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Currently, one issue of BAJ is published every year. We do, however, plan to publish twice a year, in June and December. To increase the journal's visibility, global accessibility, and impact, the journal is kept open access, with no cost to authors or readers. Furthermore, our sincere efforts are or progress to make the Journal indexed under Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), Google Scholar, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Asian Citation Indexing, Bangladesh Journal Online, and other reputed platforms.

We have a strict policy to publish high quality innovative and original articles. Researchers are highly encouraged to submit their unpublished works in any branch of science, engineering and technology, business, social science, and humanities. According to the Journal's policy, submitted manuscripts are checked for plagiarism using up-to-date software and go through a double-blind peer-review process. The journal gives especial emphasis on the contributions that deal with sustainable solutions for the betterment of emerging and developing nations. Although this issue did not include any review article, we aim to publish at least one review article in each issue in future. We wholeheartedly encourage the experts and scholars around the world to submit review articles.

Finally, we express our profound gratitude and thanks to the chief patron, copyeditors, reviewers, and web production team for their hard work, support, commitment and enthusiasm. Without their heartfelt effort, this collective achievement could not be materialized. We request all our reviewers, readers, and patrons to promote the journal to their colleagues and library databases. We cordially welcome your advice, suggestion, and feedback for the betterment of the journal.

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## Postcolonial Intertextuality: Bangladeshi Anglophone Poet Kaiser Haq's Poetics

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**Abstract:** This paper analyses the Bangladeshi Anglophone poet Kaiser Haq's intertextual liaison with several canonical Anglo-American poets whose forms, particularly free verse, and themes he absorbed during his early exposure to literary studies and reinvented for his poetics. It argues that it is re-creation—not so much of destabilization or subversion of meaning contained in the canonical texts—that concerns the Bangladeshi poet. Through comparative analyses of some selected poems for postcolonial intertextuality in Haq's poetics and its pragmatic consistency in Bangladeshi reality, this research corroborates that Haq's poetics—for its umbilical cord to Western traditions—is geared towards the representation of a nationalistic consciousness that is characteristic of postcolonial Anglophone poets in the African, Caribbean and South Asian regions. With a primary focus on poetic influence and its relevance to postcolonial literary production even today, the paper comes down to a corollary that reading Haq's poetry essentially calls for a contrapuntal, referential consciousness about Anglo-American traditions.

**Keywords:** Bangladeshi anglophone poetry, intertextuality, Kaiser Haq, postcolonial poetry

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Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*.

\_\_\_ J. Kristeva ("Word, Dialogue and Novel", 1986, p. 37)

The systems, codes and traditions of other art forms and of culture in general are also crucial to the meaning of a work of literature.

\_\_\_ G. Allen (*Intertextuality*, 2000, p. 1).

### 1. Introduction: The Kaiserian Way

Following its inclusion in university curriculum, critical attention and referential value, Kaiser Haq's poem "Ode on the Lungi"—though written much later in his career—has attained a canonical status in literary and cultural discourse. The text's international appeal—with its acerbic humor—can be attributed to Haq's play on pastiche and parody on

certain canonical texts of Anglo-American traditions whose Western politico-cultural moorings he wistfully subverts to advocate sartorial and, by extension, ethno-cultural representation in the globalized diversity of human co-existence. Albeit short of Haq's *ars poetica* (Is it "Published in the Streets of Dhaka"?), the poem's vivisection of hegemony in relation to the ethnic attire *lungi* has recently become a point of reference in Bangladesh in the spheres of social criticism (Mim, 2022; Mithun, 2022; Aaref, 2013; "Lungi Dress Shunned", 2013) and even in an Indian context where lungi wearers are politically targeted for the attire's identarian association (Venkatesh, 2019). The poem's referential use in public discourse may be taken as an instance of intertextuality but what is to be noted here is the poem's intertextual blocks weaving the local and the transnational into a universal that promotes what Tembo and Gerber (2019), taking on Mbembe's social ontology, term as "a postcolonial nonviolent notion of alterity based on the recognition of the in-common existence within one world we share" (p. 1) or what Matin (2013) proffers as "an explicit theoretical incorporation of the universal" not admmissive of "an immanent self-transcendence of the particular" and "a radical amenability to, and constitutiveness of, alterity" in its bid to supplant Eurocentrism (p. 353).

In a recent interview, Haq (2021) broaches how Ferlinghetti's "Underwear" played out "as an inspiration" behind his own poem and how "Whitman's democratic spirit" mobilized that inspiration till "everything fell into place" culminating into an intertext he titled "Ode on the Lungi" (p. 144). Then strange as it may sound for a haloed poet, Haq himself presents a comparison between the two poems to highlight their kinship. However, nowhere does he mention his "East and West" thematically associated with Ferlinghetti's "Underwear" and invested in the same veins of his sui generis humor and democratic spirit to do away with "all binary oppositions" (Haq, 2012/2017, p. 47) and to promote "interventions for the cause of world peace!" (Haq, 2012/2017, p. 48). All the same, both the poems by Haq attest to the discursive possibility that Haq exploits in the postcolonial transnational space or "the transcultural space in which strategies for personal or communal self-hood may be elaborated, a region in which there is a continual process of movement and interchange between different states" (Ashcroft et al., 2000, p. 117).

Dubbed "arguably the most internationally renowned Bangladeshi poet in the English language" (Quayum, 2021, p. 136), or "foremost" Bangladeshi Anglophone poet "in the wider arena of transnational literature" (Ahmed, 2018, p. 126), Haq (2017) once averred: "it's not a bad idea to model yourself on someone that you like". Accordingly, his idea is significantly materialized in "Ode on the Lungi" and several other poems to an effect that we find in case of postcolonial translations of canonical works; in this regard, we may cite Aimé Césaire's 1969 play *Une Tempête* adapted from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* or Derek Walcott's 1990 epic *Omeros* taking after the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, (and even Dante and Joyce) for its maturation as the most daring example of intertextuality. Haq may not be so much ambitious as to exploit the Graeco-Roman classics and Anglo-American canons in their formal entirety; yet we find a habitual symmetry in the act of establishing points of reference in the Western literary-cultural praxis and points of departure in their locales. Walcott's epic

draws the reader into an odyssey through time and space, from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, from Europe to North America, from the Caribbean to Africa, from

the present of a fishing village on the island of St Lucia to the distant past of the Middle Passage, by way of the recent past of the colonies (Zoppi, 1999, p. 509).

It is no wonder that in some of his most popular poems, Haq too urges the reader's prior knowledge of certain Graeco-Roman myths (e.g., Icarus) and modern British and American poetic forms (e.g., D.H Lawrence's free verse) as integral to understanding his expressions. Hence, without this referential consciousness, who in Bangladesh, or in any non-Western country for that matter, would get a grip on his poem "A Myth Reworked" that draws on the theme of fall of Icarus in the tradition of poetic re-workings by a few Western poets like W.H. Auden and William Carlos Williams? For Haq's blending of the Western and the local into a whole, he stands out as a cultural representative of Bangladesh. According to Ahmed (2018), "by bringing in the myth of Icarus from outside the perimeters of the Bangla literary world, Haq adds a new dimension to this common incident in the everyday life of Bangladesh...[and] fuses different worlds together" (pp. 132–3).

These translanguing, transnational and transcultural issues along with so many others need to be addressed in any critical approaches to Haq's poetry in the academia or in self-directed readership. Within its permissible range, this paper elaborates on the poet's intertextual calibration of poetics for a local yet hybrid approach to aesthetic expression and to a Bangladeshi voice. Premised upon postcolonial Anglophone poetry's rendezvous with Western forms and themes, this paper first revisits some major theoretical reflections on intertextuality, then analyses a number of pomes by Haq as exemplars of intertextuality and finally justifies his poetics of intertextuality in the broader post-structural reality of postcolonial Anglophone literary-cultural productions and consumptions.

## **2. Postcolonial Intertextuality: Promises Unbound**

In his interviews, essays, and monographs, Haq (1997; 2004; 2015; 2017; 2018; 2021) clearly acknowledges his absorption of influences from the three main literary streams: Anglo-American traditions, South Asian (or Indian) Anglophone traditions, and, of course, Bengali literary tradition. Aligned with Eliot's thinking, his poetics requires him to "to relate to the various traditions that have a bearing on his work on a one-on-one basis, largely without the mediation of academic criticism or theory" (Haq, 2019, p. 7). The particular names he mentions in relation to his poetic development range from Shakespeare, through Thomas Moore, Robert Herrick, Keats, Shelley, Laurence Binyon, Charles Lamb, Rupert Brooke, John Masefield, and D.H. Lawrence, to Yeats and Eliot, and to even more modern poets. He derives his characteristic syntagmatic spirit from a more contextualized praxis of modern poetry that promises a fluidity of meaning-making:

It would probably be accurate to place my work in the uneasy no-man's-land between the "cool" poetry of Larkin and the vatic utterances of the Beat Generation, and among the latter the zany performances of Lawrence Ferlinghetti rather than the visionary Ginsberg. (Haq, 2019, p. 9)

Simply understood, intertextuality refers to the relationships and connections between different texts, including the ways in which one text references, alludes to, or draws upon another. In its most revolutionary turn, intertextuality has problematized "the concept

of the text as a coherent and autonomous whole, and the concept of a unified subject who is the source of meaning” (Ingelbien, 1999, p. 278). Conceived by Barthes in his *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1929) and subsequently in his collection of essays *The Dialogic Imagination* (mostly published in Russia in the 1920s) as an “interplay between writers, texts, and other texts” (as cited in Durey, 1991, p. 616), intertextuality has opened up a whole new horizon of possibilities for the aspiring postcolonial Anglophone poet whose creative imagination variably comes under the spell of Anglo-American traditions. In those traditions, “the most ambitious poets also take some stance about sources in the past, perhaps for an analogous purpose” declares John Hollander (1973) in his review of Bloom’s 1997 book *The Anxiety of Influence*, asserting that even Eliot’s poetry “invoked the Middle Ages, Dante, 17th-century English literature exclusive of Milton and French symbolism” while the poet Ezra Pound acknowledged his indebtedness to Browning’s spirit, as did Yeats to Shelley’s and Blake’s. Thus, in the British poetry tradition, we have the individual talent’s “historical sense” and “depersonalization” in Eliot’s theorization (1982, pp. 37-39). Bloom’s theory of poetic influence modelled on Nietzsche’s thinking and Freudian psychoanalysis with its focus on the ego’s defense mechanism conceives the author’s inextricable relationship with his predecessors’ texts and reveals how an ambitious poet responds negatively to his predecessors by creating a new, revisionary paradigm:

The history of fruitful poetic influence, which is to say the main traditions of Western poetry since the Renaissance, is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature of distortion, of perverse, willful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist (1997, p. 30).

With its “heuristic value in unsettling textual interpretation,” intertextuality legitimizes “infinite circulation of words” and “an uncontrollable interaction between texts” (Snyman, 1996, p. 432). The way Friedman (1991) reframes this term as a practice is more relevant to understanding Haq’s poetics; she ascribes the birth of intertextuality to “an anticolonialist resistance to the concept of hegemonic influence” (p. 152). The associated term “influence”, says Snyman (1996) quoting Kristeva, “suggests a power relation” between the colonizer and the colonized with the former “envisioning his influence as a hegemonic penetration” of the latter (p. 432). In its turn, Haq’s poem “Ode on the Lungi” can be a praxis on both Snyman’s and Friedman’s concepts. Trivedi (2007) thinks that today the notion of influence “has simply morphed into trendy and with-it “intertextuality” “so that the latter’s opposite turns out to be the text itself (p. 121). According to him, intertextuality “destabilises the notion merely of (old) influence but equally of all signification” (p. 122).

A term first used in Julia Kristeva’s groundbreaking 1966 essay “Word, Dialogue and Novel” and then in her “The Bounded Text” (1966–67), intertextuality defines the text as “a dynamic site in which relational processes and practices are the focus of analysis instead of static structures and products” (Alfaro, 1996, p. 268). Alfaro (1996) proceeds to develop a synoptic note of Kristeva’s concept:

There are always other words in a word, other texts in a text. The concept of intertextuality requires therefore that we understand texts not as self-contained systems but as differential and historical, as traces and tracings of otherness,

since they are shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures (p. 268).

In all its conceptualizations—whether in the post-structuralist line of thinking or Bakhtinian theories—intertextuality makes all texts “potentially plural, reversible, open to the reader’s own presuppositions, lacking in clear and defined boundaries, and always involved in the expression or repression of the dialogic ‘voices’ which exist within society” (Allen, 2000, p. 209). Mukherjee (2014) frames the possibility of a postcolonial intertextual poetics: “The textuality of a given text can hardly be isolated from its “soul-making” geopolitical and discursive determinations.” She posits that when postcolonial writers enquired about literary “greatness”, they located it in the West and resolved to emulate it through “self-invention that “begins therefore with a reshuffling of the set texts and stifling protocols of a colonial education.”

Trivedi’s 2007 monograph “Colonial Influence, Postcolonial Intertextuality: Western Literature and Indian Literature” is a milestone in its own right for his probe into “the interrelationship” between Western literatures and Indian literature (p. 122), first tracing the former’s indebtedness—through translation and absorption—to the latter until the nineteenth and twentieth century Anglophiles started contributing to the reversal of flows. He cites John Drew’s seminal work *India and the Romantic Imagination* (1987) to highlight the fact that the British Romantic literary movement spearheaded by Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley was deeply influenced by the culture and aesthetics of India that unveiled before them novel ideas about nature, the sublime, and the relationship between the individual and the world. Remarkably, citing from Sisir Kumar Das’s *A History of Indian Literature* (1991), Trivedi surmises that “a direct consequence of our encounter with the West was that we went back to look again at what we already had and to reassess its worth and value” (p. 126). The subcontinental Anglophone author’s absorption of forms and spirit from Anglo-American traditions and subsequent reinvestment of native elements in a hybridized, and often resistant, fashion that is, borrowing Trivedi’s claim, “dialectical and dialogic, which makes it perhaps as vast and complex an example as one could find anywhere in world literature not only of influence but also of reception” (p. 127).

All the above theoretical standpoints from the West and the East having been related to the central argument of this research, it is now worthwhile to turn to an exponential case. Drawing on V.S. Naipaul’s finesse, the Nobel Laureate Walcott (1974) defines Anglophone mimicry as pantomime conducted in front of a mirror with gestures “based on metropolitan references” and dismisses the possibility of any authenticity: “No gestures, according to this philosophy, is authentic, every sentence is a quotation, every movement either ambitious or pathetic, and because it is mimicry, uncreative” (p. 6). Even Walcott, observes Jay (2006), has for a long time baffled critics and reviewers by the way he deigns to reconcile his “St. Lucian roots and his undeniable interest in Caribbean culture with his absorption of the Western canon, his propensity for grounding poetry in something very close to the kind of Great Tradition espoused by Leavis and Eliot” (p. 545). Logan (2007) finds shadows of Coleridge’s classic *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* in Walcott’s “The Schooner Flight” that appears in his 1979 collection, *The Star-Apple Kingdom* while critics also dub the Caribbean poet’s masterpiece *Omeros* as a transformed version of Homeric epics (Zoppi, 1999; Taplin, 1991; Moffett, 2005).

### 3. Haq's Poetics: Postcolonial Translation or Rewriting?

The central argument of this paper evolves the premise that the Anglophone poet Kaiser Haq developed his poetics on the forms and themes he absorbed Anglo-American poets in line with the postcolonial praxis of intertextuality evident in various modes like influence, parody, mimicry, pastiche etc. that, in a few instances, amount to postcolonial rewriting or translation of canonical texts or to redirecting the course of meaning to a contemporary reality. Albeit not directly resulting from any colonial encounters per se (Haq was born in 1950), his poetics of intertextuality marks both an extension to and a distinct block in the global postcolonial Anglophone poetic traditions with South Asian poetry being in focus here. This section's analysis of instances from Haq poetry begins with his 216-line poem "Ode on the Lungi" introduced in the first section. Parodied on the Beat poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti's "Underwear" for an "entertaining yet telling indictment of consumerist capitalism and bourgeois democracy" (Haq, 2019), this poem is interspersed with literary-cultural-political points of reference over its signification field on egalitarianism. The reader who has fathomed the rhythm and spirit of Walt Whitman's opening lines "I celebrate myself, and sing myself,/ And what I assume you shall assume" (1855/1989, p. 1) will, in an amused appreciation, follow Haq's lines in "Ode on the Lungi":

Grandpa Walt, I celebrate my lungi  
and sing my lungi  
and what I wear  
you shall wear. (2012/2017\*, p. 39)

This poem's politically charged thrust of humour and of cadence stems from Ferlinghetti's "zany performances" (Haq, 2019, p. 9). Though a Beat poet, Ferlinghetti is not characterized by the tenet's anti-social outlook and uses allusions to and suggestions of Shakespeare, Praxiteles, Yeats, Wordsworth, Dante, Yeats, Holderin, Rimbaud, A.E. Houseman, Joyce, Becket, Gertrude Stein and others with "no bitter anti-intellectualism but rather a knowledge and appreciation of literary materials which are integral to his own verse" (Hopkins, 1974, pp. 61–63).

It is also worth noting that in most of these poems, Haq reinvents (or reinvests) meaning through his well-picked primary textual models and factual allusion. In the above-mentioned poem, for example, Haq inserts Whitman's title "Passage to India" only extend (or rather to domesticate) the sense:

It's time you finally made your passage  
to more than India—to Bangladesh—  
and lounging in a lungi  
in a cottage on Cox's Bazar beach. (pp. 39–40)

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\* All subsequent citations from Haq poetry are made from this edition of *Published in the Streets of Dhaka: Collected Poems*.



In a successful bid to stress versatility of this piece of clothing, Haq metaphorizes Hawking's "Theory of Everything" and expediently flips to postcolonial's posterior theory: "Raised and flapped amidst laughter/ it's the subaltern speaking" (pp. 42–43).

While Haq identifies himself with the South Asian poets beyond nationalistic, compartmentalized confines, his poetry significantly mimics Anglo-American poets. His nascent poetics, nestled away from the turbulent political currents in the then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), fructified with his 1996 collection *Black Orchid* that opens with the poem "Imaginary Love" stylistically and thematically:

Imagination dying,  
                   imagine  
                           love  
 I invent your eyes:  
                   a gazelle leaps  
                           out of the dark.

("Imaginary Love", p. 223)

Now compare this poem with Hughes':

I imagine this midnight moment's forest:  
 Something else is alive  
 Beside the clock's loneliness  
 And this blank page where my fingers move.

Through the window I see no star:  
 Something more near  
 Though deeper within darkness  
 Is entering the loneliness:

(Ted Hughes. "The Thought-Fox", 1982/1984, p. 13)

While, in Hughes's case, it is "a sudden sharp hot stink of fox" that "enters the dark hole of the head" culminating in the poet's having the blank page "printed" with a poem, in Haq's turn, it is a gazelle invoking fructification of his poetry. Since manifestations of influence arguably occur in the earliest expressions of a creative individual, this paper analyzes Haq's poems published in separate collections in succession before they were accumulated in the 2007 book *Published in the Streets of Dhaka: Collected Poems: 1966-2006*. A number of these poems markedly cull from modernist English poets like D.H. Lawrence, Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes, and, perhaps several other poets whom he read as part of English studies. Further research may delve out more traces of influence/intertextuality in Haq's poetry that concurrently conduces to understanding contemporary postcolonial poetry.

It is certain that Haq and Hughes were contemporaneous till the latter's demise in 1998 and that he the former fervently read much of trans-Atlantic modern poetry in his

disciplinary pursuits and started composing his own free verse on replicas at hand. Did Haq absorb Hughes's depiction of the hawk fire with ultimate energy and resilience, as found in "The Hawk in the Rain" and "Hawk Roosting"? In the title poem "Black Orchid" of Haq's 1966 collection, the hawk—one of the cardinal symbols of Hughes' in *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957)—takes on an avatar in the impersonation of the poet:

I become the hawk,  
 hovering over  
 your body; skin  
 rippling with love tides  
  
 and the dark patch hiding  
 what my hawk's eye craves:  
 the omphalos of my passion. (p. 230)

The Irish poet Seamus Heaney's magnum opus "Digging" is re-created in "Nirvana" for Haq to probe into the Bangladesh (Bengal) region's tradition of secular spirituality preached by the Bauls as the formula of a universal religion of love that admits of no socio-cultural demarcations or stratifications ("Yesterday I went digging/for my roots in the library"). Whereas Heaney's "Digging" in *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) boasts of the poet's lineage connection with farmers on Ireland's geographic composition of bogland, Haq reveals a legacy of harmonious living guided by a unique tradition in this land historically known as Bengal:

I read of the *Bauls*, long haired  
 groovy wandering minstrels  
 who said Fuck to caste and creed  
 and taught liberation  
 through the equation: Nirvana... (p. 232).

The way the young poet Heaney visualizes his ancestors in "Digging" is replicated by Haq's cognizance of the original Bengali manly form in "Weekend" where the poet puts himself in contrast to "a man in *lungi* and sleeveless vest". Here the poet is rather impressed by the sight this kitchen garden caretaker "kneading the earth like a masseur, /watering it like his own/body in the shower." The elegance of manual work coupled with the naturalistic intimacy signified by the caretaker's handling of objects—as the man "bestows a lover's caress/on a plump gourd! —makes the disinterested, self-critical poet conscious of his relative, acquired incapacity, resonating Heaney's sense of disappointment from the line "But I've no spade to follow men like them":

I haven't written a single poem  
 I'd care to treat like that. (p. 247)

The Heaney-like exploration continues through the poem "Pebbles on the Beach" where the poet-as-archaeologist experiments with symbols in nature. What bogland does

to and for Heaney's poetic self is thematically matched with what the sea of life exposes to Haq's imagination, i.e., the seashores up for the aesthetically gifted soul a slew of materials: "mineral miracles/ of texture, geometry, colour, / born of cosmic tumult/ and tempered by countless ages"—and these materials induce not only "adoration" but also "contemplation" in silence (pp. 245-246).

One more instance of Haq's taking after Heaney's poetics can be made with an analogy between the latter's "The Skunk" and the former's "Writing Home" in both of which the home-sick poets are away. While Heaney invests a zoomorphic comparison between his wife and a skunk, Haq is found missing the sounds of birds and rickshaw bells that are integral to a metropolitan area in Bangladesh, like Dhaka. Once Haq recalls all these accustomed features of his city, he admits:

I shut my eyes  
and imagine the weight  
of your head on my chest (p. 256).

Interestingly, Haq avows an intertextual (or interpersonal) communion—through his "Sparrows"—with the American poet William Carlos Williams on the symbolic potential of the sparrow. Williams' sparrow—in his "The Sparrow"—looms as a "poetic truth/more than a natural one," whose agility succumbs to the annihilating forces of his female counterpart and ultimately is metamorphosed into a poem: "Practical to the end,/it is the poem/of his existence that triumphed finally"—thus the metamorphosis continues till the poem transform into the poet self: "This was I,/a sparrow./I did my best;/farewell." In his turn, Haq admits to being moved by Williams' depiction of the poet's transformed, vanquished self and having written a poem only to lose it to the currents of time. However, Haq redefined this transformational phenomenon with the metaphor of sexual intercourse as the catalytic of poetic composition, where the poet's organs like eyes, lips, loins—all metamorphose into the form of the sparrow.

Haq's purview goes far back to Emily Dickinson for her "I died for Beauty—but was scarce..." in which the poet juxtaposes Beauty and Truth through their associated agents of advocacy who become "Brethren" and "Kinsmen" continuing an infinite dialogue. But shaped by material conditions, Haq presents Truth in "Truth on the Prowl" in a personified with a disillusioned tenacity as she does not enjoy her scripture-defined place in the society. In his version of the reality, whatever orientations they uphold, people seem not to care notice Truth drifting around till she regretfully discovers her efficacy in this epicurean human scene and finally "meets Falsity/Fixes a date—/and is stood up." The apparent switching between viewing points—who sees whom—is symptomatic of the existence of Truth as an alien or, borrowing Haq's frequently used word, as a pariah, among indifferently preoccupied masses:

Truth sits alone  
Drinking, lugubriously  
Watches men and women  
Busy at their pleasures. (p. 65)

Or man's rejection of Truth or Faith might be projected in Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" that has traditionally been incorporated in poetry courses in English departments:

The Sea of Faith  
 Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
 Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.  
 But now I only hear  
 Its melancholy, long withdrawing roar,  
 Retreating to the breath  
 Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
 And naked shingles of the world (1867/ 2006, p. 1368).

#### 4. By Way of a Conclusion

Following the theoretical standpoints and the comparative analyses of Kaiser Haq's select poems in the preceding sections, it becomes clear that the Bangladeshi Anglophone poet absorbed influence from the Anglo-American traditions that nourished the embryo of his poetics into full bloom but he masterfully tailored the received forms and themes to Bangladeshi reality—only "the details of daily life, not the state of governments" and their "partisan politics" (Haq, 2018), the predilection being purely aesthetic and spiritualistic. Nevertheless, he fosters a deep concern for the country's state of affairs under the sway of politics that reaches into the private domain in the manner the bourgeois attitude to the ethnic attire (*lungi*) has time and again proved. In the 2013 event of Baridhara Society's *lungi* ban and its repercussions, he resolved he had not really "anachronistically" (Haq, 2012/2017, p. 34) conceived Whitman's overshadowing figure that celebrated Americanness (Whitman, 1904) and is celebrated on the US soil for his "democratic sublime" (Frank, 2007, p. 402) or "spiritual democracy" (Myers, 1934). Haq (2013) writes:

Little did I imagine, when I wrote the poem, that a dramatic opportunity to translate words into action would suddenly present itself, and that too amidst a continuing, nerve-wracking political crisis that has violently split the country into two definitive camps.

In other words, Haq reinvented intertextual elements to open an aesthetic window on the distinctively "Bangladeshi reality" (Haq, 2017) and he did that with "a strong sense of belonging to his own country and culture" and by "distancing himself from the Eurocentric attitude to literature and life" (Islam, 2020, pp. 66-67). Yet the reader's experience which is essentially prized for higher referential knowledge of the interwoven traditions tells that Haq is simultaneously here and there. Hummel (2022) pins down this duality with his key phrases "transnational local" (p. 2), "in-between space" (4), and "plurality of identity with the shifts of and between space and place" (4). In his exploration of Haq's "temporal, cultural, environmental, and political more than a spatial removal from his place of origin" (p. 1), Hummel formulates his main argument saying that Haq's poetic "themes, forms, and language ... heighten the nuances" of his identity "as a Bangladeshi local and concurrent

transnational gaze and presence” (p. 2). The intertextual force of his poetry can be validated—or rather appreciated—in view of its being “hybrid”, “polyphonic”, constitutive of his “observation of global systems and local impact” and “dialectic” in the sense James Clifford conveys (Hummel, 2022, pp. 9–10).

Whether we turn to Eliot’s theory of the individual poet’s conformity to a tradition in its temporal and spatial expanse or Bloom’s conceptualization of inevitable transaction, English being the medium of creative expressions, postcolonial or Anglophone poets can hardly extricate themselves from the first impression of Anglo-American verse that they usually encounter in their tender schooling years. While appreciating the Ugandan Anglophone poet Okot p’Bitek’s assimilation of both his native tradition and Western influence, Ofuani (1985) posits it is difficult “where the Western ends and the African begins” (p. 87). This is true of Western poets too: As a poet even, Wordsworth could not break free from Milton’s influence, while writing “The Prelude”. Whether in Bangla or English, for Haq (2015) writing poetry assimilates “what one has gleaned from other languages and cultures ... at a conscious and subliminal level” (p. 6).

In the region once prominently called the Subcontinent, intertextuality or influence in conjunction with translational activity has been a *normal* phenomenon, as Trivedi (2007) tries to make it the point in favor of “a reformulation of the very meaning and definition of these terms on the evidence of their modified function in a (post)colonial context, beyond the ateliers of Western theory” (p. 132). About three decades ago, Dharwadkar (1992) located popular models for the poets of Indian languages in the Romantic troupe, associated with the nationalist movement, in the poems of Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Byron, and even in the poems of lesser figures like Thomas Hood as well as the writings of Sir Walter Scott, Tennyson, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. In his observation, some Indian poets also culled from French literature with its exponents Baudelaire, Mallarme, Rimbaud, and Valery (pp. 219–222). Vis-à-vis, S. S Dulai notes postcolonial and South Asian English poetry’s break—both in content and style imitating British models—from the trends initiated during the colonial period till the modern tradition “became in its own right a genre parallel to British, American and other Western English poetry” (p. 123).

