

Residential environment of public universities for the students: friendly or hostile in the context of Bangladesh?

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ABSTRACT

This study is about the residential environment of public universities in Bangladesh. The main aim of the study is to know the existing situation of residential environment whether its friendly or hostile for the students in the context of Bangladesh. Total 70 respondents who are students from 8 public universities of Bangladesh were taken by using purposive sampling method. Medical facility, meal services, Internet facility, room condition, educational environment at residence, political influence in seat distribution, ragging and guest room culture, recreational facilities, sanitation system, democratic environment at hall and provosts - students mutual coordination were taken into consideration to understand the situation of residence in universities. The research is designed by quantitative method. Here the facts are explained which lead to make the state friendly or hostile for the respondents regarding residential environment of public universities. This paper aims to represent the scenario as well as contribute to national sector by suggesting the policymakers, university authorities to be informed in the areas of concern from the perspective of students through the statistical exhibition on the condition of the dormitories of public universities in Bangladesh.

Keywords: residence; environment; friendly; hostile; public university; bangladesh

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INTRODUCTION

As a developing country, Bangladesh has faced a lot of trouble in different sectors i.e. education, economy, food due to its huge population, political intolerance, corruption, unethical power practice. Culture of poverty is also a lying factor to arise the concern in these sectors. Though the government of Bangladesh has allocated a certain amount of budget for its education sector, its not enough in proportion to its expectation according to UNESCO. 11.91% of total budget is bestowed for education sector in 2022-23 economic year (Ahmed, 2022).

In Bangladesh, there are fifty four public universities (UGC, 2022-23) and among these only Jahangirnagar University is full residential (Maria, 2023). Others university authorities are providing residential facilities to their students after a certain period from their admission. There is scarcity and limitation of residential allotment for all students. University of Dhaka, University of Rajshahi, University of Chittagong and Jahangirnagar University are only full autonomous university in Bangladesh whereas only one university is providing full residential arrangement to the students. Others have lack of hall seat for its students. 76 percent students are deprived of residential facilities at University of Rajshahi. (Majority of residential students deprived facilities at RU, 2018) 45 percent students of the University of Dhaka and 20 percent students of the University of Chittagong have accommodation facilities (Salman, 2023).

Besides there's a alarming political influence to get a seat for general students which is the picture of unethical power practice, dominance of ruling party and helpless condition of assigned provost. Residential students are passing a day by taking less nutritious foods. Sanitation system in many

residences are not salubrious. In the highest stage of education, students of residences are bound to accept the dominance of ruling party. Besides ragging culture, localization trend, room politics are also responsible to create hamper educational environment in residence of public universities. Report published in print media that more than 300 incidents of ragging had been occurred in educational institutions which affected half of thousand (500) students physically as well as mentally in last five years. Contemporarily, 27 of such occurrences took place in the tertiary level of educational institutes (Billah, 2022).

In comparison with other countries, the facilities aren't that much standard though authority is officially assigned to ensure recreation, proper health and nutritious food management and sound educational environment. According to UGC, only 22 percent universities have on campus building facilities for their teachers which shows the paucity of advantages in proportion to its number. As a result proper interaction with students, research guideline to the students and abuse of home rent from their salaries are happening. In modern age, its unimaginable to conduct assignment, research and seminar and presentation without online facilities and computer literacy. In Bangladesh, most of the students of public universities can't bear laptop, PC due to their limitations and financial condition. From the government and administration stage, still there is no initiative to provide digital devices i.e. laptop, PC for per students whereas in foreign countries its available for their students to make them technologically skilled and befitted with modern era. Besides there is a lack of smooth Internet connection in residential hall so that online based education is tough in many areas. Broad band connection speed is not satisfactory to conduct a task with full rhythm. Overall its a matter of concern to ensure standard education in the highest level of a country. The health issue, socio-economic condition with the satisfaction and the students satisfaction on residence (Laurent et al., 2020). In global perspective are described and analyzed in residential point of views for the students (Dolap, 2009). In the context of Bangladesh, seat limitations for the students in residence, ragging issue, heinous power practise of the student section of ruling party and meal condition are explored. But medicine facilities, skill development programs, recreation facilities, sanitation system, library room facilities, democratic practices, cultural programs in residence, available services of residence aren't discussed in the literature. Besides coordination between provost and students, proper initiatives to control unethical power practise, ensuring democratic practise aren't mentioned. Most concerning factor is that regarding this issue research isn't conducted earlier in the context of Bangladesh. On the basis of these issues, this study aims to scrutinize the gap and seeks to develop the frame to know what's on going situation of public university's residence in Bangladesh.

