Buddhism which is acknowledged for pacifism and tolerance. Notwithstanding its periods of separation from the entire world, Monks seemed eager to capitalize on the tragedy by presenting it in a fresh light when dealing with its Muslim community. There has been a profusion of scholarly and policy publications, as well as press stories, connecting Islam, extremism, and securitization under this supposedly "*new world*" order (Ansar, 2020, p. 10). It has sparked a vicious dispute over who or what constitutes a Rohingya, as well as communal violence that has been described by human rights experts and activists as a crime against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and genocide (Cheesman, 2017, p. 1).

Nevertheless, the leaders of Ma Ba Tha, or the Committee for the Protection of Nationality and Religion, and the 969 movement have been working together. Besides, Ma Ba Tha's declaration of political independence and religious extremism stirred international concern regarding Myanmar. Thousands of monks revolted against Rohingya Muslims and promoted the Military's exclusion of Rohingya from the Rakhine state. Meanwhile, in 2013, most of the ex-969 movement's and Ma Ba Tha's key leaders, including Sitagu Sayadaw, U Wirathu, and Ashin Tiloka, demanded religious conversion, interfaith marriage, enforced monogamy, and population-control measures, which were enacted in 2015. Here, this paper will mainly examine why the Military supported, patronized and implemented the demands of monks and religious organizations since 2012. Buddhist religious militancy, against Islam based Rohingya minority is controlled through a combination of policies of state apparatus especially the Military that intensified the frequency of political violence. As a result, millions of Rohingya Muslims have been slain, but most have gone into Bangladesh crossed the border, which already mentioned.

Previously throughout the Military dictatorship, monks and *Sangha* were critical about the Military rule and they also took to the streets against the Military in 1988 revolution and *Saffron* Revolution in 2007. A crucial question is why the monks were being supported by the Military in the era of quasi civilian regime. While from the liberation period to *Saffron* revolution the monks and the military were in an antagonistic relationship, but now they have worked hand in hand specially in the issue of Rohingya crisis. This paper is a systematic attempt to find the answer to the specific question of reasons of alliance between monks and military, as well as to investigate the crisis' development through the lens of accelerating religious extremism.

Political Violence and Religious extremism

The interrelation between political violence and religious extremism is undeniable, the inclination of religiously motivated extremist groups to involve politically violent activities into their communal interests has been observed from the ancient to contemporary civilized world. Religious extremists engage in violence for the sake of

religious objectives because they embrace sect ideologies that sanction violence in the service of God (Iannaccone, 1999, p. 2). Therefore, they anchor on violent extremism colored as political violence and vice versa. Political theorists debate about the nature and conception of political violence. In addition, a variety of the terminology is encountered while identifying political violence. Some scholars illustrated it as national liberation and domestic conflict, while others termed it as civil strife and political instability. However, in the neutral sense the internal meaning of all connotations is identical. Some theorists prefer to stress on only the overt types of activity such as “*riots and strike*,” (Mars, 1975, p. 221) while others tend to indicate moral convent or potentially violent attitudes like “*non-cooperation, passive resistance, the threat of force as necessarily involved in potentially violent behavior*”(Mars 1975, p. 223). Several number of theorists’ stress on more extreme forms of violence such as armed struggle which includes “*guerrilla war, rebellion, revolution and other such activities involving actual physical damage to property and injuries to person*” (Mars 1975, p. 224). Thus, political violence signifies activities, which require some resistance and force to bring changes inside the political realm, or to the political system. It might entail destruction and vandalization of property and distress of individuals. Furthermore, some extremist violent activities like armed struggle, riots, strikes, and some other less extreme behavior such as protest, demonstration, sabotage and alike, which are the results of religious extremism would be illustrated as political violence in this article.

Despite the fact that religious extremism is a fiercely contested issue, it is frequently reduced to a one-dimensional construct associated with religious violence (Wibisono, Louis and Jetten, 2019, p. 1). It involves a definite political goal or agenda, concerned about adversities such as prejudice, animosity and even armed conflict. In this regard, extremism is characterized as an idealistic position that it is essential to be using aggression to reinstate the political system to the form prescribed by religious norms (Arena and Arrigo, 2005, pp. 485–486). Extreme religious groups do not practice traditional religion; instead, they selectively alter ancient scriptures and customs to make them useful in the battle against modernity. To put it another way, the groups practice selectivity, selecting and choosing the components of the parent religion to include or exclude as needed. Throughout history, there has been much discussion and disagreement about how religion extremism and politics should interact. In this manner, extreme religious movements seek political power and the ability for using policies or coercion to encourage the implementation of their religious norms and thus religious extremism and political violence works hand in hand.

The Foreshadowing of Buddhist Religious Extremism in Myanmar

Extremist religious sentiment has become a global phenomenon in recent times and is not only restricted to Myanmar. The stance against *Myanmafication* (Houtman, 2000) as a multi ethnic nation is evidently represented by the historical slogan occupying national banners, “*to be Burmese means to be Buddhist*” (Lehr, 2019, p. 157). This extremist expression in Myanmar has evolved with time and it is not sudden. Unlike Sri-Lanka and

Thiland, Burma has had its own history, which entails the country's early Buddhist chronology from the third century BCE to 1885 in the form of the *Sasanvamsa*, which would be the Region's Chronicle (Lehr, 2019, p. 160). Theravada Buddhism, successfully established its position as a prime religion in the Pagan dynasty (ruled 1044–1077), while *Mahāyāna* Buddhism dominated it during the early century of the running era. A predominant reason which can explain the inextricable link between Myanmar's culture and corporate identity with Buddhism can be attributed to the first emperor of Pagan dynasty, King Anawratha, who captured the kingdom of Burma, and relocated Mon monks but did not replace Buddhism with animism, Hinduism or even Brahmanism. Mon monks therefore have always been supported in that period. British conquest of Burma led to British administration's abolishment of Theravada Buddhism which was favored by the king. Also, British administration's adoption of secularist policy towards the existing religions came as a shock for the Burmese societies both politically and morally. The situation deteriorated further due to the British education policy which promoted western education and abolished monastery based cultural and religious education. Therefore, to rebel against British rule, the Buddhist monks and the traditional monarch collaborated. The *Saya San rebellion* and the riot of 1938 were iconic anti-Indian particularly anti-Muslim and anti-British expression. A book by a Muslim writer, Shwe Hpi, which was published in 1931, and reprinted in 1938, encompasses a number of anti-Buddhist comments (Smith, 1965, p. 109). In July 1935, a Muslim school teacher attempted to demonstrate Islam's superiority over Buddhism, in a lecture for villagers in the Tungoo district (Adas, 1974, p. 206). Scholars stated that these two incidents stimulated communal riot afterwards. The colonial policy, on the one hand, brought many Indian Muslims to Myanmar as low skilled labor and moneylender; which meant that Burmese people were replaced by these Muslims people in these low skilled occupations; these led to riots firstly in 1930 and again in 1938. But the primary reason was the disparaging references by the school teacher and Muslim writer. Parallely, a general meeting held on the platform of Shwe Dagon pagoda in Rangoon on 26 July 1938 included 10,000 people, 1500 monks and numerous political leaders. A resolution was passed to throw verbal attacks against Buddhism and Gautam Buddha in "a pamphlet entitled *The Abode of the Nats*, written by a Burmese Muslim" (Adas, 1974, p. 206). The demonstrators and the monks also demanded punishment of the writer and they declared if the authorities fail to take actions, measures will be taken to treat Muslims as the top one adversary, accusing Muslims of insulting the Buddhist society and faith, and also to exterminate Muslims and its language and religion (Smith, 1965, p. 110). Thereafter, *The Sun*, a daily owned by a rightwing politician U Saw, published a controversial letter on behalf of a monk regarding the sufferings of women who married Muslim men. Several other rumors which spread that Sule and Shwe Dagon pagodas would be destroyed by the Muslims, sparked riot. All of a sudden 1500 of all Burma council of young monks, started burning and looting Muslim shops, killed 200 Muslims and wounded more than 878. 4000 Burmese Buddhists were arrested in that riot, which spread all over Burma and Muslims were portrayed as enemies. Everywhere monks instigated and motivated rioters, whereas monasteries armed them.

In the riot of 1942 between Buddhist and Rohingya Muslims, monks again instigated violence in the name of protection of Buddhism and monastery causing massacre. Meanwhile during World War II, a considerable number of Rohingya Muslims were recruited to fight alongside the British-led 'Fourteenth Army' against the Japanese forces, most of whom were ignorant indentured laborers in the rice plantations of present-day Rakhine. The Burmese National Army, led by Aung San (father of current Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi), fought side by side with the Japanese, who promised them freedom from British oppression (Sarkar, 2019). Many Burmese Buddhist people joined the Japanese side or, remained neutral. However, when Aung San understood that the Japanese would not win the war, he contacted the British authority. In January 1948, Burma got its independence from British rule but the regional unrest remained as it was. When Rohingya Muslims joined the British force, they were promised a separate state called Arakan state (currently Rakhine state), whereas Rakhine Buddhists joined the Japanese alliance. Armed groups of both the communities attacked each other causing 1942-1943 massacres. The Muslims fled to the northern part of Rakhine state where they were a majority and the Buddhists moved to the southern part (International Crisis Group, 2016), producing an ideological gap between them. Many scholars believe that the role of Rohingya people in the World War II also grew mistrust and division between them. Historically Buddhist monks were known for following Buddha's non-violent principles. During the Pagan dynasty, Theravada Buddhism became a quasi-state religion. Again, monks became a vital part of the kingdom of Burma and gradually adopted extremism inciting a couple of communal riots. Buddhism became the core spirit of Burmese nationalism. Finally, during the British Empire, Rohingya Muslims became the primary antagonist of the Buddhist people and 'to be Barman is to be Buddhist' became the spirit of Myanmar's nationalism, which is definitely the will of extremist monks.

Alliance between Monks and Military

A significant number of monks have played a major role in Myanmar's culture, shaping communal perspectives and developing nationalism, and no Burmese government could function without monks or monasteries until recently. Most of the post-independence Burmese governments felt compelled to either co-opt or repress the monks in order to reduce their power over the people (Hlaing, 2007, p. 232). Because of the socio-political context, governments were compelled to form alliances with the monkhood, and relations between the two were either friendly or hostile. The allied government, on the other hand, would not tolerate any monks who supported the opposing parties. As the 1947 constitution declared, the misuse of faith for political reasons is prohibited, most governments distanced themselves from monkhood and the *Sangha* (Stokke, 2019, p. 159). The section 364 of the present constitution further added "*any act which is intended or is likely to promote feelings of hatred, enmity or discord between racial or religious communities or sects is contrary to this Constitution.*" Section 407, contrastingly states that any party "*abusing religion for political purpose*" shall have "*no right of continued existence*" (Union of Myanmar, 2008, pp. 152, 163). Although these exist only in the paper, these rules did not hold in reality, as witnessed in the 1988 revolution as well as

2007's *Saffron Revolution* and the most recent Rohingya crisis. Monks propelled Buddhist principles to enact policies by the government, making the Buddhist community comparatively beneficial.

During the parliamentary period (1948-1958), U Nu's government which promoted the *Sangha* and Buddhism to satisfy the monks also joined leftist oppositions. The Military took over the power by advocating "*Burmese way to Socialism*," which is the blended one of both Buddhism and Marxism. The Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) dissociated from *Sangha*, because firstly it advocated Marxist ideology and secondly it didn't fear people's perception because political organization forbade political association of the Buddhist monks and restricted them to only religious associations (Hlaing, 2007, p. 233). Furthermore, Ne Win's formation policy, campaign of cleaning up the *Sangha*, widely known as '*Sangha Reform*'-failed miserably because many monasteries were seized, and many politically active monks were forcibly disrobed and put to prison, where some, like as Sayadaw U Nayaka, perished "after being tortured"(Lehr, 2019, p. 173). Indisputably the relationship between monks and the USPP government was worse than the previous government, by contrast, monks and the opposition grew closer. Hostility grew between monks and the Military but the situation reversed after 2012, they started working cooperatively specially in case of Rohingya crisis. Different international media specially *Al Jazeera* claimed that the Buddhist monks and Military re-emerged as an unholy alliance (Lianes, 2019) and ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims was observed. However, I would go so far as to call the monk-military cooperation a nefarious strategic alliance in which both the military and the monks benefited, in other words, this alliance made a win-win situation where both parties profited by cooperation, compromise, or group participation. I'll clarify why I consider this is a nefarious strategic alliance and a win-win situation in the subsequent discussion. For instance, the NLD won convincingly in its first election in 2012, signifying noncooperation with the military and monks. Surprise and tension were expressed in the language of U Zaw Htay (Deputy director general of President Thein Sein's office), he said, "*all of our calculations were wrong*" (Bandow, 2015). To gain popularity they freed 300 of 651 political prisoners, stopped the Military operation against ethnic Kachin rebels, removed 2,082 names from the blacklist, who were regarded as threat to national security. Furthermore, the Military junta understood that 90 percent of the total population were devoted Buddhists. Majority of the masses were greatly influenced by the monks and their engagement and active participation in social and political life. NLD did not consider the role of monks as significant. The Military took this opportunity and made this alliance with the most nationalistic monks. Though the alliance was deemed nefarious because both sides had ill motives and high aspirations, it was beneficial for both. The Military enhanced their popularity and influence in the democratic era. They donated a fortune to the monastery and bribed the monks by giving them millions of dollars. According to U Gambira, famed for the *Saffron Revolution*, "*Military approached us with offers of financial assistance and presents, even offering to pay each monk \$3000 USD. This empowered the monks to come out in public in support of the military and to promote religious enmity.*" (Lianes, 2019). In addition, "*senior officials in the government have informally encouraged chief*

ministers of regions and states to approach and support local Ma-Ba-Tha monks by building 'Sayar-Dagar-Setsanye' (a patron-client relationship) between Buddhist monasteries and regional administrative leaders" (Zin, 2015, p. 383). Following the authority's decision, a military commander at a conference in Yangon personally donated about 20,000 us dollar in June 2019, where nearly thousands of monks were present. Brigadier General Zaw Min Tun, spokesperson of the military explained the reason for the military's donation to the Ma Ba Tha and other such groups, said, "The group is necessary and should be supported in the name of Buddhism," he further added to *The Irrawaddy*, "we will make donations and support the organizations which we think we should" (Zaw, 2019). Note worthily in the Military regime, monks had rejected even taking alms, but this time, as the documents suggested, they took donations pleasantly because of this coalition. Secondly, having evil intentions, a number of ultra-extremist monks including Ashin Wirathu along with Aung Sung Suu Kyi were given a presidential pardon a.k.a. Military granted amnesty. After the *Saffron Revolution*, thousands of monks took to the street in 2012 again and supported the Military objectives. *Al Jazeera* noted that "they were shouting their support for the Military and they were called to exclude the revenger" (Lianes, 2019). Most importantly, those who opposed and criticized senior monks for supporting the Military strategy of social control, were sentenced and ostracized for their views. U Gambira was one of them; furthermore, he also criticized the senior monks of the *Sangha Nayaka Committee* (SNC) for failing to release monks imprisoned in *Saffron Revolution*. Senior monks of SNC urged the government to arrest him for his political activism. Government took initiative within a while, only to release him a day after due to international criticism (Bottorff, 2012). In 2016 U Gambira finally took political asylum in Thailand. He openly opposed monk's attitudes towards Military and still believe "*democracy is the only way forward for Myanmar*" (Lianes, 2019). Besides, when the Time magazine published a cover story on Wirathu's extremist activism and hatred against Rohingya Muslims with the title "*Face of Buddhist Terror*," (Beech, 2013) the president reacted inclusively and controversially stated that the story of Time magazine, "*creates a misunderstanding of Buddhism*," confirming his support on the controversial monk. He also added, "the government is currently striving with religious leaders, political parties, media and the people to rid Myanmar [Burma] of unwanted conflicts." He further claimed Wirathu as a "*noble person*" and "*son of Buddha*" in his statement (Dehart, 2013). Though Wirathu was sentenced for 25 years in 2003 for inciting violence against Rohingya Muslims, he was freed by the amnesty of political prisoners. These types of stand by the president and the Military oriented political leaders affirms the Military's role behind the scene as well as the protector of monks.

Viewing the sinisterly alliance from another perspective, *Sangha*, as well as monks, play the role of civil society as there is no existence of civil society and through this alliance, ultra-extremists monks established its influence in the political arena, where they mobilized the general mass through their institutions and their own influence like the Nazi party in Germany. In 1920's and 1930's the Nazi party created a phenomenon against the Jews among the Germans, but when the Nazis came to power in 1933 Hitler

established a “Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda.” In this case, the Nazis spread propaganda through newspapers, printed cartoons, movies and even radio against Jews among the general mass, as there were distinct audiences for Nazi’s propaganda. German had been persuaded of both the war against foreign foes and the infiltration of Jews.(United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2015). Furthermore, when government made rules against the Jews, the Nazis played a key role in mobilizing general people through propaganda against the Jews as well as in favor of the authority, these events occurred in 1935 and 1938 especially before the “Nuremberg Race Law” and “Barrage of Anti-Semitic Economic Legislation” respectively. The same things could be seen in the Myanmar, Ma Ba Tha and the 969 movement also acted like the Nazi party, the ultra-extremist monks like Wirathu, Sitagu and even the chairman of Ma Ba Tha, Ashin Tiloka propagated relentlessly against Rohingya Muslims in the name of protecting “race and religion.” Ashin Tiloka gave a speech in a public meeting in Karen state, where he threw one question after another to the audience and finally audience answered with only, “yes.” His propaganda was as follows:

“Outside people don’t want our family to be peaceful. They want our properties like our land that is why they provoke us. Look at the area where we living. It’s in the Indochina region. What area?” Indochina.² “What’s indo? Kalars[Muslim] from the west. What’s indo?” Kalars from the west. “So, our country could be disappeared?” Yes, it could. “So, do you want to be careful and not them separate us?” Yes, we have to! “These people who don’t like you, will try to separate you in different ways. To protect from the wild tiger we have to prepare our fences. Is it important to know why they want us to be divided?” Yes, it’s important! “It’s not only them. Are there some amongst us who are maggots and want to make things worse in our country?” Yes they are! “So, we also have to be careful with them?” Yes! (Lianes, 2019)

Here it could be seen that the devoted followers of the Ma Ba Tha leader Tiloka, worshipped him and were convinced by his speech for the protection of Myanmar and ultimately Buddhism. He illustrated Rohingya Muslims as wild tigers. He claimed that he was an inspirational Buddhist monk and his mission was to “protect race and religion.” In an interview with *AlJazeera* he stated that “if one is not loyal to the nation, our country and race will disappear. This cannot be avoided if you live here. It’s like they say, ‘when in Rome, you must do as the Roman’s’” (Lianes, 2019). Thus, he and his organization Ma Ba Tha created propaganda among the general people of Myanmar in favour of the Military and against Rohingya, which is definitely hegemony.

Further pieces of evidence could be cited here, that in 2013 a number of monks demanded enactment of four communal laws after a conference of monks at Rangoon, these were religious conversion, interfaith marriage, enforced monogamy and population control measures. After a year, thousands of monks gathered in Mandalay for attending a conference and as per decision, they submitted signatures for supporting the ongoing proposed law of interfaith marriage, which restricted marriage between different religions, especially between Buddhists and Muslims. Moreover, Wirathu and his 969 movement also collected signatures to support interfaith marriage law, here it is

interesting to note, that after proposing the law by the monks, they hired lawyers for drafting the law properly. Another thing they did, which was most striking that they campaigned in favor of the legislation among the common mass in the name of protecting race and religion, which is also a common theme of Ma Ba Tha. Monks had a common stand in favour of the Military, in September 2012, Wirathu, after being freed from the jail by the Military approved amnesty, arranged a rally with his fellow monks in Mandalay for creating a social legacy of the then-president Thein Sein's policy against Rohingya Muslims, which was very controversial across the world and resulted in the mass exodus of Rohingya Muslims to Bangladesh. Besides, in the very first week of October, 2015, Wirathu posted a picture of President Thein Sein on his *Facebook* account by captioning that "I'll be with you Mr. President. You are ours"(Fisher, 2015). Besides, Sitagu, one of the leading monks who also supported the Military policy against Rohingya Muslims, although he portrayed himself as a peace builder and modest monk, at a military training academy in Karen State, he preached to members of the military. His comments had a terrible intent: to justify the mass murder of non-Buddhists on religious grounds(Walton, 2017). Subsequently, Ma Ba Tha and its prominent leaders took a stance very ambiguously in favor of USDP during the 2015 election, which was very ill-favored and controversial also. Ma Ba Tha chairman, Ashin Thiloka, openly adjured his lay people to vote for those who would be able to protect race and religion, further he argued that they must avoid those who would "destroy" race and religion, and this indicated rejection of NLD. Here, Wirathu's role and his voice was straight and unambiguous and he told his followers to be more specific in spreading the idea to the electorates that the Ma Ba Tha agenda was promoting largely following the formation of USDP; and it would proactively protect race and religion in comparison to the NLD (International Crisis Group, 2017, p. 13). It is frequently observed that Wirathu was engaged in a bigger scale in the election of 2020, where he provided fund like the 2015 election. Thus the monks, the *Sangha* and their affiliated extremist organizations created a plot in favor of Military as well as USDP like the Nazi party in Germany, which is one kind of hegemony where the general mass psychologically accept the supremacy of the Military and their policy against Rohingya Muslims. Simply, Military and the monks entered into the alliance, where monks act as a vanguard of establishing the supremacy of the Military as they have social influence and the monks use it for mobilizing general mass in favor of the Military. As the British had gone and the Military dictatorship fell through the *Saffron* Revolution, the Military-based USDP was searching for a new enemy, through which they would be able to create the crisis and exist defending the NLD. Finally, USDP considered monks as friends and Rohingya Muslims as enemies.