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## **The Enigmatic Self in Selected Poems of Alice Oswald and Brenda Shaughnessy**

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**Abstract:** This paper focuses on the theme of self in the poems of Alice Oswald and her contemporary Brenda Shaughnessy. An English poet Oswald is regarded as a nature poet, a revivalist of the English naturalness, and a Ted Hughesian by nature, although she does not want to be labeled as a naturalist. Rather, she talks of human nature and explores the self in her poems in relation to its environs and history. Likewise, Shaughnessy, an American poet, considered the most prominent poet after Sylvia Plath dealing with the self, depicts actuality and its relation to truth in her poems as a means of exploring the extent of that very self, which always proposes a binary determination for human beings. Both the poets, living in two different countries, use the realm of poetry in the hope of comprehending human nature from variegated perspectives and thus upholding its true self. In doing so, they share their personal experiences and invest them into a broader arena of paradoxical construction of the self. Thus, both the poets' works become a tableaux vivant of individuality, society and connectivity. Though their countries have numerous political, economic, and socio-cultural challenges to overcome in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these transatlantic poets manifest the nature of rupture from the past and convergence to the present with an indomitable quest for individual identity, and fashion a quotidian surface. This paper aims to find how the self is searched for and constructed in the two poets' creative works despite their geo-political and cultural randomness.

**Keywords:** Postmodern, self, individuality, identity, public/private binary

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Philosophers from ancient times up to the postmodern times have argued about the concept of self in many ways, oscillating between private and public, true and delusive, singular and multiple traits of it, among others. With so many assertions, it can be said that self is what fashions one's identity. One of the roles of the self is to propagate an inner, core line of thinking that leads to one's response towards oneself and others surrounding one. In so doing, a person consciously or subconsciously frames opportunities for others to study that person. Conversely, he also utilizes the occasion for finding out facts about other people. In this way, the self becomes a complicated but unique entity which is more than public or private, singular or multiple.

A primary contribution to such interpretations of the self is the process of observation and thinking. John Locke observes that consciousness always accompanies thinking, and this very thinking, which is the root of every self, makes a person different

from others (Locke, 1995, p. 449). A person with sharpened thinking has the ability to interpret or re-interpret the elements scattered and ignored everywhere. A poet is bestowed with the efficiency of exploring the inner thought and linking it with the interior or the exterior, the way s/he feels. Poets are no non-human creatures of our planet; they are people around us and even within us. Their presentation is always a surprise for the readers who have the thinking ability but lack proper exposition.

Alice Oswald (b. 1966) pronounces that poetry is not about language but about what happens when language becomes impossible (Armitstead, 2016). Poetry gives an outburst to that inner thinking that Locke uses to define identity. The self depends not only on the surroundings alone, but on the internal actualization as well. In other words, while being interpretive, the self always finds itself struggling against the outer realm and the inner world. Harmonizing between these two becomes the most challenging occupation for the self. If we consider Oswald's poem "Fox" in her book *Falling Awake* (2016), her dissemination of the self can be deciphered. Existentially speaking, her "Fox" is different from Ted Hughes's fox in "The Thought-Fox". Whereas his fox is an imaginary creature being concretized in verse form, thus portraying the creature as an embodiment of the creative process of the poet, Oswald's fox is a real, sexed creature, "just so abrupt and odd / the way she went" (9-10), and then "she came / a woman with a man's voice / but no name" (14-16). The two foxes, methodically imaginary, ponder upon two inter-related entities of a human being: the spectral and the corporeal. A broad line of difference between the two foxes has already been offered by the latter fox on the ground of reliability and identity.

Unlike Hughes, Oswald depicts the angst not only of creation but of identity as well. Her alertness has been perceived through the "cough" (1) of the fox, and through its abrupt movement in the yard of her house. Such intrusion beyond her "sleep" (3) forces the poet to pay uninterrupted attention to its presence. It is a she-fox, not a vixen, and becomes rooted in its identity with the voice. It is a she-fox because it is a generalized creature to hammer the poet's thoughts trying to comprehend whatever is going on in that fox's parallel existence: in the yard, and in the poet's mind. It is as if the poet read the fox's inner thoughts which are disturbed by the outer realities: hunger, life, night, children, and mother, as the poet imagines the fox is about to say, "it's midnight / and my life / is laid beneath my children / like gold leaf" (17-20).

Charlotte Runcie writes that gendering the fox is unlike Oswald; she already has written about earth, strength, and physicality, which many poets would earmark as masculine (Runcie, 2016). Oswald introduces a famished she-fox, portraying her as a mother. This creates a profound connection between the animal and human worlds, revealing deeper aspects of the self. Nature is not naturalistic if it is devoid of human nature. Nature is incomplete sans human existence in it. In other words, human beings are inevitable part of nature. For understanding human psyche, both human nature and nature itself are required. Oswald's being a mother is one identity along with her family and children, but the self of the poet is far more important to her, as she states in the poem "Fox", "she came / a woman with a man's voice / but no name" (14-16). She is a painter of the two realities that surround her. Like Hughes's creative instinct, she becomes the mother of the children-poems with the voice of domination as articulated in the last four lines of the poem. The gold leaf in the last line, symbolic presentation of beauty, life, and

life-force, demarcates individuality within the periphery of private and public, singularity and multiplicity. “Fox” is not about exploring creativity alone; it is about exploring the individuality one has to face every day, particularly at a time when one can easily be haunted by one’s self and other oppressing elements.

Oswald’s poem “A Short Story of Falling” has a particular type of instillation in its rhythm. This poem deals with the concept of time and motion. Paradoxically, this short story is a verse narrative, talking about history, origin, root, and exploration of the self. She is an onlooker, a “passerby” (9), who longs to be an active part in the process of continuity, which she is, in her consciously subconscious way of presentation. This ‘short story’ is about creativity in its temperament. Oswald has this urge to germinate a poem that is true to itself. This is about history because everything is contained in “a seed-head smaller than my thumbnail” (8). The spatiality represented in the seed is where the life-force, water is headed with a view to supplying it with the energy for survival. But it has its constraints as well. The word “momentary” (6) has a burdensome tone of lingering time, which itself is spacious. The nature of creation and procreation comes together along with the mind of the poet with “the weight of hope against the light of patience” (14). The poet’s expectation meets her own anxiety of understanding her nature of revealing the inner strength. She feels the challenge of realizing the nature of self, which becomes dubious because of the amalgamation of the subject “I” and the story itself. The characters are next to each other only to give rise not to the seed but to the very interpretation of a self that can be felt meticulously. It is the self, not the flower, which is enlivened with the elements of sustenance. The reciprocal narrative, thus, responds to an inner feeling of unease in the face of expansion of identity.

Oswald uses several binary elements in the poem “A Short Story of Falling” to uphold her arguments for comprehending the self’s characteristics. With the idea of rain falling at the beginning and end of the poem, she continues with the theme of rise only to lead it to the next fall. This cycle is unremitting, though paused with a great suspense of being one with the outcome of that cycle. From the depth of earth the energy is channeled towards the poet for orchestrating a piping song, “which is the story of the falling rain / that rises to the light and falls again” (19-20). Whereas the gravity cannot pull back the stamina and so the force that erupts becomes external, the light is closely associated with the darkness within that force that germinates the flower, the intangible self of the poet. The self is like the rotational rain only to be located and relocated as necessary.

This duality of the self can be realized in the poems of Brenda Shaughnessy (b. 1970) as well. Both the sides of the Atlantic have a few commonalities yet a few digressions. Notable differences regarding historical, social and cultural environs can be experienced in the two regions. Moreover, the 21<sup>st</sup> century challenge of family bond and individuality is also addressed separately by the two cultures. Considering the issue of identity, Kenneth Allan (1997) observes that personal identity has more or less abiding characteristics that are a unique combination of life history events that come to be attached to an individual with the help of identity; the social and personal identities are primarily other persons’ concerns and definitions regarding an individual (Allan, 3-24). The challenge for the self is, hence, to be able to realize itself in the face of all the external pressures and inner obligations. Both Oswald and Shaughnessy speak of their children when they talk about their writing – the setting, the mind, and the outcome. Oswald muses

about the family, “When I look back now I can’t understand how I managed: I was lucky in that Peter was very good at sharing the work, but I still have a note my son slid under the door saying ‘Dear Als I have a tume ache a tooth ache and a everything ache’” (Armitstead, 2016). Such familial integration and disintegration is an unavoidable extant in the poems of Shaughnessy. She writes about her first child in “Our Andromeda”, “It was my job to get you into this world safely. And I failed.” (216–17). Following the failure fact, a number of questions haunt the mind: is it a failure? Whose failure is it? Is it the failure of the people and places related to the child’s birth, or the mother? If it is not a failure, how do we explain it: as an achievement?

If we take the poet into a critical view, we find that it is not the failure of a mother, but a failure-converted-to-strength of a mother to challenge the facts that haunt her and the innermost person who can uphold the pain of going through that failure to metamorphose it into sustainable strength. Shaughnessy’s book *Our Andromeda* (2012) bears the 22-page long title poem, a verse-narrative of a disgruntled mother about hopelessness and hope. The poem portrays an apologetic mother trying to shower the child with a current of convulsive emotion because of her candid confession of nothingness:

We will find our kind in Andromeda,  
we will become our true selves.  
I will be the mother who  
never hurt you, and you will have your  
childhood back in full blossom,  
whole hog. (387–92)

The severity of this emotion is channeled through the futuristic dream of a better life, a heaven-like phenomenon where not the child but the mother herself seeks shelter. Dan Chiasson opines that if it were more tidily deployed, the heartbreak would not come so clearly (Chiasson, 2012). Her present time has proven a failure to her, and she has to fight that failure only to identify her own voice in a cruel world. This search for the self is an ongoing process for her. She very well knows the absurdity of another Galaxy’s involvement in her contemporary life. Yet, she takes refuse in it not as an escapist but as a survivalist beyond much antagonism.

As Shaughnessy refers to Andromeda, another Galaxy, she introduces a parallel world. The spatial mirage also produces the complexity of two selves contradicting each other. Eva Illouz states, “At the heart of contemporary Western culture is the division between the “staged” self, enacting itself in the public sphere, and the “true” self whose home is the private sphere of family, love, and emotions” (Illouz, 1997, pp. 91-92). The mother in this poem is such a person to play dual role of a mother and a poet. These roles are like a mirage because in her private life she is suppressed with the consequence of her ‘failure’ and has to take it as part of life whereas in her public life she has to let the pain have an outburst of modeled opulence. Both the selves offer an ornamented presentation of who she really is.

The self, however, can become its own antagonist when it comes to creativity. In an interview about her book of poems *So Much Synth* (2016), Shaughnessy expresses her explanation about what is widely known as writer’s block. According to the poet, it is just

a sense of fear and the writer's reaction towards that fear. She explains that a writer, paradoxically, flees from the fear and fights it and ultimately nothing is written (Shaughnessy Interview by Christopher Soto, 2016). This book is a spontaneous presentation of her overcoming writer's block – famous songs re-sprung through her innovative pro-action. The inaugural poem in this collection is "I Have a Time Machine." Like her other poems, this one also begins with the title as a projection of a long passage to discover. The first line of the poem begins with the conjunction "But", pointing to unexpected contradiction, a flux of shock.

Shaughnessy's time machine in the poem "I Have a Time Machine" is mechanically different from other mythical time machines because of its pace and its digressive role in life. Her machine, to science's utter frustration, "can only travel into the future / at a rate of one second per second" (1-2). This machine has a "window", which shows "the past" (13), and has a "rearview mirror" (17), which shows her what has just been left behind. The nature of movement through time juxtaposed with themes like flashback and memorabilia reveals the poet's inner struggle with her consciousness about her root and what she is in real life, "Me exploding at my mother who explodes at me / because the explosion // of some dark star all the way back struck hard / at mother's mother's mother" (27-30). The generational legacy upholds the assertion of the speaker's contemporaneity, although the passage through which the journey is undertaken, the effort and realization of looking back and forth, can be seen as a linear construct. Here is a voice which wants to explore who is there inside the outside and who is there outside that inside.

Shaughnessy's search for the discursive self is an echo of what Emily Dickinson presents in her poem "My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun –" (1862), waiting to explode with a decisive aim. The gun, which is the guard for the owner, brings forth the image of a possessor and a possessed one. The possessed possesses a "Vesuvian face" (l.17), a threat to any unwanted or targeted victim. It explodes only when the owner wants. So, here is a contradiction of free choice: the gun practically reacts at the act of the owner. But the identity is expressed through the reaction of the massive power it possesses. The self's dispersal is expressed through joy or grudge. The self, in other words, finds relief only when an uncontrollable force erupts. Until then, all its emotion is like a burden, "Though I than He – may longer live / He longer must – than I – / For I have but the power to kill, / Without – the power to die –" (21–24).

Like Dickinson, Shaughnessy also bears the burden of a self that cannot be explained in a generalized way. Victor de Munck observes that the self exists as a mental representation or construct, a language game, a constellation of narratives that humans tell themselves, but the self is not an actual thing; there is no self-enthroned somewhere in the head (Munck, 2000, p. 39). The self in Shaughnessy is a puzzling entity then, to be explained by the poet herself. The self is an enigmatic construct, shaped on many facts. She depends on time, memory, family, relationship, experience, space, expression, aspiration, and anxiety.

Shaughnessy opens channels to address the periphery of the self in her poem “Thinking Lessons” (*The Octopus Museum*, 2019), “My child does not belong to me. She belongs to / herself. But she’s too young to have a child!” (12–13). The burden of past time opposes the future ambition. At the same time, the future becomes dependent on the past experience. In such a situation, it is too taxing to be able to identify one’s self.

What is a self then? How does it work? Another way to look at it is to be able to convert the hindrances into the power of mobility. Shaughnessy argues for this very dilemma in exploring the self. Her growing up from “age eight” (21) and becoming “an old woman by now” (33) in “I Have a Time Machine” with all the binaries in life – a force that works against itself, the family history that draws her backward – help her overcome the fear of facing the difficulties in understanding herself and expressing that self. When she claims that “the past is so horribly fast” (36), she subconsciously challenges that inner fear of explosion. The fear is shaken and abolished; what is left is an abstract formation of the self she speaks of.

The enigma of the self is crucial to both these transatlantic poets. In an interview Oswald notes that British poets might put thoughts into their poems, but they pour them in as if the poem is a container and the thought drops in. Something about the American line just incorporates thinking. She continues that a poem has to have the energy to create its own necessity (Porter, 2014). Shaughnessy’s time machine fails to be a mechanical device. Instead, the machine is dependent on her dependence on ideas that are instilled in the poem. Both Oswald and Shaughnessy, contemporary as they are, construct passages for letting out the suppressed angst of creation and innovation. Poetry, for them, becomes a sanctified ground for traversing, collecting, and disbursing the obstacles that they can metamorphose into aesthetic accomplishments. In doing so, they singularly contribute to the shaping of an individual self that is realized if not concretized. Katherine Ewing argues that self is rooted in language, not in spirit or body:

When we consider the temporal flow of experience, we can observe that individuals are continuously reconstituting themselves into new selves in response to internal and external stimuli. They construct these new selves from their available set of self-representations, which are based on cultural constructs. The particular developmental histories of these self-representations are shaped by the psychological processes of the individual. (Ewing, 1990, p. 258)

The two poets under consideration practice this exposure of the self in their own yet common ways. Both experience writer’s block only to overcome it for more enviable creation of books of poems. Their individual suffering is felt, but their strength to overcome it without bypassing lends them a voice that can be heard on both sides of the Atlantic.

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## **Exploring Undergraduates' Perceptions of and Preferences for Grammar Teaching in EFL Writing Classes**

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**Abstract:** Understanding learners' perceptions and preferences is critical in teaching, as individual differences can influence learning experiences and outcomes. Many studies have explored learners' perceptions of writing and educators' beliefs about suitable practices that accommodate students' needs. However, few studies have investigated undergraduates' preferences for the nature of grammar instruction in EFL writing. The present study aims to examine undergraduates' perceptions of and preferences for grammar instruction in writing classes. This study utilised a survey questionnaire to collect data from 30 first-year English Major students of the University of Dhaka who were selected through convenience sampling method. The quantitative data were later analysed using SPSS. We found that most undergraduates considered contextual grammar teaching and using authentic language learning materials for practice essential for EFL writing classes. Besides, they preferred inductive grammar teaching over deductive teaching techniques.

**Keywords:** Grammar instruction, learners' perceptions, learners' preferences, EFL writing

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### **1. Introduction**

There are significant debates about the efficacy of the instruction of grammar and error correction in the context of language learning (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004). Grammar enables us to communicate through language by labelling the components of sentences in any language. Our ability to construct sentences begins at a young age as a fundamental aspect of being human (NCTE, 2002). It is necessary to know grammar to understand the composition of sentences, including the types of words and word combinations. A deeper understanding of grammar can reveal much about the human mind and our incredible mental abilities (Barman & Basu, 2015).

So, there is a great necessity for the instruction of grammar. The primary rationale behind teaching grammar as a framework for sentence analysis and labelling has often been driven by the desire to achieve certain practical objectives, commonly centred on improving writing skills (Tüm, 2013). Before the 1970s grammar was an essential part of language instruction as it was believed that one would only be able to communicate well if one knew the grammatical rules of the language (Ghimire, 2016). This belief was challenged by the notion of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972), which suggests



that only knowing the rules is not enough; students must learn how to apply them in practical situations. In this period, grammar was abandoned.

“Writing initiates a verbal transaction between a writer and a reader. Grammar bridges the transaction. When the bridge is broken, no transaction transpires. Correct grammar, then, is a non-negotiable requirement in writing” (Shamsuzzamam, 2019, para. 1). However, the debate on whether grammar should be taught explicitly through rules or implicitly through exposure to real-life language use has been ongoing (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). Controversies between researchers and educators have been on about the focus on form and its use. Some talked in favour, and some challenged it. Numerous studies have been conducted on ‘the explicit focus on form and its place’ in language teaching and learning. Most of those studies addressed the educators’ beliefs about suitable practices and accommodating students’ needs (Shahani, 2012). However, the literature rarely touches upon students’ perceptions and preferences regarding grammar teaching in their writing classes.

In Bangladesh, students learn the English language from the elementary level (primary) as a mandatory subject (Bashir, 2016). So, they have twelve years of experience of learning English before enrolling at the undergraduate level. In contrast, studies show that Bangladeshi undergraduate students have poor English proficiency (Rahman, 2007, 2008; Saha & Talukdar, 2008; Chaudhury, 2009). That is why students are taught grammar in their first-year classes in most universities. While extensive research has been carried out on how to teach grammar in writing classes, there seems to be a gap in the literature when it comes to exploring the perceptions and preferences of undergraduate EFL students regarding grammar teaching in writing classes. This study aims to fill this gap. This study aims to investigate first-year students’ perceptions and preferences of grammar teaching in EFL writing classes. We expect the findings will help the instructors to think more deeply about the nature of grammar instruction in undergraduates’ EFL writing classes. Therefore, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do first-year students of the English department at the University of Dhaka view grammar instructions’ role in their writing classes?
2. What types of grammar teaching techniques do these learners prefer and why?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Approaches to Teaching Grammar**

In traditional grammar teaching, grammatical structures are presented and practised separately. The term “grammar teaching” refers to any teaching technique that helps learners comprehend and internalise the meaning and/or production of a specific grammatical form. Ellis (2006) discusses several key methods of teaching grammar, including lessons with only presentation or practice, discovery learning, input exposure, and error correction during communication.

Numerous theoretical approaches have been developed to enhance students’ success in learning new information, including two that are frequently used in teaching

grammar: the inductive approach and the deductive approach. The deductive approach is a traditional and effective way of teaching grammatical rules or structures (Shirav & Nagai, 2022). Students learn the rules and then apply them. The deductive approach is primarily teacher-centric, with the teacher responsible for presenting and explaining new materials. In contrast, the inductive approach involves presenting grammatical structures in a real-world language context, enabling students to discover the rules through practical examples. The teacher provides context, and students learn the rules through examples and practice (Rivers & Temperley, 1978).

## **2.2 Studies on Perceptions of Grammar Teaching**

Various studies have investigated the topics of focus, form, and error correction in foreign language classrooms, as well as teachers' perspectives on these practices (Ellis, 2002; Farrell & Patricia, 2005; Richards et al., 2001; Schulz, 1996, 2001). However, there is a dearth of research on students' beliefs about these practices in the context of ESL classrooms. Although studies on learner beliefs tend to focus on language learning in general, the role of grammar instruction in language learning has been the subject of numerous debates in the field.

Studies in foreign language learning have shown that students generally find error correction and grammar instruction beneficial for effective writing. Schulz's (1996) study of students' and teachers' views on error correction and the role of grammar instruction in a foreign language setting showed that many students have a more positive view of grammar instruction than their teachers do and that students believe that studying grammar is necessary to master a language (as cited in Sopin, 2015). According to Pazaver and Wang (2009), there exists a disparity between the perspectives of teachers and students on the efficacy of language learning methods. Specifically, a greater proportion of teachers hold the belief that engaging in simulated real-life scenarios for language practice is more advantageous compared to the explicit study of grammatical forms. Peacock (2007) drew attention to a number of discrepancies between teachers' and students' perceptions of learning a foreign language, which were also reported in Schulz's (1996) study. Moreover, grammar exercises and error correction were significantly more popular with students than with teachers, and teachers valued pair and group work more than students (Peacock, 2007). He concluded that these perception gaps had a negative impact on learners' progress, satisfaction, classroom experience, and confidence in their teachers.

Horowitz (1990: cited in Pazaver & Wang, 2009, p. 29) stated that students and teachers often perceive grammar differently, which can lead to negative consequences. Therefore, teachers should have a better understanding of students' beliefs about language learning, as Kern (1995: cited in Pazaver & Wang, 2009, p. 29) argues that recognising this mismatch is essential to understanding conflicts that are linked to low motivation or anxiety. Therefore, it's critical to understand what students think about the purpose of grammar instruction in writing instruction and how they like to learn grammar in their writing classes.

### **3. Methodology**

This study utilised a quantitative research design involving the collection and analysis of numerical data to answer the research questions. The study was conducted in two phases: the first phase (Instrument) involved the development of a survey questionnaire, and the second phase (Data collection and analysis) involved the administration and analysis of the survey data.

#### **3.1 Respondents**

It is a study on first-year students of the Department of English, University of Dhaka. The questionnaire was administered to 30 students, and all of them properly participated in responding. It was decided to limit the survey to first-year students in order to provide a fairly homogeneous sample. In the first year, they have a course named “Course Eng. 101: Developing English Language Skills”, and the course content includes “reviewing language in use (grammar and vocabulary) and developing range and complexity with respect to writing and speaking demands”. In this study, all the participants speak Bangla as their mother tongue or native language. They are enrolled in an English literature and language undergraduate program at the Department of English. The subjects in this study were selected using the convenience sampling method.

#### **3.2 Instrument**

A questionnaire was designed to collect data in light of the research questions. The questionnaire (see Appendix for the questionnaire) used in this study consisted of three sections: The first section (Section-A) contained seven items on the students' perceptions of grammar teaching in their writing classes. In contrast, the second section (Section-B) contained nine items on the students' preferences for grammar teaching techniques. The questionnaire items were designed on a five-point Likert Scale for these two sections. Participants were instructed to express their degree of agreement with the item statements using a five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’ for each statement. The participants' responses were evaluated using a Likert scale, where a rating of ‘strongly agree’ was assigned a value of 5, ‘agree’ was assigned a value of 4, ‘neutral’ was assigned a value of 3, ‘disagree’ was assigned a value of 2, and ‘strongly disagree’ was assigned a value of 1.

The third section (Section-C) contained three open-ended questions where participants were asked whether grammar was taught in their classes and, if not, whether they wanted grammar to be taught in their classes.

The first section (Section-A) of the questionnaire used in this study was modelled on the instrument developed by Chen et al. (2016) to investigate students' perceptions of grammar teaching in their writing classes. Moreover, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with a small sample of first-year undergraduate students and later verified by some English language instructors to ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument.

### 3.3 Procedures of Data Collection and Analysis

The second phase of this study involved collecting data using the survey questionnaire. Later, the data generated from the questionnaire survey were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 20). Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were calculated for responses of each variable in order to find out the major perceptions and preferences of the participants about grammar teaching in their writing classes. The third section (Section-C) contained three open-ended questions. The responses to these questions were analysed using theme identification to provide insights into the research problem.

## 4. Results

Table 1 and Table 2 display the results of the questionnaire survey. The percentage, mean, and standard deviation are shown here.

**Table 1**  
*Students' Perceptions of Grammar Teaching in Writing Classes*

Items	N	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation
		%	%	%	%	%	%		
1	30	.0%	10.0%	6.7%	30.0%	53.3%	100.0%	4.27	.980
2	30	13.3%	20.0%	33.3%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%	2.87	1.042
3	30	3.3%	13.3%	30.0%	36.7%	16.7%	100.0%	3.50	1.042
4	30	.0%	3.3%	20.0%	43.3%	33.3%	100.0%	4.07	.828
5	30	.0%	6.7%	13.3%	53.3%	26.7%	100.0%	4.00	.830
6	30	.0%	3.3%	46.7%	40.0%	10.0%	100.0%	3.57	.728
7	30	3.3%	10.0%	10.0%	23.3%	53.3%	100.0%	4.13	1.167

Note: N= number of participants, 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree

Table 1 measures students' perceptions of grammar teaching in writing classes. The results showed that most students (53.3% strongly agreed and 30.0% agreed) believed that (item 1) grammar should be taught in schools and colleges. A good number of students replied that teachers should teach grammar in writing classes (item 3) and that teaching grammar improves students' English writing skills. Moreover, a majority (53.3% agreed and 26.7% strongly agreed) of students also think that grammatical instruction and practice help learners achieve greater accuracy in writing (item 5) and that language practice in real contexts is more important than grammar instruction in the classroom (item 7). The overall mean for this section is 4.27, which shows a positive stand towards grammar teaching and that grammar is important for learning and should be taught in schools and colleges.

**Table 2**  
*Students' Preferences for Grammar Teaching Techniques*

Items	N	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation
		%	%	%	%	%	%		
8	30	63.3%	30.0%	.0%	3.3%	3.3%	100.0%	1.53	.937
9	30	6.7%	13.3%	30.0%	33.3%	16.7%	100.0%	3.40	1.133
10	30	.0%	20.0%	36.7%	36.7%	6.7%	100.0%	3.30	.877
11	30	.0%	6.7%	16.7%	56.7%	20.0%	100.0%	3.90	.803
12	30	.0%	.0%	33.3%	50.0%	16.7%	100.0%	3.83	.699
13	30	.0%	3.3%	20.0%	40.0%	36.7%	100.0%	4.10	.845
14	30	.0%	10.0%	23.3%	50.0%	16.7%	100.0%	3.73	.868
15	30	.0%	6.7%	40.0%	36.7%	16.7%	100.0%	3.63	.850
16	30	3.3%	6.7%	10.0%	46.7%	33.3%	100.0%	4.00	1.017

Note: N= number of participants, 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree

In Table 2, students' preferences for grammar teaching techniques were measured. Nine items go under Table 2, and the results show that for (item 11), the majority of the students (56.7% agreed and 20.0% strongly agreed) believe that the teacher should present new grammatical rules in context so that the meaning is clear, and that the teacher should present the new form in a natural spoken or written text so that students can see its use in discourse (item 12). A good number of students believe that the teacher should give examples first so that the students can infer the grammatical rules. Moreover, a substantial number of students (40.0% agreed and 36.7% strongly agreed) acknowledged that they learn better when the context is given (item 13). The overall mean for this section is 4.10, which shows that students prefer to learn grammar contextually rather than theoretically. Therefore, Students prefer inductive teaching of grammar rather than deductive teaching.

In section-C, students were given three open-ended questions to know whether grammar should be taught in the first year at the university level. Twenty-two out of thirty students replied that they were taught grammar implicitly in the classroom, and in answer to the second question, most students said that grammar should be taught in first-year university classes. Here, an answer from a student can be mentioned; the student said, "I think grammar should be taught in first-year university classes because many students come from rural areas, and they do not have enough exposure to apply grammar rules in writing. Most of the students can solve grammatical problems in isolation; however, they do not apply them successfully in their writing." Similarly, most students said grammar teaching is necessary because it will make their writing more accurate and freer of errors. It will also help them to brush up on their basics.

## 5. Discussion

The findings of the analysis suggest that grammar instruction is a crucial component of writing classes for students, as it facilitates the development of their writing abilities. The majority of students surveyed expressed a strong agreement with the idea that grammatical instruction and practice contribute significantly to enhancing writing accuracy. Furthermore, the students generally held a positive view of grammar instruction in writing classes, although their preferences for specific teaching techniques varied. Many students deemed explicit grammar instruction unnecessary and ineffective, while others preferred a more frequent and direct focus on grammar in the classroom.

The students also reported that they learned best when grammar was contextualised, with new grammatical forms introduced in natural spoken or written texts to demonstrate their usage in real discourse. This finding is similar to a great extent to Hinkel (2004) and Dörnyei (2001); they suggest that incorporating engaging and relevant grammar activities can increase motivation among learners. A possible reason for this similarity might be when learners see the practical applications of grammar; they are more likely to be motivated to learn. In our study, many students preferred learning through examples that showed them how to use proper grammar. This method, called inductive teaching, is seen as very helpful. Moreover, a substantial number of students believed that it was sufficient to learn the grammatical rules themselves, with the teacher showing the rules first and then allowing students to practice applying them in their writing. Similarly, findings by Ellis (2002) and Fotos and Nassaji (2013) indicate that learners generally respond positively to instruction that embeds grammar in meaningful contexts. This contextualised approach is often preferred over isolated, rule-based instruction.