Statement of The Problem

The residential environment in public university plays a crucial role for its students in terms of developing their mentality, democratic outlook, healthy educational environment by providing them a house like but academic platform. In dormitory/ hall, a student usually passes almost 5–6 years of his life span and gains a variety of knowledge through interaction with one another and enjoying the services, provided by residential authorities. But a haphazard situation appears when the natural rules, regulations and existing services get manipulated and disrupted by the indifference attitude of hall authorities along with unethical political influences, poor services and malpractices of power and control over resources, resulting in the general students as the escape goat of system. In aftermath, they are deprived of standard facilities, i.e. seat allotment in proper time, nutritious meal services, recreational facilities, computer lab, extracurricular activities, gymnasium and so on. Besides, unethical political influence, ragging and guest room culture, lack of support from provosts and house-tutors are also responsible to making the residential environment hostile for the students.

Research Questions

This study will provide the approximate answer of these following questions:

1. Do the students of public universities are getting sound educational environment in their hall/residence / dormitory?
2. Do the students are getting proper services and supports from the authorities?
3. Do they feel obstacle to democratic practice?
4. What's the overall scenario of residences? Is it friendly or hostile from student's perspective?

Scope of The Study

This study will inform about the existing situation of residential environment of public universities whether its student friendly or hostile. Food, health, sanitation, democratic practices, recreational facilities and safety issues will be known from the student's perspectives through this study. This study will also highlight the gap of expectation and limitations of authorities. After all, a synopsis of residential scenario of four autonomous public universities will be explored.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A study was undertaken on the influence of the residential environment on undergraduate students. From 2008 to 2012, about 13,491 students in USA who live in the dormitory, their health condition was observed. The result shows on students health that females used clinical services more than men (58.9% female; 41.1% male). The percentage of students are being treated as at least once was lower for other diagnostic groups: skin symptoms (28.5%), injuries (23.6%), MH issues (23.1%), gastrointestinal symptoms (19.3%), eye-related symptoms (13.1%), asthma symptoms (4.75%), and eating disorders (4.1%). (Laurent et al., 2020)

Dolape (2009) conducted a study on "Residential Satisfaction in Student's Housing" in Nigeria. Social densities, kitchenette, bathroom, storage facilities and some demographic characteristics were taken in consideration to understand satisfaction level. Sleeping, studying, relaxing and entertaining friends these factors were used to find out the satisfaction level in bedroom environment of residence. e, its found that more than half of the students (53%) were dissatisfied with their residence and the variables which explained satisfaction were the social qualities of the residence.

Socio-economic condition and the residential satisfaction of the students can be inextricably linked. Regarding this issue the study was undertaken where it's found that economic status, sense of sharing, ethnicity of roommates have significant contribution in satisfaction and dissatisfaction level for the students. The research explored that students with high economic condition can easily adopt to the environment and the overall condition make them satisfied in residence whereas the students with poor or moderate economic condition faced some problems on the basis of social attributes (Najib et al., 2011).

Subjective residential environment and its implications for quality of life among university students in Hong Kong was studied by Ng (2005). According to his study, respondents are usually satisfied with the residential environment which is about 3.52, on a 5-point Likert scale. Here the type, size, year of the respondent's home are also related with the level of satisfaction. But environment quality, education and greenings are considered to be least satisfactory. Besides available space is less than ideal.

A study was conducted in Ogun state, Nigeria to understand the effects of residential environmental factors on residents' housing satisfaction. Onifade (2021) opined that the satisfaction in residence is influenced by securities, community perception, amenities, facilities, density of residence and safety issues which are measured by physical and social variables in environment.