Political Violence: From Extremism to Militancy

Myanmar's sense of identity has historically been linked to its Buddhist religious practice. However, in the case of the Rohingya, religion has had a particularly strong impact. (Walton, 2017). Though Buddhism and its political patronization has a long history in Myanmar, its extremist character gradually became militancy and got international attention just in the very beginning of this running century, especially after 2012 when the democratic regime started with nearly fifty years' experience of Military dictatorship, where the Military and monks control the trigger of militancy. In this discussion, the primary focus will be on the political violence in Myanmar against Rohingya Muslims, which is the result of militancy of Buddhist extremist monks and the state-sponsored armed forces. Now the question arises, what are the reasons behind political engagement of monks? According to Buddhist cosmological explanation, there are two distinct parts in the Buddhist world, which are *Lokiya* and *Lokuttara*; *Lokiya*- the mundane or materialistic world, which contains worldly things such as the temporary lives of human beings and factors entailed in it like happiness, sorrow, wealth as well as the impact of state apparatus, on the other hand, *Lokuttara*- the supermundane world or the spiritual world, which is greater than worldly things or materialistic things. Though these two are different both are dependent, they are complementary to each other. "The secular, materially oriented world needs merit and knowledge provided by the spiritual domain; and *lokuttara* needs material support from laypeople. If both decline then Buddhism is in danger" (Gravers, 2012, p. 8). Here in Myanmar, the monks argue that political leaders lost its 'moral power' to lead the state and welfare of its laypeople and monks have moral responsibilities to protect the laypeople from suffering. They also explain that there is no obligation to act in the mundane world, as the monks are not attached to the secular world. Even Aung San Suu Kyi considered Buddhism as a means of turning to real democracy and she argued that in order for Buddhism to become liberal, those who are treated as free subjects need to understand what truth is on their own free will and they must offer their help towards others (Ky, 1992, p. 174). Further, she criticized the Military and held them responsible for their despotic and immoral rule. According to her, "*failure to recover that which has been lost, omission to repair that which has been damaged, disregard for the need of a reasonable economy, and the elevation to leadership of men without morality or learning*" (Ky, 1992, p. 169). She also cited Universal declaration of human rights, 'if a man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, human rights should be protected by law' (Ky, 1992, p. 177), but her recent activities, unfortunately, does not portray it. Therefore, Buddhism is the reality of Myanmar and without it; no ruler could run the regime smoothly. On the one hand, monks primarily legitimize their political affiliation in the above mentioned cosmological explanation, but the recent trend of some Buddhists monks organization such as 969 movement and Ma Ba Tha are not confined in only non-violent protests like *Saffron Revolution*, they have taken on a very violent form. Primarily 969 movement and after it the Ma Ba Tha has been working hand in hand with the Military against Rohingya Muslims, now the extreme political role and militancy of extremist organizations and the Military in case of Rohingya crisis is illustrated below.

“969” movement and Wirathu

Ashin Wirathu, a Buddhist monk of Myanmar, who has been illustrated as “the face of Buddhist terror” (Beech, 2013) by *Time* magazine and who, himself also has taken the following entitlement “Burmese Bin Laden” (Hodal, 2013), 969 movement, on the one hand, led by him since it was established in 2001 and most importantly spread hatred against Muslims in the name of “promoting and protecting religion.” It is only three digits “969”, but these digits hold ideological meanings, among them 9 means the nine attributes of Buddha, 6 demonstrates special attributes of Buddha’s teachings and the last digit 9 represents the attribute of monastic community (Buddha’s *Sangha*), which symbolizes the ideology of revivalism and Buddhist nationalism. “969” was actually established as a rejoinder to the number ‘786’, a folk Islam symbol of the Bismillah that Islamists in Myanmar and elsewhere have long used to designate halal restaurants and Muslim-owned enterprises (International Crisis Group, 2017, p. 10). The illustration of “the face of Buddhist terror” of Wirathu is linked with terrorism and *Time* magazine was the first to make this into an international concern. Protesters demanded “Take Action and Sue *Time* Magazine For Misrepresenting Buddhism,” and they also proclaimed that Wirathu is, “*Not The Terrorist, But The Protector of Race, Language and The Religion*” (Briggs, 2013). Nevertheless, this was not the case, in the previous discussion we dealt with an alliance between Military based quasi-civilian government and the monks, both party worked for each other, in addition, president’s press note against *Time*, as well as the monks and the followers of Wirathu also carried a banner in that protest against *Time* Magazine, which covered the president’s consent. Furthermore, Wirathu’s sermons and speech against Muslims were not peaceful and non-violent at all but there was a huge discrepancy as the president and the followers claimed, which could be seen in an interview with Van Patrick King; accordingly,

“the role of the monks is inseparable from Myanmar’s politics. Monks will be working for the people in Myanmar’s politics without expecting any returns.” He went on to say something regarding monks’ response to the recent battles, “we practice non-violence and finding solution within the confines of the legal system. In order for no new problems to arise, we are assembling problem solving teams that include people of all faiths to cooperate with each other in towns and cities that are within our reach” (Van Patrick King, 2013).

Here it is interesting to note that Wirathu unguardedly talked about the political engagement of monks and their participation in politics, where they targeted Rohingya Muslims as enemies like Military based quasi-civilian government. Primarily 969 movement’s motives were unclear but soon after the release of Wirathu in January 2012 and subsequent escalated activism, at first there was propaganda to boycott Rohingya owned businesses and this spread all over the nation, in addition to members of the parliament, who were mostly the supporters of the movement, there was also introduction and endorsement of laws that were the results of the movement (Thompson, 2020). Furthermore, Buddhist business owners began hanging the logos of 969 movement in the windows of their shops and Buddhist shop owners were playing the

speech of Wirathu, which was very controversial in a sense but they got positive feedback as well as profits. However, the monks and the followers of the 969 movement gradually became more violent, when Buddhist people who are liberal tried to help or even bought groceries from Rohingya shops, these Buddhists were either worn out or frightened or ostracized by their fellow extremist Buddhist disciples of 969 movement (Downs, 2013). It also observed that the monks motivated not only boycotting the shops of Rohingya Muslims but they demanded interfaith marriage law also and those parliamentarians who opposed the interfaith marriage law, were threatened by the monks of the 969 movement to electoral boycott (International Crisis Group, 2013, p. 17). In the second stage, of the 969 movement Wirathu tried to be very obvious about their objectives and started propaganda against Rohingya Muslims in a more dispersed manner. Fake news, rumors and most importantly his speeches were used to spread hatred against Rohingya Muslims. In an interview with Hannah Beech he stated, “[Muslims] are breeding so fast, and they are stealing our women, raping them,” he further stipulated, “they would like to occupy our country, but I won’t let them. We must keep Myanmar Buddhist” (Beech 2013). He further compared Rohingya Muslims with savage animals; “You can be full of kindness and love, but you cannot sleep next to a mad dog” (Fuller, 2013). In addition, he said to Kate Hodal, “In every town, there is a crude and savage Muslim majority” (Hodal 2013). As he believed Rohingya Muslims bred rapidly and they behave violently, they would be dangerous for Buddhism and Burmese people as well. This anxiety could be found in his language;

“Muslims are like African Carps; they breed rapidly, have violent behavior and eat its own kind and other fishes. They also destroy the natural resources and beauty under water. Even though they are the minority, our entire race has been suffering a great deal under the burden of the minority. The majority Burmese have not intruded, corrupted or abused them, but we have been suffering under their burden. That is why if there are as many Muslims there are Buddhists Myanmar could never be at peace” (Van Patrick King 2013).

Primarily these were Wirathu’s private sentiment but gradually it became the theme of 969 movement: “live in our land, drink our water, and are ungrateful to us” (Fuller 2013). Wirathu prescribed that illegal Rohingya Muslims were indicated. Furthermore, he also spread rumors and fake news that Buddhist women were forcefully converted to Islam and he warned Muslim men who “*target innocent young Burmese girls and rape them,*” and “*indulge in cronyism*” (Hodal 2013). He created fear among the Buddhists by saying Buddhism in Myanmar is endangered by the Muslims. He put forward instances were Indonesia used to be a Hindu and Buddhist majority country centuries ago. However, now it has “fallen” and become a predominantly Muslim majority country. Also Philippines is now fighting with “hordes” of Islamic militants. He warned that Myanmar is going to be the next (Economist, 2017). In the cases of preaching and instigating hatred, he previously used DVD but recently he spread his sermons as well as rumors via social media such as *YouTube*, *Facebook* and other social media platforms. Although *Facebook* removed his page for violating community standards as well as inciting hatred recently (Barron, 2018). Because of Military patronization he got more options to spread

his hatred much more violently which is definitely militancy. It was observed when he visited Taunggyi, “traffic policemen cleared intersections for his motorcade”(Fuller, 2013), further observations showed that during his visit at Maungdaw Township in Arakan State Border police provided security and most importantly he stayed there at Alodaw Pyei monastery in downtown Maungdaw, which was barricaded by police (Myint, 2017). Thus, patronization by the state authorities made him more violent against Rohingya Muslims, here, it could be cited that when the international criminal court was dealing with Rohingya issues, he showed his militant behavior in a public meeting at Yangon in 2018, he proclaimed that “the day the International Criminal Court and the R2P come to our country. That’ll be the day that U Wirathu will pick up a gun”(Lianes, 2019), which was an ultimate threat and the lay people were cheering up with showing their both hands in the air, which was also a sign of support of the lay people towards him. However, Wirathu and 969 movement misinformed the Buddhist of Myanmar, but he has mass popularity among the lay people not only in his own monastery but millions of Burmese Buddhist follow his instructions. Since 2001 he has been inciting hatred against Rohingya Muslims through his national campaign of boycotting Muslim shops, he was in jail for 25 years, but was freed in 2010 under the general amnesty, after that he has been instigating against Rohingya Muslims. Though in 2013 his organization was banned by *Sangha* Council for the unauthorized use of Buddhist symbolism, they not only rejected the legitimacy of the order, but they even questioned its formation because it was established in the Military regime and they also criticized it for its activities in favor of the government, not for the Buddhist faith. Finally, this ban order evolved into the 969 movement and they joined with Ma Ba Tha, which is a formal structure for Buddhist faith and Wirathu became vice president of the new structure. Though the last civilian government which was shared its power with the Military, recently again issued an arrest order for him, police said a couple of times that they would not find him, but he continues his sermon and hatred against Rohingya Muslims on social media. Here it is interesting to note that this arrest order issued by the government was not because of inciting hatred against Rohingya Muslims but for the sedimentation against Daw Aung San Suu Ky (Beech, 2019). Since the establishment of 969 movement he rejoined with the Ma Ba Tha and has been vigorously instigating hatred and many believe his hatred inspired crimes against Rohingya Muslims from 2012 till recent times, where Wirathu served the political interest of USDP through his hegemonic leadership.

Ma Ba Tha

The acronym of Burmese Ma Ba Tha is Patriotic Association of Myanmar, which is said to have been established for the protection of race and religion. Ma Ba Tha received international attention from 2014, when prominent and founding members of Ma Ba Tha started supporting the ideology of the 969 movement and they also started relocating most controversial young monks including Wirathu in the vital position of the new form. Ma Ba Tha initiated several rallies and lobbied for the enactment of communal laws for the protection of race and religion, which the 969 movement could not achieve (International Crisis Group, 2017, p. 11). Ma Ba Tha’s continuous lobbying,

urging, propaganda caused their draft law to be passed by the parliament in 2015, many claimed that the laws were enacted and formulated to “*stop Muslims having multiple wives, large families and marrying Buddhist women; to halt what a leading monk has called the Islamic ‘invasion’ of Myanmar.*” Ma Ba Tha celebrated the passing of laws by the parliament by inviting dancers from all ethnic and religious minority groups except Rohingya Muslims, Ma Ba Tha claimed that Rohingya Muslims are illegal immigrants. Ma Ba Tha wanted to show that it worked not only for the majority “Bamar,” but for every indigenous community of Myanmar. When the dances were over Ma Ba Tha chair Tiloka, addressed the crowd and stated: “*these laws are needed by our country and our people and to protect them. We want to urge people to protect them and stay away from those who want to destroy them*”(Fisher, 2015).

Ma Ba Tha leaders instilled fear among Buddhist people regarding the threat of Islamic “invasion,” propaganda by the monks put forward that Rohingya Muslims breed like cockroaches or insects; the monks also argued that if the birth rate of Muslims increased at a higher rate than that of Buddhist people, then the Buddhists would vanish from Rakhine state. U Yan Naing, a prominent leader, joined the United National Congress, which is a Muslim party but, he was rejected by the election commission for a couple of times as his father did not come to Myanmar in the colonial time. U Yan Naing informed BBC about the hatred of Ma Ba Tha monks, he stated “*they love everyone, even pigs and dogs, but they don't love Muslims. They hate Muslims.*” Ma Ba Tha leaders often included Military personnel in their propaganda. Monks like Sitagu Sayadaw, who had acceptance among the Military members created propaganda against Rohingya Muslims and the objective for this is very obvious, so that the Military could work against the Rohingya Muslims. Ashin Nyanissara widely known as Sitagu Sayadaw, who is 88 years old and has a revolutionary history as he participated in the revolution of 1988 against Military, is now a prominent figure and who aligned monks with the Military like other Ma Ba Tha monks. Besides, he is the most influential monk both home and abroad, since the 1988 revolution he had been exiled in the USA until the new democratic era, in the democratic era he returned home as an academic in monastic university but before entering into Myanmar he met with ex-president US Barack Obama and Pope Francis, which illustrates his influence outside Myanmar. Besides, he also sat in an interfaith meeting where he talked about the non-violence of Buddha(Beech, 2019); but after 2012 he changed his non-violence philosophy and took a hard-liner on the question of interfaith marriage law. He usually gives his sermons in English outside Myanmar, but his sermons in Burmese language tend to portray Islam as a religion of violence, he puts forward that Rohingya Muslims are foreigners and outsiders not the descendent of Myanmar(Walton, 2017). An example of Sitagu Sayadaw’s hypocrisy should be cited here, this would portray his hegemonic agenda among the Military. On the thirtieth of October in 2017 he preached a sermon in Karen state in front of a large number of Military members, where he justified the Rohingya crisis in the lens of protection of race and religion by exemplifying Dutthagamani’s role in establishing Buddhism in Sri-Lanka, when he defeated Tamil ruler in the first century BCE. He further added that the relationship between monks and Military, “*could not be separated.*” He told the commander of the

Military that “*there are over 400,000 monks in Myanmar, if you need them, I will inform them. He urged the Military to participate actively*” and he “*told the soldiers that no matter how much they have to fight, they should remember that those they kill are not fully human*” (Walton, 2017). Again, Sitagu is a prominent figure so the Military listened to him, on the one hand, his sermon spread hatred because he colorized it with religion by citing Dutthagamani’s example of devotion for protecting Buddhism from Tamil.

These types of instigation and hatred are common among the monks of Ma Ba Tha. Ashin Tiloka, Chairman of this extremist organization, reported to *Al Jazeera* that “the Myanmar culture is based on the teaching of Buddha,” he continued that “*they [Muslims] are like guests insulting the host.*” his assistant Vimala went far away than him in the same channel, he told much violently that, “*Rohingya is a fake news, it’s a fake name. We don’t like illegal migrants. They are lying to get our Rakhine state.*” He further added like Sitagu, “Everybody says human rights, where human duty is? Where is citizen duty?” he denied Rohingya Muslim’s human rights and urged that “*no, human rights is not first, we have to understand human duty and citizen duty, if you are a human being. We are not animal*”(Lianes, 2019). In July 2016 Sangal Council issued an order that Ma Ba Tha was not a “legal” organization and they prescribed a name instead of Ma Ba Tha, which was “*Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation,*” that was also supported by NLD but Ma Ba Tha rejected it and still instigated hatred against Rohingya Muslims by creating a plot in favor of Military.

Military Persecutions

Rohingya Muslims themselves have been contending that the Military or Tatmadaw are responsible for the internal crisis between the Rohingya Muslims and Buddhists where monks and monkhood plays a vital role for infatuating laypeople and General Buddhists. It is also well known among the international community that the Military, as part of a larger operation, the militants were denied food, funds, information, and recruiting. Many observers believe, however, that the Tatmadaw's long-term intention is to expel all Rohingyas from Rakhine State.(Selth, 2018, p. 3). In 2012 when a new reformist era emerged after nearly half-century of Military dictatorship; a mass riot occurred in Rakhine state and afterwards it spread in the other parts where Muslims lived for centuries. Military, however, claimed that they have security concerns and Rohingya Muslims were portrayed as serious threats to Myanmar’s national security, stability and overall sovereignty, on the other hand, many believe that as the Military lost its throne they were involved in the conspiracy for inciting violence against different groups, as Rohingya Muslims are the most hated group among the Burmese Buddhists since the colonial period, so, they targeted Rohingya Muslims. There are several objectives behind the instability as well as the targeting of Rohingya Muslims in this new quasi-civilian era. First, though the Military lost its legacy during the *Saffron Revolution*, they aspired to remain in power. However, they had no popularity among the mass, which was revealed in the 2012 election where NLD won forty three out of forty five available seats and Aung Sun Suu Kyi became the successful candidate(Selth, 2018, p. 3). The Military tried

to grab power by stirring disturbance among different groups and they did it very perfectly where the Military appeared as civilians through USDP and delayed the reform process by showing following excuses, “The people can’t handle freedom of speech, freedom of movement, and freedom of organization. Therefore, we need to have a strong handle on the situation to make sure people stay in line and don’t kill each other”(Downs, 2013). The Military was doing this for delaying the reformation and staying in power. Secondly, as the NLD was the most popular party since the last decade of last century, the Military would like to tackle them through this instability, where they argued that in this vulnerable situation civilian government would not be able to ensure stable state security and sovereignty. Thirdly, the Military didn’t want to change anything because through this instability they wanted to defeat NLD in the 2020 election, they also tried to defeat NLD in the 2015 election although NLD achieved landslide victory in the 2015 election. Fourthly, the Military targeted Muslims because they are the most controversial to Buddhists in Myanmar and Rohingya Muslims are not legal citizens of Myanmar; if Rohingya Muslims are persecuted, no action would be taken inside Myanmar. Muslims are internationally regarded as a terrorist community, so it is easy to tag them as a terrorist group in Myanmar and they are a threat to the sovereignty of Myanmar, from these backgrounds, many believe that the Military community would like to continue this violence and instability as long as they want for achieving their political goals.

Military, on the other hand, entered into an alliance with monks of the 969 movement and Ma Ba Tha for persecuting and creating violence against Rohingya Muslims, which was illustrated in the previous section. Primarily extremist monks propagated against Muslims, which also permitted Military, secondly the Military persecuted Rohingya Muslims as the plot was already created by monks. Here another thing is noteworthy, along with monks Military also spread fake news and propagated against Rohingya Muslims. In 2018 the public relations and PSYOP war department of the Military of Myanmar published a book “Myanmar Politics and Tatmadaw: Part I,” which was the illustration of Military’s execution, the book spread fake and false news along with pictures, which was Photo shopped or otherwise ‘doctored’ from unrelated pictures of independent movement of Bangladesh, as claimed by Reuters(McPherson, 2018). Thus, primarily monks have been creating the plot of violence through fake news, propaganda and rumors as per the alliance since 2012 against Rohingya Muslims and finally the Military were executed and legalized.