Many studies (Brown, 2007; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999) emphasise that communicative competence, which includes fluency and accuracy, is crucial in EFL contexts. Learners often prefer a balanced approach that emphasises both aspects. Our findings also focused on the effective inclusion of grammar instruction in writing classes to attain fluency and accuracy. Regarding awareness of grammar's importance, Larsen-Freeman (2001) suggests that learners recognise the importance of grammar in achieving effective communication. They acknowledge that proper grammar usage enhances clarity and understanding. The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of our study. One of the possible reasons for this consistency may be that the learners have a common goal, i.e., to achieve communicative competence. For feedback and correction, Ferris (2006) and Truscott (1996) highlight that learners appreciate focused and constructive feedback on their grammar errors. They value explicit correction strategies that help them understand and correct mistakes. However, our study did not cover this area.

Overall, the majority of students believed that grammar instruction should be provided in schools and colleges. When asked about the teaching of grammar in the first year of the university, many students felt that it would be beneficial to review and reinforce their previous knowledge of grammar and further improve their writing accuracy. In brief, the research indicates that students perceive grammar teaching as essential for effective writing and should be incorporated into writing classes throughout their academic journey.

## **6. Limitations of the Study**

The study included a sample size of only 30 participants at a university. The sample size is moderate, as we have some constraints regarding time and budget. We believe that the study's relatively homogeneous sample will yield meaningful results. It would have been better if we had included a large sample from several universities. However, despite these limitations, the study concludes that grammar instruction is essential for enhancing writing skills and achieving greater writing accuracy, which is consistent with the widely held view. It is important to note that questionnaire-based studies may have some limitations in generalizing the results, for example, the interpretation of questionnaire items may vary, and the questionnaire designer may influence the research agenda. Therefore, it is suggested that open or semi-structured interviews followed by thematic analysis would have been more suitable for exploring complex issues involving experiences, feelings, and attitudes in this area. Due to time constraints, this study could not utilise these instruments. Hence, further research with more comprehensive instruments and a larger sample size, including multiple universities, is necessary. Such an approach would generate more dependable and generalisable results, ultimately leading to a more realistic portrayal of the situation.

## **7. Conclusion and Recommendation**

As demonstrated by the findings of this study, students hold a favourable perception of grammar instruction in writing classes. They believe that incorporating grammar teaching is crucial for enhancing their writing skills and achieving greater accuracy in their written work. The inductive approach to teaching grammar is preferred over the deductive approach by the students. Furthermore, students perceive grammar instruction in first-year classes as beneficial, as it allows them to apply what they have learned in their writing courses. Therefore, students suggest that grammar instruction should be included in first-year classes.

Educators can utilise the findings of this study when designing teaching materials for writing classes (Salgado, 2003). Effective grammar instruction at the school and college levels would prepare students for the challenges they may face in higher education. Teachers may use visual aids to demonstrate grammar-related exercises and rules. Moreover, visual aids (e.g., short videos, images, etc.) can provide learning context and make grammar instruction attractive and practical. Error analysis can play an influential part in improving writing skills. The instructor may show the anonymous answer scripts that contain common mistakes that students commit while writing and ask whether they can identify and solve them. They may use pop culture, e.g., contemporary music, viral videos, interviews with celebrities, memes, conversations on social media, etc., which provide fertile ground for authentic language use. Moreover, using authentic materials such as advertisements, music, poems, and cartoons in the classroom can help students remember and retain examples ("How to Teach Grammar," n.d.). Besides, considering some issues like the objectives of the class, the learning background of the learners and the learning styles of each student bears paramount importance in any aspect of language teaching. If grammar instruction is necessary for first-year classes at the university level, it should be taught through authentic language materials and examples

rather than explicitly instructed. Teachers should incorporate contextual grammar teaching in their instructional strategies, as students learn best when provided with context. Moreover, teachers should consider their students' preferences for grammar-teaching techniques when designing instructional strategies for teaching grammar in writing classes. Further research is required to determine the most effective ways to incorporate these strategies into EFL writing classes for Bangladeshi EFL learners.

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## Appendix Questionnaire (Question Part only)

### Exploring Undergraduates' Perceptions of and Preferences for Grammar Teaching in EFL Writing Classes

#### Section-A: Students' Perceptions of Grammar Teaching in EFL Writing Classes

Questionnaire items	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. Grammar should be taught in schools and colleges.					
2. Grammar should be taught in universities.					
3. Teachers should teach grammar in writing class.					
4. Teaching grammar improves students' English writing skills.					
5. Grammatical instruction and practice help learners to achieve greater accuracy in writing.					
6. The study of grammar can facilitate and speed up the grammar acquisition process.					
7. Using authentic language learning materials in the classroom is more important than grammar instruction.					

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

#### Section-B: Students' Preferences for Grammar Teaching Techniques

Questionnaire items	SA	A	N	D	SD
8. Teachers should teach grammar rules only.					
9. The teacher should show the rules first and then let students practice.					
10. I learn better when I know the rules first.					
11. The teacher should present new grammatical rules in context to clarify the meaning.					
12. The instructor should present the new form in the context of a natural spoken or written text so that students can observe its application in discourse.					
13. I learn better when the context is given.					
14. The teacher should present new structures from simple to complex.					
15. The teacher should explain new structures with all the details and in a formulaic way.					
16. The teacher should first give examples so the students can infer the grammatical rules.					

#### Section-C: Students' Thoughts on Grammar Teaching

Questionnaire items	Responses (please specify)
17. Was grammar taught in your first year EFL writing classes at the university?	----- ----- -
18. If not, should grammar be taught in the first year EFL writing classes at the university?	----- ----- -
19. If yes, why should grammar be taught in first year EFL writing classes at the university?	----- ----- -

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## **Mapping Female Agency in Masculine Domain: A Feminist Study of J.M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea***

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**Abstract:** In *Riders to the Sea*, John Millington Synge exhibits how the female agency is concealed and sidelined in a patriarchal establishment due to the males' refusal to accept the females as their equal 'selves'. This paper contextualizes Synge's *Riders to the Sea* within feminist literary criticism to understand how female agency is shadowed and marginalized in a masculine domain under the aegis of religious institutions, linguistic politics, and cultural hegemony. It scrutinizes the micro-politics behind the binary construction of homemaker-breadwinner, and its connection to patriarchal domination in every masculine domain like the Aran Island one. The way female experiences, opinions, and judgments are devalued in *Riders to the Sea* ultimately questions whether the female agency is achievable considering the contingency of patriarchal establishment in a masculine world. By mapping female agency in the masculine domain, the study attempts to expose how Synge brings into the foreground the existing gender inequality and oppression of his time.

**Keywords:** Female agency, masculine domain, patriarchal establishment, gender inequality

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John Millington Synge (1871–1909) is a notable Irish literary figure who contributed to the Celtic revival and is famous for his “unique and felicitous blending of cosmopolitan literature and Irish social experience into a work of heart-rending universal appeal as well as of individual self-expression” which is exemplified in his 1904's one-act play *Riders to the Sea* (Bourgeois, 1913). In this play, Synge has romanticized Irish peasant life in western Ireland by exhibiting the culture of Aran Island society where women are marginalized, female experiences are devalued, and most importantly, the female agency is concealed and sidelined in the existing patriarchal establishment. The overpowering existence of female characters is dominant in the whole play since apart from managing the kitchen, they [the female characters of the play] help the males to earn a livelihood, weep on the dead bodies, wash them, and make arrangements for burials which are essentially considered as masculine duties; yet their superior roles in a family remain unacknowledged due to their feminine identities. Till the death of the only alive male family member – Bartley, he is credited for taking the family forward in all spheres; but in reality, it is Maurya, the old mother, who handles the whole family with the help of her daughters – Nora and Cathleen. In every masculine domain, the contribution of women, their sacrifices, and their accomplishments are depreciated and unacknowledged

strategically since their “subordinate position [both in family and society] is a systematic ignorance that the patriarchy imposes upon the women” (Millett, 1970, p. 42). With the death of Bartley, all the male members of Maurya’s family are physically disappeared; finally, the islanders acknowledge Maurya, Nora, and Cathleen’s contribution to the family. Their contributions and sacrifices are acknowledged since no male member is left in the family to be ascribed those credits and to continue patriarchal domination over the female family members. Thus, the question arises: whether the female agency is achievable in the existing masculine domain, or the elimination of the males is a must for achieving the female agency. This paper scrutinizes how the female agency is shadowed and marginalized in a masculine domain like the Aran Island society under the aegis of religious institutions, linguistic politics, and cultural hegemony.

In *Riders to the Sea* (1904), the Aran Island society becomes a cultural and political battleground – a masculine zone – where the female agency is subdued under the aegis of religious institutions, linguistic politics, and cultural hegemony. The play is an “outcome of Synge’s actual experience during his staying of five summers in the Aran Island, and it is the culture, traditions, and superstitions of that land which he portrays throughout the play” (Uddin & Chowdhury, 2016, p. 7). Machhar (2013) emphasizes that *Riders to the Sea* is not merely a story of “a grief-stricken mother” (p. 7) rather a battleground of two worldviews – protagonist Maurya with her feminine identity and the established patriarchy. Kataoka (2017) suggests that according to Kubler-Ross’ grief model, “the mother [Maurya] must live on after all her sons’ death with the knowledge that she has to, which makes her predicament different from the earlier version of Maurya who does not care for her own life any longer” (p. 20). Through this, the question of female agency comes into the foreground.

If Synge’s arts of characterization in *Riders to the Sea* are analyzed, Bartley, Young Priest, and the Townpeople are found the representers or advocates of the existing masculine domain; even Nora being the youngest daughter of Maurya is found slighting her mother echoing the Young Priest voices. In contrast, Maurya is found striving against the established masculine domain with her feminine identity searching spaces for her female agency. Thus, we notice that the playwright portrays not only the picture of Aran Island society and its culture throughout the play but also the mindset and psyche of the inhabitants regarding gender stereotypes. Again, Bartley wants to control his mother and sisters by imposing his decision on them; and Young Priest and Townpeople constantly provide moral support to this imposition. In the course of the play, the opinions of Maurya, Nora, and Cathleen are also ignored and devalued when they suggest anything to the males. Feminist criticism brings to light the inequality inherent in traditional gender roles, and explains how languages, shaped by the patriarchy, inject inferiority into women’s consciousness; moreover, it uncovers the degree of the difficulty women face for their feminine identity in a masculine domain. In studying *Riders to the Sea*, this paper follows an Anglo-American feminist critical approach that critiques gender stereotyping in male-written literary works.

Elaine Showalter in her essay “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness” implies two distinct modes of feminist criticism: a. feminist critique, and b. gynocriticism. Between these, Synge’s *Riders to The Sea* will be analyzed from the perspective of feminist critique which implies “feminist reading of the texts which consider the images and stereotypes of

women in literature, the omission and misconceptions about women in criticism” (Showalter, 2000, p. 309). Showalter (2000) also suggests four models of difference to examine gender inequality and oppression: “biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic, and cultural” (p. 313). These models will be applied in *Riders to the Sea* to understand how Synge brings into the foreground the existing gender inequality and oppression of his time. Besides, Showalter’s interpretation of Ardener’s diagram is also used in this study to examine the relationship between the males as the dominant group and the females as the muted group in a masculine domain.

The masculine domain is defined as a political, social, and cultural system where “women’s reproduction, women’s sexuality, women’s mobility and property, and other economic resources are under patriarchal control” (Walby, 1990, p. 20). In this structure, males hold the dominant positions in every power exercising agency and instruments, and consequently subordinate the females psychologically by defining various roles or duties as feminine ones or masculine ones. The binary construction of woman as ‘home-doer’ and man as ‘breadwinner’ is the ultimate inception of every masculine domain; the same we find in *Riders to the Sea*. At the very beginning of the play, Nora and Cathleen are found observing their duties as ‘home-doers’ in the kitchen while baking cake for their brother, Bartley, who is going to sail on the sea to attend Galway Fair so that he can observe his duty as ‘bread-winner’. Cathleen constantly insists Nora to bake the cake faster otherwise Bartley will leave without any food with him. She has complete authority over the house to such an extent that she knows where the rope is, where the shirt is, and where the kitchen appliances are. Apart from being a ‘home-doer’, she also sells pigs in Aran Island society and contributes to the family financially. But her role as ‘home-doer’ is only acknowledged in that masculine domain. Mother Maurya often gets surprised that “how would the like of [Cathleen] get a good price for a pig?” (Synge, 2018, p. 9). Neither Cathleen nor Maurya nor any other female character shows any resistance to that patriarchal construction of homedoer–breadwinner gender roles. In this way, the female agency is undermined in every masculine domain.

Along with Nora and Cathleen, their mother Maurya also gets a hint of the upcoming death of Bartley because of their understanding of the natural phenomena; especially Maurya has a deep, sharp, and profound knowledge about the Aran Island and the sea. Leder (1990) mentions that “Maurya knows it [the island] intimately — its winds, its graves, its portents” (p. 208). All female characters in this play are well aware of the fact that Bartley has grown up in such a society which devalues women’s experiences and opinions. So, it is obvious that he will undermine every piece of advice from his mother and sisters. For this reason, Maurya, Cathleen, and Nora contact the Young Priest to stop him (Bartley) from attending the Galway fair sailing the sea. In response, the priest refuses to do so; and, without understanding any natural phenomenon, he assures that “let you not be afraid...almighty God won’t leave her destitute with no son living” (Synge, 2018, p. 4). Later, in response to priest’s assurance, Maurya asserts, “it’s little the likes of him knows of the Sea” (Synge, 2018, p. 21). In fact, Young Priest’s attitude resembles the colonial powers which “suppress the ‘Other’ mentally, physically, and economically” (Uddin & Chowdhury, 2016, p. 6). Maurya tries to resist the priest’s Victorian confidence in God but gets overruled. Though she tries over and over to stop Bartley from attending the Galway fair, he remains constant in his decision. Considering the condition of the sea, before

sailing, he even takes advice from his male neighbors Eamon Simon, Stephen Pheety, and Colum Shawn not from his mother and sisters since those male neighbors overpower the existing masculine domain. When those male members vote in favor of sailing, Bartley sails neglecting his mother's warnings. At the end of the play, we find Bartley's fate to be sealed for undermining Maurya's female agency.

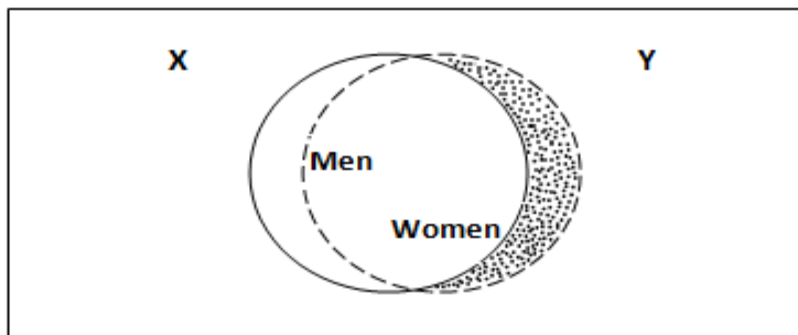
In the Aran Island society, as portrayed in *Riders to the Sea*, the linguistic difference propagates in injecting the sense of superiority or inferiority into the consciousness of both genders. Language is constructed socially by males; and, when a woman speaks, she is compelled to speak through it. In the male-constructed language system, all the things that are bold, positive, and strong are associated with masculinity whereas the opposite qualities like timid, powerless, and pale are seen as feminine qualities. In the play, the sea, the sun, and the dark night are addressed as 'he'; in contrast, the moon, the land, and the offshore are addressed as 'she'. When Bartley devalues his mother's opinions and suggestions, Maurya addresses him as a 'cruel man'. Later, she also personifies the sea, and the dark night as 'cruel' ones, addressing them as 'him'. It is a clear indication that the sea is considered masculine from the perspective of the female characters in the play. At the time of describing her dream, Maurya personifies 'the moon' as a woman, which refers to her; on the contrary, she personifies 'the star' referring to her son Michael. The hypocrisy of the male-constructed language system lies in the fact that it personifies the attire of God as masculine. The young priest of this play repeatedly asked Nora, Cathleen, and Maurya to seek help from 'Him' [the God]. Undoubtedly, God is superior to all beings. In this case, the pronoun which is used to refer to God is also used to refer to a man. Therefore, linguistically, the males become superior to females; and the women own no floor "to create a new language of their own" (Showalter, 2000, p. 314). In this way, the male-constructed language system kills the women psychologically. In *Riders to the Sea*, dramatist Synge shows how invisibly the structure of oppression works through language. Ultimately, it is language in a masculine domain that sets barriers to the female agency being recognized.

As discussed earlier in this paper, the female characters of this play, Maurya, Cathleen, and Nora are well aware of different types of natural phenomena. In the opening scene, Cathleen asks Nora, "Is the sea bad by white rocks" (Synge, 2018, p. 4)? Nora responds positively and says, "Middling bad. God Help us" (Synge, 2018, p. 4). It is noticeable that mother Maurya has a better understanding of nature than them. For this, she continuously forbids his son Bartley to sail on the sea. But he devalues her suggestions, and goes to his friends Eamon Simon, Stephen Pheety, and Colum Shawn for advice regarding whether he should go or not; to which they respond positively. Even the priest doesn't understand the law of nature. All the female characters in this play understand nature more than the males. But Bartley devalues their opinions since they have smaller brains. In talking of biological differences, Showalter quotes the Victorian anthropologists' belief as "the frontal lobes of the male brain were heavier and more developed than female lobes and thus that women were inferior in intelligence" (Showalter, 2000, p. 313). Because of existing biological differences, women are never considered as the producers of meaning or the source of knowledge. Cathleen creates the meaning of Bartley's death by seeing the worse condition of the sea.

Similarly, Maurya smells the upcoming danger of seeing the gray pony. Though the males ignore all of their understanding and devalue their opinions, the predictions of the women prove accurate in the end. When finally Bartley leaves for the Galway fair, Maurya utters, “He’s gone now, God spare us, and we will not see him again” (Synge, 2018, p. 11). So, before the death of Bartley, she has an intuition that he will surely die. Hence, the Anglo-American feminist critique “rejects the attribution of literal biological inferiority” (Showalter, 2000, p. 313). Showalter (2000) in her writing “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness” uses Ardener’s diagram to demonstrate the rapport between the dominant and the muted group in any masculine domain (p. 323); which is described below in the context of *Riders to the Sea*:

**Figure 1**

*Ardener’s Diagram (Showalter, 2000, p. 323)*



In Figure 1, the Y-zone refers to the knowledge and understanding of nature of the female characters of this play, Maurya, Nora, Cathleen, whereas the X-zone refers to Bartley, Simon, Stephen, Shawn, and Young Priest’s knowledge and understanding of natural phenomena. In this play, the males don’t understand women’s grasp on natural phenomena, because they don’t have access to it. So, it is men’s failure that they lack the mental faculty to understand women’s experiences. On the other hand, females don’t have the authority to establish their understanding of nature as an authentic form of knowledge. This is how Maurya’s understanding of nature is sidelined in that particular masculine domain.

Nora and Cathleen know that Bartley will devalue their opinions regarding his attending the Galway fair. Parallely, they also understand that Bartley may ignore them, but he will listen to Young Priest since the priest complements the existing masculine domain under the aegis of a religious institution, i.e. the church. Even Maurya also possesses the same conception; so, she says to her daughters, “He won’t go this day, for the young priest will stop him surely” (Synge, 2018, p. 6). In this situation, they seek Young Priest’s intervention in Barley’s sailing on the sea. It is unfortunate that being a mother/sister, they need to contact an outsider to stop their own son/brother from sailing due to their feminine identity. Even in the end, Bartley priors his friends’ advice to the opinions of his mother and sisters. In fact, out of superiority, the males do not want to “understand women’s tongues” (Showalter, 2000, p. 317). Showalter terms these

conditions of women as psychological and cultural oppression of women in a masculine domain. Barry (2018) is of the opinion that the representation of women as 'others', as 'lack' as part of 'nature' is a form of psychological domination that is constructed culturally (p. 135) in every masculine domain.

In the course of the play, Nora is found echoing the Young Priest's worldview though her mother's influence on her can't be neglected. In fact, she never "quotes the priest directly, she rarely editorializes, offering neither reflection nor comment on what she repeats" (Leder, 1990, p. 216). She has so much trust in Young Priest that she remains in certainty when the priest assures her about Bartley's safe return. Price (1961) claims that Nora is "hardly aware that a battle [between female agency and patriarchal establishment] is happening" (p.182). Similarly, Cathleen also admits that it is young men's duty to go to the sea. Often, her worldview resembles what the masculine domain establishes. She quotes, "In this place, it is the young men do be leaving things behind for them that do be old" (Synge, 2018, p. 10). So, neither Nora nor Cathleen has any idea of the battleground they are fighting in. When the females accept and echo the beliefs, customs, and norms offered by the masculine domain, their female agency is undermined and sacrificed.

In the opening scene of *Riders to the Sea*, all female characters – Maurya, Nora, and Cathleen are entitled to a set of feminine responsibilities, for instance preparing food, doing the household chores, simplifying males' lifestyle by providing what they need, and observing different festivals like Samhain night. But, in the end, when all the male members of the family die, their [women's] feminine responsibilities shift to masculine responsibilities. The females of the family arrange everything to bury Michael and Bartley – which is predetermined as a masculine responsibility. Maurya becomes the guardian of the family and manages the livelihood of her two daughters. By fulfilling all of her responsibilities, she is doing nothing less than a man. But society will not acknowledge her break free from femininity. To Maurya, femininity is constructed by society, and it is a limitation or barrier that is imposed on her for which her female agency is undermined and concealed.

Being a naturalist dramatist, Synge sets *Riders to the Sea* in western Ireland and reflects on the existence of women in a masculine domain and exhibits how female agency is sacrificed and undermined strategically under the aegis of religious institutions, linguistic politics, and cultural hegemony. Maurya's striving for her female agency is not confined to Aran Island society rather she becomes a universal figure representing women's condition of existence who are marginalized in every culture in any timeframe. Undoubtedly, she gets relief from all kinds of feminine responsibilities at the cost of the physical disappearances of the male members.

It is obvious that Maurya's potential and her capabilities of observing masculine duties are hidden and sidelined in that particular masculine domain due to the males' existence. Through this, Synge implies how impossible it is to have a harmonious coexistence between males and females in every patriarchal establishment. At the end of the play, after losing all of her male members, Maurya mourns, "They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me" (Synge, 2018, p. 15). This is an inclination that the masculine sea has lost its power to dominate over the feminine persona of Maurya.



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## **From Multicultural to Transcultural: Reading Zadie Smith's *White Teeth***

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**Abstract:** Zadie Smith wrote the fantastic debut novel *White Teeth*, published in 2000, which describes various issues, especially the difference between the immigrated people from different times, cultures, and traditions. Multiculturalism (cultural pluralism) is a sociological phenomenon in descriptive interpretation (Dewing & Marc, 2006). The intergroup dynamics concept of multiculturalism describes it as a procedure of struggling for support from authorities to achieve particular goals for racial and ethnic minorities (Dewing & Marc, 2006). *White Teeth* is compared to modern-day London's cosmopolitan and eclectic population. In the narrative, the ancestry of the first immigrated people and their history have caused identity challenges for the second generation. This paper exposes a theoretical and conceptual investigation of *White Teeth* from a transcultural point of view in an argument with multicultural ideology. This study finds the novel's depictions of the multicultural social space, identity instability, and complex familial relationships are moving toward the transcultural ideology.

**Keywords:** Multicultural, transcultural, identity, immigrant, familial relationships

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### **1. Introduction**

Zadie's familial and multicultural background impacted her writing significantly. She represents multicultural Britain, and her novel *White Teeth* deals with the issues and problems of a society where people from different cultures live. The novel also talks about the gap between the migrant characters of different generations. It describes the characters' past, the legacy of their origins, and the present in London. It shows that the migrants feel frustrated living in a modern country and are still nostalgic about their roots.

Britain is a country that has seen many people from different countries and cultures over the centuries, each with their own policies and ideologies. Most of the immigrants in Britain have come from former colonies like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Caribbean, Africa, and many more. After the Second World War, the wave of immigration started when the British government faced a labor crisis and began looking for immigrants to fill gaps in the labor market. A common question in a multicultural society is the cost and benefit of multiculturalism. Though migrated minor groups enrich the host country in many ways, at the same time, they create many problems, such as inequality in social and

economic status, racial factionalism, and religious differences. In Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, the prominent role of religious dogma is lost in her more contemporary, Westernized, and secular London. She shows a contemporary, individualistic culture in which religion and religious identity become artificial and insignificant by contrasting secularism with fundamentalism in her characters. For example, Samad, the Muslim character, struggles to assimilate into modern London. The evidence of Samad's struggle with secularism in London becomes initially evident as he develops feelings for a white woman and is tempted by the urge to masturbate. His urge for sexual desire shows his dissatisfaction with his religion.

Zadie shows how the British white people had created the black identity and made the migrated people feel black, and also they are in the lowest position of social strata, such as religion, culture, race, and economic status. However, some migrants are happy living in Britain, which is better than in their root country, while some immigrants still dream of returning to their country but need more money to do so and start again. Thus, they are unable to return. The novel presents many culturally diverse characters adjusting to British culture and trying to create a sense of belonging in London. It tries to show that it would be possible to create one united society of many ethnic communities without destroying or alienating their cultural traditions.

*White Teeth* covers the historical period of the Second World War, the post-war years, and the period of social changes until the late 1990s. In this novel, Zadie focuses on the conflict among migrants of different ages. She presents how the first generation reflected the cultural and personal history; on the contrary, how the second generation escaped the history. It shows the identity crisis of the migrated people in a multicultural society and the conflict among the generations. The article critically examines the novel *White Teeth* by closely reading the characters' psychological state. It shows the developed relationship between different cultures and religions, thus the novel is read and examined through the lens of transculturalism. These relationships are intricate and burdened with historical weight and are ultimately the source of the fundamental conflicts that the characters face. This paper ultimately examines how multicultural ideas can be moderated and transformed into transculturalism.

## 2. Methodology

This paper discusses Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* from a multicultural and transcultural point of view and collected ideas through a theoretical and conceptual investigation by analyzing the texts, secondary data, and research work by other researchers from various sources like research books, literary criticism, magazine articles, journal articles, etc. To describe my argument that *White Teeth* moves from multicultural to transcultural, I have followed the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz's idea of transculturation. APA Style Format, 7th Edition operational manual has been followed for citations and documentation.

### 3. Literature Review

Fernando Ortiz established the idea of transculturation as a methodological instrument in his book *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, published in 1940. In this work, he aimed to provide a comprehensive and in-depth examination of the evolution of Cuban society and culture. The idea of transculturation is put forth as a way to comprehend the typical interactions between opposing traditions and practices, more specifically, it is described as a reciprocal process that occurs within a process of cultural evolution in which old cultural practices are transformed into new ones. Ortiz explains:

I have chosen the word transculturation to express the highly varied phenomena that have come about in Cuba as a result of the extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place here, and without a knowledge of which it is impossible to understand the evolution of the Cuban folk, either in the economic or in the institutional, legal, ethical, religious, artistic, linguistic, psychological, sexual, or other aspects of its life. (Ortiz, 1995.)

In light of this, Ortiz defines transculturation as a widespread and all-pervasive process that impacts all dimensions of social life and leads to “fusions” across distinct cultural scopes that are in contact at a specific historical moment. The historical development of Cuban culture is combined in this approach, which might potentially serve as a model for the entire experience of the American hemisphere.

Nowadays, transculturalism, commonly referred to as cosmopolitanism, is increasingly popular. Appiah defines cosmopolitanism as recreating something like the global village (Appiah, 2005). According to Bentley (2008), the distinction between transculturalism and multiculturalism arises from how we view the outcomes of each. A blending of cultural markers is considered cultural variety, which can also be said as transculturalism or a collection of varied and distinctive contributions to the culture is regarded as cultural diversity (multiculturalism). In multiethnic states, accommodating various cultural identities is a challenging task. The idea of multiculturalism draws harsh criticism, but its importance in recognizing the problems with cultural diversity cannot be overlooked.

According to Donald Cuccioletta (2002), cosmopolitanism is proposed as a solution to the shortcomings of multiculturalism. He begins by recognizing the value of multiculturalism as a social and political strategy and outlining its advantages and disadvantages. To him, diversity is essential to create cosmopolitan citizenship. Cosmopolitan citizens must have multiple identities that link them to their cultural heritage, the culture of the host country, and the culture of the continent. Fernando Ortiz coined transculturalism as a term in 1965, and his philosophy about it is the synthesis of two cultures where one will lose its past to acculturation with the present. So, creating a new common culture is based on meeting and intermingling different people and cultures. In the age of globalization, one’s identity is not strictly one’s self; rather, it should be in rapport with others. So, one’s identity is multiple (Ortiz qt. in Cuccioletta, 2002).