Design factors in share house can contribute positive impact on residential satisfaction. For ensuring this, physical, environmental, psychological issues are also highlighted in the study on The

Influence of Residential Environmental Factors and Design Factors on Residential Satisfaction in the Share House of Young Generation Choi et al. (2021). According to them, design factors have positive impact on residential satisfaction. Economic factors for the satisfaction isn't playing significant role whereas they emphasizes on openness, safety, noise, territoriality, and crime prevention, and social factors like community consciousness, and privacy.

Alamgir (2022) notes that, in most of the public universities there is no on campus housing facilities. Many teachers have to join in teacher politics unwillingly to get on campus housing service. In 2016, almost 77% universities haven't such facilities and services which shows the paucity of residential scope in tertiary level of education.

There is a great shortage of allocated seats for the students in residence. In University Of Dhaka, 13,969 students have seat facility out of more than 30000 students. University Of Rajshahi authority can afford 8,586 students seat facility out of 37,256 students. 4,529 students out of 28,216 students are getting seat facility in University Of Chittagong. Despite being full residential, Jahangirnagar University authority affords seat for 12,849 students out of 17,006. Overall, scarcity of seats is observed in proportion to the total number of students in these four autonomous universities (The Daily Sun, 2019).

Meal condition of public university residences is poor, less nutritious. Economics department of Jahangirnagar University had conducted a research on nutritional status among 225 students where they've got that students are taking average 1 thousand 821 kilo calories foods whereas it should be 2,800 - 3000 kilo calories. So students are suffering from nutritional scarcity for maintaining sound health. Besides political organization leaders are doing unethical power practice in hall canteen (Howladar Asif, 2022).

Freedom of expression, democratic practise and critic of ruling people these areas have become shrink due to the ragging, guestroom culture and unethical power practise of the student wing of political ruling party. Student of BUET, Abrar Fahad was murdered. was killed by the students of political wing of government party just from the sense of his involvement with any Islamic party. CCTV footage from Fahad's dormitory showed several men carrying the victim's body. Police arrested nine men from the hall, including the five activists of BCL (BBC, 2019).

Objectives of The Study

Objectives of the study are:-

1. To know the available services of residences for the students in public universities.
2. To understand the magnitude of concerned situation in residence whether its friendly or hostile for the students?
3. To provide recommendations for the concerning issues.

METHODS

The study is conducted through quantitative method and on the basis of nature it is a quantitative research. Survey method is used in questionnaire to collect the data. Most of the questions are structured and close ended.

This study is informed about the educational environment, existing opportunities i.e health, skill development, technological literacy, recreation. Besides, obstacles to maintain standard and expected life in hall, problems faced by general students, students-house tutor and provost relationship, expectation vs gap of students and other issues in residence of public universities in Bangladesh are covered within the wing of this study. After conducting these, fruitful recommendations on the basis of these issues are provided by the frame of it's area.

This study is conducted in Dhaka, Mymensingh, Tangail, Rajshahi, Kushtia and Chittagong among the students of public universities. Current students of public universities in Bangladesh who are living in hall are the population of the study. Young (1966) said that, statistical sample is a miniature picture or cross section of the entire group or aggregate form which the sample is taken some formulae are used sampling, while selecting the sample for the study the population will be selected on the judgmental basis. Here's students with residential status of public university are the population of the study. As there's no accurate data or valid census of the number of residential students, so the population is unknown for me. So I have collected the data from 70 respondents purposively who are students of public university and living in dormitory / residence / hall. So, sample size is 70. As population is unknown, Purposive sampling process is used.

Data is collected from the primary and secondary sources. primary source: Questionnaire by using google form was sent to the relevant respondents to collect data from the field level. It was the primary source. Secondary source: Journals, literatures, relevant news from the daily newspaper on this issue were used as secondary sources. To analyze the data, IBM SPSS ver.20, MS-Excel software are used. Data is presented in the MS-Word program. Besides, statistical method i.e. mean is applied to convert the data into percentage form, then its presented into a tabulation form.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Available services of residences provided by authority to the students in public universities