A rumor was spread that a Rakhine Buddhist woman was raped and after that murdered by Muslim men on May 28, 2012, which sparked violence against Rohingya Muslims in the Rakhine state. Within a second this riot spread all over the state and it was estimated that 98 people were killed and 123 injured; whereas 5,338 homes were destroyed and most importantly 75,000 people were displaced in that riot, they were mostly Rohingya Muslims persecuted by the Rakhine Buddhists. Again, after a month later in Toungup Township ten Muslim pilgrims were murdered, which sparked tension between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims. Though emergency was declared in June, further attacks appeared in October which were directed towards the Muslims not only against

the Rohingya Muslims but Kaman communities also (International Crisis Group, 2013, p. 7). It observed in the riot that it was actually systematic persecution, which was pre-planned, many believe that it was systematic reaction to the June violence where might have political objectives as the army personnel Lieutenant General Hla Min claimed. In this second round of violence 92 people were killed, 142 were injured and 3,276 homes were burned down, Muslims were the most targeted. Comeback to the real story, several Rohingya Muslims³ claimed that the rumor of the raped and murdered Buddhist woman was fake, it was actually a preplanned propaganda. Actually, a Rakhine girl in Kyauk Ni Maw fell in love with a Muslim boy from Kaman. Although they had been in love since high school, another Rakhine boy loved her. The couple broke up for one day. In the Rakhine state, girls were not permitted to have any romantic affair with Muslim boys. The act of love infuriated some people and they planned to kill the girl for not loving someone from the Rakhine race; they eventually brutally murdered her. Her mutilated body was then left somewhere near the Muslim village; as a result, the Muslim boy, who was her lover was accused of rape, murder, and was eventually incarcerated. Nevertheless, the autopsy report and investigation showed no evidence of rape. Two other Muslim boys were arrest along with him on the same accusations. Capitalizing on this, some Rakhine extremists circulated leaflets among Rakhine people to prompt rage and hatred against Muslims.

Meanwhile, other states as if in Maungdaw, Buthidaung and some other parts faced the same type of attacks and allegations by the state-owned forces. In Butthidaung police commissioner ordered to arrest educated people from every Muslim village and after torturing them, sent them to jail, besides, it was also claimed that several Muslim men died after being tortured in custody. Furthermore, police also claimed a huge amount of money for releasing them and if they were unable to pay this amount, they would have to be subject to torture. Again, from October to November 2012, monks held a meeting secretly for storing arms from Rakhines in Buthidaung, which created fear among the Muslim community.³ The same occurrence also happened in Maungdaw, according to the source³, after starting the riot, NaSaKa⁴ permitted and supported the killing of Muslims by Rakhine people, on the one hand, on Fridays when the Muslims came out from the Mosque after Jumma prayers at noon, NaSaKa and police fired on them and two Muslims died on spot. Again, within a second Rakhine Buddhists attacked several Mosques and burnt them along with Muslim houses. Results were obvious, because of Rakhine Buddhists and NaSaka's joint attack many of them died and sustained injuries and most importantly thousands of them escaped to Bangladesh, which the international community illustrated as mass exodus.

Many believe that miscreants were overwhelmingly motivated by monks of the 969 movement, such as Wirathu and Wimala, who were very vocal in inciting hatred against Muslims, as I previously illustrated. Many believe that miscreants were overwhelmingly motivated by them and attacked both the Rohingya and other Muslims, uch as Kaman, a government recognized ethnic group. Though Wirathu and his ultra-extremist 969 movement denied their involvement, *“he accepted that it may be causing Burmans to*

have greater hatred of Muslims”(International Crisis Group, 2013, p. 17). President, on the other hand, on 17 August in 2012 formed a commission which is widely known as “*investigation commission,*” which had the broad mandate and finally it submitted its report on April 2013 with some recommendations, but the majority of them were very controversial such as the report urged the government to adopt the term “Bengali” instead of “Rohingya” and another recommendation for family planning for Rohingya community urged only two children. Finally, this report would not work out and it was eye watching. However, it is claimed by some observers that the riot was preplanned and it had ill political objectives to destabilize the country through which the Military wanted to relocate their dictatorship, where the Military used the monks and their influence as a trump card for tricking the anti-force of the Military.

Religious extremism in Myanmar, on the other hand, also appeared from the side of Rohingyas which is known as Harakah al-Yaqin (Hay),⁵ this resulted in an attack on Border Guard Police (BGP) very early in 9 October 2016, which sparked the conflict enormously, on the one hand, monks and armed forces got a valid reason to attack Rohingya people. In that insurgence, they launched three BGP posts all together in Maungdaw, Rathedaung townships and north-western border which is very close to Bangladesh, where 9 police were killed as well as 8 HaY members were killed and 2 of them were caught as the government reported. Their motive was to target the BGP headquarters very explosively and they did it multiple phases, where they had looted the majority of arms. However, from 10 to 12 October and 3 November they committed several attacks but according to the source it were very shallow, organized than the previous attacks by the locals (International Crisis Group, 2016, p. 6). These attacks were highlighted as a game-changing episode because Myanmar authorities labelled it a terrorist insurgence; on the other hand, the Rohingya community welcomed it for the sake of their rights, but it spread fear and insecurity between the two communities, particularly among Rakhine Buddhists living in northern Rakhine state villages. Further strikes by the ARSA a year later in August were more well-coordinated, with more explosives and a higher number of victims. It's worth noting that the ARSA assumed full responsibility for all of the devastating assaults because they wanted to demonstrate their authority. These insurgence and random attacks from 10 October 2016 to August 2017 by the ARSA had two types of impacts; firstly, Ma Ba Tha reacted very bigotedly and claimed that Rohingya Muslims have been fighting for overturning Islam in Myanmar and since then like as previous Ma Ba Tha has been inciting hatred by anti-Islamic sentiment for their ideological gain as well as gaining political ill motives of their aligned Military. Secondly, authority got legitimacy from the mass people to conduct area “clearance operation”⁶ and they have been doing militancy since then through joint operation, which indicates the combination of Military, BGP and other armed forces. This is systematic violence, which could be illustrated as ethnic cleansing, where the security forces committed atrocities, which include “mass killings, sexual violence, and widespread arson, amount to crimes against humanity,” though the Myanmar authority denied all of the allegations. However, it is estimated that since August 2017, “more than 671,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled Burma’s Rakhine State to escape the Military’s

large-scale campaign of ethnic cleansing”(Human Rights Watch, 2020b). It is estimated that in this clearance operation more than 24,000 were killed by the Military and local Buddhists since August 2017, further it was claimed that more than 18,000 women and young girls were raped, on the one hand, 116,000 were beaten whereas 36,000 were burned by the persecutors. Recently, Human Rights Watch published a satellite report, where they showed that more than 200 homes and buildings were burned further(Human Rights Watch, 2020a). Besides, Reuters claimed that because of this ethnic cleansing nearly 690,000 Rohingya Muslims were displaced from their villages and they crossed the Border of Bangladesh since August for the sake of their life security (Wa Lone et al 2018). However, since the colonial period until the present Buddhism is the reality in Myanmar, but the recent trend of Buddhist organizations and monks (not all) engaging in politics deal with the cosmological explanation of Buddhism, but skips the main theme of non-violence of Buddha. Military, on the other hand, took it as an opportunity for gaining their political goals. In the period of Military dictatorship, they tried to stay aloof from the monks' influence mostly and monks criticized them and took part in the revolution against them because of their dictatorship in 1988 and most importantly in “Saffron Revolution” in 2007. Nevertheless, after 2012 the scenario changed dramatically when the monks and Military entered into an alliance that we discussed previously, this time the unity of “Saffron Revolution” shouted down and religious tension between Muslims and Buddhists started. Thousands of monks once again took to the street and they chanted, “Let’s protect our motherland, Myanmar,” there were shouting in favor of the Military and they also called for expelling the Rohingyas. Since then monks have been creating a plot for destabilizing the country, where they instigate hatred against Rohingya Muslims, which sparked after the HaY’s attacks on BGP. Some ultra-extremist monks like Wirathu, Wimala, Sitagu, Tiloka and several others as well as their ultra-extremist religious organization Ma Ba Tha has been using their influence for creating plot against Rohingya Muslims among the fellow laypeople so that the Military could persecute operation. Since October 2016 the Military have been persecuting Rohingya people and still there is no sign of stopping this militancy because they would like to continue it not for the sake of the people of Myanmar but for gaining political objectives for overthrowing NLD, where they use the support of Buddhist monks.

Concluding Remarks

On the question of religious extremism and political violence against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, this paper propounds several arguments. Throughout the whirlwind tour, firstly, it posited a nefarious strategic alliance between monks and the Military, I termed it sinisterly because both the Military and monks had the same objectives, which are either evil or destructive for Rohingya Muslims and here; it argued that there are several reasons which led to this alliance from both sides. For the Military, firstly they ruled the country for a half-century and then lost popularity, which was observed in 2012 election, they have been reviving their popularity by using the influence of monks and their ultra-religious extremist organizations. For instance in the 2015 election Wirathu, Tiloka and other same-minded monks instructed laypeople for voting in favor of USDP. The

Military had been trying to destabilize the country to remain in power and has been opposing the NLD since the quasi-civilian regime started, when the Military used monks and took to the streets in 2012, 2016 and 2017. For monks, firstly, in the pre-colonial times, they were in touch with state authority but during colonial and military dictatorship they were back footed, through the alliance with the Military they regained their position. Secondly, the ultra-extremist monks acted as civil society, which helped them to establish hegemonic leadership over common people.

However, it also argued that in this mutual and win-win game both sides paid off. Military donated lots of money to the monks and monkhood, and patronized the extremist monks. On the other hand, monks and their ultra-religious organization Ma Ba Tha acted in favor of Military like the Nazi party in Germany. As they captured the position of civil society, monks propagated against Rohingya Muslims and spread anti-Islamic sentiments among the Buddhists as well as laypeople, to spread these sentiments they used the social media platforms like *YouTube and Facebook* as well as sermons in monasteries and also in public meetings, in these cases, they mostly instigated through fake news and rumors. Buddhist people consciously or unconsciously believed their propaganda of hatred against Rohingya Muslims. Thus, monks and their ultra-extremist organization Ma Ba Tha infatuated the Buddhist people, where they established the supremacy of the Military as well as USDP like the Nazi policy against Jews, which shows the hegemony of the Military and the general mass psychologically accepted the Military supremacy and their policy of persecuting Rohingya Muslims. Since the alliance between monks and the Military, monks have been playing the role of Nazi in the name of protection of Buddhist race and religion for establishing the hegemony of the Military; and the Military has been engaging in violence for their political objectives and this has led to mass killing, displacement and mass exodus of Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar.

Notes

1. The epithet Rohingya is by far the most divisive in Myanmar because the term claims the indigenous status of the Rakhine state of the Muslim community that's why state authorities, monks, nationalist political leaders and mostly Military like to regard them as Bangladeshi immigrants and therefore they prefer to call as "Bengali" but many historians claimed them as Rohingya and they have been living in Rakhine state (Previous Arakan State) for centuries as Rohingya, again, in colonial period they also termed as Rohingya and most importantly they like to introduce themselves as Rohingya. So far, though there is a lot of controversy on the question of terming them, however, I am not going to solve this controversy but I would like to call them Rohingya as the international community and actors approved them as Rohingya.
2. Here the Italic words spelt by the audiences of the Ashin Tiloka, which infatuated answer of the audiences in the Karen state were meeting on the banner of Ma Ba Tha.
3. I interviewed several Rohingya people who fled to Bangladesh because of this violence, Ukhiya, Chittagong, Bangladesh, November 2019.

4. NaSaKa (Nay-Sat Kut-kwey ye) a special security force named containing Military, police, riot police, intelligence officers and customs officers worked in the Rakhine state up until 2013 and was directly controlled by the Ministry of Border Affairs.
5. Harakah al-Yaqin is an Arabic name and its English translation is “Faith Movement,” which the government portrayed as a “communities of fighters” in the name of Aqa Mul Mujahidin as well as they illustrated it as a terrorist organization. On the other hand, after 9 October attacked they rebranded as Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), they claimed themselves not a terrorist and religious organization, but a secular organization, whose objectives would be “defensive attacks,” which only aimed at the “oppressive Burmese regime.” Furthermore, they would support and welcome the international organization for making the Rakhine state peaceful and redrawing harmony among different religion. But documents don’t support that because there are shreds of evidence of terrorist attacked against him, where they attacked not only the armed forces of Myanmar but Hindus and Muslims too. Many claimed that they are nothing but another extremist group like Ma Ba Tha and they have international connections where they funded by them.
6. Myanmar authority termed this operation as “clearance operation,” but the international media and actors called this action “ethnic cleansing”. I would like to use the term “ethnic cleansing” as it is widely admitted.

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Exploitation of Rohingya Refugee Women: Experiences at Kutupalong Camp of Bangladesh

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Abstract

Rohingya refugee women encountered various kinds of exploitation at the refugee camp. This study explores the scenario of women exploitation of Kutupalong Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh located at Ukhiya of Cox's bazaar district in 2013. It analyzes the various forms of exploitation of refugee women, and focuses on the root causes of women exploitation at the refugee camp. This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods, and scheduled Interview, In-depth interview and Case study methods are used for data collection. The study found various forms of exploitation present at the Kutupalong camp. It is observed that a lot of women in the camp experienced sexual exploitation by their own community people, and also by security personnel and NGO staffs working there. Poor living status and abuse of power are main contributors of women exploitation at the camp, identified in the research. It is also found that female-headed household's women and young girls are more vulnerable of sexual exploitation at the camp. Most of the cases of women exploitation at the camp are left unidentified because of the victim's preference to be silent for social dogma and existing patriarchy. Nevertheless, lack of efficient prevention and response mechanism created obstacles to address women exploitation at the camp.

Key Words: Women Exploitation, Rohingya Refugee, Perpetrators, Gender Disparities, Refugee Camp.

Introduction

The Rohingya people have faced unprecedented persecution in their own state in Myanmar for the reason of their race and ethnicity (Amenesty, 2016). Because of the atrocities done by the state authority of Myanmar, they fled from their land to enter Bangladesh where women and girls are most vulnerable in the refugee community (Akter and Kusakabe, 2014). Refugee Women faced various forms of exploitation both inside and outside of the camp in Bangladesh (UNHCR, 2002). Many authors and media highlighted on capsized boat and drowned refugees, but they did not give further attention to refugee women who faced exploitation at the camp. From 1996 to 2017, there are nearly eleven lakh (1.1 million) Rohingya refugees fled to Bangladesh and staying in 34 refugee camp (The Daily Star, 2020). They faced sexual harassment, forced prostitution, forced marriage, trafficking, limited employment opportunities and many

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others mental and physical exploitation (Freedman, 2016). Sexual exploitation is the most occurred violence they experience at the camp (Akhter and Kusakabe, 2014) which is termed as a gender-oriented violence; and women and young girls are most at risk. The alone and single women who lost their family are most vulnerable, and experienced sexual exploitation during traveling and living in their community at the camp (Freedman, 2016). Many human rights group heavily criticizes this issue (Swift and Gould, 2020). It badly effects on our society and culture and goes against the values of humanity (Manikamma & Radhika, 2013). If this crime practices could not stop immediately, it will create worsened environment for women well beings at the refugee camp. This study is a result of intensive field work of 2013 which was taken place at Kutupalong Rohingya refugee camp located at Ukhiya of Cox's bazaar district to understand the nature of harassment refugee women faced in the camp. The paper argues that abuse of power and lack of efficient prevention and response mechanism is main obstacle to address women exploitation at the camp. In this study, the concept women refers to person of female gender above the age of 18 and the girls refers to female children between the ages of 10 to 18. In the Rohingya camp most of the victim are found from ages of 10 to 50. Mainly the study will help the social worker, NGOs, UNHCR who work for the protection of refugee women and will help them to take action against exploitation. The paper will also helpful to Bangladesh government to implement any policy for the refugee camp to reduce this kind of violence. The study will help that researcher and academician who work on refugee women. In this regard, the study focuses the scenario and causes of women exploitation at the Kutupalong refugee camp.

Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh: A historical background

Rohingya is the most persecuted ethnic minority group in Myanmar (Akter and Kusakabe, 2014). Rohingyas lived at Arakan state of Myanmar for about thousand years long before the British occupation, which is the part of northern Rakhine (Ahmed, 2010). At first Rohingya were excluded from the citizenship rights in Burma in the Union Treaty of 1947 (Islam, 2018). After then, they were constantly faced discrimination from the state as a ethnic minorities and faced persecution in different course of history. In between 1991 and 1992, almost 250,000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh for saving their lives for the violent events (Islam, 2018). The government of Bangladesh (GoB) stood by their side with the support of United Nations on humanitarian ground though the country has her own socio-economic problems. Then the GOB built 20 temporary camps for the refugees in this time, (Sultana, 2017) and after then, built up two-registered documented camp in Kutupalong, Ukhiya and Nayapara, Teknaf. Next incident occurred in 2012 and 2015 when a large number of Rohingya entered into Bangladesh (Sultana, 2017). After then, the most recent persecution took place in 2017 by the Myanmar government and more than 7,00,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh (World Vision, 2020). Today Bangladesh hosts the biggest refugee camp in the world (The Daily Star, 2020). Now 9, 05,754 Rohingya living in 27 camp of Teknaf and Ukhiya and 2,31,798 Rohingya living outside in the camp. Another 5712 Rohingya live with the host communities (The Daily Star, 2019). This study, though, executed in 2013, considers that the experiences of

women exploitation at that time will be helpful to understand the women exploitation in recent time.

Women Exploitation at the Rohingya camp

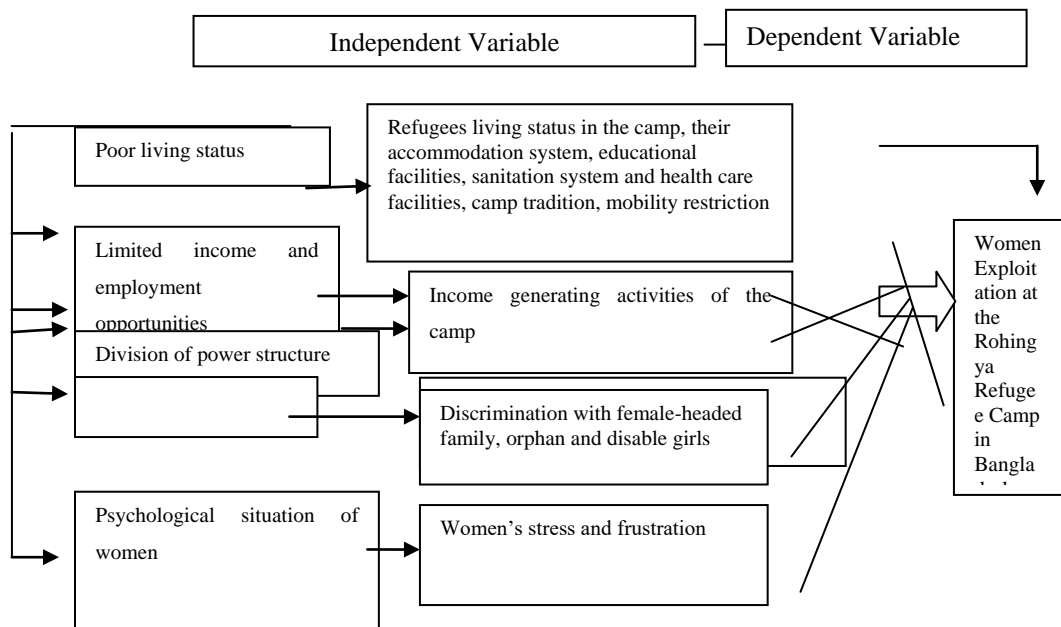
Exploitation is a sexual and gender-based violence that is very common occurrence in the Rohingya refugee camp. Rohingya women face various kind of exploitation like domestic, sexual (sexual harassment, forced prostitution) cultural (forced marriage, trafficking) economic (wage discrimination) and many others mental and physical exploitation in the camp. Most of the cases they suffered in the camp by their own community people including their husband, neighbor, relatives, refugee who holds some power (Majhi, CMC & BMC member), and responsible law enforcement persons including camp Ansar, and camp police (Akhter and Kusakabe, 2014). In the outside of the camp, they faced violence by local villager, local politician, drug dealer and local police (Akhter and Kusakabe, 2014). There are many socio-economic factors are liable for the occurrences of women exploitation in the camp comprising cultural tradition, limited humanitarian support, limited income generating activities, restriction of mobility etc. Moreover, the inexistence of efficient prevention and response mechanism contribute these types of occurrences (Akhter and Kusakabe, 2014). In a good number of studies, it is found that most of the perpetrators are from their own family, neighbor, camp personnel and responsible security persons of the camp. The study of Amnesty International (2020) has identified different cases of sexual harassment among the refugees while exploring the human rights situation of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Continuously women face sexual and gender based violence at the camp because of the patriarchal power relations at the camp. Sometimes NGO workers demand sexual favors in exchange of service. Akhter and Kusakabe (2014) explored the gender-based violence against women at the documented refugee camp (Kutupalong camp, Cox's bazaar) in Bangladesh. The researchers collect data from documented Rohingya camp in two phases, at first one in November-December 2010 and the second in February 2012. They used interview method and case study method to carry out the study. They found refugee women suffered violence both inside and outside of the camp; domestic violence is the most occurred violence inside the camp. They mentioned that, the restricted mobility, minimal support of the state, lower income are causes of domestic violence in the camp.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The study describes women exploitation and its causes by using Structural theory taking it more appropriate to analyze this study. Originally, this theory developed by Robert Connell in 1987 (Gina M., 2002). He described gender and power in the context of social structural understanding. According to this theory, gender-based inequalities and disparities arise from some structure like division of labor, division of power and structure of cathexis (social and behavior risk factor) that influence women's risk for exploitation (Gina M., 2002). This theory gives many features of the socio-structural factors as causes of women exploitation. According to the theory, structural or situational

stress, and frustration also results into violence against women that forced them to exploitation too (Flowers, 2000). It is mentioned in this theory that lower income, less education, lower occupational status turned the women to exploitation (Henslin, 2013). The structural theorists examine some variables that co-relates with women exploitation such as social and cultural structure, social classes, poverty, race, ethnicity, and ecological areas. Though exploitation exist in all categories of people, but this theory examined that more perpetrator laid in poor, unemployed and underemployed male (Henslin, 2013). According to the structural theory, the study describes the variables as follows:

Fig. 1: Independent and Dependent Variables of the Study, Source: Structural theory (Gina M. 2002) and secondary sources of the study.