Again, multiculturalism means reinforcing the culture, whereas transculturalism promotes dismantling cultural barriers. It talks of blending all cultural identities existent in a nation-state rather than absorbing a minority culture into the majority culture. According to Donald Cuccioletta, a cosmopolitan citizen will cultivate the other, accept cultural differences among different ethnic groups, and recognize oneself in the other. Additionally, Brooks (2012) discusses transculturalism and cosmopolitanism. He shows each minor group has some contributions to a newly blended mainstream culture and also he rejects the value of transculturalism in contrast to Cuccioletta. He favors multiculturalism as cultural pluralism. He opines that transculturalism creates confusion for each group thrown into the mix. These groups cannot avoid the problem of cultural hegemony as the migrated minor groups surrender some or most of their identity to be a part of the mainstream. So, transculturalism creates a dilemma for groups thrown into the mix. Each group has its contribution to creating a new cultural trend in the mainstream (Brooks, 2012). However, the migrated groups cannot avoid cultural discrimination. The loss of cultural symbols that Brooks (2012)'s views as inevitable with transculturalism is seen by the critic as an unjustifiable sacrifice. He presents arguments to back the multicultural (cultural pluralist) agenda.

It is extremely intriguing how Brooks (2012) uses the simile that "cultural plurality ordains cultural identity" to describe the connections between cultures from a multicultural perspective. Racial and ethnic distinctions are upheld within each group. The groups resemble a salad with lettuce, carrots, cucumbers, and other easily recognizable veggies. Each group included in the mix is accorded equal respect and cultural validity within its domain or sphere of influence, except what will be mentioned later (Brooks, 2012). The metaphor of the "salad" effectively conveys the critic's stance on cross-cultural encounters. He views maintaining ethnic diversity as optimal for a successful cultural exchange. However, Brooks (2012) model does not specify how these "mainstreams" may coexist in the multiethnic state.

Another opponent, Brooks (2007), argues that transculturalism is a practice, not just a theoretical idea. According to Ann, new cultural and ethnic barriers have formed, transculturalism and transnationalism, giving rise to new ideas of subjecthood and identity. These unique cultural and ethnic identities call for the opening of new subject positions, spaces, and places to speak, as well as the necessity for new concepts of subjectivity. This emphasis necessitates a trans-disciplinary method of representation and identity analysis (Brooks, 2007).

Cuccioletta's strategy sounds the most tempting; achieving the objectives of transculturalism seems incredibly far away. People continue to be prevented from adopting a nonjudgmental attitude toward foreignness by stereotypes, fear, and ignorance, forgetting that the trend toward globalization has already brought us closer together and caused us to adopt foreign behaviors and customs. Interethnic or cultural exchanges inside nation-states are a problem that still needs to be fully resolved. The key to comprehending the variety of

cultures that live in today's multiethnic states is to accept difference, not tolerate it, embrace diversity, and practice it.

As a result of increased migration and technological improvements, there is more significant interaction between people from various geographical regions, which has led to the blurring of boundaries between different ethnicities and cultures in the modern, globalized world. In today's multicultural society, everyone is exposed to various cultures, significantly impacting their identities. People today have a variety of freedoms, including the right to select their cultural associations. They frequently embark on a journey to learn more about themselves when they move from one nationality to another. Transculturalism advances the classic theories of multiculturalism and interculturalism. Its defining characteristics are cross-cultural linkages, fusions, and convolutions that create a brand-new global culture. Transculturalism goes beyond cultural boundaries and emphasizes the blending of many cultures; it serves as a force for bringing together diverse cultures and forging new ones shared by all.

#### 4. Discussion

The young British author Zadie, whose mother is a Jamaican, offers *White Teeth* from the perspective of immigrants. Zadie Smith credits her upbringing in “the brave new multicultural world” (Nichols, 2001) of London for greatly influencing her writing. The novel is set in North London, highly recognized for blending cultures from the 1970s to the 1990s. The book addresses the common issues faced by three families of different ethnic backgrounds residing in multicultural London. The three families that make up the plot—the Bangladeshi Iqbal, the Jewish Catholic Chalfens, and the British and Jamaican Joneses—reside close to one another. Their shared geography surpasses their ardent family ties to tie their fates together. The novel presents a close relationship among people who have migrated from different generations, emphasizes the value of roots and traditions, and details the lifestyles and customs of Muslim immigrants. It also shows how migrated people's cultural and religious values evolved due to British cultural influences. The novel highlights how vibrant and distinctive individual immigrant communities are in the global city of London.

In an interview, Zadie told Stephanie Merritt about *White Teeth*, and how the theme of inheritance is carried down from generation to generation. She aware of the racial tensions of her parents, like difficulties in booking hotel rooms and other things, but she did not talk to them about that aspect of their lives. Although an autobiography may not be an exact copy of a real-life person like the *White Teeth* characters, the issue of heredity is significant in the book. She concludes that although the book *White Teeth* was not intended to raise all these issues related to immigration and multiculturalism that does not make it any less significant. In *White Teeth*, Zadie doesn't want the characters to serve as a metaphor for immigrants in England. She doesn't think of herself as a politician and doesn't

want to assert positively about other people's experiences; instead, she wants to have fun (16 January 2000).

Many of the characters, like Samad Iqbal, Clara, and Hortense in *White Teeth* frequently recognize their postcolonial selves as they have migrated to London due to colonialism, and the multicultural culture of London leads to a misunderstanding over their ethnic identity. As M. Hossain Ismail, a butcher shop owner finally enrolls with a fundamentalist group only because of his anger against the native English who misbehaves with him. The novel focuses on a Bangladeshi family and the identity problem of the family. Britain is a cosmopolitan nation whose policies are founded on encouraging peace amongst different ethnic groups. People from other countries migrated to England for various purposes with all aspects of their identity, such as culture, religion, customs, and language. It helps the English culture to enrich significantly, but on the other hand, this cultural diversity has raised issues like the assimilation process or issues like racism or stereotyping. *White Teeth* examines cultural and racial identity in modern British culture and cultural and familial heritage. According to Nick Bently, teeth depict a person's life journey (Bently, 2008). He mentions every person owns a set of teeth by birth, but how we choose to live our lives, the accidents that happen, the class we belong to, and the appearance of our teeth all influence this. Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* symbolizes modern society's acceptance of diversity.

One of the significant factors influencing young people's sense of identity is racism. Some human subpopulations are fundamentally superior to others or fundamentally different from them due to biological distinctions (Encarta Encyclopedia). Under the Race Relation Act of 1976, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) was established to advance racial equality. According to CRE, assimilation-focused policies have been replaced with integration-focused ones. The multicultural policy development was an understandable response to dissatisfaction with guidelines from the 1950s and 1960s when the goal of "integration" was assimilation. So, on the one hand, the law is talking about the assimilation of host and immigrant community cultures. Still, on the other hand, the host community is very conscious about the impact of outer culture on them.

*White Teeth* illustrates how British society views people from Bangladesh and Pakistan. Although born in Britain, Millat in the fiction knows he is never treated like a British person. They are considered job thieves or unemployed people who rob the government. The British government associates Bangladeshis and Pakistanis with lower-class jobs, mainly in the culinary industry. Millat believes that despite his best efforts, he would never prosper in a British society that makes fun of his faith, attire, and culture. As Zadie observes in *White Teeth*, no one who looks like Millat or feels like Millat is ever on the news unless they have recently been murdered (Smith, 2001). Discrimination also indicates Samad's decision to relocate his family from East London to North London because he believes it is unsafe for his children to live in East London. He says things were more liberal since North London had so many immigrants. (Smith, 2001). The racial tensions Smith presents through cross-cultural and cross-class relationships. As Joyce

Chalfen believes that Irie has some intelligence, but she must not inherit that from her working-class parents, Alsana's mistrust of the Chalfens and Samad's desire to raise his sons in Bangladesh all represent racial tension. Though at the novel's end, race, class, and culture mixed more than in the first part. Irie's daughter is a representation of the unrestrained future.

No society, according to Parekh (2001), can be unaffected, independent, and self-contained in the face of minority groups migrated with their own culture and social structure. *White Teeth* establishes a genealogy for a British society that goes back to the British colonial era. It explores British colonial history and postcolonial policy, particularly in the case of Hortense Bowden's life. In this way, the novel's formal structure matches the adage that appears at the beginning, "What is past is prologue" (Smith, 2001). *White Teeth* presents multicultural Britain and its trans-cultural nature in the modern day. Samad fights to establish harmony between the present culture and family history and their lifelines, which has led to the conflict with the previous empire or western world. It is described with phrases like roots and rootlessness in numerous works of postcolonial literature.

According to David Buckingham, identity is a concept that can be employed in various ways and is hence "ambiguous." Everyone has a unique individuality that sets them apart. Millat and Magid, two of Samad's sons, have the same cultural and religious background, but each has a unique identity despite the complexity and impossibility of identity. Identity, according to Buckingham, helps people understand who they are, who others are, and who they are as a whole. Additionally, it enables others to perceive their operational environment differently. We can discover our identity by comprehending who we are and our surroundings. Identity is molded by what one encounters rather than something one creates alone. Within a Muslim household, the difficulty in preserving one's identity and the disparities in the worldview between the first and second generations are evident. Coming from Bangladesh, Alsana and Samad Miah Iqbal have discovered that adjusting to life in Britain is incredibly challenging. But Majid and Millat, the second generation of Muslims, have different worldviews from their parents.

In the novel, *White Teeth*, a working-class Englishman Archibald Jones weds Clara, a Jamaican immigrant. Irie, their daughter, is constantly frustrated by her past and ancestry as she searches for her identity. She is conscious of the value of her roots and origin, yet she tries to look forward and live in the moment. Joyce and Markus Chalfen, respectively, a biologist and a genetic engineer, are third-generation immigrants, but they have integrated well and lived as a wealthy British family. They are also very liberal, who reject dwelling on the past and place more emphasis on the future. Chalfens are distinct from the Iqbals, and their worldview significantly impacts Millat, Magid, and Irie.

Samad is a devout Muslim, a first-generation Bengali immigrant who takes pride in his heritage. He continues to look back to his history throughout the novel to find his roots. He has discussed his native country, customs, and the bravery of Mangal Pande, his great-grandfather, who fired the opening shot in the Indian Mutiny of 1857 with his acquaintances



over the years while living in London (Smith, 2001). Pande is a hero in Samad's eyes, even though not all of the truth about his bravery is accurate. However, he frequently lacks knowledge of his cultural heritage, and his sons and friends seem to care only about the historical events that are so significant to him (Smith, 2001). After falling in love with a white woman, he becomes aware that his cultural tradition is fading under the British socio-cultural impact. Samad also regrets coming to Britain as he thinks this is where every problem starts (Smith, 2001). As an immigrant living in a host society, Samad spent his whole life looking for an identity. He has lived in Britain for a long time, yet he still feels foreign and is sure that he will never find true happiness. He knew of the dryness and experienced the terrible, enduring thirst of travelling to a foreign country (Smith, 2001).

By including three forms of family life, each with its unique spatial arrangements, Smith confronts the diversity of identities and experiences in modern British culture. She not only acknowledges the presence of these "other" spaces, but she also portrays them as being subject to constant negotiation and transformation. *White Teeth* portrays London as a fusion of various cultures and ethnic groupings. London was referred to as a multicultural metropolis because of British colonialism in the 20th century, *White Teeth* comprise two or more distinct cultures, faiths, or languages that consider the novel as multicultural in some sense. Smith combines the Iqbals and the Joneses, the two families with different identities, worldviews, and cultural and religious values. Although the characters reside in London and have been assimilated and integrated, some continue to adhere to their rituals, religious beliefs, and cultural values to preserve their roots and identity.

In *White Teeth*, Smith says, in spite of all the mingling, we have eventually slid into one another's lives at an acceptable level of comfort. Still, it is difficult to acknowledge that neither the Indians nor the English are more English than the other. But still, some young white men are upset about it; they will roll out after hours into the dark streets clutching a kitchen knife (Smith, 2001). It demonstrates the perspective on multiculturalism. On the other hand, many people oppose the fundamental tenet of multiculturalism, which is coexisting in different groups in peace. They dislike the presence of immigrants in their nation. For this reason, many Pakistani parents prefer to give their children English names to prevent potential discrimination. Irie Jones, most annoyed by the past, represents a second generation of immigrants. They do not want her to adhere to any particular cultural customs because her father is English. Her mother, Clara, rejects the Jehovah's Witnesses and refuses to discuss her background. But Irie is different; she seeks to find her grandma to learn more about her family history and identity. However, the Chalfens, on the other side, are equally significant in Irie's life. Irie is positioned between these two worlds due to Marcus and Joyce Chalfen's dual focus on the present and the future. Irie is intimately attached to her family customs, but she knows her past and cultural history, hampering her present. She criticizes the Joneses and the Iqbals for maintaining strong ties to the past, recounting the same old tales about Pande, amassing

items, and storing them in the attic. She claims that other families prioritize the here and now because it is crucial (Smith, 2001).

In *White Teeth*, Smith criticized those parents who simultaneously pursued their children to live up to their standards and demanded them to go on with their religious and cultural norms. Because she thinks it is pointless to try hard to lead one's life like others. She advocates for greater tolerance and respect between parents and their kids. Smith emphasizes the significance of identity in heterogeneous cultures and the impossibility of immigrants escaping their history, shaped by their ancestors' impacts. Millat, Magid, Irie, and Joshua constantly debate their current situations, potential futures, and ancestry. They are adjusting to their family and social environments. Smith presents these adjustments very humorously. Millat becomes a member of a religious fundamentalist group while living in London. In contrast, his twin brother Majid, raised in Bangladesh, became an atheist. Also, the responsible and diligent son of a respectable scientist, Joshua, rejects his father's experiments at the novel's conclusion and becomes an animal rights activist.

Migrated people always experienced physical displacement, which includes the experience of diaspora. The progeny of the first-generation immigrants did not travel to another country. However, they lived in a border region known as the "Third Space" (Bhabha, 1994), and this situation can be defined as multi-locationality spanning physical, cultural, and mental barriers. These kids of the second generation belong to mixed identities. *White Teeth* also presents the concept of uniform selfhood, emphasizing the role of social environment and interactions in defining an individual's identity.

After making a name for themselves abroad, the first generation finds integrating into the local culture challenging since their roots are deeply ingrained in their home country. Their response to difficulties and disputes is to return to their origins or country. The difficult circumstances that first-generation immigrants face while they adhere to their multiracial heritage include being uprooted from their own country and culture and making a painstaking effort to locate a means of support.

As a matter of fact, Zadie Smith deals with various issues related to living in a multicultural culture and the conflict between immigrants of different ages. Characters like Archie and Samad keep strong ties to their past, ancestors, and roots and find living in a modern nation frustrating. They experience religious bigotry and discrimination, and their ideals differ entirely from those of Western nations. Even after spending so many years in Britain, some still feel alien. A few join violent fundamentalist organizations to obtain status and define their identities. Some feel most at home in their British identity because they have assimilated. London is a dynamic environment where new identity positions might arise and a city where new interaction spaces among individuals of different ethnic backgrounds are created. The novel portrays identities as being incredibly flexible and presents Britain's current policy on integration instead of the binary strategy on the assimilation of the 1950s and 1960s. It also respects the identities of the minor ethnic group and values their culture instead of undermining them.

White Teeth presents several families—some immigrants, other native-born citizens—living in London during the late 20th century. Although their backgrounds differ, each family experiences similar dilemmas: the children choose different paths from their parents, and the parents struggle to connect with their children. Three of the four main characters in *White Teeth* are immigrants, Samad and Alsana Iqbal are from Bangladesh, and Clara Bowden Jones is from Jamaica. Both Jamaica and Bangladesh are former British colonies. These characters are educated in English and British values but they are treated by the British as outsiders. So, they are confused about their identity as they already have been cut off from their native cultures but not accepted by the British culture. And this sense of identity crisis passes to the next generation. Irie Jones and Magid and Millat Iqbal all these kids are born in England, and they want to be treated like other English kids but everywhere they are being rejected. This pain of maladjustment increases the distance between parents and kids.

Moreover, Samad has a struggle in himself, between his physical desire and his Islamic principles. His extramarital relationship with Poppy Brut gives him some momentary enjoyment but inwardly he is not satisfied with it. So to recover this loss in his moral values he decided to send his son Magid to Bangladesh for religious education. However, Samad fails to fulfill his target of keeping his values okay through his sons as Magid becomes an English intellectual and Millat becomes a fundamentalist. Samad's awareness of his native culture is proven when on a particular day of a Muslim occasion the school arranges the Harvest Festival, and he protests. Interestingly, though Samad is aware of his culture and tradition he starts to flip coins before making a decision like Archie, his best English friend. Samad's wife Alsana also starts to think Britain is more secure than Bangladesh for living. Archie as an English also finds he depends on Samad in each step of his life and Kids of the next generation find new ways of their life. So, people from different cultures start to assimilate and transmit into a new life.

Actually, *White Teeth* challenges readers to consider British culture in terms of plurality and to abandon the malicious binaries of insiders and outsiders. As in the novel, we find the racial friendship, a racial couple, an established racial businessman, a blending of Christian-Muslim names, and finally, Irie's desperate decision to keep her daughter without any fatherly identity. All these things present that the novel steps forward to transculturalism, from multiculturalism. So, Smith gives her readers hope for a time when achieving some semblance of "normalcy" in a heterogeneous society like Britain will be possible. She uses humor to achieve this elevated feeling of normalcy. Her humorous, witty, and occasionally caustic narration of the lives of her characters eases the tensions inherent in her essential subject matter but also leaves room for interpretation of the consequences of this alleviation. As Moss articulated this idea of normalization of hybridity she mentions, that in the future everyday culture and racial hybridity will no longer be a matter of pain for the next generation of immigrants, like Irie and Millat (Moss, 2003).

## 5. Conclusion

In the novel *White Teeth*, Smith expertly handles the conflict between two generations of immigrants about the preservation of one's own deeply established culture or its loss, through an impressively well-rounded cast of people, each symbolizing a cultural extreme in particular. The social fabric of modern-day London is thoroughly explored in this serious yet incredibly funny book. It also highlights the challenges societies may and will face as they attempt to become truly multicultural and exposes all the shortcomings of immigrant-native relationships. It produces a nation of alienated people who are unsure of who they are and lack reliable ways to find their new desired identity statuses as a part of the community. The optimistic future envisioned in *White Teeth* is one in which "daily cultural and racial hybridity" (Moss, 2003) won't be as complex and painful. So, the novel presents a journey of a society from multiculturalism to transculturalism which is positive and going to decrease the tension and unrest in a multicultural society.

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## **Impact of Training and Development on Employee Performance: A Perception-based Study on Commercial Banks in Bangladesh**

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**Abstract:** This paper intends to explore the influence of training and development (T&D) on employee performance of selected commercial banks in Bangladesh. Structured questionnaires were surveyed on a sample of 260 bankers selected from three public and four private commercial banks located in the Dhaka and Mymensingh divisions of the country. Sample were taken following the convenience sampling technique. The study found that selected banks were aware of the importance of T&D to improve employee performance and thus provided several types of training to their employees. The study suggests continuous T&D to improve communication skills, upgrade knowledge, retain talents, increase job satisfaction, and enhance productivity, and earn more profit. Finally, the study has found that T&D has a significant influence on employee performance by helping increase knowledge, skills, and capacity with retention and perform better with efficiency. This examination into the impact of T&D on employee performance follows that the findings of the study may be useful to academics, researchers, policymakers, practitioners, students, and local and foreign enterprises in Bangladesh and other comparable nations. This research finally concludes that T&D of commercial banks influences the employees' performance and competence and finds a favorable relationship between training and employee performance. Banks have to arrange and improve their training sessions so that employees' performance is improved.

**Keywords:** Training, development, employee performance, commercial bank

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### **1. Introduction**

Workforce is the lifeblood of any organization and it is considered that out of the four fundamental resources, such as human, financial, information, and physical, human resources is the most crucial asset in organizations because every company needs it to function properly. The success or failure and boom or downturn of a firm depends on the talent of its employees and their performance. Employees are an indispensable asset and a key element of gaining a competitive advantage in any organization and training is an essential tool for its actualization. Banks acquire money from surplus units and lend it to

deficit units and thus play the most important role in the economy of a country. In the modern era, banks execute a variety of tasks and provide most of their financial services online. Therefore, it has already been established that banks are essential to both business and the economy. Commercial banks, the largest segment of the banking industry in Bangladesh, help to increase exports, promote trade and commerce, reduce poverty, raise the living standards of low-income groups, and promote overall sustainable socio-economic development in the nation (Islam & Jahan, 2015).

Nowadays, banks use updated technologies to carry out their daily tasks and provide better services to their customers because maximizing earnings is their primary objective. Commercial banks are therefore leveraging digital technology to create every part of their companies. Digitalization in banking refers to the use of new technology to change the traditional banking business model into a new one rather than only referring to online, mobile, or paperless banking. A model that will generate new clientele on its own, introduce brand-new financial services, guarantee quick, error-free service delivery to customers, and, ostensibly, provide utmost security. Therefore, it is not just a new channel; it is an entirely new method of changing the current transaction-based banking system to one that is experience-based. Customers can access banking at any time and from any location by doing so. Since all financial services must now be digitalized and adapted to new technology, all personnel must participate in training and development (T&D) programs.

Training is crucial to maximize the potential of an organization's human resources- the most important asset. The aim of T&D program is to add value to the provision of services. Training is crucial for completing the prescribed task. Employees who have received training are more equipped to accomplish their jobs using cutting-edge technology than those who have not. Top-level personnel including branch managers must possess a wide range of abilities, which can play key roles in leadership and supervision, general banking- communications, and technological understanding (Jalil et al., 2020). They require a solid understanding of the organization's operations as well as the banking activities they perform. T&D is designed to help an employee learn to most appropriate response to any situation. It is a planned and systematic process, whereas experience results in gaining success on the job. T&D serves several significant purposes for managerial and non-managerial employees (Islam et al., 2022).

Commercial banks hire new employees who have the aptitude to learn basic skills but may not be ready to perform the jobs. Thus, every commercial bank should provide training to employees who are unable to perform the job according to their expected standards due to a lack of skill. T&D provides many opportunities to employees including performance improvement, skill upgrading, solving personal as well as organizational problems, promotion opportunities, and opportunities for personal growth. In this context, the study intends to check out the impact of T&D on the performance of employees working in the commercial banks of Bangladesh. Specific objectives are: to assess the existing training trends; to examine the impact of T&D on the performance of employees; and to propose where the management should direct their training investment more. In the aforesaid backdrop, the response research question is: How does T&D influence the employees' performance?

Moreover, to find the answer to the above-mentioned research questions, the study highlights the critical analysis of the subject under consideration to better understand the phenomenon as to how effective training leads to superior employee performance and proficiency and provides a checklist for improving employee performance through designing effective training programs. Additionally, the study identifies the favorable relationship between T&D and employee performance. The broad objective of this study is to determine the impact of T&D on employee performance and proficiency of the commercial banks of Bangladesh. The specific objectives are: (a) to investigate the relationship between T&D and employee performance and proficiency; (b) to determine the degree of skills and efficiency acquired by banks' employees as a result of T&D; and (c) to analyze the benefits of T&D methods on the performance of the bankers.

The rest of this paper is organized as under: section 2 deals with the literature review, section 3 represents the methodology of the research, and the final analysis and results are presented in the following sections: section 4.1 represents the respondents' biographical information, section 4.2 shows the descriptive results, section 4.3 examines the impact of T&D on employee performance, section 5 shows the major findings and recommendations and finally section 6 concludes the study.

## **2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework**

T&D aims to provide employees with knowledge and expertise so they can do their tasks to the appropriate standard promptly and affordably. Training helps in the development of skills that current employees can use to perform better in their current roles, acquire new technologies or processes, and get ready to handle more responsibility in the future. T&D is a significant component of the HRM function that is particularly important to the actual utilization of human resources. Employees must be viewed as one of the most significant assets for any organization to achieve success on the scoreboard. "Training is the systematic improvement of the knowledge, skills and attitudes obligatory by an individual to perform adequately a given task or job" (Armstrong, 2006).

T&D programs ensure that workers are skilled and developed to be productive (Bataineh, 2014). Employees are always given the opportunity to learn something new through T&D programs. To stay one step ahead of the competition, training is essential. Training is full of learning and innovation (Niazi, 2011). "Training is the act of enhancing knowledge and skills of a person for completing a given profession," (Flippo, 1984).

In order to handle the everyday pressure and obstacles that the banking industry experiences, Fard (2015) emphasized the importance of client staff training. Training plays a crucial role in an employee's social, logical, and mental development, which is crucial for both increasing productivity and fostering the growth of the workforce in any firm.

Cole (2002), in his book, *Personnel and Human Resource Management*, prescribes training as an educational activity targeted at acquiring particular knowledge and abilities for a job or task. The focus of training is on the work or job at hand, such as the requirement for efficiency and safety when using a certain piece of machinery or equipment, or the

requirement for an efficient sales force. Effective training programs are necessary to help employees get the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to perform well on the job.

According to Garavan (1997), training is the strategic and rational alteration of behavior through educational events, activities, and programs that enable competitors to reach the levels of knowledge, skills, competencies, and abilities necessary to perform their jobs successfully. T&D programs ensure that the workforce is developed and skilled so that they can perform well (Bataineh, 2014).

The majority of individuals associate employee development with obtrusive, all-day group training sessions. Unfortunately, this hated method of employee development is the exact opposite of how it ought to work and feel to workers. Employee development can take many different forms, including assessment, educational programs, and feedback. The benefits of training on employee performance, when properly implemented, can frequently promote growth both inside the individual employee and within the organization (Katcher & Snyder, 2003).

An organization's actual focus on employee improvement, either as a person or as a contributor to the organization, is one of the more significant aspects of developing employees' skills and abilities. A company's focus on the employee and its raised expectations after the training opportunity may cause the employee's output to increase on its own. Employee output becomes higher when employees receive regular, scheduled feedback, training, and higher expectations (Katcher & Snyder, 2003).

Training is used to distinguish oneself from competitors in a competition, (Jehanzeb & Bashir, 2013). Training reduces the gap between employees' present performance and the targeted performance (Elnaga & Imran, 2013). The efficiency of training programs offered by commercial banks in the public and private sectors was studied by (Nagar, 2009). In their study, Saleem et al. (2011) noted various aspects of creating training programs, including instruction in customer service, safety procedures, a variety of technical and computer operating skills, diversity, instruction in quality programs, and instruction in ethics, communication, and working relationships.

T&D has become a necessary function in most organizations because it leads to high performance in the same field and is important part of human resource department, it has a significant effect on the success of an organization through improving employee performance (Mozael, 2015). However, management must first recognize the need for staff training through organizational analysis, performance evaluation, and job analysis. Organizing training programs is the next stage after determining the assessment of the training needs (Tabassi & Baker, 2009). There is a significant positive relationship between employee T&D and employee performance (Naveed, 2014).

## **2.1 Research Gap**

Employee performance in the industrial, financial, and banking sectors is significantly influenced by T&D. As a result, it has a favorable influence on staff performance at commercial banks in Bangladesh. Previously, its influence on employee job satisfaction in the industrial, financial, and banking sectors has been studied, but little study has been done on the impact of T&D on employee performance of commercial banks in Bangladesh.



From the literature review, it is clear that most scholars attempted to measure employees' job satisfaction from the perspectives of banking and large industrial area employees, rather than employee performance of commercial banks in Bangladesh, but this research attempted to focus on this valuable sector of the banks. There have been several studies on the usefulness of T&D, according to the aforementioned literature review. Furthermore, these researches looked at some of the factors that affect employee performance. However, there are more elements that influence bank employee performance that have yet to be examined.

The majority of the studies analyzed were conducted outside of Bangladesh, while some were largely conducted outside of the banking sector. Meanwhile, the majority of the difficulties that had challenged the foundations of Bangladesh's commercial banking sector had been firmly placed on a lack of personnel training in the banking industry. However, there is a research shortage in this field in Bangladesh, particularly among commercial banks. As a result, the study is carried out. This work is thus driven by the necessity to address these gaps.