Services	Frequency of existence services in residence	Frequency of nonexistence of these services	Percentage of availability
Residential allotment at the beginning of academic life	1	69	1.64%
Standard meal service in residence	3	67	4.29%
Cleanliness initiative of sanitation system by residence authority	64	6	91.4%
Medical facilities (tablets, first aid, medical checkup)	19	51	27.1%
Gymnasium in residence	6	64	8.6%
Computer lab	8	62	11.4%
Swimming pool	7	63	10%
Indoor gaming equipments	57	13	81.4%
Standard wi-fi service	4	66	5.7%
Prayer room	67	3	95.7%
Student-authority meeting	36	34	51.4%
Satisfied democratic environment	36	34	51.4%
Satisfactory library facility	15	55	22.4%
Presence of psychologist for mental issue and counseling	0	70	0%

The table 1 & table 2 express the available services for the students and considerable situation that leads to create friendly or hostile condition are portrayed with the percentage respectfully. The statistical rate of these shows the scenario of residential environment of the students at tertiary level. The

first objective of the study was to know the available services of residence provided by the authorities for its students. In the frame of this inquisitive mind variety of factors are analyzed. Study conducted by Salman (2023) shows that only 45 percent students from University of Dhaka and 20 percent students from University of Chittagong have accommodation facilities at their campus. Regarding this issue, here I investigated on 8 public universities in Bangladesh. Report shows that just 1.64 % get seat allotment at the beginning of their academic life. Indeed the rate from the holistic frame is very little and represents a limited scope.

Table 2. Concerned situation that leads to create friendly or hostile environment.

Variables	Frequency	N	Percent
Political Influence for getting seat	52	70	74.3%
Ragging and guest room culture	21	70	30%
Victim of ragging or mental oppression	22	70	31.4%
Proper disciplinary action taken by residential authority	9	70	39.1%
Sound room condition for education	58	70	82.9%
Vulnerable, intolerant condition for the student wing of opposition party (except ruling party)	34	70	48.6%

A concern regarding the meal condition, served by residential authority is analysed by researcher. Howladar Asif (2022) states that students are absorbing just 1821 k/cal from provided meal whereas it should have 2000-3000 k/cal. for standard meal service and nutrition. In this study, its found by taking 8 public universities into consideration that just 4.29% students are thinking that the provided meal service at residence is standard. Rest of them are showing their dissatisfaction regarding this matter. For keeping health salubrious, nutritious foods with satisfied quality are indispensable part.

Cleanliness service rate on sanitation system represents the highest percentage. 91.4% students of universities have shared their positive sense on cleanliness initiatives in sanitation system taken by authorities. Though it should be 100% for the health and hygiene. Just 27.1% university residences have medical facilities such as availability of tablets, first aid and medical check-up at their residence. Cleanliness initiative on sanitation system and medical facilities ensure the hygienic and health conscious programmes taken by university authorities for its students. 2008 to 2012, about 13,491 students in USA who live in the dormitory, their health condition was observed. The result shows on students health that females used clinical services more than men (58.9% female; 41.1% male). The percentage of students are being treated as at least once was lower for other diagnostic groups: skin symptoms (28.5%), injuries (23.6%), MH issues (23.1%), gastrointestinal symptoms (19.3%), eye-related symptoms (13.1%), asthma symptoms (4.75%), and eating disorders (4.1%). (Laurent, Allen, Spenger, 2020, p.320 -327) In comparison with international standard, the study shows the insufficient concern and programmes in dormitory for the public university students in Bangladesh. 8.6% of university residence have gymnasium room for their students. The scope and provided facilities are shrink in terms of population.

In the age of science, computer literacy is mandatory for the standard education system whereas just 11.4% residential students are getting computer lab facility. Almost a decade ago, report from online news portal noted that 65% students from University Of Dhaka are not satisfied on Internet services and

90% are being compelled to use mobile network as wi-fi speed is poor (Dhaka Tribune, 2013). Internet speed is a crucial factor for ensuring consistence access in education at tertiary level. But according to the respondents on this research, just 5.7% get standard wi-fi service at their residence. Without proper networking services, its unimaginable to get in touch of standard education system and materials.