Methodology

The study follows a mixed method using both qualitative and quantitative approaches and collected primary data in two phases : from 21th March to 7th April of 2013 and 17th December to 26th December 2013 . Social survey, in-depth interviews and case study method are used to collect data. The research was conducted at the Kutupalong Refugee Camp, which is a documented Rohingya refugee camp of Cox's Bazar District under Ukhiya thana in Bangladesh. At first, the study has selected victim's house through snowball sampling to get access to appropriate data, because the Rohingya refugee camp is highly restricted and it was very difficult to identify the victims. In-depth interviews were organized within those households inside the camp. An informal group discussion

also arranged within the camp. The willing respondents came, discuss, and share their experiences about exploitation. There were some interviews conducted with NGO worker and with the Bangladesh government representative CIC (Camp in Charge). The study used Nominal scale (Yes/No/No response) and Ordinal scale (Poor/Normal/satisfied), (Low/Medium/High) for measurement the data. The study also used the SGBV (Sexual and Gender based Violence) official case file as the sources of data. On the other side, secondary data collected from existing literature, official documents, various books, articles, research paper, seminar paper, newspaper, and related websites.

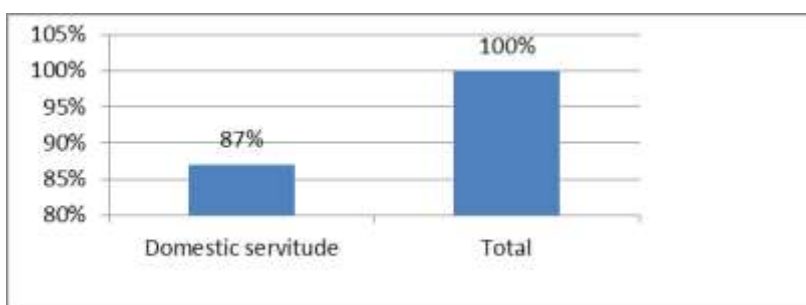
Various forms of women exploitation at the Rohingya refugee camp

Rohingya women face various kind of exploitation like domestic servitude, sexual maltreatment (sexual harassment, forced prostitution) forced marriage, trafficking, economic exploitation (wage discrimination) and many others mental and physical exploitation in the Rohingya camp (Swift and Gould, 2020).

Domestic servitude

Domestic servitude is a form of domestic exploitation. Rohingya women face domestic servitude at the camp by their husband or other family members. Gender norms of Rohingya refugee enhanced domestic servitude of women (UNHCR, 1995).

Fig. 2: Percentage of domestic servitude at Kutupalong camp



Source: Field study of Kutupalong camp, 2013

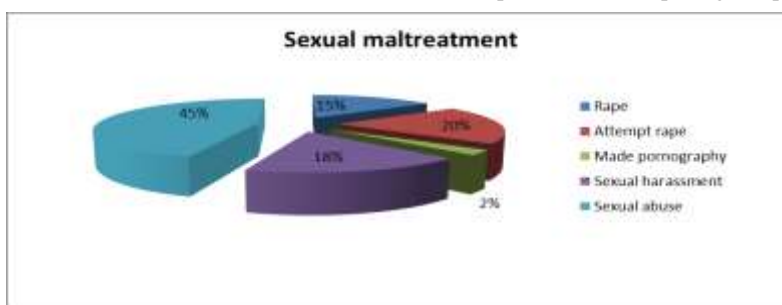
The figure shows there are 87% respondent said that they experienced domestic servitude within their family. Rohingya men recognize themselves with role of breadwinner in family and women as housekeepers, but when women start to work outside it becomes difficult to men accept their wives with independent role. It affects their relation and women face maltreatment, beaten and abused by their husbands. Tofura (age 38) describes, her husband expects every domestic tasks have to be finished before he came

back home. However, Tofura works outside, could not complete everything in due time . she earned money from hard labor and her husband waste this money to drink alcohol. When she did not want to give money, her husband beat her. This is very common forms of domestic exploitation at the camp.

Sexual maltreatment

Sexual maltreatment covers rape, attempt rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, forced prostitution and pornography (Sharma, 2015). The figure of sexual maltreatment has given below according to field survey.

Fig. 3: The scenario of sexual maltreatment of respondents at Kutupalong camp



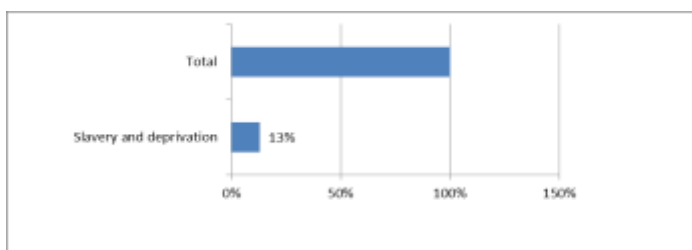
Source: Field study of Kutupalong camp, 2013

The above figure shows that 15% participant experienced rape; attempt rape victims are 20%, victims to pornography are 2%; sexual harassment victims are 18% and 45% of the respondents faced sexual abuse at the camp. Most sexual attacks occurred when women or girl went outside for their daily chore, particularly in collecting firewood from isolated areas. Attacks also taken placed at night in their home in front of their family members and during using of latrine and taking shower. Sometimes sexual maltreatment happened in promise of exchanging gifts like money and accommodation. Sometimes official, camp authority, community people get opportunity to extort sex in exchange for assistance such as food and other necessities.

Victims of trafficking

Many Rohingya refugees became target of trafficking and ended up in forced marriages. At the Rohingya refugee camp, exploitation and slavery occurred by trafficking and forced marriage (Tropman, 2012). Teen age girls are the main target of traffickers in the camp. The absence of social protection and economic security enabled a large number of Rohingya women and girls become easy victim of traffickers (Syeda, 2005). The figure of slavery and deprivation has given below:

Fig. 4: Slavery and deprivation of women at Kutupalong camp



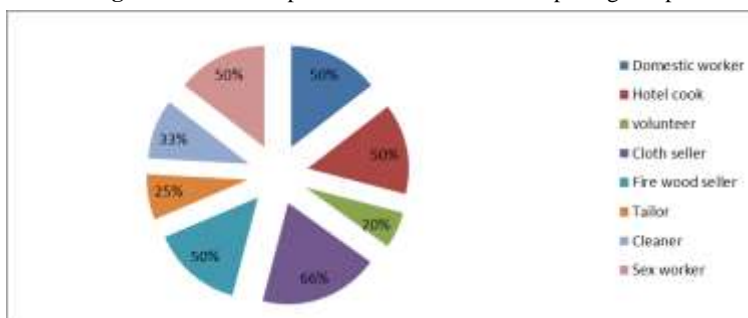
Source: field study of Kutupalong camp, 2013

There are 13% respondents who told that they trapped in slavery by trafficking. Maymuna (age 14) described that her neighbor aunty offered her a job in Dhaka and she went with her. Her job was as a maidservant in a house. The house owner often beaten her badly and did not give her enough food. She could not tolerate these anymore and one day she escaped from that home and returned at the camp. Sometimes, the organized gang of traffickers allures young girls and women by false promise of better job. Often refugee men make false promise of love to marry young girls and after marriage, men forced them to prostitution or sell them to trafficker as slave labor.

Economic exploitation

Women experienced economic exploitation at the camp because. Employers do not want to give work to women. Some employers want sexual flavor in exchange for work (Akhter and Kusakabe, 2014). Sometimes refugee women faced wage discrimination from the employers at the camp. Some women of small business told that they have to give a big share of their business to community's powerful members for running their business. Even prostitute have to give money to community leaders for their business.

Fig. 5: Economic exploitation of women at kutupalong camp



Source: Field study of Kutupalong camp, 2013

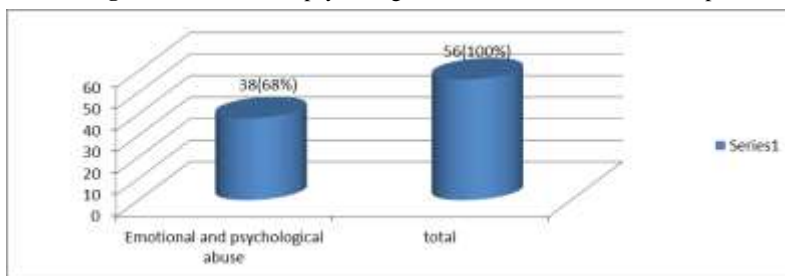
The above figure shows the scenario of economic exploitation of women at the camp. There are 50% of domestic workers, 50% of hotel cooks, 20% of volunteer, 66% of cloth sellers, 50% of fire wood sellers, 25% of tailors, 33% of cleaners, and 50% of sex

workers told they experienced economic exploitation at the camp. According to respondents, domestic workers, hotel cooks and volunteers faced salary discrimination.. Sometimes they have to give an amount from their business to Majhee. Fire wood sellers told that they did not get exact exchange value of wood. Tailors and cleaners also face wage discrimination and sex worker have to give money or sex to community leaders.

Emotional and Psychological abuse

Emotional and psychological abuse is the form of psychological exploitation. It includes nonphysical acts against women or girls like threatening of the victim or her close person, purposely controlling victims' freedom, or acting to undermine or isolate the victim. Every forms of exploitation have psychological pain and victims feel deep depression in this case (Sharma, 2015). Humiliation, abuse, eve teasing etc. are other forms of emotional and physical abuses. The figure below shows the percentage of emotional and psychological abuses of respondents at Kutupalong camp :

Fig. 6: Emotional and psychological abuse of women at the camp



Source: Field study of Kutupalong camp, 2013

The above figure shows that 68% of respondents faced emotional and psychological abuses at the camp. Rohingya refugee women and girl experience humiliation, abuse and eve teasing by their community people, employers, and security staff regularly. On the other side, alone women used to face psychological harassment from their community leaders. They threat them to send back Myanmar and take advantages (money, gift, work without payment, sex etc) from them.

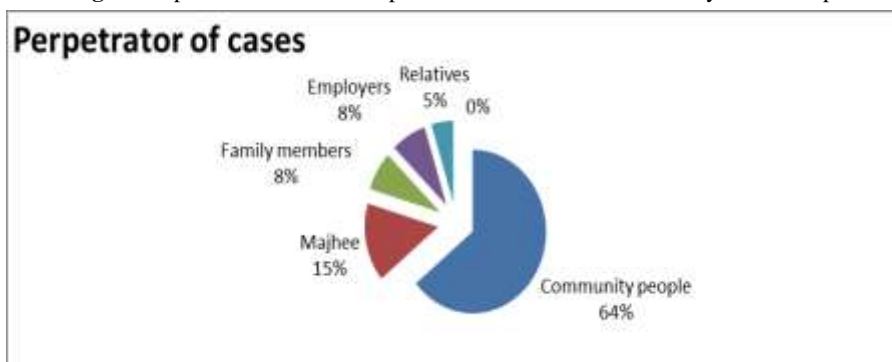
Women Exploitation at the Kutupalong Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh: Causes & dynamics

Exploitation is the form of sexual and gender based violence are very common occurrence at the Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh. Especially it happened with the girl and women of the camp. Most of the time, they suffered in the camp by their community people, leaders and responsible security personnel (camp ansar and police) of the camp. The gender norms and insufficient protection mechanism encourage them to involve with this violence .The scenarios of women exploitation given as follows:

Rohingya refugee women faced exploitation by their own community people at the camp

Rohingya refugee have to register their name for the ration card through Majhee (the formal title of Rohingya community leader) for getting their regular ration from UNFPO (Akter and Kusakabe, 2014). The real fact is that Majhees are very influential in the Rohingya camp and everything has to done by their approval; even camp management could not access the Rohingya people directly (Akter and Kusakabe, 2014). The power relation makes women more vulnerable because Majhees support all traditional patriarchal rules and values in the community. They take advantages from refugee women to get entry in the ration card as well as they also take advantages from new refugee women to accept them in the community. Some women have to give sexual service to these leaders for getting more ration and getting permission to work or business. Widow and female-headed household women and orphan girls are at more risk in this exploitation.

Fig. 7: Perpetrators of women exploitation in their own community at the camp.



Source: Field study of Kutupalong camp, 2013

The figure above shows that most of the refugee women (64%) face exploitation by their community people, community leaders (Majhee) are 15%, their family members are 8%, employers are 8% and relatives are 5%.

Case study of Noor Fatema

Noor Fatema (age- 27) is the main breadearner of her female headed family and she has four children. Three are girls and one is boy. The regular ration that she gets is not enough for bearing her household expenses. Community leader Abdur Rajjak(age-52) got opportunity to exploit her sexually. One day he called Noor Fatema in his shed at night and gave her some extra ration (rice, soap, milk). He offered her to come regularly in his shed and satisfied him sexually in exchange of extra ration regularly. He also promised her to marry after some days. Noor Fatema agreed with his proposal and one day she got pregnant; then Abdur Rajjak did not want to take her responsibility

and left her alone.

In this case, as a community leader Abdur Razzak abused his power to sexually exploit Noor Fatema. On the other side, Noor Fatema belongs a female-headed family and could not maintain her family expenses by regular ration that made her fallen in the trap of Abdur Razzak.

Sometimes, women and girl experience exploitation by their husband or parents at the camp. There are very limited income generating activities inside the camp and working opportunity is very limited for refugee men at outside of camp (Akter and Kusakabe, 2014). In this situation, many refugee family and men forced prostitution their wives or girls. However, many parents or family head are aware to this sexual exploitation but they have no other option to secure their livelihood.

Case study of Salma

Salma (15) is a Rohingya refugee girl of Kutupalong Camp. She described how she got exploited by her family members. They are four sisters and three brothers. Her father has no income and her mother is sixth month pregnant. The regular rations they get do not fulfill their family demand. One day there was no food at their home and they could not arrange it from anywhere. Their little siblings were crying for food. Then his father came to her with crying and told her that they have no other option. He took her to a man of break filled near the camp for prostitution.

Rohingya Refugee Women face Exploitation by the security personnel of the camp

Refugee women also experienced sexual exploitation by the security personnel of the camp. Police and Ansar members are deployed to give protection at the camp, but the disappointing tragedy is that refugee women and girls sometimes faced exploitation by these security personnel (UNHCR, 2001). The police usually have good relation with Majhee (community leader) for bringing refugee women for their sexual purpose (Akter and Kusakabe, 2014). It is also alleged that camp personnel bribed the victims parents, brothers, relatives, or friends to bring their young girls to them.

On the other hand, the food ration that they get from the UNFPO is not sufficient for them (Akter and Kusakabe, 2014). Therefore, they need to find work outside and need money for buying their other necessities. However, it is highly restricted for the refugees to go outside the camp without valid permission. Thus often, women had to face trouble to get valid permission from the camp authorities. Some respondents that told camp's security personnel often wanted sex in exchange for giving valid permission. The position of power, wealth and status of security personnel created the uneven situation for the women in the camp (UNHCR, 2001). According to study , it is found that 40%

women experienced physical, mental, and sexual exploitation by the camp police and security personnel, but they didn't complain against them because it would bring more terrible for them at the camp.

Case study of Sharifa Begum

Sharifa Begum (age 37) is the bread earner of her family, because her husband was caught by police in allegation of robbery three months before. She has six children. Four are daughters and two are sons. She got ration for three; and other members names are not registered in the ration list. So, she had to work as a maidservant at the local village nearer the camp. In this circumstance, she wanted to arrange valid permission from camp police to work outside. However, the responsible police person demanded physical relation with her in exchange of giving valid permission. She did not agree with the proposal, that ended beating by him and She was locked for one day.

Rohingya refugee women faced exploitation by the humanitarian agency staff of the camp.

Often, the refugee women faced exploitation by the humanitarian agency staffs of the camp (UNHCR, 2001). The national and local NGOs working at the field level at the refugee camp to extend humanitarian support following the UNHCR's policy for the refugees. This agency workers sometime abused their power and position to exploit the refugee women and girls (WHO, 1997). They work to support refugees with food, health care service, medicine, education, training, and income generating activities. In this sector, some workers took sexual advantages from the refugee women and girl in exchange for giving services.

Case study of Rahela Begum

Rahela Begum (age 18) is an educated refugee girl; she went school in Myanmar and now she working as a family planning volunteer at the camp under family planning segment of an NGO. She experienced exploitation by an NGO staff of the camp. Kawser (45), the health care officer of NGO often offered her bad proposal and sometimes he touched badly in her body during distribution of medicine. One day he offered her to sex with him and threatened her if she did not agree with his proposal that he would fire her from the job. Then Rahela left the job. The Refugee women could not complain against the NGO staff because the power position in the community is very strong. They have the control on food and other services, and refugees are dependent on them. On the other hand, most of the community leaders do not want to deal with these issues because they also involved with it.

Causes of women exploitation at the Kutupalong Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh

Analyzing the cases and scenarios of women exploitation at the refugee camp, it found that all incident triggered by different forms of factors. Some socio-economic and cultural factor triggered women exploitation at the refugee camp.

Abuse of power and inexistence of efficient prevention and response mechanism created women vulnerable at the camp

The power structure of camp and inexistence of efficient prevention and response mechanism made the refugee women more vulnerable (Akhter and Kusakabe, 2014). Women faced injustice, violence and exploitation by their community people and they have no choice rather than accept and enduring this. Often community leaders practiced their informal patriarchal power on the refugee women and created various kinds of obstacles for them (Elizabeth, 2007). Women must take permission of Majhees to involve in any income generating activities and any other works (Akhter and Kusakabe, 2014). It increases Majhees informal power and control over the community. Sometimes women had to keep them happy by fulfilling their demand. Camp security personnel and NGO stuffs also practiced unjust dominance in their own sector and refugee women have no power to pull up them.

However, UNHCR has SGBV (Sexual and Gender Based Violence) section to protect women from violence, but most of the cases were not reported because the victims did not complain about the incident. The NGO workers do not work responsibly to find out these cases, because some NGO worker are also involved with women exploitation (WHO, 1996). There are no strong response mechanisms to prevent the women exploitation at the camp. These situations make women more vulnerable and put them to the risk of sexual and other exploitation. Refugee women shared their experienced at the informal conversation of the study, but most of them afraid to complain about the incident they have experienced. Few women complained to UNHCR's SGBV section. According to the sources of field study, there are only 27% cases entries at the SGBV section as complains.

Often Majhees demanded sexual flavor from new refugee women and threatened them to cancel their registration and send back them to Myanmar. Then women could not protest them, they felt helpless and agreed with Majhees proposal. The hidden crisis is that there is no prevention mechanism at the camp to stop Majhees activities. Refugee women tolerate all kinds of violence from the Majhees and they fear to complain against them.