## 2.2 Conceptual Framework

Employees are valuable sources for getting a competitive advantage because they are the company's intellectual property, and training is the sole means to grow organizational intellectual property by developing employee competencies. Therefore, the following conclusion could be formed in light of the foregoing literature review:

**Figure 1**  
*Schematic Diagram of the Conceptual Framework*

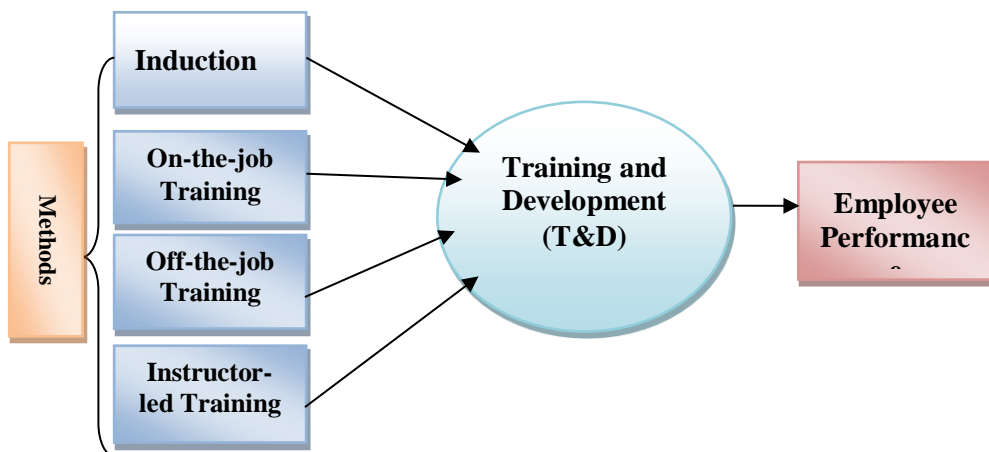


Figure 1 also illustrates the theoretical framework where T&D includes induction, on-the-job training, off-the-job training, and instructor-led training. Employees who regularly participate in successful training sessions can perform well on the job by raising the standard of work, attaining organizational objectives, and getting an advantage over competitors.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Target Population**

We collected data from private and public commercial banks located in Mymensingh and Dhaka regions. Rupali Bank Ltd., Sonali Bank PLC, and Agrani Bank Ltd are selected as the public commercial banks, and Bank Asia Ltd., Mutual Trust Bank Ltd., Prime Bank Ltd., and Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited are selected as the private commercial banks. The employees of the selected commercial banks were used to create a sample that is representative of the population because it is not practical to collect data for the whole statistical population.

#### **3.2 Sampling Technique and Sample Size**

For exploratory and quantitative research, non-probability sampling strategies are frequently acceptable. Because the survey enables the collection of fundamental data from respondents, convenience sampling techniques were used in this instance.

This research used a sample of 260 employees of the selected commercial banks of Bangladesh. For data collection through a questionnaire instrument, researchers employed the survey approach. There was a high response rate of 87.84% higher than the expected 80%. Of the 296 questionnaires distributed 260 responded completely and correctly while just 28 questionnaires were returned incomplete, leaving only 8 questionnaires unanswered. For the sake of more accurate results, only the completed questionnaires were used for the research. The distribution of the survey and the collection of employee feedback took close to six weeks.

#### **3.3 Data Collection**

This study is basically based on primary data but some relevant data were also collected from secondary sources. The primary data was collected through the survey of questionnaires and also by face-to-face conversation. The secondary sources of data include lecture material from the training division and the websites of the selected banks.

#### **3.4 Questionnaire and Measurement Scale**

For the research, a set of questionnaires was used to gather primary data. As a result, a self-administered questionnaire was used as the data collection tool in the survey plan. A descriptive survey with a structured questionnaire carrying 15 items relating to the varied respondents' responses was undertaken and used the 5-point Likert scale to find out the result. In this method, every question carries 5 options and each option carries a specific point in which 5 represented "strongly agree" while 1 stood for "strongly disagree."

### 3.5 Data Analysis Methods

Frequency analysis, descriptive statistics, and pie charts are used to demonstrate the impact of T&D program on employee performance. Data collected on a five-point Likert scale were analyzed using the MS Excel software.

## 4. Data Analysis, Results, and Discussion

The analysis part looks at the demographic information of the respondents and examines the survey responses concerning the impact of T&D on employee performance. The demographic profile of the respondents is represented in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Demographic Information of the Selected Respondents*

Descriptions	Items	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative
<b>Gender</b>	Male	179	69	68
	Female	81	31	100
<b>Age</b>	20-30	97	37	37
	30-40	136	52	89
	40-50	23	9	98
	50-60	4	2	100
<b>Education Qualification</b>	Undergraduate	17	7	7
	Graduate	102	39	46
	Post-graduate	127	49	95
	Others	14	5	100
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	58	22	22
	Married	202	78	100
<b>Job Experience</b>	Below 1 year	81	31	31
	1-5 years	105	40	71
	6-10 years	69	27	98
	Above 10 years	5	2	100
<b>Status of Respondents</b>	Top Management	15	6	6
	Senior Management	47	18	24
	Middle Management	92	35	59
	Junior Management	106	41	100

Source: Survey data

As shown in Table 1, out of 260 respondents, men consisted of 69% while women make up only 31%. The age of majority of respondents were between 30 to 40 years. The age group of 20 to 30 years has the second-highest percentage of respondents (37%). The age range of 40 to 50 years has the third-highest percentage of workers (9%). In terms of educational background, 49% of employees hold a postgraduate degree, 39% hold a graduate degree, 7% hold an undergraduate degree, and 5% hold a different type of degree. Additionally, it reveals that 40% of employees have 1 to 5 years of work experience, 31% have below 1 year of work experience, 27% have 6 to 10 years of experience, and only 2%

have 10+ years of experience. Employees also make up the majority of the junior staff (41%), the second-highest group of the senior staff (35%), the third-highest group of the managerial staff (18%), the fourth-highest group at the top level staff of 6% and it is the smallest percentage.

**Table 2**

*Summary of Survey Responses Concerning the Impact of T&D on Employee Performance*

Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. The T&D programs for employees are periodically reviewed.	15	6	34	13	60	23	125	48	26	10
2. Employee performance is enhanced by training, which also increases job security of the bankers.	42	16	156	60	13	5	39	15	10	4
3. Training is highly important for employees to do their jobs effectively.	52	20	140	54	44	17	16	6	8	3
4. Training is required to strengthen the communication skills and completes the job with all parties related to their works.	122	47	83	32	34	13	18	7	3	1
5. Employees acquire technical knowledge and skill through training.	11	4	49	19	42	16	23	9	135	52
6. Training increases employee confidence when performing work related task after training.	29	11	151	58	44	17	31	12	5	2
7. Employee performance and proficiency has improved after receiving training.	34	13	140	54	16	6	31	12	39	15
8. Training helps employees to improve proficiency through adapting with new devices and technological developments for better performance and services.	153	59	24	9	39	15	31	12	13	5
9. T&D influences the managerial skills and tasks of employees and it improves the performance with competence of the bankers.	18	7	68	26	47	18	117	45	10	4
10. Training increases job efficiency and raise the quality of services provided by the personnel as a result of fewer mistakes.	26	10	156	60	47	18	18	7	13	5
11. Ability to lead effectively and to give it the subordinates, the appropriate direction is a result of T&D of skill and knowledge.	31	12	138	53	44	17	42	16	5	2

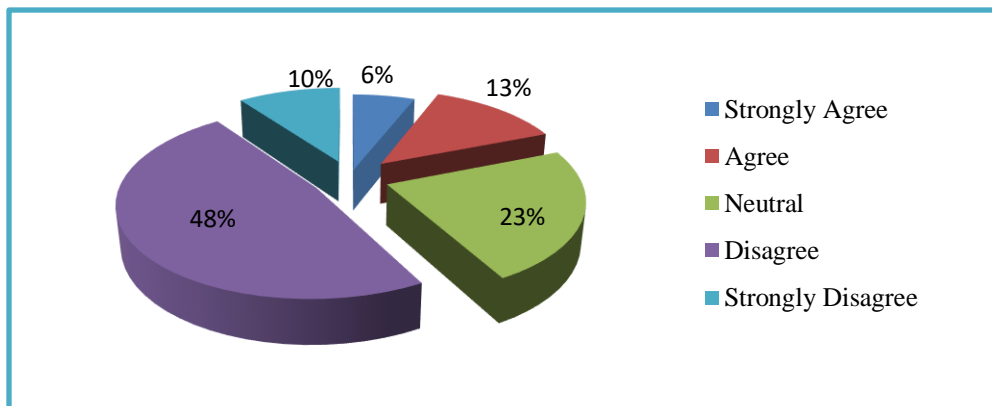
12. Employees are acquired human, conceptual and decision making skills through T&D.	47	18	159	61	26	10	21	8	7	3
13. T&D enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of the work being performed by employees.	83	32	112	43	28	11	34	13	3	1
14. T&D promotes innovation and creativity for competitive advantage by enhancing employee capacity and efficiency of the bankers.	18	7	55	21	83	32	99	38	5	2
15. Norms and values of the employees and policies and procedures of the organizations are clearly explained to new employees during induction training.	23	9	143	55	55	21	31	12	8	3

Note: f = frequency.

Table 2 summarizes the responses concerning the effect of T&D on employee performance. Whereas, Figure 2–16 depict the responses on 15 individual questions concerning the impact of T&D on employee performance.

**Figure 2**

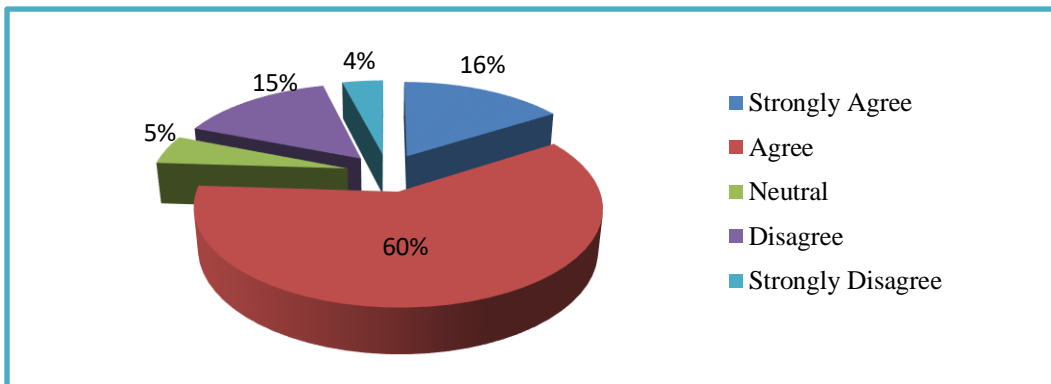
*Response Concerning “T&D Programs Are Periodically Arranged for Employees”*



According to Figure 2, 58% of respondents disagree that programs for employee T&D are examined and modified regularly. The remaining 23% were indifferent on the subject, and 19% agreed that employee T&D initiatives are assessed and enhanced regularly. The commercial banking industry uses a variety of training techniques, as demonstrated here. Banks most frequently use on-the-job training, which includes mentoring, talks, and job rotation. In Bangladeshi banks, the majority of T&D initiatives take place once every three months. Many banks offer funding and vacation time to staff members for T&D, and they also implement a variety of training techniques to improve staff members’ skills and knowledge.

**Figure 3**

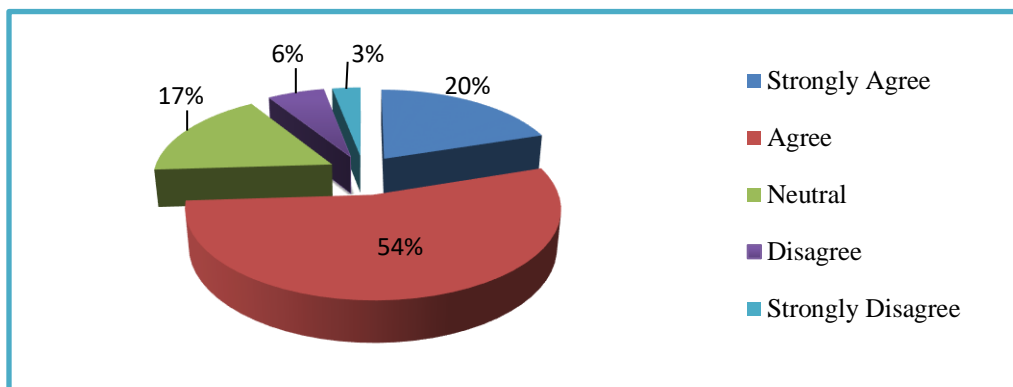
Response to the Statement “Training Enhances Employee Performance and Increases Job Security”



As shown in Figure 3, 76% of participants in total agreed that training increases their performance and increases their degree of job security; 5% were neutral on the subject, and 19% disputed that training really does increase performance. Effective employee training increases employee performance, according to a study that backs up this conclusion. Therefore, it is reasonable to anticipate precision, efficacy, quality work, sound safety procedures, and positive client experiences. Five percent of participants were neutral, which may have been a result of the fact that the organization never sends these workers for training. A total of 19% of participants disputed the idea that training improves performance. Proper training will cover how to identify workplace hazards, address them, and avoid them.

**Figure 4**

Response Concerning the Statement “Training Is Very Important for All Employees to Perform Effectively”

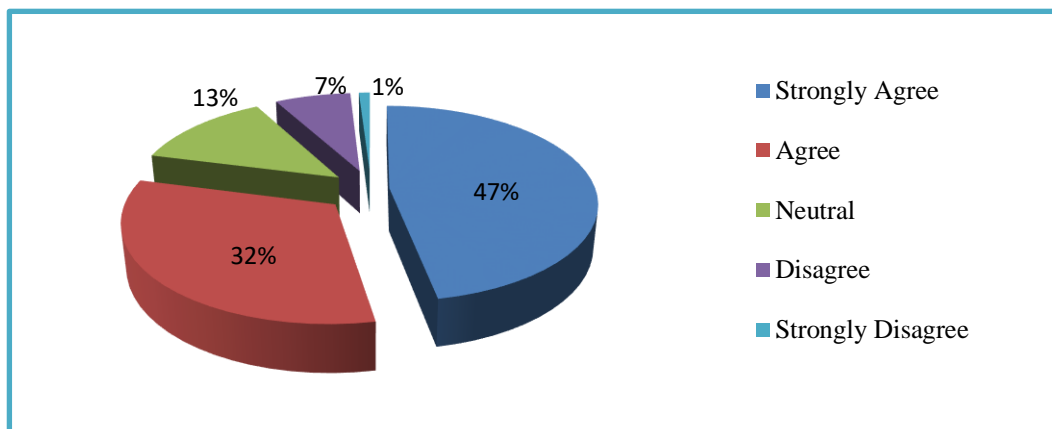


According to Figure 4, it can be said that a total of 54% agreed, 20% strongly agreed that training is highly important for employees to do their jobs effectively; 17%

were neutral on the matter, 6% disagreed and 3% strongly disagree that training is crucial for people to accomplish their jobs. Here, it is clear that T&D programs are very important for the employees to perform their regular activities. They enhance employee performance, boost employee productivity, reduce employee turnover, and improve company culture. The ability of employees to perform their jobs is improved when they obtain proper training. They learn more about safe practices and how to carry out simple jobs according to the right protocol. The personnel stays current on banking advancements through ongoing training as well. Competent staff members who stay current with evolving banking regulations assist their organizations in maintaining their leadership position and position as major competitors.

### Figure 5

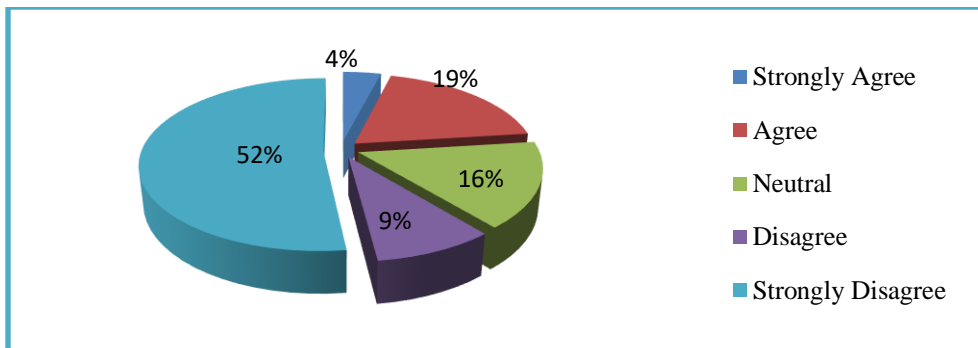
*Reply Concerning the Statement “Training Is Necessary to Improve Communication and Finish the Regular Activities.”*



As demonstrated in Figure 5, a total of 79% of participants agreed that training is necessary to improve your communication skill to accomplish the tasks with all parties; 13% was neutral and only 8% disagreed that training is vital to improve communication skills that are required to complete duties with all parties. Effective employee training leads to creating a way to communicate with others effectively. Frontline employee training should not just cover job-specific skills but should also emphasize communication skills. Employees who sign up for a communication skills training course show that they are prepared to participate in the process of growing and enhancing their connections with those around them. However, they won't be able to have better connections unless they put the lessons they learn in training to use.

**Figure 6**

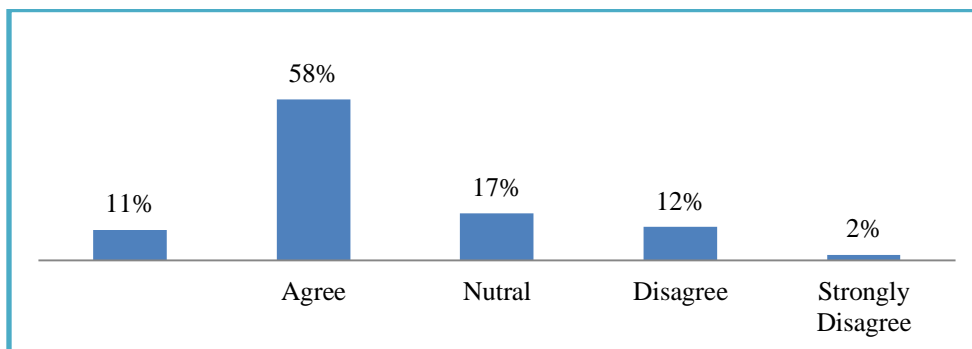
Response to the Statement “Workers Develop Their Technical Expertise through Training.”



According to Figure 6, 16% of the participants had no opinion; these workers lacked certainty that training affords workers the chance to learn new information. However, 61% of participants as a whole disagreed that training results in new knowledge and skills being acquired by employees. These individuals most likely went to a training session that had nothing to do with their jobs at the company. Only 23% of participants agreed that employees gain new knowledge and skills through training.

**Figure 7**

Response Concerning “Training Increases Employee Confidence when they Perform Training Relevant Tasks.”

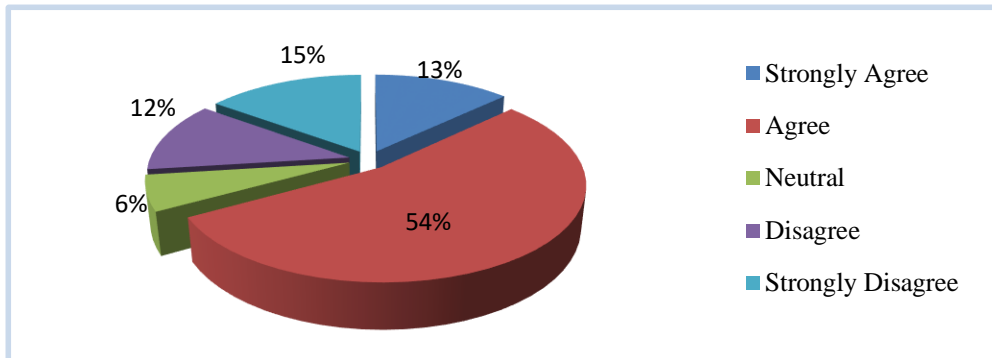


It is evident from Figure 7, that a total of 69% of participants agreed that training promotes employee confidence when executing his or her work after training; 17% were neutral on the topic; and 14% disagreed that training increases employee confidence while performing their tasks. In this regard, they emphasize how training can help employees feel more confident and have their worth validated. Additionally, they emphasize how new information, skills, and attitudes are imparted to employees through training to make them more conscious of their existing knowledge and abilities.



**Figure 8**

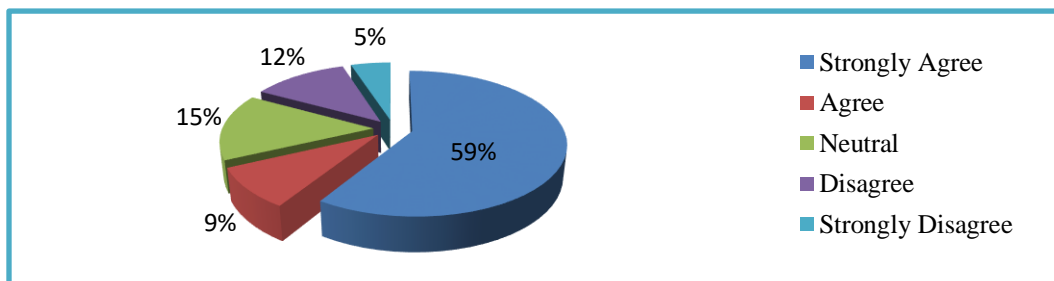
*Response to the Statement “Employee Performance and Competency Is Increased After Obtaining Training.”*



As shown in Figure 8, the majority of participants 67% agreed that training increases employee performance and proficiency. Only 27% disagreed with this statement, while 6% were neutral. When they claim that employee development is the main determinant in the building of employee human capital, which determines the long-term advancement of the employees, they are saying that training increases employee performance.

**Figure 9**

*Response to the Statement “Training Enables Workers to Become More Proficient By Adjusting to New Tools and Technological Advancements for Better Performance and Services.”*



According to Figure 9, employees who have received the proper training can easily adapt to cutting-edge technology, including robots and computer-based industrial processes. Only 15% of participants were neutral; these staff members were unsure whether training helped staff members adapt to new developments or their intelligence. A total of 68% of participants agreed that training aids in employees’ ability to adapt to new developments to increase productivity. However, 17% of participants disagreed that training aids in employees’ ability to adapt to new developments and believed that this ability depends on the employees’ level of intelligence. To keep managers on staff and to

sustain productivity, engagement, and lower attrition, training is essential. On-demand training can assist new and experienced managers in fitting learning into their busy day. Personalized training that suits the requirements and skills of the manager is essential. According to the report, managers in this cutthroat market are looking for additional training, and businesses that offer it will gain. So, training helps employees improve proficiency by adapting to new devices and technological developments for better performance and services.

**Figure 10**

*Response Concerning the Statement “T&D Influences the Managerial Skills and Tasks of Employees.”*

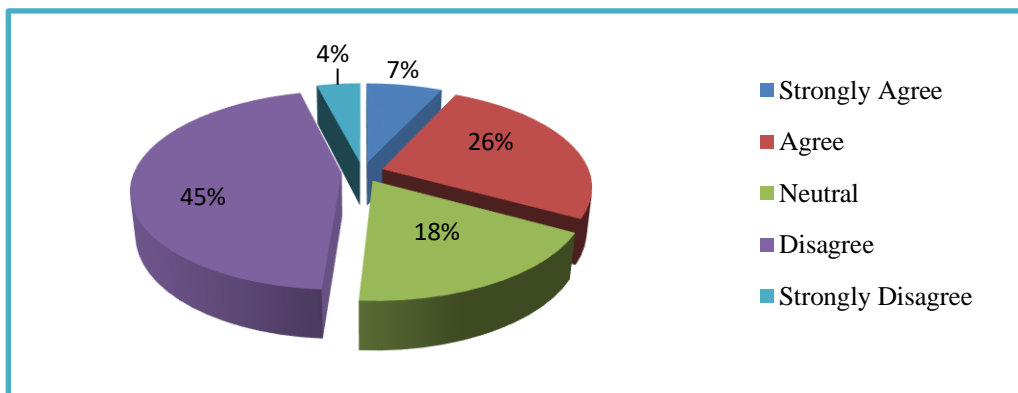
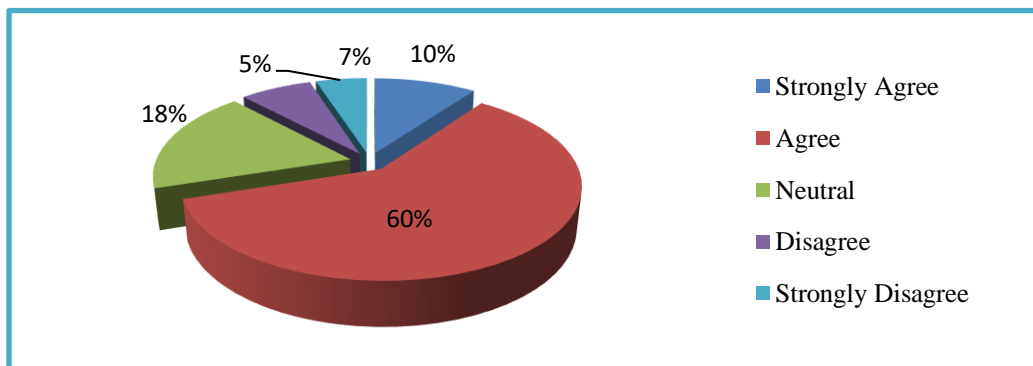


Figure 10 shows that a total of 33% of participants agreed that T&D influences the managerial skills and tasks of employees and improves your performance with competence; 18% were neutral on the matter and 49% disagreed that that T&D has an impact on the managing tasks and abilities of employees and that it enhances performance with competence.

**Figure 11**

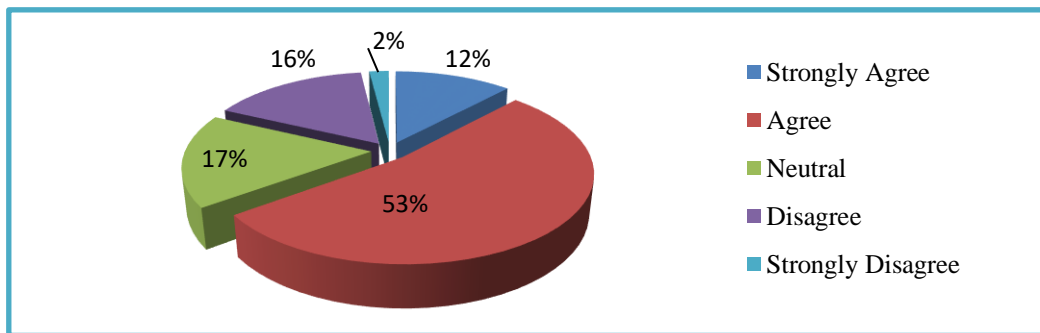
*Reply concerning the Statement “Employees Become More Effective at Their Jobs and Deliver Higher-Quality Services because They Make Fewer Errors through T&D.”*



According to Figure 11, a total of 70% of participants agreed that T&D increases job efficiency and raises the quality of services provided by the personnel as a result of fewer mistakes; 18% were neutral and only 12% disagreed that T&D improves the quality of work services, creates dynamic effort and work efficiency of by the employees as a result of fewer mistakes being made. Training programs assist employees in improving their success and efficiency at work. Training can also help a person learn the necessary abilities for a certain job. Nowadays, many businesses attempt to provide training programs for their staff to help them reach certain goals.

**Figure 12**

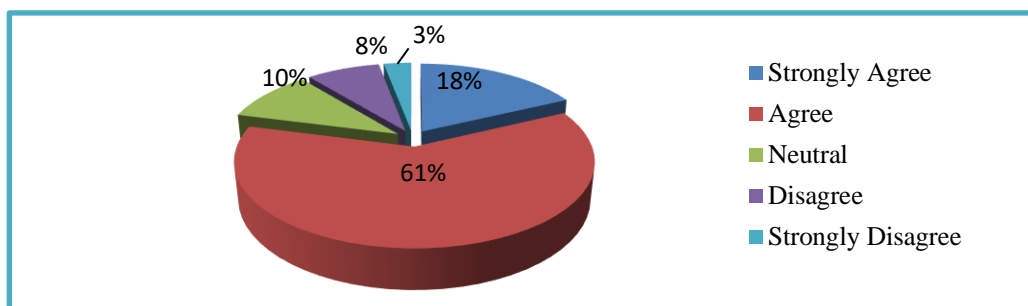
*Response about “T&D Improves the Capacity to Lead Effectively and to Provide the Right Direction to Subordinates.”*



As shown in Figure 12, a total of 65% of participants agreed that the skill and knowledge gained through development enabled them to deliver quality leadership and provide the right direction to their subordinates; 17% were neutral on the issue and 18% disagreed that the ability to lead effectively and give the team members the proper direction is a result of T&D as a person. However, when the banks provide T&D to their employees that allows employers to pinpoint the knowledge and skills they want their employees to have. T&D programs can educate employees about new skills or provide updates on existing skills to enhance performance, proficiency, and productivity.

**Figure 13**

*Response Concerning the Statement “T&D Helps Employees to Acquire Human and Decision Making Skills.”*



Ten percent of participants were undecided; these employees lacked confidence that training allows employees to learn new information. However, 79% of participants as a whole agreed that training results in managerial, strategic, and decision-making knowledge and skills being acquired by employees. Only 11% of respondents disagreed that training aids employees in improving their conceptual, interpersonal, and decision-making abilities. Technical skills are important for first-line managers of a bank who spend much of their time training and answering questions about work-related problems. Human skills are important for all levels of managers but are especially needed for mid-level managers and conceptual skills are needed at the top level of managers. Training programs change the skill level of employees.