Recreation is compulsory for a healthy environment in academic institutions. Existence of swimming pool and indoor games equipments percentage are respectively 10% & 81.4%. Authorities i.e. hall provost, tutors are the guardian of the residential students. In residence, students face mental problems i.e depression. For dealing with psychological issues the study aims to know the services regarding in that aspect. According to the report, there is 0% existence of psychologist for counselling or mental services for the students. For any concern, they'll meet with them ; that's the normal fact. But report shows that 51.4% residential students have the opportunity to get students-authority meeting in emergency. Almost half of the students aren't getting this service from the residence. Library room facility isn't satisfactory to the most of the students. Only 22.4% get satisfactory library room services. Besides almost half of the residential students say that, democratic environment isn't satisfactory.

The second objective of the study was to understand the magnitude of concerned situation which may lead to the environment friendly or hostile. Students are facing many obstacles to get a seat. Many report show that the seat allocation are controlled by student wing of political party. BCL leaders control seat at JU hall. This study finds that 74.3% students are saying that there is political influence for getting seat allotment. But the duty is assigned to the hall authority.

Ragging is an abhorrent physical and mental torture or oppression, usually done by seniors student to the juniors or freshers. Already the nation has observed a heinous occurrence in BUET campus where a meritorious student, named Abrar Fahad, was killed by ceaseless battering of student wing of the ruling party. Repressed situation of democratic view and hectic condition of the freedom of expression are consequences of this occurrence (BBC, 2019). By taking these issues as a matter of concern, this study was designed to collect the data to know the overall situation in holistic level from the students in residence. 30% students have said there is ragging and guest room culture at their residence and 31.4% are the victim of ragging or mental oppression. 39.1% are saying that the hall authority has taken proper disciplinary action. That means most of the occurrences are not get resolved in proper way which represents the limitation of disciplinary committee and a sick, uncontrolled and haphazard condition of residential life. In terms of educational environment, most of the students have expressed their satisfaction and its about 82.9% of respondents. It shows comparatively better ray of the circumstance in comparison with other issues. Democratic practise in educational institutions represents the freedom of speech, expression, mutual respect and healthy environment of a state. Here, 48.6% residential students have said the situation is vulnerable, intolerant for the students wing of political parties except ruling party.

Limitations

Lack of enough respondents from all over the county in proportion to public university hall, indifference and absence of spontaneous attitude from students, absence of deep investigations regarding political violence, lack of related research in this topic from the perspective of Bangladesh, fear of current students to provide data about political, ragging issues and methods regarding the study are the limitations of this research.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the analysis of available services and considerable situation, it can be said that the environment of public universities for the students in Bangladesh isn't friendly, standard and world class.

Services aren't meeting the level of international standard of tertiary level education. Most of the residences haven't medical services, gymnasium, standard meal service, computer lab, satisfactory library room facilities and recreational services. Besides, there are some alarming issues which are existed in the residences such as political influence of getting seat, ragging & guest room culture, absence of proper steps from the authorities regarding the disciplinary issue, political intolerance that shrinks the scope of democratic space. But considering the initiatives of cleanliness services for sanitary system, availability of prayer room, sound educational environment at their room, it's tough to press the hostile button in one chance regarding this topic. Yes, a lot of things are left to be improved which are important variables for a sound educational environment in higher level. Overall, the situation isn't friendly. But if we have to select one option between these two, then we have to say its hostile. This bottleneck condition can be one of the crucial factor for the impairment of student's success in higher level. By implementing the recommendations and mitigating the concerned issues, situation of residence in public university of Bangladesh may see the light of betterment.

Recommendations

For mitigating these, following recommendations could be implemented:-

1. Number of seats in residence should be increased and more budget should be allocated.
2. Seat should be allocated on the basis of student's merit and economic condition.
3. Meal condition of residence should be improved for ensuring student's nutrition and health.
4. For ensuring democratic environment, hall authority should be neutral and maintain strict rules, regulation.
5. Internet facility, medical services i.e. availability of tablets, computer lab, gymnasium facility, recreational facilities i.e. swimming pool, debating club should be ensured in every residence for standard environment.
6. Student-authority meeting should be held to fulfill the student's needs and demands.
7. Authority should maintain zero tolerance policy regarding the political violence in residence.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author announced that there were no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research work.

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