Limited humanitarian support and income generating activities at the camp pushed women to risk of exploitation

The main economic concern of the refugee camp is limited humanitarian support and lack of income generating activities. At the camp, refugee women have few opportunities for income generating activities (Yilimaz and Talukdar, 2019). Some livelihood programs have been introduced by aid agencies like tailoring, soap making, basket making,

handcrafting and so on. This training programs helped the refugee women to start their business, but the business at the camp is not profitable because of the limited income of the refugees (Yilimaz and Talukdar, 2019). They need to go outside from the camp for business or find other work but going outside of the camp is more risker for women exploitation. The basic needs of refugees are food, shelter, and security. In the refugee camp, the living status of Rohingya is very poor. The regular ration that they get from UNFPO is not sufficient for survive and for that, people want to go outside for work .As the humanitarian support is not enough to make their ends meet, they became helpless to find any money source to support their family. It is noticed that most of the refugee women face exploitation while finding a work (Akhter and Kusakabe, 2014). Sometimes they were deceived in promise of giving work. Sometimes they had to bribe to get a work, some villager often took sexual advantages from them to give work, sometimes they were given half wages for the work. The women who are widow or female-headed family, experienced more exploitation in getting work. Therefore, economic insolvency creates more risk for the refugee women. The table below shows the income generating activities of respondent of the study.

Table 1: The income generating activities of the respondents

Name of occupations	Number of participant	Monthly income (taka)
Domestic worker	6	1000-1200
Hotel cook	2	1200-1500
Camp volunteer	5	300
Cloth seller	3	2100-300
Fire wood seller	2	1500-2000
Net weaver	2	700-1000
Tailor	4	800-1200
Cleaner	3	300
Sex worker	2	1200-3000
Home maker	27	000
Total		56

Source: Field study of Kutupalong camp, 2013

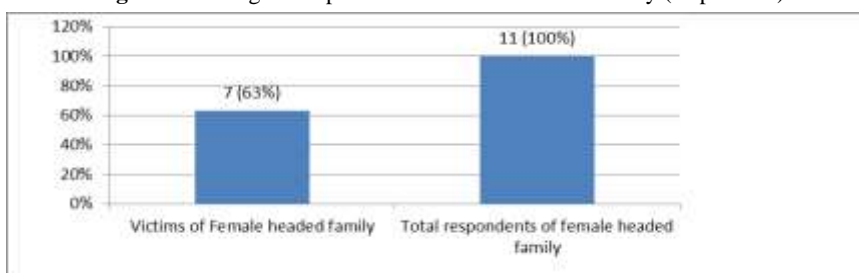
Moreover, the poor sanitation system is also another cause of sexual exploitations like rape and other sexual abuses of refugee women at the camp. The women had to take bath in an open place. Some of refugee women accused that the man watched them during taking bath. Some men took photo of their bathing, and next time they blackmailed the refugee women and eventually sexually abuse them. At Kutupalong camp, one latrine access for twenty-five people as well as there is no different latrine for men and women.

The areas of latrine, there was lack of proper light at night and was not safe for women. At the Kutupalong camp 58% rape victim mentioned that the rape attack on them occurred during the time of using latrine at night.

Gender disparities causes women exploitation at the refugee camp

The unequal gender relation in the camp resulted in women subordination, and the practices of unequal social norms and values ended in discrimination and sexual violence towards women (UNHCR, 2011). This male dominated structure of community leadership makes women more vulnerable. Women used to do household work and take care of children but at the refugee camp, they enter a new phase. They have to do work outside of home and most of the cases women become the main income earner of the family (Swift and Gould, 2020). This experience may new for women at the camp and they need support and help of men to do any work. This situation meets exploitation to women and power holders get more opportunity to exploit women (Gina, 2002).

Fig. 9: Percentage of exploitation of female headed family (respondent)



Source: Field study of Kutupalong camp, 2013

The figure above shows that 63% of respondents are from female headed family and widow or alone women experienced of exploitation at the camp mostly. They are at more risk as they suffered more poverty than the normal mal-headed family. The widow or female-headed household's women had limited choice to go against the employer or community leader or camp authority like or wants. They knew if they want to survive at the camp, they had to satisfy community leader and camp authority, as they want. In these situations, most of the women experienced sexual exploitation and they became very easy target of refugee men and others. The orphan or disable girls faced sexual exploitation in the same way at the camp.

Conclusion

The Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh for the state persecution in Myanmar to save life, but they face differnt challenges in Bangladesh. The study focuses on the women exploitation at Kutupalong Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh in 2013 and it found that 64% of women suffered exploitation at the camp by their own community people. The historically unequal power relationship between men and women is the main cause of women subordination. In this regards practice of gender disparities, abuse of power

and inexistence of protection and response mechanism created obstacles to address this problems in the camp. On the other hand, there are insignificant humanitarian supports in the camp, and also poor living status make them more vulnerable to domestic violence, economic exploitation, sexual harassment, prostitution, and trafficking at the camp. The community leaders and NGO workers also got chance to offer sex in exchange of food and other necessities for the same reason. There are multiple factors contributed to women exploitation and it is clear that the solution to the problem is not so easy. A big change of living status and the end of Mahjee's power in refugee camps may protect women from the exploitation. On the other hand, UNHCR should ensure women rights and intense invigilate to the NGO workers that they could not exploit women. In addition, the government of Bangladesh should be more concern about the security system of Rohingya refugee camp and need to monitor the activities of camp security personnel. It is also essential for refugee women to be aware about the incident and encourage them to report the incidents. The SGBV section has to ensure the victims that they will handle the cases in very sincerely and confidential manner for evading further suffering or danger to live for them at the camp.

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Combating Covid-19 in Bangladesh: Analyzing from Policy Perspective

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Sinthia Haque Eva**

Abstract

The study emphasizes on analyzing the effectiveness of public policy taken by Bangladesh government to counteract COVID-19 pandemic. This paper also figures out the challenges and impediments of implementing policies taken by Bangladesh government in this regard, and suggest some doable recommendations to evaluate the policies properly. Following the directives of WHO, almost all the countries have taken initiatives to combat against this virus. Most of the developing countries like Bangladesh have followed testing and isolation as well as lockdown policy to combat the pandemic. But the question is how much the lockdown policy is effective to control the deadly virus in Bangladesh? New Zealand, Japan, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Sweden, and some other countries got the benefits of lockdown strategy. It is evident that, one policy may work very well in one country but it may not work in another country due to its local circumstances. The policy taken by developed countries may not work in developing countries like Bangladesh due to its size of population, people's behavior, expectation, and education level, level of awareness, leadership commitment and local cultural perspective. Considering the density of population, economic condition, and citizen's behavior Bangladesh government has taken to slow down the strategy of lockdown.

Key Words: Covid-19, Pandemic, Isolation, Lockdown.

Introduction

The novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV, further referred to as SARS-CoV-2), was first recognized in Wuhan, China. Outbreak of Covid-19, has posed a dangerous threat to global human health and economy. As the corona virus outbreak rapidly, World Health Organization (WHO) declared it as – ‘International public health emergency’. Worldwide countries are struggling to combat the spread of the disease, impacts of novel corona virus have varied a lot between countries. Some countries have been worse hit than others. Differences in governmental policy may response to explain the disparity within countries. ‘Oxford Coronavirus Government Response Tracker’- (OxCGRT) has tabled nine metrics to calculate government stringency index are as follows :school closures, workplace closures, cancellation of public events, restrictions of public events, closures of public transport, stay at home requirements, public information campaigns, restriction on internal movements and international travel controls.

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To tackle down the covid-19 situation policymakers in every country imposed some containment policy with the aim of flattening the curve. Singapore is the first country “winner” of pandemic response by its aggressive approach to contact- tracing and widespread testing. The government of United Kingdom follow the rules of non-therapeutic preventive measure to slow down the rate of transmission. United Kingdom introduced ‘coronavirus act- 2020’ and used emergency power to imposed stay at home order, banning all non-essential travel, shut almost all schools and restriction on public gathering. It became the first country to authorize Pfizer-Biotech vaccine of corona virus.

In china, to extinguish corona outbreak government adopts one of the largest mass mobilization efforts in the history. The mass lockdown and restrictions on travel made it possible to mitigate the spread of covid-19 in China. In addition, 60 million people were forced to stay at home only in Wuhan and China government did it successfully due to its authoritarian political system (Hussain. R. and Aslam.2020).

Each and every country has taken different policy by considering its own circumstances, education level and awareness level. One policy may work very well in one country and it may not work in another country (Rodrik. D. 2008). As the countries local circumstances and leadership commitment may vary so it is required to consider local conditions as well as local people awareness level and their education level before formulating any policy. That’s why different countries formulated and implemented their policy by ensuring stakeholders participation.

Bangladesh is also not exception and formulating different policy to combat against deadly virus. Most of the cases, Bangladesh initiated its policy by following incremental policy making model and some cases followed both incremental and rational model. Government introduced ample policies to combat against corona and most of the cases did not make any feasibility study before formulating policy regarding corona. For this reason, it is experiencing rapid spread of COVID-19 after the detection of first case 8 march 2020. To date, April 18, 2021 the total confirmed case is 718950 and the death toll is 10385. Bangladesh is the most densely populated country in the world and a lower middle- income country, so maintaining social distance and lockdown are difficult here. However, Bangladesh government has taken various steps to response the outbreak such as- lockdown, isolation, social distancing, local or regional shutdown, increase public awareness, announced several financial stimulus packages etc. There are so many limitations as Bangladesh is dealing with covid-19 with its limited resources. So, Collaboration between government, citizen, experts, along with international support enable the country to minimize the impact and combat against the pandemic.

Bangladesh policy to combat against Covid-19

It is required to face corona pandemic as a nation rather than a group of people. Right now, all political parties should set aside their ideological differences and work together to curb the spread of corona virus. The fact is that both incumbent and opposition parties is claiming each other for the mismanagement and corruption in health sector. However, Bangladesh government has taken some steps to control deadly virus of corona. Though

it was not satisfactory and enough to protect corona. The first corona infected patient was identified on March 8, 2020 and just after 10 days later, first corona-infected patient died in the country. Many experts speculated that corona virus may have entered earlier than that but had not been detected due to inadequate monitoring (Perera, 2020). Up to April 19, 2021 the death toll stood at 10,497 and a total of 723,221 people have been identified in the country as infected with corona. A total of five (5) people died of corona on March 2020, while 7559 on December and 8994 on March 2021. However, experts showed their worriedness on inefficiency of testing which many cases undetected in the country. According to the report of DGHS, from April 8 to May 9, 2020, the number of deaths per day was 10 and in August the death per seven day moving on average 45 and in April 2021, the death per seven day moving on average-80. Again the terrible thing is that the death figure turned triple on 15 April 2021. The death toll and corona infected ratio has been rising since May 31, 2020, while the government has withdrawn the national holiday and reopened government offices and public transports. Meanwhile on June 30, 2020 the World Health Organization has warned that is not even close to ending. So, it is required to analyze the measures of government to control the spread of corona.

Bangladesh government took more than 600 policies to fight against corona since March, 2021. In most of the cases government failed to ensure the participation of the stakeholders to formulate the policy. So, government just followed the previous model and some cases changes or reforms previous policy. For this reason, government faced challenges to implement the policy.

Government holiday and lockdown

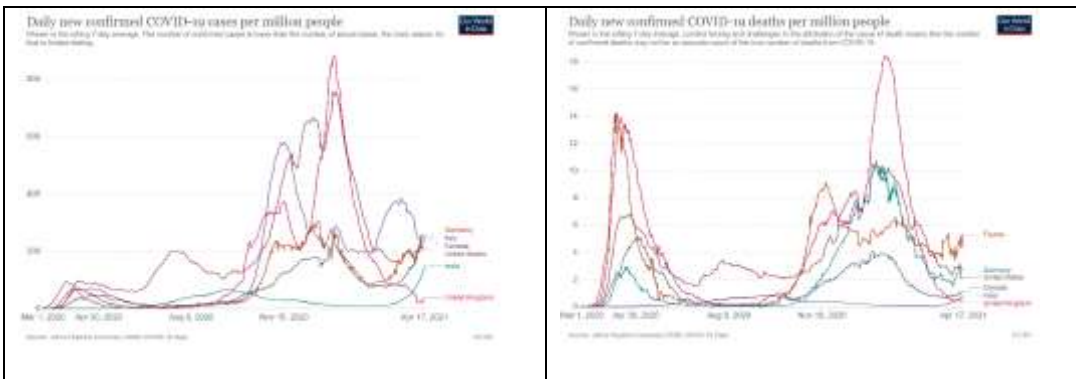
As a part of preventive measure against the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, government had no other option but to continue lockdown. Bangladesh government announced general holiday from March 26 to April 4 and extended shutdown till May 30. In a partial lockdown outlines limited people's movement that enable low community transmission of covid-19 infection and will increase death rate slowly. The recent initiative of government is full lockdown that mostly effective against community transmission and to reduce death rate, but in result- business, economic sector hampered severely, increasing gender based violence, and sufferings for essentials due to price hike, mostly the low income people.

However, Government lifted lockdown after the end of public holiday on May 30, then the identification rates of corona patients have been upward since May 31, 2020. In our socio-economic condition lockdown is not the proper solution to combat against covid-19 virus rather government focus on - increasing testing, screening, strict quarantine of the infected people, contact tracking and surveillance also.

Coronavirus infection are on rise. Now the infection rate is 23.36% where the overall infection rate is 13.86%. Probably the main reason people think that corona-19 may be gone. People are not following the hygiene rules they are not wearing mask and even do not maintain the social distance despite repeated warning of government. In this case people should be more responsible than authorities as coronavirus means a destruction

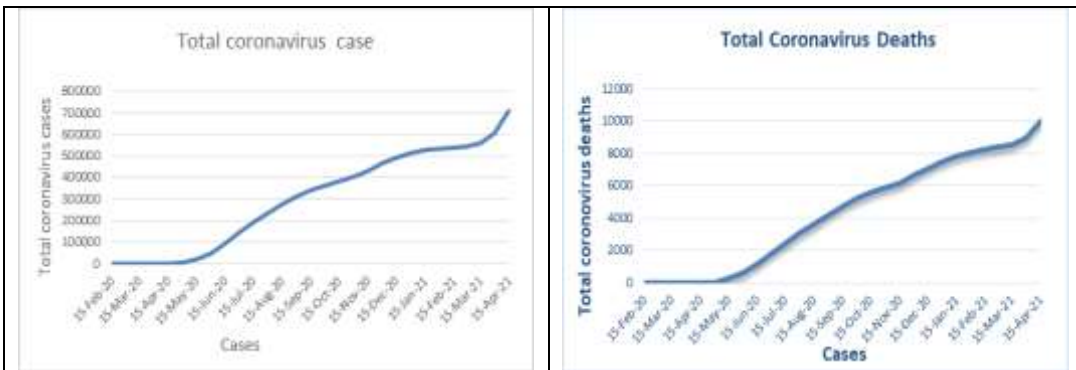
to a family. Only the students are not physically present in their educational institution, wherein all of government and private offices, factories, transport, assembly and gatherings, trade are not stop alike normal as before after may 2020. So people think there is nothing fear about coronavirus.

Chart1: Covid-19 Trend World wide



Source: John Hopkins University, CSSE COVID-19 Data

Chart 2: Covid-19 trend ,Bangladesh



Source: Worldometer.info

The figures show that the number of corona positive cases are uprising in a jiffy, in the month of March 2021 due to the negligence of following government rules and government decisions though it has been decreasing since the month of July 2020. Experts have mentioned several reasons behind the sudden increase rate of infection- A new strain of coronavirus that discovered in UK last September is one of the reason for sudden increase of infection. Because many of Bangladeshi who have not stopped coming and those who came were not quarantined and isolated properly. Experts says it

could spread as much as 70% including to affect the children and young. And in winter coronavirus didn't grow much so people become callous about their health concern and rules of hygiene. Again in February 2021 when people started vaccinating the rate of wearing masks has dropped. Surprisingly the covid-19 virus constantly mutate into new variant, the recent South African variant is more infectious and threatening to the host-humans. Alarming thing is that during first wave lungs severely affected after the 8th-14th day of being infected, but this time within 4 to 5 days the virus damaging the lungs severely near to 70%.

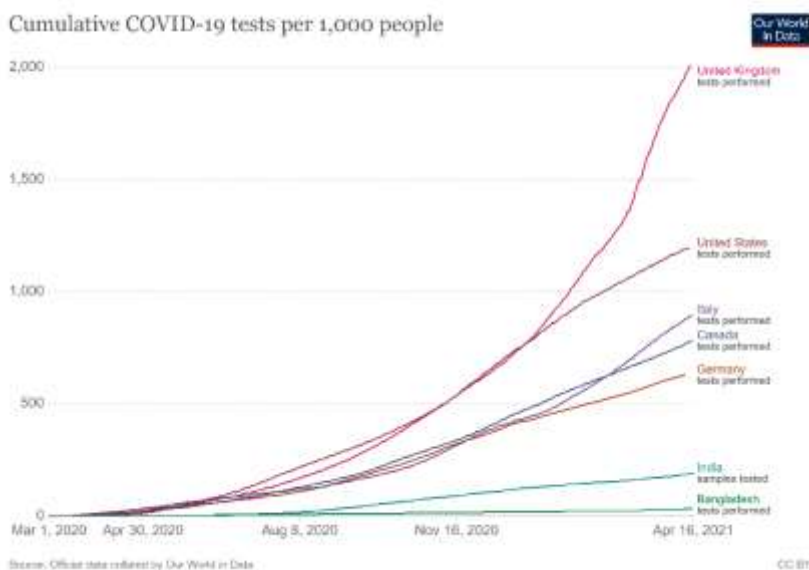
In the cases of death rate we noticed that the death rate is alarming. Death toll hits triple digits for the first time in April 16, 2021.

Testing and isolation

Testing is crucial to detect the infected people and to combat against community spread of virus. But in some cases, government has taken some policy to hide irregularities and corruption in the field of health sector by imposing restrictions in disclosure of information (TIB, 2020). They also found that government has reduced corona virus positivity rate and claimed success of government by taking some policy. The report also explained that the fees for testing in private hospital and government laboratories putting the poor people in a risk and make some opportunities for doing corruption in testing. A large-scale testing allows to quickly identify and isolate the known cases to prevent them from coming into contact with others and slow the rate of community transmission. In Bangladesh Testing coverage has been increasing gradually. In March, 2020 only IEDCR tested corona but now more than 257 authorized lab are testing corona. But in compare to South Asian countries, it is now nearing Sri Lanka (4727/1000000), lower than India and Nepal. In compare to death rate, Bangladesh is the lowest among the selective countries. As the aged people are facing more risk due to corona and the aged population rate in USA, Spain and UK are higher than that of Bangladesh. As a result, the death rate in western countries likes UK, Spain and USA is higher than that of Bangladesh. At the same time, it is also noted that government timely initiative made it possible to lessen the death rate due to corona.

We can see by the chart that the position of Bangladesh in coronavirus testing rate is lower than the selective countries that shown in graph. Bangladesh is the third most affected country after India and Pakistan. Till April 12, 2021 the number of testes case is 5002865 and confirmed case is 684756.

Chart 3: Cumulative Covid -19 test



Source: our world in data.org

Government has taken some policy to Use of technology

To control the spread of corona virus, it is necessary to use technology to trace the contract of infected people. According to national preparedness and response plan for covid-19, Bangladesh suggests disseminating the WHO definition of “contracts” and develops protocols and standard operating procedures (SOP) for contract tracing. Moreover, it suggests establishing and implementing electronic data management using Go-Data software. Till now, no software developed to trace the contracts of corona infectious patients. Though, ICT Division of Bangladesh government has established a national digital platform of “Shohojoddha- A Plasma Network”. As convalescent plasma therapy is an important method to help the corona patient to recover from corona infection. This network can support technologically to get the information of plasma bank. A Covid-19 dashboard has been developed and is updated daily, this portal displayed data from laboratory, number of people in quarantine and isolation and the number of deaths. MIS also includes E-health with “Shastho Batayan” is the major tele-medicine operator under DGES.

Collective efforts

Experts identified some reasons for increasing corona patients in the country. First of all lockdown has not been effective, people have left capital city of Dhaka for any kind of program and to get together on their holidays and gone to own villages and everything

has been re-opened after public holidays. As a result, the rate of identification of patients with corona and death rate have been increased. Another problem was lack of coordination in implementing government decision. In that case, coordination among different ministries and departments as well as collective efforts is essential to control the outbreak of corona.

As it's a pandemic, it's time to unify the nation for a better resilience. Here, being a parent organization, the government must be humble enough in bringing the stakeholders under an umbrella undermining political as well as ideological differences. Besides there must be a 'policy space', so that the authority could response to emerging problems as well as feel the gap of towards obtaining policy goals. We have already discussed about the tendency of adopting incremental policy, in this context this policy space can play a major role in coping up with the changing difficulties arouse from the Covid-19 situation.