**Figure 14**

*Reply about "T&D Enhances the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Work Being Performed by Employees."*

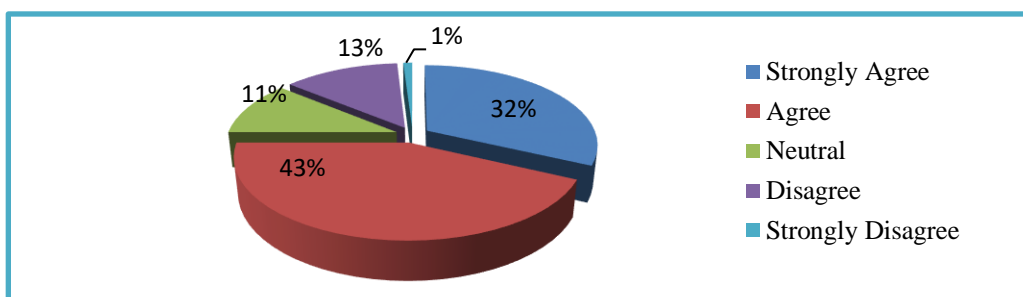


Figure 14 shows that a total of 75% of participants agreed that the efficacy and efficiency of the work that employees undertake are improved via T&D; 11% were neutral on the issue and 14% disagreed that employee productivity and effectiveness are increased through T&D. Here, it can be seen that majority of the respondents were positive in enhancing their effectiveness and efficiency for better perform in their workplaces. Effective training programs can make the employees of the bank work effectively. With training people gain efficiency and confidence and this efficiency and confidence is seen in the output, productivity, and results. And also helps them to gain knowledge and insight into the workings of the organization.

**Figure 15**

*Response Concerning the Statement "T&D Promotes Employees' Innovative and Creativity."*

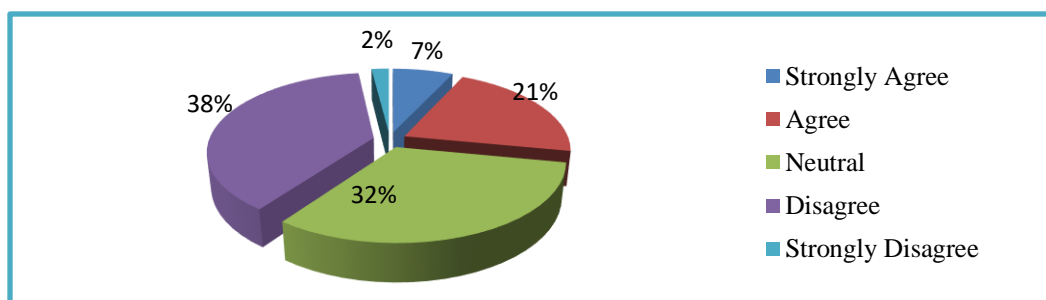
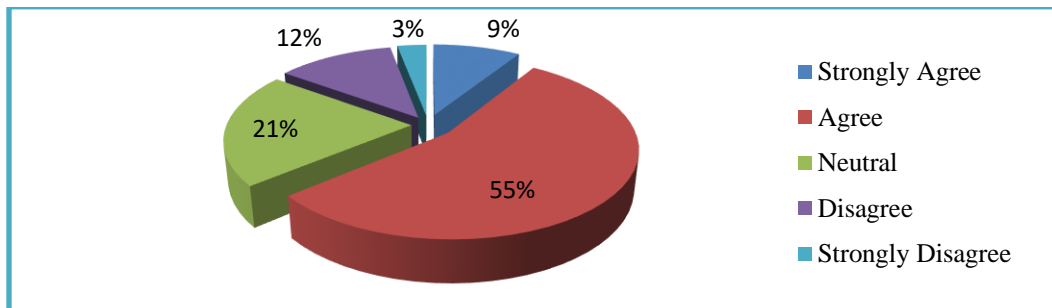


Figure 15 demonstrates that a total of 28% of participants concurred that T&D stimulates innovation and creativity for a competitive edge by enhancing worker capacity and efficiency; 32% were undecided on the subject; and 40% disagreed. Training programs are arranged for employees and developments are arranged for executives. Most of the respondents were in middle and lower-level situations that are why they thought that there were little effects to promote their creative and innovative skills and efficiency.

**Figure 16**

*Response Concerning the Statement “T&D Improves Employee Attitudes, Behaviors, And Values and Introduces Organization’s Policies and Work Procedures.”*



It is evident from Figure 16 that a total of 64% of participants agreed that during induction training, new employees receive a thorough explanation of the organization’s policies and procedures as well as the norms and values of the staff; 21% were neutral on the topic; and 15% disagreed that new hires receive thorough explanations of company policies and procedures during induction training, as well as the norms and values of the workforce. In this regard, underline how training can provide workers with a sense of increased self-assurance and worth. They also stress the importance of imparting new knowledge, talents, and attitudes to workers through training to raise their awareness of their current skill sets.

## 5. Findings and Recommendations

The findings show that the institution’s training policy was developed to fulfill its goals for T&D. Additionally, the policy offers a cogent framework for T&D activities that enhances access to training aimed at enhancing employee performance. The major findings of the study are as follows:

### 5.1 Major Findings of the Study

The following key findings are outlined below based on the survey and analysis of the data that were gathered for the study. The respondents are given a variety of questions, which are then examined in order to extract more precise information about T&D from the sample banks.

- The impact of T&D on employee interest, attitude, motivation, and morale is significant. The goal of training is to increase bank workers' capacity to meet organizational needs in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values.
- The majority of employees believe that the processes for maintaining T&D are not being effectively maintained and that the procedures provided do not produce the results that are necessary for them to execute their duties.
- As a result, the study's findings show that training enhances worker performance. While the majority of participants felt that training boosts employee confidence while executing his or her activity after training, only a small number of participants agreed that employees acquire technical skills and knowledge following training.
- The study's results also show that training boosts employee morale, and the majority of participants thought that training inspires workers to perform better. Participants also concurred that staff can adjust to new advances with the aid of training.
- T&D are crucial components of performance for almost all commercial bank staff.
- Some commercial bank employees are so uninformed about technology and technical issues that they cannot finish the task properly and take a long time.
- Banks place less emphasis on the software and modern technology-based training that is crucial for keeping up with the competition.
- The majority of employees said that their ability to lead effectively and give their subordinates the proper guidance was a result of their continued education and growth.
- Employee skill, productivity, and knowledge can all be improved through T&D, and managerial tasks can also be enhanced.

## **5.2 Recommendations of the Study**

It is challenging to endorse commercial banks, despite the fact that they are the oldest in the banking sector. The recommendations from this survey are listed below. The following suggestions should prompt the banks to take the necessary action:

- The importance of T&D must be given equally by all employees because not all employees are given the same weight in this area.
- It is needed to improve the quality of the training which is provided by the bank.
- The goal of the training program is to make it appealing to all of the employees so that they are motivated to participate in the program.
- To train the employees, it is crucial to hire highly qualified trainers with expertise because they can actually improve the employees.
- Banks should enhance their training programs in order for employees to learn new technical skills and knowledge during training.
- Since there is a significant communication gap in banks, it is necessary to provide training in communication skills so that employee and customer communications can be enhanced.

- They should pay greater attention to the value of technology-based training that is based on digitalization, software, and updates because it is crucial for providing rapid and better services as well as for competing in the market.
- After finishing any training session, participants should provide feedback, which will serve as the foundation for any program modifications.
- Therefore, it is advised that each individual be more proactive, aim to be more creative and original, and do so in order to fulfill their share of the contribution through their profession and expertise.

### **5.3 Limitations of the Study and Future Directions**

This analysis was only centered on selected commercial banks and other banks were not included was one of its main limitations. Another drawback was that, due to time restrictions, only the Mymensingh and Dhaka regions were examined; additional branches of the chosen commercial banks in the other regions were left out. This study focused on Bangladesh's commercial banking industry. Researchers can do the same research in any other business, including the financial sector, the IT sector, the RMG sector, the SME sector, the education sector, the hospital sector, the hotel industry, the medical industry, etc. This study can also be carried out in any other cities, provinces, or nations. There are several sampling techniques available. It would be possible to undertake a qualitative research study to examine how T&D affects employee performance. Since in-depth interviews provide more information than questionnaires provide, qualitative approaches would enable the researcher to conduct interviews to get data from the respondents. Many banks used a variety of training strategies to obtain a competitive edge, depending on the needs of their workforce. It has a big influence on the sectors' capacity to maximize earnings, but there is still a need to use T&D to increase employee performance.

## **6. Conclusions**

In Bangladesh, there is fierce competition in the commercial banking industry. Providing excellent customer service to the bank's customers is essential to its success. When staff receive T&D, it is feasible to deliver successful service to clients since these programs increase productivity and profitability and foster a favorable attitude toward profit orientation, which aids the business in achieving its long-term objectives. The employees of banks need to be able to adapt to a new environment or circumstance because the technologies, systems, processes, and procedures used in banks are changing rapidly. This is why employees of banks are required to go through T&D activities. The ability to complete all of the bank's tasks is another benefit of training. It aids in gaining a competitive edge as well. The modern banking industry's success or failure rests on the caliber of its people resources, which can only be achieved through T&D. To improve their job skills and knowledge, all employees should have access to the T&D program. An employee's competence and understanding of their current job are upgraded when they receive T&D. It will boost their self-assurance and professional competence. T&D essentially improves an employee's expertise and knowledge of their jobs. By raising awareness of the advantages of T&D among employees and managers, the gap between employee knowledge and skills

and the skills needed to function successfully and efficiently should be reduced. Researchers may spread this awareness by highlighting the advantages of T&D; additional publications on these topics are required in order to persuade managers that implementing T&D programs will result in a win-win situation.

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# **Women Representation in Urban Local Government of Bangladesh: Laws and Realities**

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**Abstract:** Women's representation and meaningful participation in decision-making are prerequisites for women's empowerment, which ultimately contributes to the overall socio-economic development of any country. Upon realizing this fact, Bangladesh Government enacted several laws to ensure women's representation in different local government (LG) tiers. This paper intends to evaluate the legal provisions concerning women's representation in Bangladesh's urban local governments (ULGs) and draw the practical scenario with associated challenges regarding their participation. Based on primary and secondary data, this study found sufficient provisions related to women's representation in the Constitution of Bangladesh and local government laws. However, the state of meaningful women's participation was found unsatisfactory. Male-dominated society, sharing wards with male colleagues, lack of educational qualification, negative attitudes towards reserved seats, unawareness about duties, lack of cooperation from male colleagues, and less priority to women than male colleagues are the key impediments to women's participation in local government institutions (LGIs). This study emphasizes the specification of the power and functions of women representatives in ULGs and building awareness of the rights of women representatives by themselves. Moreover, this study suggests a healthy relationship between male and female colleagues to enable women representatives to hold responsible positions.

**Keywords:** Urban local government, women representation, meaningful participation, local government laws, reserved seats

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## **1. Introduction**

Local Government (LG) is an administrative cum political subdivision of a state. It is constituted by law, recognized as a minor territory, and has substantial control over local affairs, including the power to impose taxes (Siddiqui, 2005). Local Government Institutions (LGIs) perform various functions under the orbit of relevant laws and thus establish a bridge between political leaders and general people. Moreover, LG is such an avenue from which leaders can gain practical experience before they move to national politics. Therefore, it is considered the most viable vehicle for evolving the democratic process and participatory development in a country (Khan, 2015).

Women's participation in politics is a significant way to establish their positions. It is pivotal to any nation's economic, social, and democratic development (Shetty & Kodandarama, 2019). Equal participation of both men and women in politics is of utmost need for the development of women. It is not merely for equity or democracy but for women's and society's well-being (Khan, 2015). The goal of development, peace, and equality cannot be achieved without women's active participation and inclusion in all spheres of decision-making. Under-representation of women at any level of governance and decision-making indicates democratic deficiency.

Women's role in decision-making is considered essential in ensuring their empowerment. Upon realizing this, the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) has taken steps to ensure women's representation in political life, including at national and local levels. The Local Government (Union Parishad) Second Amendment Act, 1997 of Bangladesh is a landmark document ensuring women's access to local-level politics. This amendment introduces direct elections for women-reserved seats in LG. Affirmative action to provide the structural framework for women's representation in the political decision-making process creates an opportunity to bring women to the arena of local-level leadership (Khan & Ara, 2006). Besides, the GOB has enacted LG laws for different tiers of LGIs based on constitutional provisions. Though there are laws to ensure the representation of women in LG, there is still a question of whether they can truly participate in all decisions and whether they face any challenges in active participation. In this context, this study intends to find out the laws regarding women's representation in urban local government (ULG) and their state of participation with associated challenges.

Making women an active part of all development activities is a priority agenda for the policymakers of the GOB. However, the country's political field is still, by and large, unofficially reserved for men alone. Thus, systematic incorporation of women is needed to enhance the efficiency and quality of LG services. The quota system for women in LGs is an important initiative for women's empowerment in Bangladesh, but it is not enough. Additional strategies are required to support and accelerate the process, which requires further research.

As the present study has focused on the law and practice, academics, LG experts, policymakers, legislators, and development partners are expected to get new insights. Such insight will ultimately help make LGIs more effective and a venue of true democracy. In the present study, legal provisions have been analyzed elaborately. Thus, stakeholders will find most laws on LG relating to women's representation in one research and also the defects in the legal provisions. Furthermore, this study has been conducted on the two tiers of ULGs: city corporation and paurashava. In this context, the current study has added a new dimension to the existing stock of knowledge in legal and social science fields. The remainder of this paper is organized into six sections. Section 2 explains the methodology of the study followed by LG laws and the structure of LGIs in Section 3. Section 4 narrates the laws regarding women's representation in ULGs. Section 5 portrays the realities of women's participation in Bangladesh, followed by a conclusion in Section 6.

## 2. Methodology of the Study

This qualitative study was conducted in the Rajshahi district of Bangladesh. Rajshahi district comprises 96 local government units, as shown in Table 1. The population of the study covers all the women members of different tiers of ULG in the district.

**Table 1**  
*Local Government Institutions in Rajshahi Districts*

Serial No.	Name of Local Government	Frequency
1.	Zilla Parishad	1
2.	City Corporation	1
3.	Upazila Parishad	9
4.	Paurashava	14
5.	Union Parishad	71
Total		96

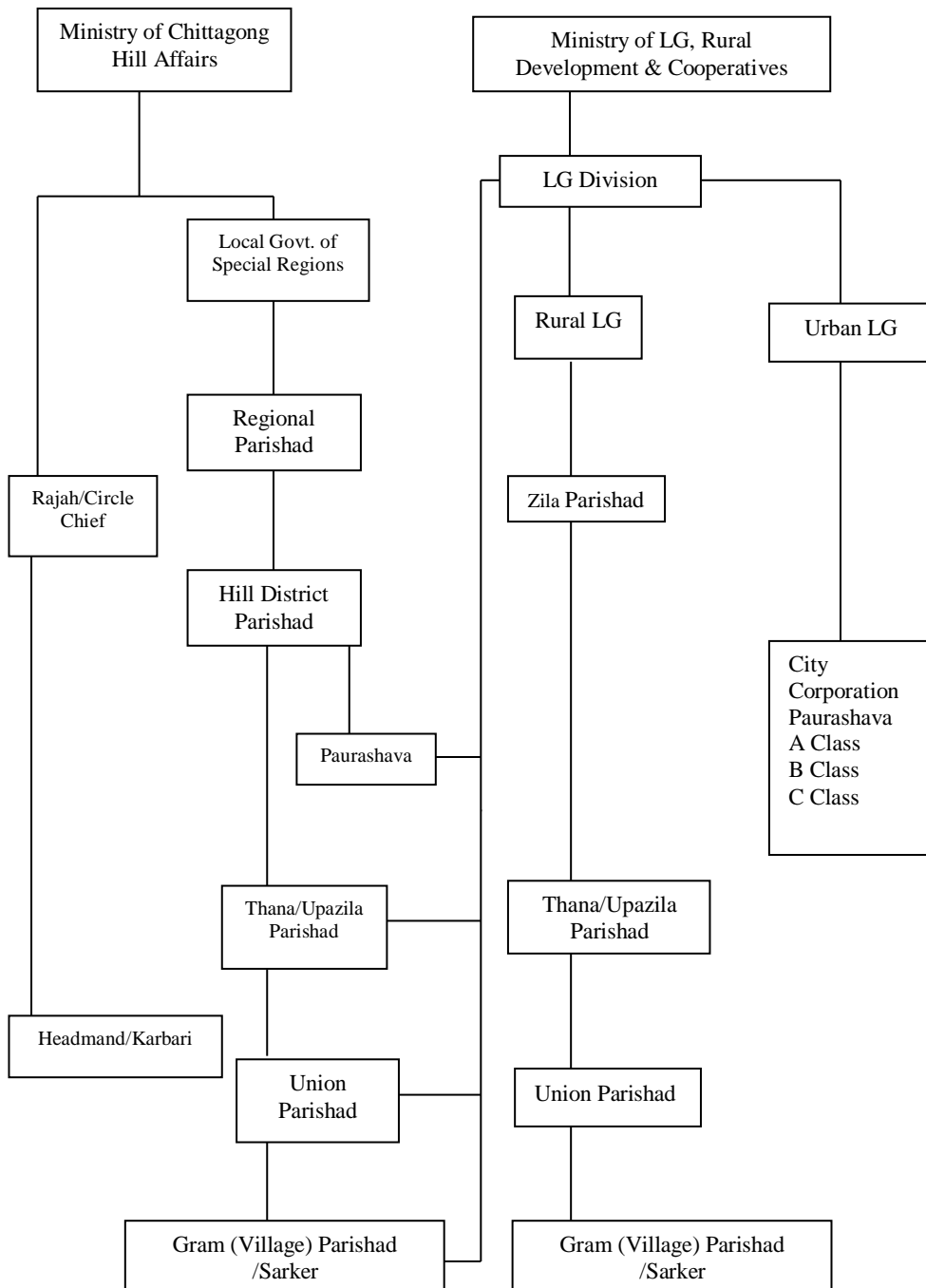
ULGs of the Rajshahi district consist of one city corporation and fourteen paurashavas. Rajshahi City Corporation is the only city corporation under consideration and the largest unit among ULGs in the district. Besides, seven paurashavas were randomly selected (50% of the population). Therefore, the sample area of the study covers eight ULG units in Rajshahi. Thus, all the 31 women elected members from reserved and general seats of these eight units are the sample of this study.

This study was based on primary and secondary sources of information. Primary data sources constituted the sample of women representatives from selected ULGIs, whereas secondary data sources covered relevant books, journals, dissertations, newspapers, and publications of government and international organizations. Primary data of this study has been collected through a semi-structured questionnaire survey. After completion of data, it is verified, reviewed, and scrutinized to avoid any errors and inconsistencies. Simple statistical tools, such as frequency distribution and percentage, were used to analyze primary data. Finally, the findings have been presented descriptively and supported by tables and graphs.

## 3. Local Government Laws and the Structure of LGIs in Bangladesh

The GOB emphasizes efficiency in implementing rural development programs through economic reforms and structural adjustments. It is stated in the 4th five-year-plan (1990–95) of Bangladesh that people's participation is an essential element in the development process. It is also stated that the government should play a pivotal role in creating opportunities for the rural people's meaningful participation in the development process, where they will design their development projects (Mujeri & Singh, 1997).

**Figure 1**  
Organogram of Local Government in Bangladesh



Source: Tofael Ahmed (2002) (Khan, 2015)

There are provisions in the Constitution of Bangladesh regarding LG regulations. Meaningful participation of citizens through election is the fundamental principle of state policy of the Constitution of Bangladesh (The Constitution of Bangladesh, 1972, Art. 11). Moreover, articles 59 and 60 have given the authority to establish LG. According to article 59, LG in every administrative unit shall be entrusted to bodies of elected persons. Therefore, declaration as an administrative unit is one of the conditions for establishing any tier of LG. An administrative unit is a district or other area designated by the law (The Constitution of Bangladesh, 1972, art. 152(1)). LGs perform their functions according to the guidelines in article 59(2) of the Constitution. According to article 60, LG bodies can exercise several powers, such as budget preparation, fund maintenance, and tax imposition.

The Legislative body has absolute power to enact laws relating to LG in compliance with the provisions of the Constitution. According to article 7, a law will be void if it contains anything contradictory to the Constitution. In this context, there are two historical examples. First, the Supreme Court announced *Gram Sarker Ain, 2003* void for incorporating provisions inconsistent with the Constitution (*BLAST v. Bangladesh, 2003*). Another example was in 1991 when the government abolished the Upazila Parishad established under the Upazila Parishad and Upazila Administration Ordinance, 1982. The decision was confronted before the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. The court announced its judgment that Upazila Parishad was not declared an administrative unit under article 59 of the Constitution. Thus, it was not properly formed as a local government institution (Rahaman & Hasan, 2014). The two judgments mentioned above imply that the legislative body has the authority to enact laws for the smooth functioning of LG; however, it must be made following the constitutional provisions (*Kudrat-E-Elahi Panir v. Bangladesh, 1992*).

In addition to general constitutional provisions, there are a few specific legislations related to LG, which include Hill District Local Government Parishad Act, 1989; Zila Parishad Act, 2000; Upazila Parishad Act, 1998; Local Government (Union Parishad) Act, 2009; Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009; and Local Government (Paurashava) Act, 2009. Besides the constitutional provisions and statutory enactments, there are several rules, regulations, by-laws, office orders, and project guidelines adapted by the concerned authority (Local Government Division, 2015).

In each administrative district of Bangladesh, there is a tier system of LG comprising three levels of rural councils and urban municipalities. Therefore, the LG system of Bangladesh is divided into rural and urban areas side by side, a separate system in hill tract districts. The rural council has three tiers, Zilla Parishads, Upazila Parishads, and Union Parishads. The urban council comprises city corporations and paurashavas (Bangladesh National Portal, GOB). Each tier has a different law to regulate the LGIs. Besides, there are laws for three hill tract districts. Figure 1 shows the structure of LG in Bangladesh.

#### 4. Provisions relating to Women Representation in ULG

LG is used to describe the transmission of power from the national government to local authorities (Bhuiyan, 2011). Several international conventions have incorporated provisions to ensure the representation of women in the decision-making process in every sphere of life (Zaman, 2012). There are two enactments to deal with the provisions of city corporation and paurashava. Women members can represent directly under the statutory laws and represent under different regulations, office orders, and different projects. This section depicts the laws regarding women's representation in ULG.

##### 4.1 Provisions Concerning Women Representation in Paurashava

Although LG is an ancient institution in Bangladesh, LGIs got their legal shape under the British regime. Nasirabad, the first and earliest municipality in the sub-continent, was set up in 1856 (Siddiqui, 1992). According to sections 6 and 7 of the Local Government (Paurashava) Act of 2009, a paurashava shall be constituted with a mayor, an equal number of councilors according to the number of wards, and one-third of female councilors in the reserved seats. The scope of reserved seats does not bar any female member from participating in a direct election for general seats.

According to section 40 of the Act, the councilors of the paurashava will form a mayor panel comprising three members among them. One of those panel members must be from the councilors of the reserved seats. Section 55 states that the paurashava will constitute ten standing committees for two and a half years. This section also states that a maximum of five members will constitute each committee. Forty percent of members in each committee will be female councilors. The standing committees are related to— (1) establishment and finance; (2) taxation and collection; (3) accounts and audit; (4) women and children; (5) urban planning, services for citizens and development; (6) observation, monitoring and control of market prices; (7) law and order and public safety; (8) information and culture; (9) communication and physical infrastructure; and (10) fishery and livestock. Per this section, in addition to the standing committees, a paurashava can form, if required, additional committees. According to Paurashava Ideal Tax Schedule, 2014, all the standing committees along with the additional standing committees will be constituted as follows:

- Councilor (general/reserve), ward no – Chairman
- Mayor- Member (ex officio)
- Councilor (general/reserve), ward no – Member
- Councilor (general/reserve), ward no – Member
- Councilor (general/reserve), ward no – Member

**Ward Committee:** Section 14 of the Act states that ward committees comprising not more than ten members should be formed in every ward with the approval of the paurashava council. The elected councilor of each of the wards will be the chairman of the ward committee, and the women councilor of that ward will be the vice-chairman. Forty percent of committee members will be female [Paurashava (Constitution & Function of the Ward Committee) Rules 2012, sec.3]. This committee performs functions related to the

development of the concerned ward and invites the citizens of the ward to discuss the overall condition of the ward, and the way forward for the problems of the concerned ward.

***Town Level Coordination Committee (TLCC):*** To fulfill the objectives of sections 14 and 115 of the Local Government (Paurashava) Act, 2009, TLCC will be formed with 50 members. The mayor will be the chairman of this committee, and the mayor will select 12 councilors as members. In constituting the committee, the condition is that at least one-third of the members will be female (Local Government Division, 2015, p. 126). The TLCC deals with making the overall proposal of paurashava, implementation, and monitoring of those proposals, discussion regarding the tax collection, and rendering services to the general people of the paurashava.

***Khas Collection Committee:*** After the circulation of tender regarding the lease of hatbazar if the lease is not completed within the stipulated time, the paurashava performs the duty to collect the money from the hat bazar. This function is performed by a committee named the khas collection committee. Regardless of the type of paurashava,<sup>†</sup> the committee includes two councilors from the paurashava, including one women councilor (Local Government Division, 2015, p. 340).

***Paurashava Hat-bazar Management Committee:*** For daily management, maintenance, and development of hat-bazars under paurashava, a management committee is formed. All ward councilors, including women members of reserved seats of the concerned paurashava, are members of the committee (Local Government Division, 2015, p. 336 & 346).

***Paurashava Humanitarian Assistance Programme Implementation Committee:*** According to the Humanitarian Assistance Programme Implementation Guidelines 2012-2013, all councilors of the paurashava, including women councilors are members of the Paurashava Humanitarian Assistance Programme Implementation Committee (Humanitarian Assistance Programme Implementation Guidelines 2012-2013, guideline 8.8).

***Paurashava Infrastructure Maintenance Committee:*** All the male and female councilors of paurashava are members of the committee (Rural Infrastructure Maintenance Programme Guidelines 2012-13).

***Project Implementation Committee:*** Every project implementation committee comprises five to seven members. The ward councilor of the respective paurashava becomes the chairman of this committee. A person cannot be a chairman of more than three

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<sup>†</sup>Class A Paurashava's average annual revenue income from its own sources is over Tk. 60,000,00 in three years; Class B Paurashava's average annual revenue income is between Tk. 25,000,01 to Tk. 60,00,000 in three years, and Class C Paurashava's average annual revenue income is between Tk. 10,00,000 to Tk. 25,00,000.



projects in any financial year. If there are more than three projects in a financial year in any paurashava, at least one-fourth of such committees will be chaired by women councilors (Rural Infrastructure Maintenance (TR-Food Grains/Cash) Programme Guidelines 2012-13).

***Paurashava Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) Committee:*** In every paurashava, there is a VGF committee to deal with issuing VGF cards and making the beneficiary list. All the members of the paurashava will be members of this committee (VGF Programme Circular, 2009, art. 5).

#### ***4.2 Provisions Concerning Women Representation in City Corporation***

The Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009 deals with the establishment of the city corporation. According to the Act, there will be one mayor, and the number of councilors specified by the government in the official gazette, including reserved seats for women. The seats for women shall be one-third of the total number of the councilors [Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009, sec. 5]. According to Section 20 of the Act, the councilors of the corporation will form a mayor panel composed of three members comprising one woman councilor of the reserved seats.

***Khas Collection Committee:*** There is a *khas* collection committee in each city corporation. Among the committee members, one member will be the women councilor of the concerned ward (Local Government Division, 2015, p. 336). The committee is assigned to perform the same function as paurashava does.

***City Corporation Hat-bazar Management Committee:*** For daily management, maintenance, and development of hat-bazar under each city corporation, a management committee is formed with four nominated ward councilors by the mayor, including one female member (Local Government Division, 2015, p. 336 & 347).

***City Corporation Humanitarian Assistance Programme Implementation Committee:*** According to the Humanitarian Assistance Programme Implementation Guidelines 2012-2013, various committees are formed to implement the assistance programme. All the ward councilors, including women members of reserved seats, are members of such committees (Humanitarian Assistance Programme Implementation Guidelines 2012-2013, guideline 8.14).

***Allotment Committee:*** There is a committee for the allotment of shops in the markets of the concerned city corporation. Among all members, two councilors (one male and one female) of the corporation will be nominated by the mayor as members of that committee (Rajshahi City Corporation Market by Law, 2014, sec. 3).

As per discussion in this section, laws provide provisions for women representation in several ways. Women councilors can represent the main body of the city corporation and paurashava. They also can represent in different standing committees.

Besides, there are several other committees where women councilors can represent according to the provisions of the law. Apart from the statutory enactments, there are several guidelines from the government by which the representation of women councilors is ensured in different committees in ULG.

## **5. The Scenario of Women Participation in ULG**

LG in Bangladesh is one of the oldest bodies constituted of local representatives at grass root levels where women representatives can raise their voices (Dalia, 2018). The political participation of women in Bangladesh has increased over time (Prodip, 2015). It is a democratic insufficiency if women representation in local governance is poor. In Bangladesh, the provision for representation of women at the local level is ensured by different laws. Despite several attempts to increase women participation at all levels of decision-making, the condition of their participation is still not satisfactory (Ara, 2021). The study of Ara (2021) outlines the differences between women representation and participation. Women representation in LG merely fulfills the legal provisions regarding representation, whereas participation is related to their active or effective engagement. Again, meaningful participation indicates that women representatives should be given a proper opportunity to express their opinions and that those opinions are valued. Although there are provisions for women representation and they represent accordingly but there are questions regarding their participation. The subsequent discussions present the findings concerning notable women participation issues.

### **5.1 Reason to Contest in LG Elections**

The respondents were asked about their inspiration to participate in the LG election. About half of the respondents (48 %) have replied that they have participated in performing social responsibilities. Around 30% of respondents have said that they have got inspiration from their family members. On the other hand, around 15% became inspired to participate in LGs to help people and only 7% of respondents have expressed that becoming an LG representative was their dream. The study by Ferdous and Islam (2021) found that 30% of respondents self-inspired, family members inspired 30%, community members inspired 30%, and the remaining 10% are encouraged by local political parties.

### **5.2 Election Experience**

It is evident from this study that more than half of respondents (55%) have experienced winning elections two to six times and thus participating in LG elections. The rest participated for the first time. The study also finds that the acceptability of experienced representatives is higher than the first-time winner. During the discussion with respondent in Tanore Paurashava on 26 February 2022, one women councilor, who had been elected for the 6<sup>th</sup> time, stated—

“I am more experienced than the male councilor and even the mayor who has been elected for the first time. So, all of them respect my opinion in

making any decision. However, this situation is different for those women representatives elected for the first time.”

### 5.3 Fulfillment of Electoral Manifesto

When the respondents are asked about the fulfillment of the electoral manifesto, they provide mixed reactions. Nearly half (48%) of the respondents have said they have fulfilled only a little of their manifesto. They added that they want to fulfill their commitments but cannot do it due to insufficient resources. Over a quarter (29%) of respondents said they have fulfilled their electoral manifesto. A minority (13%) of the respondents have replied that they cannot fulfill the manifesto because they are not given any resources from the concerned LGI. Only seven percent of respondents have no electoral manifesto, and the remaining three percent skipped this question. Thus, insufficient resources and opportunities are barriers to fulfilling the electoral manifesto of women representatives. It is evident from the study of Dalia (2018) that only a few respondents can fulfill their electoral manifesto, and 45% fulfill their promises partially. They can provide allowances to only a few persons in their areas. A quarter of them has opined that they cannot maintain any promises made at the time of the election, and the rest (22%) have mentioned that they do not make any promises to the people before the election.

### 5.4 The Attitude of Colleagues toward Reserved Seat Representatives

The goal of institutional efficiency cannot be achieved without a healthy relationship among colleagues, irrespective of male or female. As shown in Table 2, around two-thirds of respondents (65%) have said that their male colleagues have a negative attitude towards reserved seat provisions, and the female representatives are elected from those seats. Over a quarter (29%) have said that male members have a positive attitude towards the female, and only six percent of respondents have said that it varies depending on circumstances, such as their experience, relationship with colleagues, affiliation with the political party, family background, and relation with influential persons.

**Table 2**

*Attitude of Men Councilors towards Reserved Seat Councilors*

<b>Attitude</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
It varies	2	6.5	6.5
Negative	20	64.5	71.0
Positive	9	29.0	100.0
Total	31	100.0	

Respondents’ opinions concerning the attitude of male colleagues towards the members of women-reserved seats are mixed in another study. More than 50% of the respondents stated that women representatives from reserved seats encounter negative attitudes from their men colleagues. Moreover, they also said that male colleagues think themselves superior to female members and ignore the views of female members.

Sometimes they ridicule women members for being elected from reserved seats. The remaining respondents have said that male colleagues are respectful towards them (Karim, 2020). The attitude of male councilors towards the female councilors of reserved seats is discriminatory and the male councilors always get priority over the female councilors of reserved seats (*Shamima Sultana Seema and 9 others v. Government of Bangladesh and 3 others*, 2005). During the field survey by the researcher, the attitude of men councilors toward women has been observed as unsatisfactory (Godagari Paurashava, March 5, 2022).

### 5.5 Recommendation of Beneficiaries by Women Members

Women representatives were asked whether they get the opportunity to recommend beneficiaries under different social safety net (SSN) programs. Most respondents have said they do not get equal opportunities to recommend. Sometimes they are not informed about the distribution of relief under different projects.

**Table 3**

*Responses concerning Opportunity to Recommend Beneficiaries*

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
No	6	19.4	19.4
Yes	10	32.2	51.6
Yes, but not accepted always	1	3.2	54.8
Yes, but not equal number	14	45.2	100.0
Total	31	100.0	

It is evident from Table 3 that almost a third (32.3%) of respondents agree that they can recommend it. The remaining respondents have expressed their dissatisfaction regarding their beneficiary recommendation scope. More than two-fifths (45.2%) of the respondents have agreed that they can recommend but not in equal numbers compared to male councilors though a female councilor represents three wards. Regarding the allocation of different development budgets, the scenario is different. Here, the women members are not involved at all. Another study conducted on UZP in this regard support that women members do not get equal opportunity to recommend beneficiaries (Karim, 2020).

### 5.6 Satisfaction at Working Place

In response to the question of whether women members are satisfied in their workplace, the respondents provided mixed reactions. More than half (52%) of the respondents have said they are not satisfied working at LGIs. The rest (48%) of the respondents have said that they are satisfied with working at LGIs.

### 5.7 Cooperation from Male Colleagues

Respondents were asked to express the state of cooperation between male and female colleagues at LGIs. More than two-fifths (45%) of the respondents answered that their male

colleagues do not cooperate with them in any matter. Twenty-six percent of respondents have said that the male members cooperate with them, and another 26% said that sometimes they cooperate, but the scope of their help is minimal. Only three percent of respondents have replied they do not ask for help from male members as they are unwilling to help female colleagues. It has been found in another study that a significant proportion (67%) of respondents have claimed that male members do not cooperate at all regarding decision-making issues. A fifth (20%) of them have said that they are not cooperative. Only a minority (13%) mentioned that the male members are supportive (Nahar, 2019).

### **5.8 Domination of Male Members**

Male domination is one of the significant barriers to women's active participation in the LGs in Bangladesh (Rahman, 2016). Many female councilors are dominated in their working place by their male colleagues. More than two-fifths (45%) of respondents have said that their male colleagues are highly dominating. In a previous study, a fifth (20%) of respondents have said they are dominated sometimes and the situation is gradually improving. A quarter (25%) of respondents have said that nobody is entirely free from domination by male colleagues. The rest (10%) have said that male councilors do not dominate them. (Ferdous and Islam, 2021).

This study also finds similar answers from respondents. When the respondents were asked whether the male member dominates them, almost three-fifths of the respondents (58%) replied that women members are always dominated by their men colleagues. On the other hand, more than a third (36%) of them have said that the male members dominate them in decision-making sometimes; moreover, a minimal number (6%) have replied that male members do not dominate them; instead, they help female members. When asked what type of dominance they face, more than half (51%) have said their male colleagues do not allow them to speak in the meeting. Male colleagues ridicule the ideas of female members, and sometimes, they are given unimportant work to perform. It is also observed during the survey that female members are not allowed to speak in a TLCC meeting at a paurashava (Mundumala Paurashava, March 31, 2022).

### **5.9 Barriers to Women Competing in LG Election**

Respondents were asked whether they faced any barriers to competing in LG elections. Male dominance (32.3% of respondents) and unawareness about women rights (24.8% of respondents) are the two major causes. However, an insignificant number of respondents (19.4%) have replied that they did not face any problems. The current study's finding contradicts other research findings, where a very large majority (88%) of the respondents replied that they faced no problem. A minority (12%) of them said they face a threat from the opposition party so that they do not contest the election (Karim, 2020). To remove the barriers to women candidature, respondents have suggested different ways, such as elimination of discrimination between male and female councilors, ensuring women rights, assigning specific duties to women members, free from political influence, awareness about women rights, support from family and society, and positive attitude.

### 5.10 Representing Three Wards with Less Power

According to law, women councilors from reserved seats must contest from three wards. Therefore, they become councilors of three wards after victory in the elections. However, they practically cannot exercise power equal to the male councilors of a ward. When asked whether this is discrimination against them, a very large majority (84%) of respondents have marked it as discrimination. Less than a fifth (16%) disagreed, saying it is not.

### 5.11 Educational Qualification of the Respondents

When respondents were asked about their educational qualifications, some felt shy to tell their academic level. The educational level of more than two-fifths (42%) of respondents is below SSC. As evident in this study, less than a quarter (23%) of them have completed the SSC level. Here most of the respondents from the city corporation area have completed HSC and are above the HSC level. At paurashavas, the level of education of women members is below SSC in most cases.

**Table 4**

*Educational Qualification of Women Representatives*

<b>Education Level</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Below SSC	41.9
SSC	22.6
HSC	12.9
Degree	3.2
Honors	6.5
Masters	12.9
Total	100

It is observed in another study that more than half of the respondents have educational qualifications below SSC and the rest have SSC degree (Nahar, 2019).

### 5.12 Family Members Involved in Politics

In Bangladesh, most women representatives have been nominated due to their family members' involvement in politics. Many women representatives at national and local levels get nominations as inheritors to their family relations (Ahmed & Hasan, 2018). This study has also found that women representatives with a family with political affiliations are engaged in politics in large numbers. When respondents were asked whether their family members were involved in politics, most respondents (65%) have said their family members are involved in politics. They added that they have got the inspiration to

participate in the election from their family members and the people of the concerned area. The rest (35%) have said that their family members are not involved in politics. It is also evident from this study that the husband of a woman representative interferes in the decision-making process of women representatives.

### **5.13 Equal Importance with Male Colleagues from LGI**

Women representatives were asked about getting equal importance to find out the scenario regarding this. A significant proportion (74%) of the respondents have replied that they never get equal importance as their male colleagues from LGIs. Less than a fifth (19%) of respondents have answered that they get equal importance with male colleagues. A small number (7%) have said that sometimes they get equal importance but upon some conditions, such as family background, political influence, experience, etc. They added that they sometimes get equal importance after complaining about that. Another study corroborates the findings of this study. Due to gender discrimination and non-cooperation from the union parishad chairman and officials, the female representatives receive fewer benefits and opportunities from male colleagues. Besides, for these reasons, they cannot perform their responsibilities properly (Das et al., 2020). However, evidence from other studies shows significant gaps between the legal provision and reality. Most male colleagues do not allow female representatives to undertake responsibilities for any necessary work. They argue that women representatives cannot perform their role in implementing projects (Mohiuddin & Ahmed, 2019).

### **5.14 Role of Women Representatives in Combating Violence against Women**

Respondents were also asked about their role in combating violence against women. Almost all (97%) of respondents have said they try to solve different issues by counseling the parties. One of the respondents has stated—

“As soon as we receive the news of any violence, we go there to observe the matter. Then, we sit down to negotiate the issue. Sometimes some concerned persons are invited to solve the issue. Overall, we always try to solve the issues to do justice to the victim. Moreover, the parties accept the decision in most of the cases.”

Another study supports the current study's findings that in combating violence against women, it is crucial to create awareness and resistance against violence. They have mentioned that usually, they participate in *shalish* relating to violence against women. In case of need, women representatives take victims to the proper authority to get legal aid (Mohiuddin & Ahmed, 2019).

## 6. Conclusion

The Constitution of Bangladesh has emphasized the establishment of LGs with a representative character. Incorporating provisions concerning women's representation in every tier of LG does not ensure their active participation. The male-dominated society is not yet ready to accept women as a part of the decision-making process. Consequently, women lag in leading different sectors, thus causing a big challenge in achieving sustainable development. Based on the findings of the current study, it can be said that the level of women's participation in ULG is still unsatisfactory and thus requires further improvement. This study summarizes the state of women participation in ULGs and the challenges in ensuring effective participation. Women members face different challenges in participating in the decision-making process of ULGs. The women representatives are not satisfied working at their working place. It is observed that though they have been elected several times, they cannot fulfill their electoral manifesto properly. The study further finds that the respondents' educational qualification creates differences between the women and men representatives.

The study has further found that the attitude of men colleagues towards women representatives is not favorable. In many cases, they do not show any respect to women representatives. It has been found that most of the time, the male colleagues do not cooperate with the female colleagues in any difficulties. It is also evident that female representatives are dominated by their male colleagues in decision-making. Male dominance has also been identified as the main barrier to the active participation of women representatives. Further, women representatives need to get equal opportunities and importance from LGIs to recommend beneficiaries. They can recommend but always in a smaller number, and sometimes they do not get any scope to recommend the beneficiary's name. Finally, this paper suggests the following to overcome the above barriers and ensure meaningful women's representation and participation:

- Women members' power and functions should be more specific in related laws, rules, regulations, office orders, and by-laws of LGs;
- There should be some educational qualification for being elected in the LG elections;
- The women representatives should be aware of their rights and duties. They can read the relevant laws, discuss with other persons, take help from the NGO for this purpose;
- The relationship between them should be more reasonable and polite. Positive counseling and advocacy may be made to improve their relationship; and
- The negative attitude towards reserved seats should be changed. Building awareness and effective advocacy may be the way to change the mentality of males and females towards each other.



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# **A Survey Study on Sexual Harassment Experienced by Female Students Traveling Between Chittagong City and the University of Chittagong on Public Transport**

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**Abstract:** Sexual harassment is a common phenomenon in our society that has reached a severe form on public transport, where data shows most passengers have experienced the incident to some degree. This study aims to determine the occurrence of sexual harassment in public transportation and its effects on female students to uphold the dignity of human rights. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data from 120 female students at the University of Chittagong. Statistical analysis gives the result with significant values where half of the respondents reported experiencing sexual harassment on public transportation, and 38.33% say they have experienced it twice or thrice in the past six months. Moreover, 55% of respondents think 999 beneficial, while 33.33% of respondents disagree that women's safety applications are helpful. However, 90% of respondents do not know any martial arts, and 73.33% do not carry anything for safety. It is highlighted that 51.67% considered lack of strong laws may be responsible for sexual harassment and 33.33% filed cases when only severe. This paper ends with recommendations for addressing the issue, including a separate bus for women with female drivers and helpers, the strong enforcement of regulations, the effective involvement of university authorities, and adequate police presence. Appropriate implementation of the suggestions may lead the problem to a sustainable solution.

**Keywords:** Sexual harassment, public transport, Effective laws

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## **1. Introduction**

Sexual harassment is a matter that makes the women folk embarrassed and feared to move in any places with their mental freedom and it grossly degrades their human rights and dignity. Sexual harassment in public place and public transport has become a very severe problem in our country that discourages women to move in any places with mental satisfaction. Even it is such a problem which hampers the female students while moving to their educational institutions. In the present ultra-modern age, the people are thinking for a society beyond discrimination. However, still the society comes across news of sexual

harassment in the daily newspapers almost every day. The talk of equality and the talk for human rights will go in vain if safe society cannot be ensured for women.

Harassment comprises a wide range of criminal activities, which are often described as behavior that demeans, humiliates, or embarrasses a person and is distinguished by its lack of social and moral acceptability. These are actions that, in a legal sense, appear to be disturbing, upsetting or threatening to women. These originate from discriminatory motives and have the appearance of nullifying or limiting an individual's rights.

Sexual harassment is a form of undesired sexual activity that occurs within men and women. It is characterized by a wide range of offensive behaviors such as teasing, winking groping, staring, sexual comments, pinching, telling sexual jokes, spreading sexual rumors, displaying porn films, sketching sexual pictures, and squeezing or stroking ladies' private parts (Madan & Naila, 2016 and Ali & Kramar, 2015). Harassment accusations of this sort might occur for a variety of causes, including assaulting a private person for any reason. Touching can include massaging someone or any part of their body without consent, fidgeting with their hair, grabbing at their clothing with the intention of ripping them off or exposing body parts, caressing their arm, hand, or any other part of their body in an extremely sexual way, hugging an individual without her permission, attempting to kiss someone without asking, cornering a victim with their body. Physical harassment can even be classified as touching oneself ahead of someone if it is done in a sexual manner and makes someone uncomfortable. Harassment occurs in different social places like the workplace, conveyance, home, educational institutions or churches etc. Especially, the article focuses on harassment occurred on public transport. About 94% women in Bangladesh experience harassment publically on transport in verbal, physical or other forms, a study by development organization BRAC (2018) revealed. It operates as sexual pressure that is applied to a person who is not in a strong enough position to reject it (MacKinnon, 1987). Fitzgerald et al., (1995) put them into three groups: sexual coercion, unwanted sexual attention, and harassment based on gender.

Wise and Stanley (1987) proposed that, by identifying 'specific' acts to be included in the phrase, molestation is portrayed as 'exceptional' as opposed to being a frequent display of men's dominance. Experiential reality is likewise excluded from the molestation framework since it is normatively defined. In an example, while calls to 'cheer up' are difficult to identify as molestation under formal standards, they represent a large part of some women's experience of unknown men publicly space and are uniquely gendered and thus behaviors that are not seen as "sexual" or "harassment" may go unreported (Vera-Gray, 2016). Larkin (1997) observed that such occurrences are so frequent that they are rarely categorized as harassment.

There are many international conventions containing the issue of sexual harassment and violence against women. New Women Foundation (2019) reported from GENEVA the platform discussions of a new International Labour Organisation (ILO) a tool to address harassment and violence at work and expresses worry about the potential erosion of internationally recognised international standards for women's rights, including harassment as a form of gender-based violence. The Platform while discussion took into consideration principles from the Convention on the Elimination of all kinds of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Declaration on the Elimination of

Violence Against Women, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women, known as the Belém do Pará Convention, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of girls in Africa, called Maputo Protocol and also the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and force, called the Istanbul Convention.

In Bangladesh, Penal Code, 1860 contains sections 354 and 509 that say about the activities as sexual harassment that are insulting to the modesty of women and provide for the punishments. Section 509 of the said Act has been enlisted in the Mobile Court Act, 2009 for the purpose spot punishment. Similarly, section 78 of the Chittagong Metropolitan Police Ordinance, 1978 and section 76 of The Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance, 1976 contain provisions of penalty for teasing women. More severe and elaborate provision covering the issue has been added in the Prevention of Repression on Women and Children Act, 2000 (Amendment 2003) that includes the physical characteristics like touching various bodily parts of a lady or child, making an impolite gesture or annoying a lady sexually in course of satisfying their feeling mischievously (Khan, 2015). The directives of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh's High Court Division address several difficulties with the concept of harassment against children and girls at employment, at educational institutions, and on the streets. It defines harassment as some sexually suggestive comments or gesture conveying directly or over the phone, sending email in indecent means, watching indecently and use of any offensive languages like etc.

The present law containing provisions restraining sexual harassment in Bangladesh is a positive beginning, but it is antiquated and limiting because it refers to harassment as an offense to a woman's modesty. Moreover, non-explicitly sexual forms of gender harassment must be covered by the present laws. However, enacting progressive laws by itself would not suffice to cover the matters. As everyone is aware, it is crucial to ensure that current laws are followed and that individuals responsible for their enforcement are held accountable for their actions. By constant token, if social attitudes—particularly pervasive cultural tendencies of “blaming the victim” in cases of harassment—don't change, the effectiveness of laws are constantly undermined. Women can't expect the law or the police to protect them if the authorities already assume that women who report crimes are “guilty” or “morally lax” (Siddiqi, 2003).

In response to a writ petition filed by *Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) v Govt. Bangladesh & Ors.* [2011] 31BLD(HCD) 324, the High Court Division of Bangladesh observed that we fully concur with the arguments made by the learned advocate for the petitioner organisation because of an in-depth and thoughtful analysis of the provisions mentioned above shows that they are simply insufficient to address the situation of sexual harassment in this country. The phrase “intention to outrage or insult the modesty of any woman” is exceedingly ambiguous and nearly impossible to prove in several of the aforementioned sections, particularly in section 509 of the Penal Code, 1860. 10-point directives issued by the HCD in above case outlining the definition of harassment, which includes all non-contact sexually connoting offenses as well as all other contemporary forms of sexual insults against the potential victims (Hussain, 2016) which are not properly utilized (Farhin, 2018). However, according to a recent newspaper report, Bangladeshi academic institutions and therefore workplaces have not yet coped with court rulings because of a lack of awareness (Farhin, 2018).

The root causes of harassment can't be fixed until people's attitudes toward women, especially poor working women, change in a fundamental way. Women should always have the right to be in public places, no matter the time or place, without having to risk their reputations or their physical safety (Siddiqi, CPD- UNPF, June, 2003). In the past, several scholars focused their studies on molestation entirely on faculty campus or places of employment throughout many different nations. The scholars of the high school for long weren't treated as victims of such harassment (Loredo et al., 1995). Nonetheless, certain findings of a study conducted in the United States revealed that a large proportion of sexual assaults are committed against women aged 18 or under (Greenfeld, 1997). The number of child victims of harassment in Bangladesh is not low (Rahman, 2005). Due to numerous structural factors, including patriarchy, sociocultural norms, and gender expectations, harassment still occurs often in Bangladesh (Nahar, Van Reeuwijk, & Reis, 2013).

There are many articles supporting this issue, almost on a daily basis a minimum of a commentary is found regarding women being harassed at public transport but the quantity of proper study remains very less. Many NGO's like BRAC and Action Aid have done study on this but the provision of research paper supported this issue was less.

This study mainly focused on the rate of sexual harassment determination specially on university female students while travelling to the University of Chittagong from Chittagong city and vice versa. Why public transport? Because most female students cannot afford long-distance private transport, they frequently use it, particularly buses or *tempo*. The University of Chittagong is located about 22 km away from the city center. The study's main goal is to analyze the influence of sexual harassment on the traveling environment, productivity, and female students' attitudes and responses to harassment and safety standards. In order to gain insight into which groups of women may be most affected by harassment on public transport, it is often the case that personal and circumstantial factors influence experience and fear of harassment and assault.

## **2. Methods and Materials**

This study is based on data acquired directly from female students of University of Chittagong while they use the public transport as mode of transport to go to the University of Chittagong from Chittagong city and return from the University. Data had been collected throughout the months of November and December of 2019. A pre-set questionnaire survey was used to get primary data from the respondents. The questionnaire met the standards such as simple, easily understood, concrete and conformed as much as possible to the respondent's way of thinking, and realistic. The questionnaire avoided technical terms and imprecise phrasing that could be interpreted differently. Questions that might affect the sentiments of respondents were also avoided. For easy understanding, the questionnaire was formed in both English and Bengali languages. The questionnaire was included in statistical analysis point in para-3.2. The total number of participants in this study was 120 and they were all female students of (18–25) age level. They were chosen using a non-probability judgmental sampling process. The respondents participated within the survey voluntarily and were unengaged to answer the questions. They were free not

to answer any particular question if they did not want. Data were collected with the prior permission of the authority of the University of Chittagong. Additional secondary data were gathered from various research papers, government reports, international reports, journals, books, and newspapers. MS Excel and SPSS software were used for data analysis. The purpose of this descriptive study is to assess the level of harassment faced by female students while traveling.

### 3. Findings of the Study

#### 3.1 Questionnaire checking

Our initial stage in the data preparation procedure was to determine whether or not the questionnaire is acceptable. This involves assessing the quality of the interviews and the completeness of the questionnaires. This action was taken when gathering the data. A questionnaire was not acceptable if it was either partially or completely incomplete, if it was answered by a person with insufficient knowledge or who did not qualify for participation, or was answered in such a way which gave the impression that the respondent could not understand the questions.

Through this questionnaire, it was tried to detect the forms and trends of sexual harassment with its frequency that is faced by the women students of the University of Chittagong while moving to and from the university. This significant result of frequency of occurrences made a clear alarming view of the issue.

#### 3.2 Statistical Analysis

The results from the questionnaire of 120 samples were evaluated for SPSS test and all the values were found very significant (P-value of  $<0.01$ ) with 95% confidence intervals (CIs) that are given in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*The Statistical Analysis at a Glance*

Questionnaire	N	P Value	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
			Lower	Upper			
Where in your city are acts of sexual harassment more prevalent?	120	<0.01	1.7062	1.9938	1.8500	0.79547	0.07262
At what time of the day you feel insecure while travelling by public transport?	120	<0.01	2.5524	3.0476	2.8000	1.36954	0.12502

Which public transport do you prefer?	120	<0.01	3.4291	3.8375	3.6333	1.12969	0.10313
When a girl goes out to a public space, I think	120	<0.01	1.6233	1.8767	1.7500	0.70114	0.06400
On an average in a 6 month period, how many times do you face/witness incidents categorized as high on severity by you in the above question?	120	<0.01	2.7143	3.1190	2.9167	1.11960	0.10220
Generally, do you confront a situation when someone tries to harass you in a sexual manner?	120	<0.01	1.8215	2.1785	2.0000	0.98731	0.09013
Generally, do you try to draw the attention of the bystanders of the incident?	120	<0.01	1.6985	2.0681	1.8833	1.02230	0.09332
According to you, what extent the women safety apps are helpful?	120	<0.01	2.8735	3.3932	3.1333	1.43740	0.13122
Do you think calling 999 is helpful when you feel insecure?	120	<0.01	1.3812	1.5854	1.4833	0.56484	0.05156
Do you carry something like (pepper spray, chili powder etc.) for your safety?	120	<0.01	1.6531	1.8136	1.7333	0.44407	0.04054
Do you know any martial art technique for your safety?	120	<0.01	1.8455	1.9545	1.9000	0.30126	0.02750
Do you think that martial art technique is necessary for women's safety?	120	<0.01	1.0716	1.1950	1.1333	0.34136	0.03116
Have you ever stepped in to confront an incident where someone else was being sexually harassed?	120	<0.01	2.0317	2.3683	2.2000	0.93125	0.08501
In your opinion what are the major obstacles to stop sexual street harassment?	120	<0.01	2.2217	2.9117	2.5667	1.90855	0.17423
Do/would you report a case of sexual street harassment to the legal authorities?	120	<0.01	2.9975	3.6025	3.3000	1.67332	0.15275

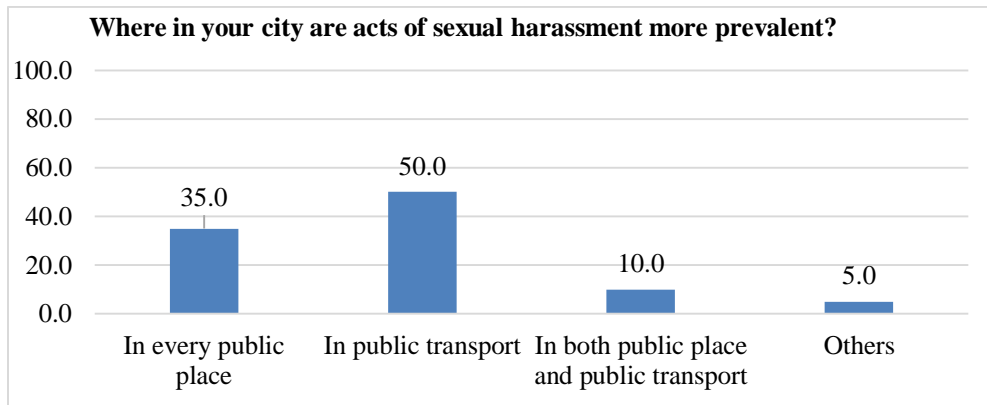
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### 3.3 Prevalent of Sexual Harassment

From the University of Chittagong, 120 female students were enlisted for this study. All of them agreed on the occurrence of the incident where half of them (50%) thought the sexual harassment took place at public transports, 35% believed it occurs at public place, 10% considered it occurs at both public place and public transport and 5% thinks that it occurs in others (Figure-1).