Economy matters but life matters more About 13 percent people have become unemployed in the country due to Covid-19 pandemic (BIDS, 2020)

The report also predicts that the country's overall poverty is to increase by 25.13%, where rural poverty will be 24.23% and urban poverty will be 27.52%. It is difficult to continue economic activities and corona issues simultaneously. Because of the long period of lockdown, impacted all over the economic sector and so on severely. So, Government make a priority to save people first and economy later. It is important to note that the government of Bangladesh has taken several important measures to combat these social problems. As a part of financial support, the government announced that loan payers need not pay until June 30, and credit card users will be waived from their fees/ interests against late payment of their due bills until May 30. Due to a restriction in movement as well as closure of major banks during the lockdown, the government has increased the limit of monthly transaction on mobile financial services. For the agriculture sector, the government instructed banks to provide loan at only 4 percent interest rate. Besides payment period for import of raw materials, agricultural implements and chemical fertilizers have also been extended. Most importantly, for the agriculture sector, a refinance scheme of BDT50 billion has been declared with an interest of only 4 percent at the customer end. To help other different industrial sectors, the government has declared stimulus packages of BDT667.5 billion especially for those industries who are badly impacted by COVID-19. A BDT30 billion of the refinancing scheme has been declared for the low-income professionals, farmers and micro businessmen where the customer will be able to pay the loan flexibly including a grace period of one to two years (Islam, Lamia). Most of the countries in the world took stimulus package to recover economy from the drastic attack of corona on economy. Chinese government announced USD 79 billion to support economic sector to overcome the effect of corona. Moreover, the government also encouraged all of the banks to distribute more loans to the small

industries with low interest rate to continue their economic production and in some cases relief the taxes (Reuters, 2020). The government of Italy announces EUR 285 billion as an economic support package while Spain EUR 200 billion, South Korea USD 9.8 billion, France EUR 45 billion, Germany EUR 550 billion, USA USD 104 billion and UK USD 300 billion as an economic support package to recover their economy amid the global pandemic. In this perspective, government announced stimulus package to tackle the drastic impact of corona on economy.

Vaccination

Bangladesh has taken quick action to combat Covid-19 by rolling out a national vaccination program. “Covid-19 Emergency response and pandemic preparedness project” helps to procure safe and effective vaccine. Till April 16, 2021, a total 5.6 million people had received the first dose and 930,151 people the second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine. Wherein the national coverage of 1st dose is 11.4% and Dhaka city coverage is 36.6% (DGHS). The government decide to continue vaccination during ongoing lockdown.

Case management and infection prevention

According to DGHS, as of 11 April 2021 there are 10,364 general beds dedicated to Covid-19 treatment countrywide and 672 dedicated ICU beds in the country. The figure is not satisfactory. Recently, Bangladesh Government take a ground breaking steps to combat against corona virus as Bangladesh is facing a second wave of covid-19 and around 160,000 people have tested positive in covid-19 in last month and a half. Deaths have increased by five times and hospitals are filling up with patients. So there is an urgent need to expand health care service that’s why government has prepared the DNCC market as a modern dedicated Covid-19 hospital that conclude 1000 dedicated bed for covid-19 patient.

Economic relief package

Bangladesh reported first corona case on March 8 and imposed nationwide shutdown on March 26. The two prime sectors of economy- Ready Made Garments (RMG) and Small and Medium Enterprises have mainly halted operations since then. This shutdown posed huge number of workers jobless and enhanced the poverty level. Considering the situation world Bank has predicted that GDP growth rate of Bangladesh may come down to 2 to 3%, Even, International Monetary Fund has forecasted the growth rate may go down to 2%.(The Dhaka Tribune, 2020). But surprisingly Bangladesh achieved 5.2% of GDP growth. To overcome the drastic economic impact of covid-19, Bangladesh

government has taken series of economic policies including some stimulus package. Bangladesh Government approved a total 23 stimulus packages with an overall outlay of 1.24 trillion tk. Which is 4.44% of total GDP.s

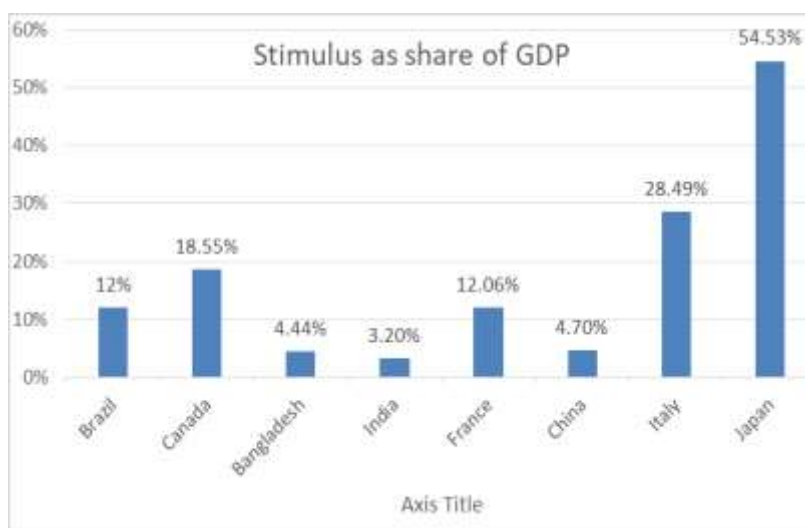
Table 1: Covid-19 fund announced by government:

Name of package	In core taka	As share of GDP	Number of recipients
Salary support for export oriented industry	5000	0.178	3,500,000 persons
Capital facilities for the affected large industries and service sector organization	40,000	1.426	2,549 entities
Capital facilities to small and medium enterprises	20,000	0.713	41,069 persons
Export development fund introduced by Bangladesh Bank	12,750	0.454	2,379 entities
Pre-shipment credit refinance scheme	5,000	0.178	N/A
Agriculture refinance scheme	12,705	0.454	89,934 persons
Refinancing scheme for low income farmers and small traders	3000	0.107	100,277 persons
Loans	3200	0.114	N/A
Government subsidy for interest waiver	2000	0.071	N/A
Credit guarantee scheme	2000	0.071	N/A
Special honorarium to doctor nurses an health workers	100	0.004	N/A
Health insurance	750	0.027	42 persons
Distribution of free food item	2500	0.089	2,3400000 households
Distribution of rice	770	0.027	N/A
Distribution of cash amount to the targeted people	1258	0.045	34,97,353 households
Increase the coverage of the allowance program	815	0.029	156.218 persons
Procurement of boro	860	0.031	N/A
Agricultural subsidies	9500	0.339	N/A

Source: The Financial Express: February 24, 2021

Though government distributed 120 trillion TK. for recovering economy but in most of the cases

Chart 4: Stimulus as share of GDP



Source: Statista; April 1,2021.

Global collective leadership and partnership

Bangladesh government has been tried to make a global partnership since April, 2020. To make a strong collective global leadership and partnership Prime minister Sheikh Hasina has made a call on April 23, 2020 in a virtual conference “Enhancing Regional Cooperation in South Asia to combat Covid-19 related Impact on Economic” organized by the World Economic Forum and placed her five(5) points proposal to make a collective responsibility to combat against corona. She also emphasized to form a global leadership from G7, G20 and OECD and also urged UN lead multilateral system to go ahead. As a part of global partnership, World Bank has approved USD 100 million for Bangladesh through International Development Association (IDA) to tackle corona pandemic(World Bank 2020). Moreover, SAARC Development Fund has finalized USD 5 million funds to combat against corona among SAARC members countries (Ministry of Finance, 2020). In addition, Asian Development Bank (ADB) also approved USD 300000 fund to support Bangladesh to fight against corona. Apart from these support Bangladesh government requested to approve foreign aid to tackle corona pandemic

Table 2: Fund requested by Bangladesh Governmen

Organization	Fund Requested
World Bank	USD 850 million
International Monetary Fund(IMF)	USD 750 million
Asian Development Bank(ADB)	USD 600 million
Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank(AIIB)	USD 250 million
Islamic Development Bank(IDB)	USD 150 million

Source: Saif. S & Islam., J. (5th April, 2020)

Again The World Bank approved \$500 million to help Bangladesh for vaccinate 54 million people against covid-19 in 18 march 2021.

Zero tolerance against corruption

Nowhere, Bangladesh is battling with two virus- one is the pandemic of corona and the another one is the epidemic of corruption. Following the corruption and irregularities in health sector during covid-19, Bangladesh government, reiterated zero tolerance policy against corruption. TIB expressed that corona virus pandemic exposed the corruption level in health sector and created more scope for making corruption in the country. TIB also found that more than 12% of beneficiaries faced irregularities and mismanagement while enlisting their name as a beneficiary. Moreover, it also created mistrust among mass people regarding health care services and relief distribution. Local Government and Rural Development ministry has suspended 30 Union Parishad Chairman and 64 UP members due to allegation of stealing relief goods since March 2020 amid the corona pandemic. All of them were involved in embezzling relief goods under social safety net programs. Moreover government cancelled the leave of doctors and law enforcing agency during the outbreak, in consequences some of suspended for remained absent in their workplace and negligence to duty. This timely action sent a message to the local government bodies to implement government policy with carefully and sincerely. It is also enhancing the capacity of government to apply government orders and regulations to control the outbreak of corona virus (Islam, Lamia).

Committee formation to fight against corona

Government formed more than forty committees since March 2020, to tackle the outbreak of covid-19(The Daily Prothom Alo, 8th July,2020).All of these committees formed with specialized person from different sectors to prevent covid-19 inside the country. Government formed **National committee for prevention and control of covid-19** where the minister of health and family welfare ministry is the chief of this committee and cabinet secretary, principal secretary of Prime Minister's office, senior secretary, local government division-ministry of local government, senior secretary-Ministry of disaster management and relief, senior secretary-ministry of civil aviation and tourism, PSO armed forces division, director general of health services, director of DGHS, director of IEDCR and some secretaries of different ministries. The major function of this committee is to provide financial or logistics support to prevent covid-19. Moreover, to provide directions to local committees and providing direction in any other related matter.

National coordination committee for prevention and control of covid-19

This committee was formed with 26 members where Prof.ABM Abdullah, Medicine specialist and Chief physician of honorable Prime Minister to review and taking decision on evolving issues of covid-19. The committee formed to continue their function 24/7 through selected members of the committee when necessary through full committee.

Another function of this committee is to send documents to national technical committee or multi-sectorial taskforce or technical advisory group. This committee can also instruct coordination committees of different levels

National Technical committee for prevention and control covid-19

This committee is consisted of 24 members and DG of health service will preside over this committee. All the members of this committee are specialist on health issues. Their major task is to review and implement national plan as well as to review communications materials. Moreover, they can review, adopt, and implement proposals at the directorate level.

Committee in division level for prevention and control of covid-19

This committee is consisted of ten members and major functions is to implement orders from national committee and if any information regarding covid-19 is obtained, this committee will take necessary action in coordination with national committee.

Committee in district level for prevention and control of covid-19

This committee is consisted of 11 members and Deputy commissioner of District is the chief of this committee, civil surgeon is the member secretary of this committee while local member of the parliament and Zilla parishad chairman works as advisor. Their main pivotal task is to implement orders from national committee. In addition, it will ensure logistic and financial support to enhance mass awareness when necessary. Moreover, if any information regarding covid-19 is obtained, this committee can take necessary action in coordination with national committees.

Committee in Upazila level for prevention and control of Covid-19

Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) is the chief of this committee and Upazila health and family planning officer is the member secretary while local member of the parliament works as an advisor of this committee. Officer in charge of police, municipality mayor, upazila livestock officer, upazila education officer, upazila secondary education officer, upazila project implementation officer and upazila social welfare officer are the members of this committee. Their major task is to coordinate with district committee to implement orders from national committee and to take necessary actions regarding any other issues. Professor Bay-Nazir Ahmed, a former director of the Department of Disease Control at the Department of Public Health expressed that “the main purpose of forming the committee should be to implement a national plan to combat corona. But the way the committee has been and is still being formed from the beginning, the implementation of the plan has not been possible”.(The Daily Prothom Alo, 8th July,2020). National Technical Advisory Committee holds only two meetings since the inception of this committee on 19th April, 2020. This committee also has five sub-committee but didn't hold any meeting subcommittee meeting since April 2020. All of these committees could not play their role effectively in dealing with corona. Health Minister Zahid Malek

expressed in a meeting at Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons (BCLPS) that “I have been made the chairman of the National Committee as the health minister. The decisions that are being made are not in our knowledge”. Even the recommendations of Advisory committee have not been implemented properly.

Recommendations for Bangladesh

Testing and isolation at mass level is essential as the World Health Organization mentioned earlier that testing, testing, and testing is the only way to curb corona pandemic. Early analysis of covid-19 outbreak in china suggests that mobility restriction can mitigate the spread of corona. Bruin. D. B. Y. et al., (2020) explained that by January 23, 2020 the epidemic had already spread to other cities of China and therefore mobility restriction can modestly delayed the spread of epidemic. Restriction on travelling along with public health interventions and behavioral change reduced the outbreak of SARS in Singapore (Drake et al., 2006). These findings imply the importance of quick response based on early detection and additional risk mitigation measures. Safety concern of health care staff should be address on priority. ICU beds and ventilators are required to combat against deadly virus. Moreover, it is also essential trained staff to operate these instruments. Government can get success by following three major processes of preparedness, prevention and protection. The timely policy taken by the government of Bangladesh is enough to tackle the outbreak of corona and its impact on economy. Effective supervision and transparency is mandatory to stop the disbursement of loans under stimulus package to the loan defaulters. As Bangladesh has a long history of loan defaulter. A study showed that in the FY-2011 a total of 22644 loan defaulters, while in the FY-2019, it goes up to 94313. Moreover, it showed that less than 1% of these defaulters, holding more than 50% of total default loans. Loan defaulting, ongoing liquidity crisis, mismanagement in disbursement may make a threat for the successful implementation of policy. To get the success of above policy, international solidarity, global partnership, and coordination among different agencies within country is prerequisite. The success of policy implementation depends on the participation of stakeholders of the policy. So, it is required to ensure the participation of the beneficiary group of policy and different actors in policy process. Policymakers in worldwide are adopting different policy to confront the economic crisis due to corona pandemic. As, a large portion of the population lives hand to mouth, lockdown is not feasible strictly. Government should consider this reality while enforcing lockdown for few weeks. Robust international cooperation, global collective leadership, and strong public policy can lessen the devastating impact of corona pandemic. As a developing country, Bangladesh can recover its economy by implementing government policy through ensuring proper guidance, monitoring and skilled resource person. Moreover, collective approach can show the way to get the successful implementation of policy.

Conclusion

There must be no gap between reality and policy content in formulating policy. Before setting agenda, there have to be proper study about the reality and capability of selective

sections. Keeping up in this line, first find out the real problems, barriers, and limitations; then set agenda in accordance with these what can be successfully imposed. In this sector, the media including social media as well can play a vital role for articulating issues, On the other hand the bureaucrats will assess the capabilities of government and other organizations respectively. On the question of implementing policy both carrots and sticks can play role but in this pandemic the use of earlier one in a greater degree is time worthy. For example, lockdown is neither a magic bullet nor the best option to eradicate the Covid-19. It's just a way of keeping social distance through forcing people staying at home. Country like Bangladesh, it's impossible. But it can be possible to motivate them to follow the basic rules of lockdown. If the law enforcing agencies use sticks too much, it will raise hatred among people towards obeying rules and they will reluctant to obey rules simultaneously. On the other hand, using carrots, like sympathy towards commons, will bring respect and awareness among them in keeping social distance. The politicians can also motivate people by establishing examples. NGOs, civil society, mass public, media might be compatible watchdogs. And obviously government have to encourage and evaluate them. Without people's participation no single policy could meet the goals. That's why it's first and foremost duty of government to ensure this anyhow. We all know this crisis is going on and in day by day, so 'policy space' is must to face the changeable challenges and there must introduce 'short term evolution' as a necessary step.

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State of Social Safety Net Programmes in Bangladesh: Issues and Challenges

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Habibullah**

Abstract

Social Safety Net programmes (SSNPs) denote to the social service programs that aims to reach the poor and vulnerable people of the community through non-contributory transfers. The paper is to investigate the policy of resource distribution and selection of beneficiaries of SSNPs and how do local representatives and political elites establish political disbursement through allocation of SSNPs. The study has been made to explore the existing challenges and limitations of current SSNPs. The study finding suggested that SSNPs are not constantly equally delivered among the vulnerable groups who justify to get it. To explore the challenges and limitations of SSNPs at the rural level for the vulnerable groups in Bangladesh, 12 respondents from elected representatives of the Union Parishads (UP) as well as the government officials, 40 general citizens (non-beneficiaries) and 70 respondents from beneficiaries have been interviewed for the purpose. In this study, it has been noticed that the positive result of the Social Safety Net Programme mainly depends on the successful implementation of these programmes. According to the local representatives, beneficiaries and the general citizens, there prevailed a chance of irregularities in the list making procedure of the beneficiaries.

Key Words: Social Safety Net Programmes, Beneficiaries, Challenges.

Introduction

Social safety nets programme (SSNPs) is a protective tool engaged by the government to defend the poor and vulnerable groups of its society. Bangladesh yearns to be a welfare state in near future exhibits firm promise to ensure the bliss of its entire citizen (Hasan, 2018). For the wellbeing of the citizens Bangladesh government allots an amount of fund in its national budget each year. The government of Bangladesh is increasing the allocation for SSNPs every year to reduce poverty (Hossain, & Ali, 2017). An important point in the field level study is that the amount of allocation that the government allocates to the social security sector every year is not being implemented properly (The Daily Star, 2019). There are various obstacles and challenges regarding party consideration, nepotism, corruption, claiming money from beneficiaries, failure to make the list of the beneficiaries independently of local elected representatives, role of syndicate in the process of service, allocation less than the demand, lower quality of allotted goods, lack of social cohesion etc. (Iqbal, 2008). Successful implementation has been hampered for

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these types of obstacles. SSNPs are provided to protect the individuals and families from the shock of poverty and calamity (Khuda, 2011). The current government in its roadmap of expansion has merged plans for the deportation of poverty, inequality and human deficiency with the spirit of liberation war of Bangladesh (Daily Kaler Kantho, 2019). Bangladesh government has already started 126 Safety Net Programmes to safeguard sustainable development (Finance, 2020). Most notable programmes are Cash Transfer Programs, Food Security Programs, Micro-Credit and Miscellaneous Funds Programs, Development Sector Programs etc. (Khuda, 2011). Other programs like Food for Work, Scholarship for Poor Students, Subsidies, Old Age Allowance, Widow Allowance, Freedom Fighter Allowance, Disability Allowance etc. all are helpful for the vulnerable people in Bangladesh (Ferdous, 2014). For all these well planned and effective safety net programs, the percentage of poverty has been reduced (Daily Prothom Alo). Whereas in the FY 1973-74 the poverty rate was 82%, in 1991 it was 56.7% and in the fiscal year 2018-19 the poverty rate has become 20.5% and the government aims to make it 0% by 2030 (Daily Kaler Kantho, 2019). Despite many positive aspects of SSNPs, there are a number of challenges, limitations and complaints about the distribution procedures of the benefits at the grassroots level. So, it is very important to explore the nature of challenges and limitations of SSNPs at rural level in Bangladesh.

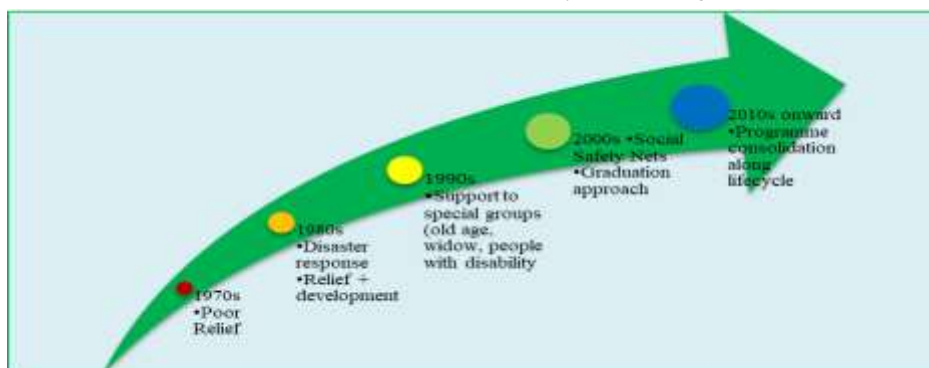
Social Security: Conceptual Clarity

The Social Security or Social Safety Net Programme (SSNP) is a protective apparatus engaged by the government of a state to defend the underprivileged and helpless groups of its society (Ahmed & Islam, 2011, p. 15). It can be defined as a group of policies and programmes which purposes to decrease social and economic vulnerability and helplessness of the poor, to increase their ability to defend themselves against jeopardies and damages of income including under spare circumstances. Details social safety net programmes include all sector of defenseless population covering the unwaged, disabled, aged, sick, orphans, women-headed households, street children, etc. (Ahmed, 2019).

‘Social security’ and ‘social protection’ are technical terms used by some literatures as consuming dissimilar meanings, whereas some literature applies these ideas interchangeably. Some see social safety as a wider concept; others view social security as broader, as it comprises also unexpected mutual funding, while social protection is a directive of the state. Various institutions and organizations such as UNDP and ILO perceive the significance of two ideas more or less the similar. The term ‘social protection’ was used in the early enlisting of its National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) in Bangladesh (UNDP, 2019). Later, to mark it constant with the Constitution, it was transformed to ‘social security’, without changing meaning. Social protection differs in relations of methods assumed by specific activities and institutions and their method of allocating with it. A broader definition of social protection is ... *‘a set of formal and informal mediations that purpose to decrease social and economic hazards, liabilities and deprivations for all people and facilitate reasonable growth’* (Rahman, 2019). United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) understands social protection as containing of *‘strategies and programmes planned to decrease poverty and*

vulnerability by stimulating efficient labour markets, diminishing people’s exposure to hazards, and enhancing their volume to accomplish financial and societal threats, such as joblessness, prohibiting, illness, disability and old age’ (Shahabuddin & Khan, 2018). Despite some dissimilarity, the most common structures of social protection are that these are programmes or interventions with the impartial treatments to the challenges of deficiency, helplessness, and social prohibiting (UNDP, 2019). Social safety net programme is the only way to provide all possible assistance to the poor and underprivileged people with monetary care. There are various programs including money transfer, food safety and employment in Bangladesh. The journey of the Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs) began with the relief to the victims of natural disasters. A total of 126 sectors have been allocated in the year 2019, In line with programs, activities and projects. (Finance, 2020)

Fig. 1: The Continuation of Social Safety Nets in Bangladesh



Source: (Hasan, 2018)

The above figure shows a series of developments in Bangladesh’s Social Safety Net Programmes. Social safety net was the only relief programme in the 1970s. Later in the 1980s, the relief program was added to the developmental activities. And then in the 1990s, social safety net was further increased, adding special services for widows, elderly and disabled people. Currently, Social safety net is not only restricted to the above functions, but also is widely accepted. And it is considered as an important tool for eradicating poverty from the country. (Hasan, 2018)

Bangladesh needs to be a welfare state in future displays firm potential to ensure the happiness of its entire citizen. For the wellbeing of the citizens, Bangladesh government allots funds in its national budget each fiscal year. SSNPs are provided to defend the individuals and families from the shock of poverty and disaster (Alam & Hossain, 2016). The Social Safety Net programmes (SSNPs) of Bangladesh Government can be separated into four main types: (1) Employment generation programmes; (2) The programmes to cope with natural disasters and other shocks; (3) Initiatives provided to parents for their children’s education; and (4) Initiatives provided to families to improve their health status (Khuda, 2011).

According to the article 15(d) of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the right of the sick, unemployed, aged, and disabled persons, widows, and orphans is guaranteed. Providing these legitimate and constitutional rights to the citizens is the responsibility of the ministry of social welfare. The ministry is also responsible to fulfill the constitutional obligations of the government connecting to the provision of public health (Article 18), equality and opportunity (Article 19) and freedom of association (Article 38). According to the Allocation of Business, the ministry is responsible for framing National Social Welfare Policy as well as providing aid to the backward segment of the society. As a part of its duty the ministry runs a number of cash based safety net programs namely the old age, widow and disable allowances etc. Moreover, the ministry delivers micro-credit and training to the underprivileged, so as to carry them out of the poverty. Various types of Social Safety Net Programmes are implemented throughout the country.

Methodology

The main objective of this study is to explore the challenges and limitations of SSNPs at the rural level in Bangladesh. For that, both quantitative and qualitative methods of research are used in this research. Interviews and surveys methods are used for the purpose. The research is conducted by questioning and interviewing some of the government officials, local representatives, elites, general people, and beneficiaries of SSNPs regarding the implementation process of the research area. Both open and close ended questions were placed for the respondents. To explore the real scenario of SSNPs, survey method was used to fold field data directly from the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries as well as officials and authorities who were directly related with the programmes. Random sampling is applied in exploring the challenges and the gaps of services of the SSNPs. However, due to time and other different limitations and obstacles, two union parishads named Hariari and Parila of Paba upazila of Rajshahi district of Bangladesh was purposively selected as study area for this research. The socio-economic status of the people of research area and the other areas of the country are mostly matched. So, study area selection can be justified. Details of the categories and frequency of respondents are shown in tables.

Categories of Respondents

Local elected representatives are directly involved in executing the government's Social Safety Net Programs at the rural level. Therefore, the researchers interviewed the representatives of all local levels of two selected Union Parishads to identify of the challenges and limitations of implementation the Social Safety Net Programs. Tables show that the researchers interviewed 2 UP chairmen, 4 UP members, 2 UP women members of reserved seats, 2 secretaries and 2 dafadars (head of the village police). The researchers conducted a total of 12 representatives interviews from different categories. Moreover, to explore the real scenario of SSNPs, 40 general poor people (non-

beneficiaries) and 70 beneficiaries of SSNPs are interviewed. Tables show the details frequency of respondents.

Table 1.1: Categories of the Respondents

Categories of the Respondents:	Frequency	Percent
UP Chairman	2	16.7
word member	4	33.3
Word woman member	2	16.7
UP Secretary	2	16.7
Dafader/Chaukidar	2	16.7
Total	12	100.0

Table 1.2: Categories of the Respondents

Categories of the Respondents	Frequency	Percent
General People	40	100
Total	40	100

Table 1.3: Categories of the Respondents

Categories of the Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Beneficiaries	70	100
Total	70	100

Data Analysis and Findings

Opinion of Elected Representatives and Government Officials

This study is conducted to identify the challenges and obstacles to successful implementation of the Social Safety Net Programs. Various types of barriers and challenges have come up in the information that was provided by the Chairmen, Members, and Women members of the reserved seats, secretaries, and village police of the Union Parishads.

The allocation and the demand

After the independence, about half of the population of the country were living with extreme poverty level. Later, the rate of poverty has been reduced significantly. Currently, poverty rate in the country is 20.5% (bdnews.24.com). It is assumed that the government's social safety net programs have played a key role in reducing poverty in the country. However, the government allocation is not adequate for the beneficiaries in remote areas of the country (Ahmed, & Islam, 2011). The table shows, all respondents pointed to the same statement that the allocation in the social safety net sector is minimal

compared to the number of poor people in their area. If there are 40/50 poor widows in a locality and all of them are eligible for the allowance, the government is allocating for only 5 people which is really insufficient compared to the demand, according to a respondent. On the other hand, the poor people don't want to understand that the allocation is low, they think that the government is providing sufficient allocation but they are not getting it due to the discrimination and corruption of UP parishads.

Table 2: Allocation Sufficient or not in Rural Area

Sufficient Allocation	Frequency	Percent
No	12	100.0
Yes	00	00
Total	12	100

Source: Field Survey 2020

Types of Selection procedures of Beneficiaries

The biggest challenge for implementing social safety net programs is the selection procedure of the beneficiaries. There have been a lot of irregularity, corruption, nepotism etc. noticed in the process. Completion and implementation of government circulars would greatly reduce the problems of the selecting procedure of the beneficiaries but no one is following that procedure. UP delegates are choosing beneficiaries in their own way, so there remains the scope for irregularities. The table illustrates that the respondents (local elected representatives) have followed different methods to select the beneficiaries. 41.7% of the respondents told that they collect the name of the beneficiaries by the local elected members and female members of the ward. 8.3% of the total respondents opined that they choose the beneficiaries from local political activists. Another 8.3% of the respondents said that they make a list of the beneficiaries' names according to the names that are given by the local dignitaries. On the other hand, 8.3% of the respondents said that they make a list of the names of those who come to UP at different times. 25% of the representatives told that they use all the above procedures as per the status quo. And the remaining 8.3% said that before listing the name, they announce the allocation of SSNPs in the religious or other social institutions then include the names of beneficiaries.

Table 3: Types of Selection Procedures

Types of Selection Procedures	Frequency	Percent
Prepare a list of candidates by word members.	5	41.7
Collect the names with local political activists	1	8.3
Collect the names by local moderators.	1	8.3

Include the names of those who applied to UP at different times	1	8.3
Followed the procedures by depending on the situation	3	25.0
Other	1	8.3
Total	12	100.0

Source: Field survey 2020

Challenges to select the Beneficiaries

Selecting beneficiaries of the Social safety net programs is an important and complex as well as challenging task. The success of this government-programs largely depends on choosing the right one. Choosing the right one is a big challenge. If you don't choose the right one, then all the efforts of the government are bound to fail. Local representatives face various problems in preparing the list of beneficiaries. Table 4 shows, all respondents told that they had faced a lot of problems while they were selecting the beneficiaries at the local level. The respondents gave different opinions in response to the specific question. The table 5 shows that the local elected representatives had faced various difficulties while they were selecting the beneficiaries. 33.3% of the respondents said that everyone wants to get the benefits, 25% of the respondents said that general people have less patience, 8.3% told about political influence, 16.7% of the respondents said that the beneficiaries had the lack of rules and relevant knowledge of SSNPs, 8.3% of the respondents told about the routing of local brokers and syndicate, and the other 8.3% respondents said about the opposition propaganda / misinterpretation of SSNPs. This study finds that, when a local elected representative goes to select the beneficiaries, everyone wants to get the benefits, general people have less patient.

Table 4. Challenges to select the beneficiaries

Challenges to select the beneficiaries	Frequency	Percent
Yes	12	100.0
Total	12	100.0

Source: Field survey 2020

Table 5. Nature of Problems

Nature of Problems	Frequency	Percent
Everyone wants to get the benefits	4	33.3
General people have less patience	3	25.0
Political influence	1	8.3
Lack of rules and relevant knowledge of the beneficiaries.	2	16.7
Routing of local Brokers and Syndicate	1	8.3

Opposition propaganda / misinterpretation of SSNPs.	1	8.3
Total	12	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2020

Types of Influence in selecting Beneficiaries

Local elected representatives should have the freedom of creating the list of beneficiaries. But in reality, they cannot choose the beneficiaries independently. They choose beneficiaries through various constraints, including political, social, and economic pressures. Table 6 shows that 58.3% of the total respondents can choose the beneficiaries independently. On the other hand, 41.7% of the respondents told that they could not choose the beneficiaries independently. On the other hand table 6.1 shows that 40% respondents had to consider the political matters; 20% respondents said that satisfaction of the Upazila chairman, MP had to be kept in mind; 20% respondents told that senior authorities had to be listened and the other 20% of the respondents said that there was pressured from well-respected people of the locality. The study found that a number of representatives cannot select the beneficiaries independently.

Table 6: Beneficiaries Selection Process

Independent Selection Process	Frequency	Percent
Yes	7	58.3
No	5	41.7
Total	12	100.0

Source: Field survey 2020

Table 6.1: Types of Influence

Types of Influence	Frequency	Percent
Have to consider the political matters.	2	40.0
Satisfaction of Upazila chairman, MP matters	1	20.0
Senior authorities have to be listened.	1	20.0
There is pressure from local elite (well-respected people).	1	20.0
Total	5	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Awareness of the General people about SSNPs.

The general people need to have a clear idea about the programs. Since the rate of education in Bangladesh is not yet 100%, the public are less aware of these issues. On the other hand, the poverty rate is high among the illiterate villagers (Alderman, 2002). Table 7 illustrates that 33.33% of the respondents think that general people are aware about

SSNPs, 50% of the total respondents opined that the general people are less aware about SSNPs and 16.7% of the respondents think that the general people are not aware about SSNPs. This study finds that general people have no clear concept about SSNPs. Even those who have an idea of SSNPs, those are not clear at all.

Table 7: Awareness of the General People

Awareness of the People.	Frequency	Percent
Aware	4	33.33
Less aware	6	50
Not aware	2	16.7
Total	12	100

Source: Field survey 2020

Online Database/Digitalization

It is important to keep the total number of the poor people, total government allocation, sector-based allocation, etc. in the online database of an UP so that anyone can find all the information of the UP while sitting at home. So that it is less likely to reach misunderstanding and the opposition cannot carry out propaganda. Table 8 shows, 50% respondents said that they had online database and 50% told that they had no online database. Even though the government already has allocated funds and has appointed the employees to create online databases, but in the 50% of UP, online databases are not available.

Table 8: Online Database of SSNPs

Online Database	Frequency	Percent
Yes	6	50.0
No	6	50.0
Total	12	100.0

Source: Field survey 2020

Opinion of the general people outside the beneficiaries

Nature of discrimination to distribute the benefits by UP

Sometimes it is alleged that the UP members discriminate to give the benefits. For various reasons a poor people didn't get the benefits. Sometimes the affluent are also taking the advantages. Tables shows that, 65% respondent think that UP discriminates to give the benefits. On the other hand 35% respondents opine that Up doesn't discriminate to give the benefits. 42.3% of the respondents think, because of party consideration of UP (elected local authorities) someone deprived from the benefits, 42.3% argue someone deprived for nepotism of the local authorities and 15.4% respondent wasn't willing to reply in this regard. This study found that a number of respondents think that UP discriminates to give the benefits.

Table 9: Types of Discrimination

Discrimination	Frequency	Percent
Yes	26	65.0
No	14	35.0
Total	40	100.0

Source: Field survey 2020

Table 9.1: Types of Discrimination

Types of Discrimination	Frequency	Percent
Party consideration	11	42.3
Nepotism	11	42.3
No reply	4	15.4
Total	26	100.0

Source: Field survey 2020

Eligibility of Beneficiaries

The table 10 shows that 72.5% of the respondents think that someone is not eligible for the benefits of SSNPs but enjoy it. In contrast 27.55% opined that only the poor people enjoy this benefits.

Table: 10: Eligibility of Beneficiaries

Eligibility of Beneficiaries	Frequency	Percent
Yes	29	72.5
No	11	27.5
Total	40	100.0

Source: Field survey 2020

Deprivation of getting Benefits

Table 11 shows that 67.5% of the respondents think that someone has been deprived from the benefits. On the other hand, 32.5% of the respondents opined that nobody has been deprived from the benefits. This study found that a number of vulnerable people have been deprived from getting the SSNPs benefits for various causes like party consideration, nepotism of local elected representatives.

Table: 11: Deprivation of getting Benefits

Deprivation of getting Benefits	Frequency	Percent
Yes	27	67.5
No	13	32.5
Total	40	100.0

Source: Field survey 2020

Challenges of implementing Social Safety Net Programs: Opinion of the beneficiaries

As a citizen it is his/her right to get the benefits from the country without any complications and hesitations. It is the responsibility of an elected representative to provide him/her citizens the benefits. But in reality, the poorest people have faced a lot of complications and difficulties when they want to get the benefits. The tables illustrate that 22.9% of the total respondents have faced complications before getting the benefits of SSNPs while 77.1% of the beneficiaries opined that they have got the benefits without any complications. The respondents who have faced complications before getting the benefits of SSNPs, 14.3% of them answered that they had to bribe, 71.4% of the respondents told that they had to go to UP again and again, and 2 respondents weren't willing to reply in this regard.

Table 12: Nature of complications before getting the benefits

Frequency of Nature of Complications	Frequency	Percent
Yes	16	22.9
No	54	77.1
Total	70	100.0

Source: Field survey 2020

Table 12.1: Nature of Complications

Nature of Complications	Frequency	Percent
Have to pay	2	14.3
Have to go to UP again and again	10	71.4
No reply	2	14.3
Total	14	100.0

Source: Field survey 2020

Policy Gap and recommendations

Bangladesh government already has engaged various phases to make the Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs) more integrated and effective. An inclusive social safety net program protects all sections of defenseless population. There are particular purposes behind the creation of National Social safety net Strategies. In keeping with these purposes, the government has been working vigorously since 2016. There are a number of conceptual and methodological gaps in measuring outcomes. In this study we found a number of issues negatively affect the fruitful operation of the program, such as the intervention of local governments, local elites and political representatives, the incorrect choice of beneficiaries, and the difficulties in managing the series accounts by the receivers. Moreover, Conflict of interests exists among the LG Representatives, Officials of the Local Administration, MPs and Local Elite which is the big challenge for the successful implementation of SSNPs. Beneficiaries have shown some mixed reactions in

this regard. Most of the authorities want to bring their supporters and followers under the purview of social security benefits, whether they are eligible or not. So, there are some conflicts of interests among mentioned authorities. SSNPs are managed by several offices/sectors of the government and NGOs, with little or no harmonization among them, ensuing in repetition, overlap and wastage of limited funds. So, it is essential to advance an united social safety net policy and a style of action for proper implementation, nursing and assessment. Guaranteeing satisfactory synchronization among the executing agencies should obtain high consideration.

This study conducted to identify the policy gaps and obstacles for the successful implementation of the Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs). Various types of barriers, challenges and gaps have come up in the information that was provided by the Chairmen, Members, and Women members of the reserved seats, secretaries and village police of the Union Parishads. Data has been collected the data from the representatives of Hariari and Parila union of Paba upazila of Rajshahi district, which raised the issue of specific problems. Selecting beneficiaries of the Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs) is an important and complex task. The success of SSNPs largely depends on choosing the real beneficiaries. If the respective authorities don't choose the right one, then all the efforts of the government are bound to fail. Local representatives face various problems in preparing the list of beneficiaries. During conducting this study, it has been noticed different challenges and limitations were existing in implementing the SSNPs.

However, all these gaps and challenges will be recovered if the respective authorities play a more responsible and appropriate role in the field level. To overcome all of the gaps and limitations, the following suggestions can be followed:

1. To overcome most of the challenges, government should allot more satisfactory proportion of national budget for SSNPs so that it can be ensured properly to deserving vulnerable people;
2. SSNPs should be audited by the higher authority of respective body to ensure transparency and accountability;
3. Most of the beneficiaries face different kinds of harassment in selection process and in getting service (Haider and Mahamud, 2017). So, authority should have to ensure the necessary actions for eliminate all of harassments;
4. The knowledge, attitude, psychosocial conditions about SSNPs programs can be improved through seminars, symposium, workshop, effective discussion etc.;
5. To ensure the consciousness of the beneficiaries, responsibility of general people and authority about the SSNPs, media can play a vibrant role (Alderman, 2002);
6. Overall, all of people who are engaged in SSNPs should be attentive, sincere, dedicated, and benevolent (Alam, and Hossain, 2016).

Conclusion

The government has a responsibility to ensure social security for the vulnerable group people of its country. The government is trying to do this. The budget for the social safety net sector is also increasing day by day. The government has also formulated NSSS

(National Social Security Strategy)-2015 to implement social safety net programs in a more inclusive manner. But on the ground, there are a lot of challenges, gaps, and limitations to implement the programs which have been identified in this study. The selection process of the beneficiaries, political influence, and inadequate allocation of SSNP's are the biggest challenges which we found in this research. All respondents (local elected representatives and local officials) told that they had faced a lot of problems while they were selecting the beneficiaries at the local level. All respondents (local authorities) told the same statement that the allocation in the social safety net sector is minimal compared to the number of poor people in their area. Moreover, in this study, it has been noticed that there are new challenges of identifying the 'new poor' creating through COVID-19 crisis. Bangladesh government has taken new steps to safeguard vulnerable people. The COVID-19 pandemic based crisis has emphasized both the weaknesses of our monetary structures and the potential of technology-based solutions. In this study, it has been explored that politics of making eligible beneficiary list, political connection and affiliation, personal relationship, and personal conflicts regulate the allocation of SSNPs. The Union Parishad (UP) chairman and members allocate the SSNPs to their ineligible clients (followers of local representatives, elites, and political groups) by avoiding the proper and formal means for increasing their ballot power. They (UP members, political elites, and local representatives and elites) have accepted presenting more informal structures that better serve their benefits. They use the SSNPs as a device for creating the partisan disbursement. Finally, it can conclude that there are a lot of challenges and limitations to implement SSNPs properly which are identified in this study. SSNPs will be more beneficial and successful, if it is possible to overcome properly the challenges and gaps mentioned in this paper.

Acknowledgement

The study is totally based on field data. So, we want to gratitude and express our deepest respect to the authority of Union Parishads for approving us to conduct this research. Moreover, we would like to thank to the respective persons and office who provided us required documents to manage the research successfully. At last, we show our love and admiration to those participants who gave us their valuable opinion and time during survey.