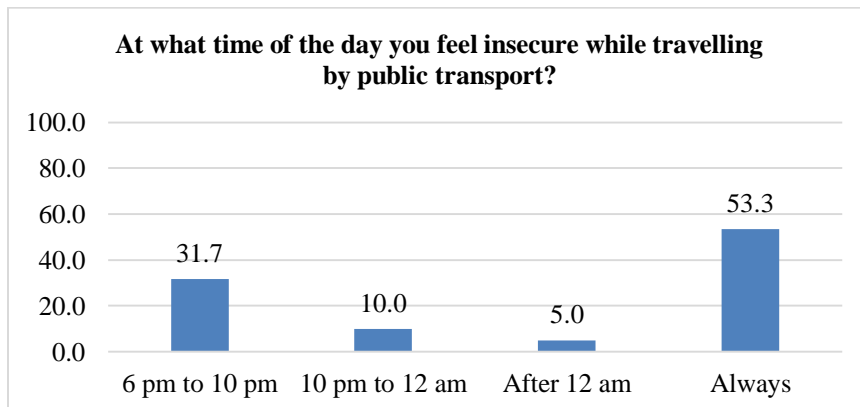
**Figure 1**  
*Prevalent of Sexual Harassment*



### 3.4 Time Range of Feeling Insecurity while Travelling by Public Transport

Here most of the respondents (53.33%) felt insecure always, 31.67% respondents felt insecure during 6pm-10pm, 10% respondents felt insecure during 10pm-12am and 5% felt insecure after 12 am (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**  
*Time Range of Feeling Insecurity while Travelling by Public Transport*

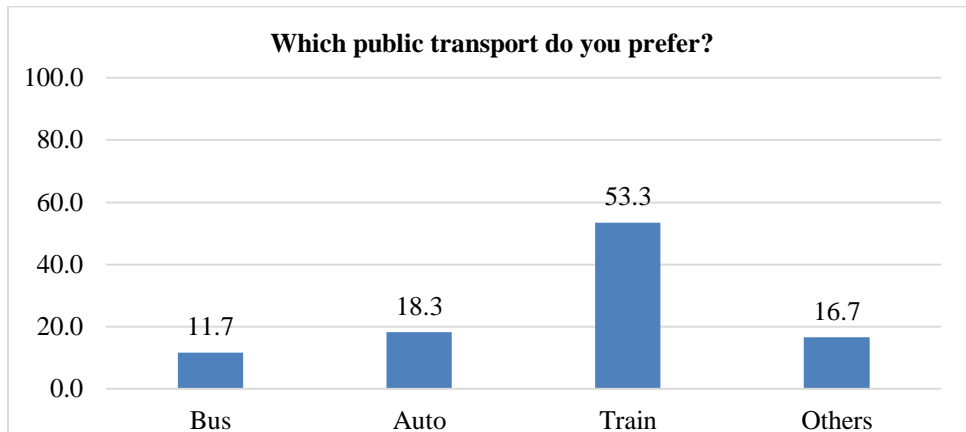


### 3.5 Preference of Types of Public Transport

In this regard the flow chart depicts that, 53.33% respondents preferred train, where rest of the respondents (46.66%) availed other modes of transport like auto, bus etc. (Figure-3).

**Figure 3**

*Preference of Types of Public Transport*

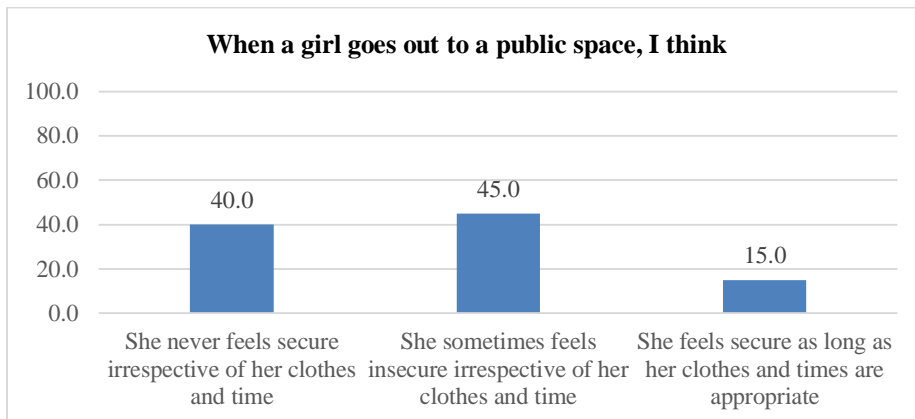


### 3.6 Insecurity Feeling Irrespective to Cloths and Times

Here only 15% of the represents felt secure in appropriate time and clothing while 85% of the respondents thought that there were no relation between security and appropriate time and clothing in case of sexual harassment (Figure-4).

**Figure 4**

*Insecurity Feeling Irrespective of Cloths and Times*

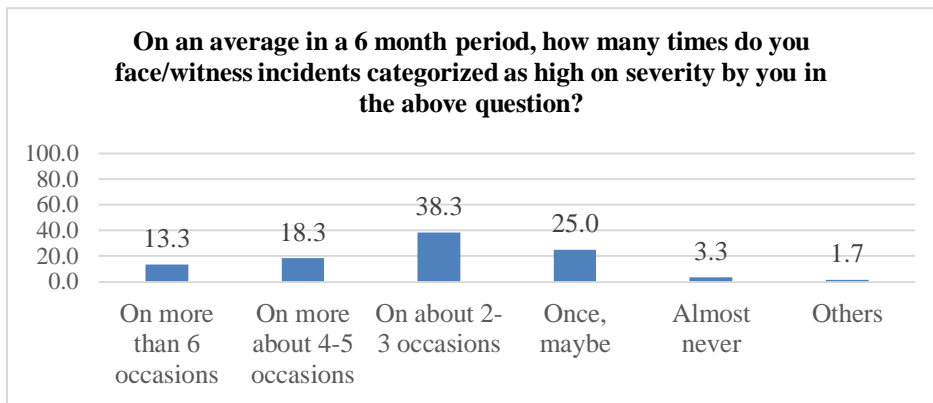


### 3.7 Frequency of Incidence of Sexual Harassment in 6-month Period

The chart below shows that, over a six months period, 96.69% respondents faced or witnessed the problem of sexual harassment ranging from minimum one time to maximum six to more times. On the other hand, only 3.33% respondents said they did not face the problem for minimum level at that time (Figure 5).

**Figure 5**

*Frequency of Incidence of Sexual Harassment in 6-month Period*

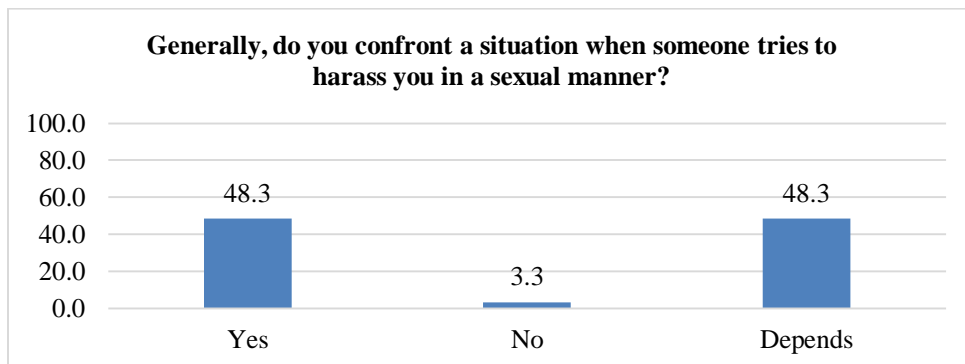


### 3.8 Confrontment of Sexual Manner

The graph describes that, 96.66% respondents confronted the situation if anyone wanted to harass her where half of them did it irrespective of circumstances and rest of the half confronted depending on the situation. 3.3% respondent did not confront the situation (Figure-6).

**Figure 6**

*Confrontment of Sexual Manner*

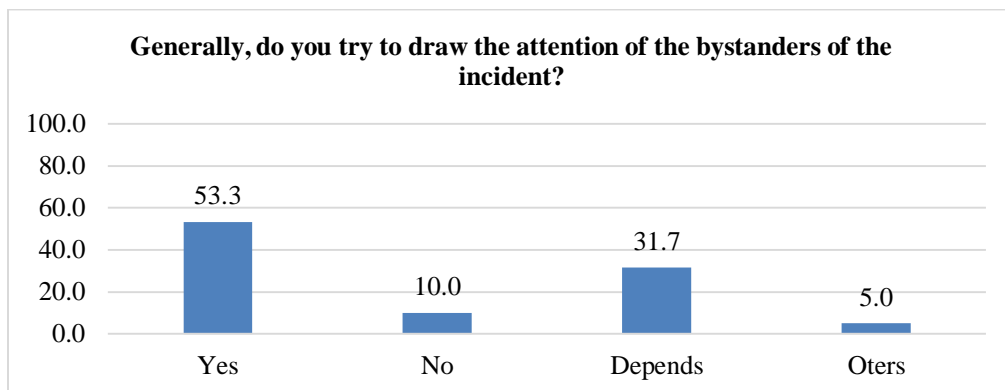


### 3.9 Seeking attention of the bystanders of sexual harassment

The chart demonstrates that, 85% of the respondents tried to seek attention of the bystanders from which 31.67% did this observing the situation. 10% respondents did not try and 5% did something other (Figure 7).

**Figure 7**

*Seeking attention of the bystanders of sexual harassment*

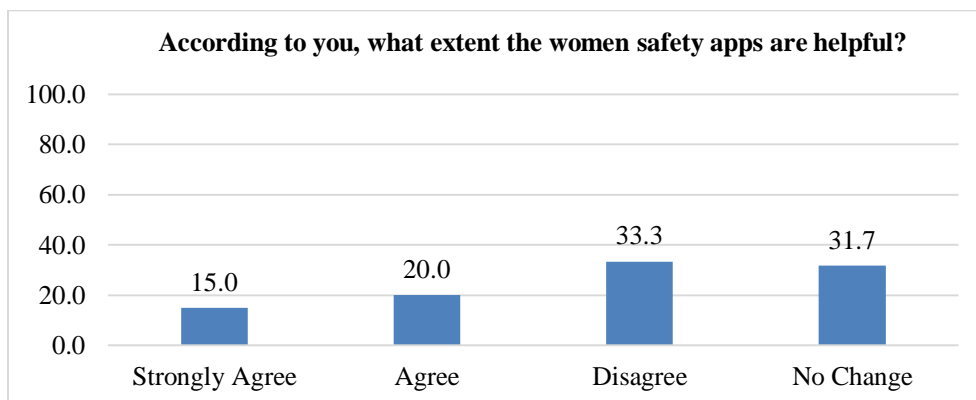


### 3.10 Extent of Usefulness of Women Safety Apps

This chart presents that, regarding the usefulness of women safety apps, 35% agreed as effective while 65% (33.3% + 31.7%) disagreed and considered it as no change (Figure 8).

**Figure 8**

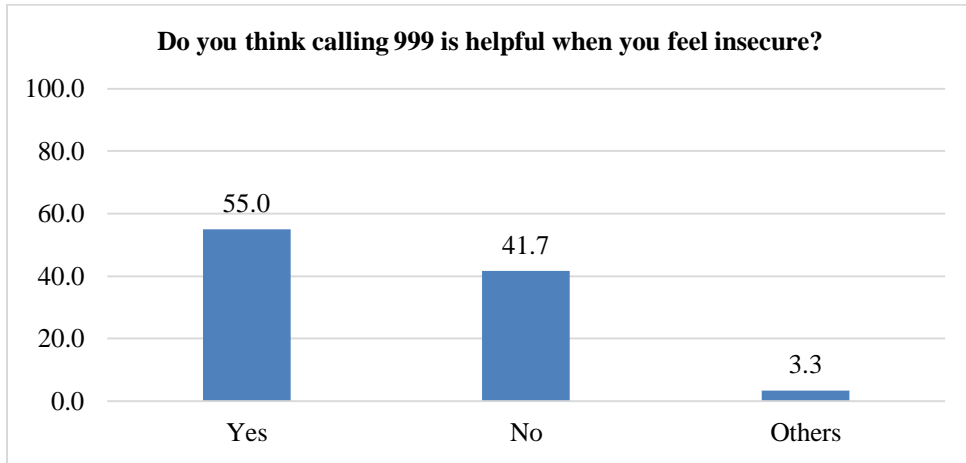
*Extent of Usefulness of Women Safety Apps*



### 3.11 Range of Usefulness of Calling 999

This chart expounds that, 55% respondents found 999 helpful, 41.67% did not find it helpful and 3.33% responses to others (Figure 9).

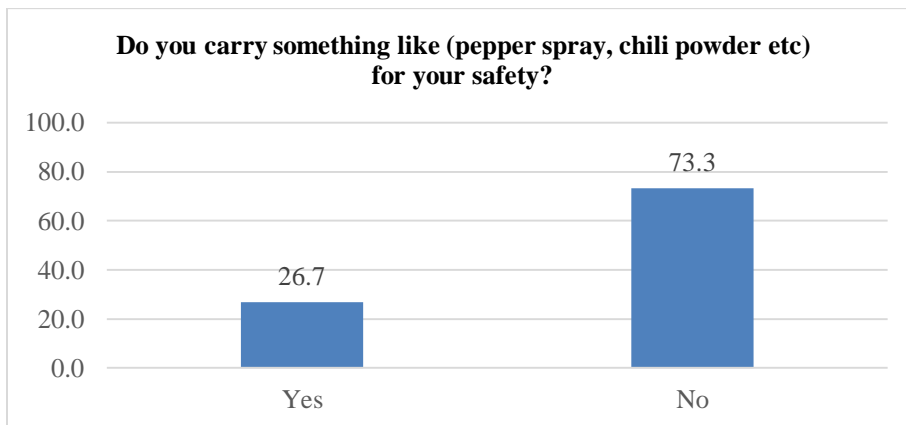
**Figure 9**  
*Range of Usefulness of Calling 999*



### 3.12 Carrying any Materials for Safety

Figure 10 delineates that 73.33% respondents did not carry anything and 26.68% carried something for safety.

**Figure 10**  
*Carrying any Materials for Safety*

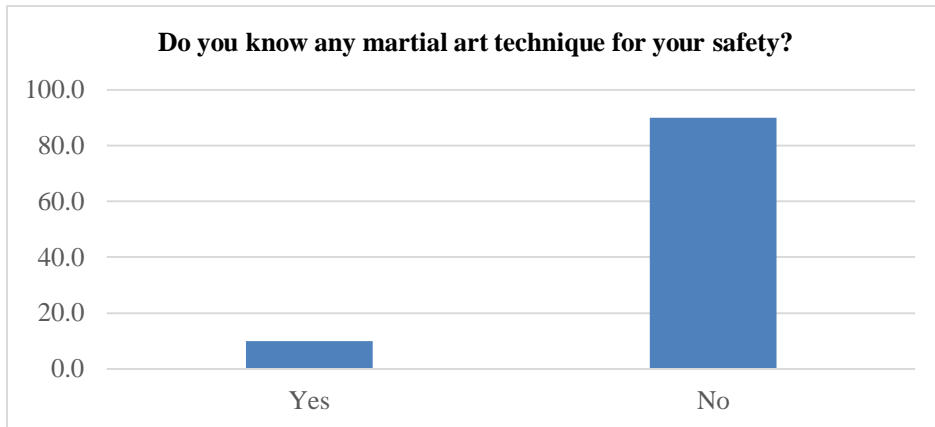


### 3.13 Knowledge of Martial Art Technique

Figure 11 outlines that majority of the respondents (90%) did not know martial art technique where only 10% knew it.

**Figure 11**

*Knowledge of Martial art Technique*

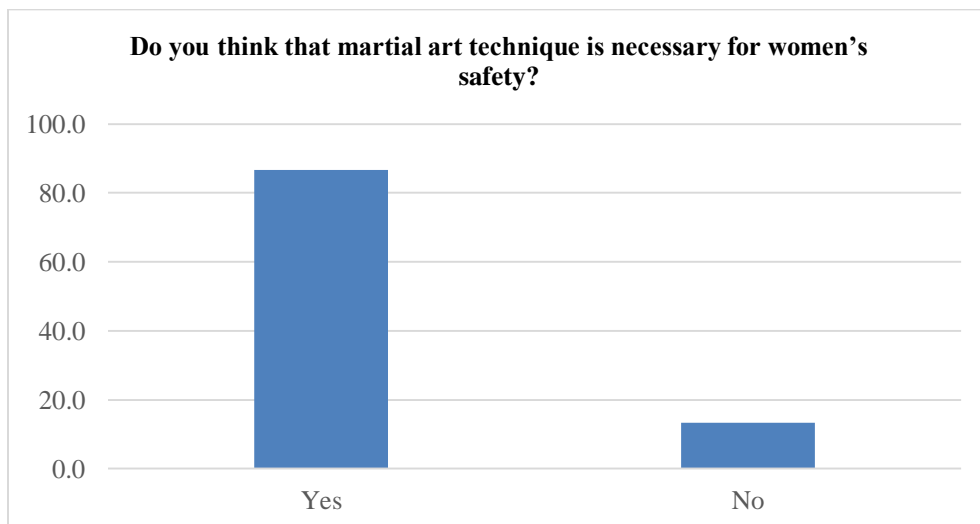


### 3.14 Necessity of Martial Art Technique for Women's Safety

Here, regarding the usefulness of martial art technique, 86.6% respondents considered it as helpful while 13.33% did not think so (Figure 12).

**Figure 12**

*Necessity of Martial art Technique for Women's Safety*

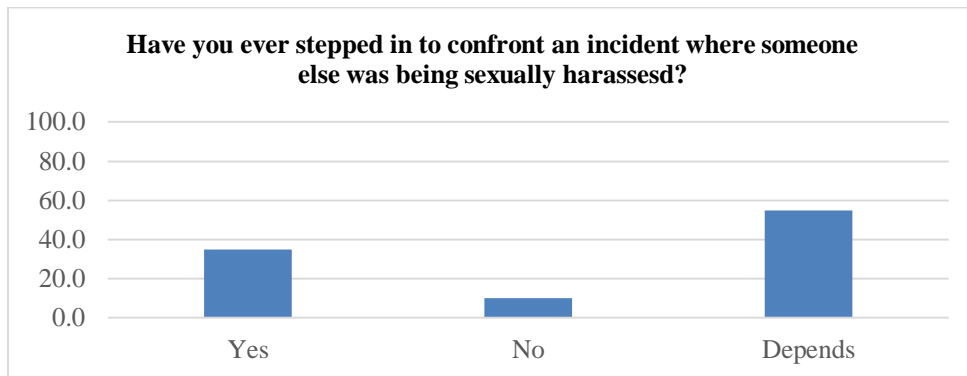


### 3.15 Step to Confront to Others' Sexual Harassment

Here the flow chart draws that, 90% respondents confronted the harassment of others from which 55% did this observing the circumstances. 10% respondents remained silent in this situation (Figure 13).

**Figure 13**

*Step to Confront to Others' Sexual Harassment*

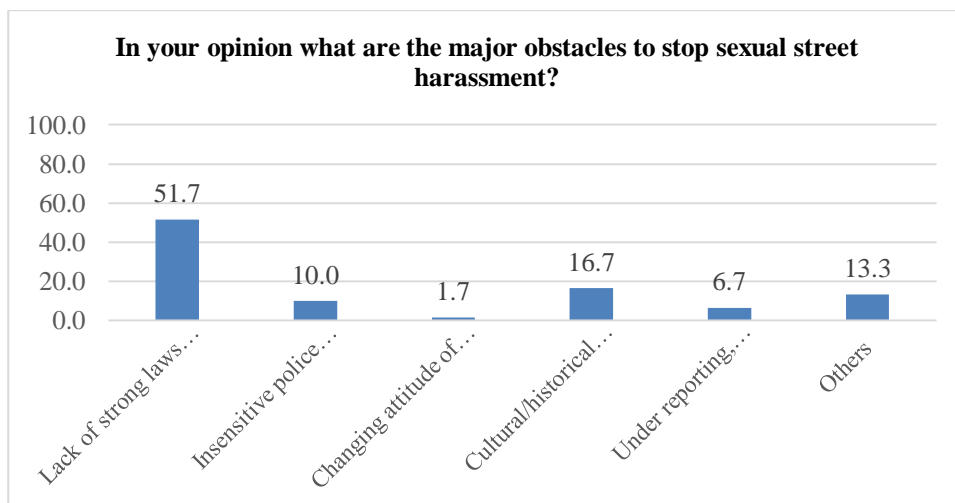


### 3.16 Major Obstacle to Stop Sexual Street Harassment

From the chart it appears that more than half of the respondents (51.7%) considered lack of strong laws as the major obstacle to stop sexual harassment while rest of the respondents pointed to some other reasons like insensitive police, changing attitude of women, male dominance, under reporting and others (Figure 14).

**Figure 14**

*Major Obstacle to Stop Sexual Street Harassment*

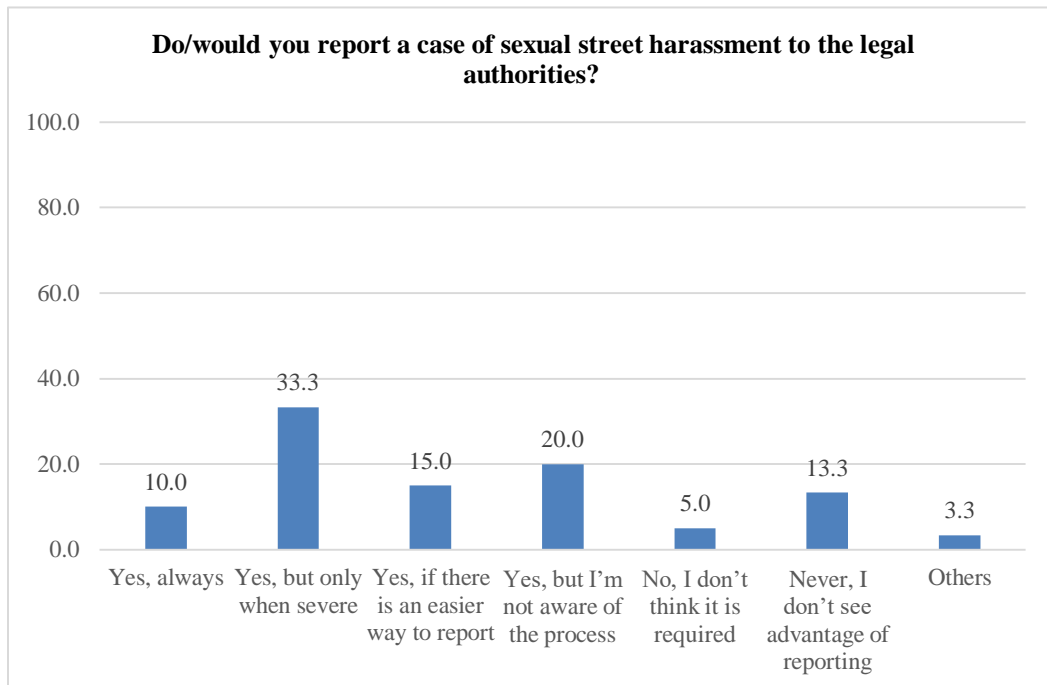


### 3.17 Report of Sexual Harassment Case to the Legal Authority

The chart represents that 78.3% respondents thought of reporting a case to the law enforcing agency from them some considered the sheerness (33.3%), easiness (15%) and some did not know the process (20%). Rest of the respondents thought as not required and it had no advantages and others (Figure 15).

**Figure 15**

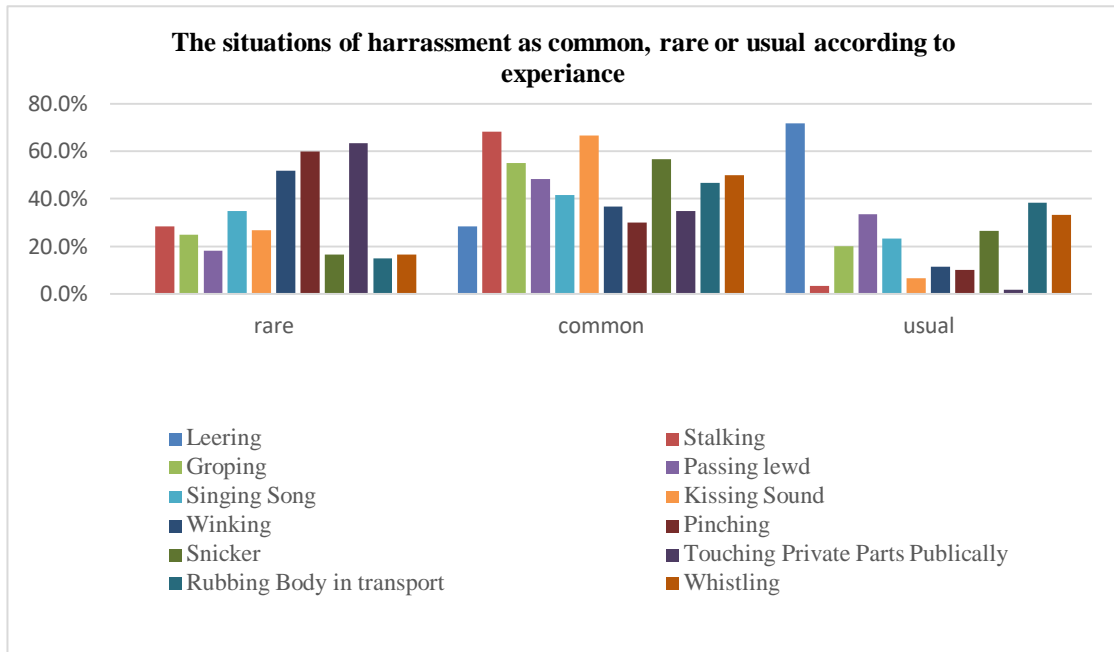
*Report of Sexual Harassment Case to the Legal Authority*



### 3.18 Scenario of Different Kinds of Sexual Harassment

The chart below depicts that, almost all sorts of sexual harassment are experienced by the women folk in our country while moving on public transport. Among these sorts of harassments, more than 71% women suffer leering as very usual form and stalking and kissing sound as more common which cover about 68% and 66% consecutively. And most of the forms of harassment are very common that they have to face (Figure 16).



**Figure 16***Scenario of different Kinds of Sexual Harassment as Rare, Common or Usual*

#### 4. Suggestions from the Respondents

From 120 respondents, most important suggestions are stated below:

- Current laws should be carefully followed, sexual harassment offenders should face severe penalties, and law enforcement agencies should act without delay.
- Mapping technology should be connected to all public vehicles.
- The government should develop operations, policies, and enforcements to help control harassment on public transportation.
- Government should create training sessions for drivers about ethics, rules and respecting passengers.
- The administration of the institution needs to be more aware of sexual harassment cases and support women speak out against it.
- Students from early age, especially in schools should be taught religious and moral facts.
- The social and educational institutions should initiate diverse awareness programs to create consciousness among the population in the field of street sexual harassment.
- Need to learn martial art and should be included in the curriculum as co-curricular activities.
- Along with women, man should also protest against such kind of social diseases.

## **5. Recommendations**

The majorities of female students of University of Chittagong who reside far from campus regions lack access to transportation, and therefore are more likely to experience harassment when travelling. To mitigate the situation, following recommendation can be materialized.

- It is found that the majority of the students are harassed by the unknown persons during their journey to and from the University especially once they are alone. So, to keep them safe they may be grouped consistent with class or batch so that it can generate fear to the offender of being protested.
- Students should be aided in locating themselves, as well as others, on social media in order to assess the way they present. Female students can seek assistance from their male friends and institutional authorities in order for them to take the situation seriously and put an end to such dreadful behaviors.
- According to the court's orders, the committee of each educational institution shall take an active role in resolving the problems.
- A monthly or semi-annual program on effective strategies for preventing such sexual harassment may provide students the courage and confidence to protest such heinous behaviors.
- Each and every case that is reported needs to be brought under the watchful, vigilant surveillance of the local representative or appropriate police force.
- University authority should provide the identity of vehicle drivers and helper of bus and other transports that frequently move from city to University and vice versa Including CCTV on every transport.
- Separate female-only bus with female drivers and helpers can be arranged by the Government for the female student of University. Buses should have adequate light at night. Number plate of transports should be placed inside the transport also.
- The number of buses should be increased because overcrowding and not enough seats for passengers make it easy for harassers to target women.
- All faculty of University of Chittagong should establish complaint cell where the student can give their modesty complain report. The University's disciplinary body in charge of these cases should be made up of individuals who can preserve their objectivity and confidentiality throughout the procedures.
- University authority should facilitate martial art program among the female students. Features of emergency call service are a bit complicated and its server remain busy most of the time. This problem can be fixed by making the structure of these apps easy and available.
- Consciousness program should be provided among the transports authority and implement law properly.

This issue needs to be handled by taking both preventive and corrective approaches by families, guardians, educational institutions, religious leaders, religious institutions, police, and native representation, where all should cooperate to improve awareness among both males and females about various aspects of such harassment.

## 6. Conclusion

Considering the survey we have conducted and the discussion we have made, a concluding argument can be drawn that, almost all forms of sexual harassment are faced by women while moving on public transport. Though there are so many laws prevailing in Bangladesh in this regard to punish the offenders, but still the rate of sexual street harassment is not decreasing rather increasing. All of the respondents replied that, they had and still having the experience of various sorts of sexual street harassment in almost every day in public transport. When the respondents were asked about different forms of sexual harassment they face as rare, common or usual, they replied most of the forms are very common and usual. In order to prevent sexual harassment in public transportation, the administration and the university should take the necessary action. In this respect, they should consider the suggestions offered by the respondents who are the part of the victims of such sorts of harassment and it is mostly sought through the study.

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