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Human Rights Violation of the Elderly in Bangladesh: An Empirical Study on the Right to Liberty and Security

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Abstract

This study intends to investigate the nature of human rights violations of the elderly people in Bangladesh keeping a careful watch on the ground of right to liberty and security. The study sample consisted of 60 respondents who have been selected from three categories: general respondents, old home respondents, and responsible officials. The findings reveal that these rights are violated in many ways. The elderly people in Bangladesh are deprived of the rights to freedom of movement and expression, freedom of the right to vote etc. Besides, in many cases, the elderly are victims of forced labor and insecurity. Lack of morality and ethical views, absence of familial liability, lack of financial adequacy, apathy on state law and the presence of inhuman demands, lack of law enforcement etc are the responsible causes for the violation of human rights greatly. This study recommends that raising moral education, creating the feeling of familial liability, increasing aging insurance and enforcing laws can play vital role to overcome the situation.

Key Words: Human rights; elderly; universal declaration of human rights; old home; rights to liberty and security.

Introduction

Everybody needs some common and universal rights for the development of his/her life. The life of a human being cannot be thought of without these rights. These essential rights are called human rights. These are applicable to all irrespective of their racial, religious, political or any other identities. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is the milestone document in the field of human rights that recognized these human rights under 30 articles in 1948 by the United Nations. Old age is a natural stage of life for every human being. Everybody has to pass through this stage among the five main stages of lifespan (Barikdar, 2016). A person's activities, relationships to family, attitudes towards life, biological capacities, etc. are confined by the level of age (Sazzadul, 2015). The United Nations (UN) selects the age of 60 and above as the elderly. 13% of the total populations remain in this age all over the world (2017) (UNDP Bangladesh, 2018). There are many mentionable efforts for the elderly which are taken

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by several reputed international organizations including the United Nations. UN principles for Aged people were adopted in 1991 through resolution no: 46/91 (Barikdar, 2016). On 16 December of 1991, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) established 18 rights for development and security of the elderly (UN, 1991).

Bangladesh is a developing country which is constantly trying to improve its all sectors. Mohammad Abdul Hamid, the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has declared the age of 60 as the elderly to attain United Nations benchmark (Acharjee, 2017). The President also declared the elderly people as the 'Senior Citizens' of the state and urged about their social security, dignity, and all other facilities (BSS, 2014). The government of Bangladesh has already passed an act for ensuring social security and better living of the senior citizens named as *Parents Care Act, 2013* (ILO, 2013). In spite of these efforts, there are mentionable pictures of violation of human rights of the elderly people in Bangladesh explored by this study, such as, deprivation of the right to liberty and security.

Research Methodology

This research is empirical because the aim of this research is to intensely investigate the present field level human rights situation of right to liberty and security of the old people in Bangladesh. The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods. Required data were collected from both primary and secondary sources and analyzed accordingly. Various research reports and articles, relevant books, official statistics, government policies, journals, newspaper reports, unpublished study documents, thesis/dissertations, internet, and the like have been used as the secondary sources of data. Primary data have been collected through face to face interview by using close ended questionnaire from the respondents above the age of 55 who were considered as the victims of human rights violation. The total number of respondents for this study was 60 who were categorized into three groups, such as general respondents (25), old home respondents (25), and responsible officials and key informants (5). Snowball sampling technique was used to select samples since the total population was undefined and difficult to locate. Samples were selected in chain referral basis. Since qualitative response has been used throughout the study to draw the conclusion, 60 samples from Rajshahi District is assumed close to be representative.

Human Rights Violation of the Elderly in Bangladesh

Life is essential for every animal. An animal can present its status as an animal only with life. Similarly, human beings are a kind of animal. According to the Article 3 of the UDHR, as a part of human being everyone deserves the right to life, liberty, and security. To ensure the existence of life, two elements are considered as crying needs. These are liberty and security. A human being cannot amplify its personality without liberty and he/she cannot enjoy the main flavor of life without it. Similarly, the life of a human being has no certainty without security. Generally, right to life indicates the right to live and the right not to be killed by anyone. Right to life is the most core right. All rights are

originated from the right to life. Generally, right to life means that no one, including the authority or government can try to abolish one's life. Even it means that the government shall take necessary steps to save one's life in any circumstance as the responsibility of a state. It has to take immediate actions if one's life is at risk. The government should consider the rights of people when it makes several policies as if it cannot harm the life of a man in any condition. It is also a duty of a state to investigate the reasons behind one's abnormal death or if his/her family feels the need to investigate and wants justice.

Besides, human being is a social animal. So, he/she always desires company. But sometimes they suffer from loneliness. And, this matter creates like death situation of an old aged father or mother. The story of an old father of Sagarpara, Bolaiia, a retired secondary school teacher is very much similar. He has a 5 storied apartment building in the Rajshahi city. One of his sons lives in the USA and the other one is a banker in Bangladesh. But nobody lives with him. He shared his situation,

“I am a retired teacher. I have enough money, status and nearly everything. I made my two sons well established. One of them lives in the USA and the other is a banker who lives in Dhaka. A few days ago, I went to Dhaka to live with my son at least to get this company. But a few days later I had to leave the place because of the lack of adjustment between my wife and daughter-in-law. We became a burden soon to my daughter-in-law. We had to leave the place silently one day. Even now we have been suffering from unlimited senile problems, but nobody is with us. Today, I have everything but I have nobody to take care of me. Alas! Suddenly I may go to die but I will not get anyone beside me for a glass of water during my departure from my loving earth” (Field Study, 2020).

It is true that none of the respondents of this study has the risk to be killed directly . However, their lives are at risk in different way and they have become victims of several acts which can causes death indirectly. Therefore, rights to liberty and security are the core subjects to discuss in this study.

Right to Liberty

Liberty is an essential element in the society or in a political territory to amplify the capabilities of a human being. One lives in a society or a state where he/she tries to use his/her creativity in all sectors. But if the liberty is unavailable there, the creativity will be ignored. So, liberty is essential for being a complete human. Generally, liberty indicates the right to do everything according to one's will. But it cannot be a reason for violating the same right of others. Liberty is a positive idea which is used only for positive purposes. Autocracy is not the impersonation of liberty. It is the negative form of liberty (Agarwal, 2014: 191).

Basically, liberty indicates such type of state of keeping free oneself from the unexpected restrictions by the government or by the authority of the society in the way of life, behavioral nature or in the political or others ideologies (Oxford Lexico, 1884).

Elaborately, liberty is a state of freedom which is opposed to imprisonment, slavery, and political subjection (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010). Jeffrey Dorfman, a Professor of the University of Georgia, emphasizes liberty mentioning the quotation on liberty by Benjamin Franklin that liberty of a nation at first begins with freedom of speech (Dorfman, 2014). Finally, it can be said that liberty is such a type of precious element without which a man cannot develop his or her personality properly (Agarwal, 2014: 191).

Right to liberty is an important fundamental human right which mostly indicates the physical freedom of an individual. The right to liberty specially indicates the right to freedom from slavery or forced labor and the right to freedom of movement (Icelandic Human Rights Centre, n. d.). Everybody has the right to liberty, particularly in the case of arbitrarily arresting or detaining as well as no one shall be deprived of liberty (Human Rights & Discrimination Commissioner, n. d.). Similarly, according to the human rights act, law should protect individuals from unlawful or arbitrary deprivation of liberty (Queensland Human Rights Commission, n. d.).

According to the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees), no one shall be deprived in the field of liberty. They shall enjoy the right to freedom of movement, freedom of nationality, freedom of living or freedom of expression. In practice, people of several countries suffer from the violation of the right to liberty in several aspects. Among the respondents of this research, nobody has been victim of arbitrary arrest or detention. But they have become victims of the violation of the right to freedom of movement, freedom of expression etc. Some of them have been victimized by forced labor. All of these are the indicators of human rights violation. These are described elaborately in the following points.

Right to Freedom of Movement

The word “Movement” derived from the Latin root expresses several meanings. But in the context of human rights it means the changing process of place, posture, or position (Merriam and Merriam, 1983). In a word, it denotes the changing location from one place to another (Harper Collins, 2011). Freedom of movement means the free right of a person to travel from one place to another in the territory of his/her country. It's not only applicable for travelling but also for residing or works (Gilbert, 2016: 73).

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights incorporated the right to freedom of movement in its article 12 (1, 2, and 3). According to the article: a) everyone has the right to freedom of movement; b) everyone has the right to freedom of choosing his residence; c) everyone has the right to leave any country, including his/her own territory; d) no one shall be victimized of deprivation to enter his/her own country; and d) these above rights shall not be violated except only in case of the national security or national interest (UN, 1966).

Finally, UDHR is the highest guarantee for human rights. It reserves the right to freedom of movement and seeking residence within the border of a country of one's own. Besides, he/she has the right to leave the country and to return to the country (UN, 1948: Article

13.1, 2). But the study reveals that a mentionable number of the respondents cannot enjoy the rights properly. They are deprived of the rights by their family or by the attitude of other persons. Among the general residents, a mentionable number of respondents could not go out from their house because of the pressure of their families. They cannot fraternize themselves with their neighbors in fear of the prestige of their children. They cannot travel to their relatives' houses for some reasons such as want of money, in fear of the family prestige etc. The children or daughters-in-law think that their parents or parents-in-law may disclose the real picture of their sufferings to the neighbors that will be a threat for their prestige.

Table 1: State of the Freedom of Movement

Variables		General respondents		Old home respondents	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Can/could you fraternize yourself with your neighbors?	Yes	20	80%	19	76%
	No	05	20%	06	24%
	Silent	00	00%	00	00%
Do/did you get the facilities to travel regularly?	Yes	02	08%	04	16%
	No	19	76%	15	60%
	Silent	04	16%	06	24%

Source: Field Survey, 2020

The table 1 shows that 80% of general respondents can fraternize themselves with their neighbors and 20% cannot get the chance to do it now or could not in the past. Only 8% get the facilities to travel for their economic solvency. But 76% cannot get the facility to travel because of their economic insolvency or of the unintentional matter of their families and 16% kept them silent in this regard.

Among the old home respondents, 76% have given positive replies and 24% have given negative answers in the case of fraternizing themselves with their neighbors before going to the old home. Besides, only 16% respondents got facilities to travel before stepping in the old home. It should be mentioned here that they understand by the word of travel is movement from the house. They do not consider it as a tourist place. 60% did not get any facilities to travel and the rest (24%) of the respondents kept them silent to answer this question. Among the old home respondents, an old father from Dardari under Bagha Upazilla stated a heart touching story of his own life. He states,

Before stepping in the old home, I had a very hard time and passed a critical situation in my life. I was victimized by detention in my own house by my sons. They did not give me any chance to go out of the house and to fraternize myself with others. That was a suffocated situation in my life. Finally, they took my signature to get all of my properties in their names and then set me free (Field Study, 2020).

Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression

Right to freedom of opinion and expression has nearly a similar meaning of the right to freedom of speech. It means the state of a political entity where a person can articulate his ideas and opinions fearlessly (James, 1973). In the modern world, most of the countries try to follow the democratic norms, values and ideals. Here, the right to freedom of opinion is a safeguard of democracy.

Everyone preserves the right to freedom of expression and opinion. It includes the freedom of holding and seeking opinions fearlessly. Receiving and imparting of information are also included here (UN, 1948: Article 9). *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* enshrined the right to freedom of opinion and expression in the articles 19 and 20. According to article 19: a) everybody preserves the right to hold opinions without any interference; b) everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression. it includes the freedom of seeking, receiving and imparting all kinds of information and idea; c) this information can be in oral, in written or print, in the form of art or through any other media according to one's choice; d) it is the duty of the government to provide the environment for enjoying the rights. But it is subjected to some restrictions in some cases: (a) in the case related to the respect of the reputations and rights of others (b) in the case related to the national security (c) in the case related to public order (d) in the case related to public health. According to article 20: a) any type of propaganda intensified to war shall be prohibited by law; b) any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law (UN, 1948: Article 20).

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is Great Britain's national level top body and has been awarded an 'A' status as a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) by the United Nations. According to its article 10, the right to freedom of opinion indicates the right to hold one's own ideas and opinions freely without the interference of government.

Freedom of thought, freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, freedom of expression and freedom of press are guaranteed except in some cases related to the national security, unity and national interest according to *The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh* (GoB, 2011: Article 39.1, 2). Most of the respondents of this research are from lower class or lower middle class. They are not well educated. They uphold the parochial political culture. As a result, they do not expect to express their views or ideas in national or international contexts. They are economically insolvent. So they are always serious to think about their hunger. They cannot think about their right to freedom of opinion and expression.

They want to share their views and ideas in the context of their families. But here some of these are stumbled to do this. Their family members, particularly their children and daughters-in-law do not give them any chance to express their opinion freely. Especially, a problem is noticed that their family members do not support or respect their ideas or do not give importance to their opinions.

It is found from the survey that 16% respondents have the right to freedom of opinion and expression in their families. 40% have no right to it and 44% chose not to reply in this regard among the general respondents. Among the old home respondents, 60% claim that they had no right to freedom of opinion and expression in their families and 40% kept themselves silent in this question because they have no knowledge about this.

Forced Labor

Labor means any physical activity that can be involved with wages directly such as the activities of a day laborer. Sometimes, it is only for satisfaction and it may be only for responsibility. But now and then it may be for nothing but force. When a man is not able to or does not agree to do a work but he is forced to do it under pressure is called forced labor. Forced labor is a bad culture all over the world. It has been running from the very beginning period. Once upon a time, direct slavery system was a culture of this world. In this century, the world has been trying to remove the heinous act but a culture of forced labor is running till now directly or indirectly.

Forced labor indicates the sex trafficking or labor trafficking when the threat, fraud or coercion are present (End Slavery Now, n. d.). By forced labor we mean any work or service that people do under any threat against their will (Anti Slavery, n. d.). According to International Labor Organization,

Forced or compulsory labor is all work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily (ILO, 1930).

Based on the above discussion it can be said that forced labor is a work that is performed involuntarily by a person against his/her own will (ILO, 2014). Most of the time, forced labor indicates the work of workers or employees or victims of trafficking. But sometimes it can occur domestically. Sometimes a member can be victimized by forced labor in his/her family. But forced labor is strictly prohibited. All kinds of forced labor are prohibited by the *Abolition of Forced Labor Convention, 1957* (No. 105) of United Nations Human Rights (OHCHR, 1957). Besides, all forms of forced labor are prohibited in Bangladesh also, and any contravention of this law shall be an offense (GoB, 2011: Article 34).

Some of the respondents of this research became victims of forced labor domestically. Particularly, they claimed that their daughters-in-law coerced them to do some work against their will in spite of lacking of their physical fitness. Among the general respondents, 52% claim that their daughters-in-law coerced them to do such types of works which were not possible to do with their physical capability. 40% were not coerced by anyone to do work and the rest 8% had no response to this question. It is also found that 64% old home respondents acknowledged that they were victims of forced labor, 32% were not victims of it and 04% did not reply to this question. An old widow woman from the slum of Rajshahi Court describes her pathetic story concerning this. She says,

One day I was suffering from intolerable fever. So, I could not do any household work on that day. At the middle of the day when I was taking lunch with rice and a piece of fish at the veranda of my home, suddenly my daughter-in-law came here and snatched the plate of my food in absence of my son. She threw the food to the pussy cat and asked me why I had taken food without doing any work. She lugged me to the pond Ghat (a place of the pond where clothes, utensils and other things are washed) to wash the dresses of a loaded bucket (Field Study, 2020).

Right to Vote

Democracy is the most popular form of government. It is the most wanted governmental system all over the world. Democracy is a type of governmental system in which a state is governed by the people for the welfare of them (Lincoln, 1963). But in the present world, the population size of any state is very large. Moreover, there are a lot of complexities in present states. As a result, it is not possible to participate in the activities of a government directly by all people. So, they elect their representatives to represent on the part of them in government indirectly. In this system, election is a process to elect the representatives.

A free and fair election is a part and parcel of a bona fide democracy. The election process is run by the voting of the citizens. Every citizen has the right to participate in government. So, everybody preserves the right to vote to elect their representatives. Right to vote is a universal human right. Every citizen holds the right to vote irrespective of race, color, sex, religion, or political ideology etc. Universal right to vote is called universal suffrage. In representative government, suffrage means the right to vote to elect public officials (Smellie, 2010). According to the UDHR, everyone holds the right to take part in the government of his country directly or by his elected representatives (UN, 1948: Article 21 (1)). It is also recognized by the domestic laws of all states. A historical covenant described this elaborately such as universality of the right, no discrimination before the right etc (OHCHR, 1996).

A number of general respondents are deprived of this right. They have no freedom to vote. They are influenced by their children strictly when they go to cast their votes. Findings reveal that only 24% respondents are free to vote according to their will. 36% claim that they have no freedom in this ground. Their children or families interfere with them about their supporting candidates. Rest 40% keep themselves silent to answer in this question. It is also found that 32% of old home respondents are free to cast their vote according to their will whereas 40% are not free in this ground. Rest 28% respondents are silent to this question. Actually they have no concern about election or voting due to their illiteracy, lack of political consciousness and extreme poverty. In such a situation, they have no appeal to participate in any election process to cast their votes but they fight for appeasing their hunger and thirst.

Right to Security

Security is an essential element for a complete life. There is no meaningful existence of life without security. Security means the certainty of life against any kind of harms. It indicates the resilience against potential harm. Right to security deals with the right to be secured from all kinds of potential harms of one's life, liberty and property. Right to security is recognized by article 3, UDHR. Everyone preserves the right to life, liberty and security according to this historical document (UN, 1948: Article 3). Besides, *the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* enshrined the right to security in its text elaborately. Here all people have their legal rights to liberty and security (OHCHR, 1966: Article 9). According to the Attorney-General's Department of Australian Government, "The right to security requires the country to provide reasonable measures to protect a person's physical security."

However, a person always deserves a happy and prosperous life where security is essential. No one has the right to harm the life of others. It is strictly prohibited by the law of every state. Article 32 of *The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh* has given the guarantee for the people regarding this. According to this article, everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security (BLAST, 2003). But sometimes people are deprived of this constitutional guarantee. A number of old persons among the respondents of the research became victims of insecurity in several ways. Some of them were victims of insecurity in their families, some were in their working areas, some were in public institutions etc. A study found that 64% and 24% of old people are victimized respectively of mental and physical torture by their daughters-in-law or children to get sufficient food (Hossain, et al., 2020). It indicates their insecurity in their families also. The results depict that among the general respondents, only 8% consider their families as completely secured. 12% and 64% consider their families averagely secured and unsecured respectively. On the other hand, 8% and 84% old home respondents treat their families as averagely safe and unsafe respectively. Other 16% and 08% chose not to reply to this question among the general and old home respondents respectively.

Besides, some respondents were victims of insecurity in their working areas. They were victims of hijacking, stealing and physical torture. Now, one of them is a street beggar in the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital area who was an auto-rickshaw owner in the immediate past. He describes,

I have a son, two daughters and my old wife. I had a house in the Bulonpur area. I bought an auto rickshaw taking loan from an NGO to earn my livelihood. One day 3-4 hijackers attacked me on the way of Tanore to Rajshahi in the evening. They stabbed me and hijacked my auto rickshaw which was the only source of my income. Then the concerned NGO created pressure on me to repay its loan amount. I had to sell my small house for my treatment and for clearing off the loan. Today, I am a beggar. Oh God! Please, give them due punishment for whom I am deprived of my happiness (Field Study, 2020).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Elderly people are the part of a society. Even, they are the builders of this present society. But they are passing through a very vulnerable situation in some ways. They are deprived of the right to freedom of movement, freedom of opinion and vote etc. Even sometimes, they are not secured in this society. Lack of morality and ethical views, absence of familial liability, lack of financial adequacy, apathy on state law and the presence of inhuman demands, lack of law enforcement etc. are responsible for this. For giving back lives of the old people by degrees from the above-mentioned unsafe, unsecured conditions and deprivation of rights to liberty and security, elderly people need to be aware of their rights. They have to be conscious about the facilities available to the state for them. If their human rights are violated, they should be aware of the solution. We have to awaken democratic values in all sections of the society. We have to build a culture of giving priority not only to one's own power but also to the opinion of others. Obstructing the opinion of others is an extreme threat to freedom and a crime. This feeling must be awakened in everyone. There is no place for elderly parents grows a tendency that is manifesting in the nuclear family. Instead, all worries are about husband and wife and unmarried children. This is expressing familial responsibility. In this case, children need to be aware of the responsibilities to their parents. The responsibility for the security of the people lies with the state. The state has to be more active in this regard. If someone's security is at stake, strict and effective measures must be taken. The scourge of poverty comes at a time when the elderly have to be employed in old age labor, begging or have to be the burden of the children. Therefore, in order to provide economic prosperity, the social security program needs to be further expanded and made effective. Above all, morality and values must be awakened in all, irrespective of the high and low, rich and poor, parents and children of the society. *Today, if my parents are victims of domestic violence by me, I have to create the feeling that I will be a victim of similar incidents by my child according to the traditional customs of nature.*

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