

CITIZEN'S PLATFORM
Working Paper

4

Disengaged Youth in Bangladesh

Concepts, Causes and Consequences

Debapriya Bhattacharya
Towfiqul Islam Khan
Fabiha Anbar Huq



Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh

এসডিজি বাস্তবায়নে নাগরিক প্ল্যাটফর্ম, বাংলাদেশ

Citizen's Platform Working Paper 4

Disengaged Youth in Bangladesh

Concepts, Causes and Consequences

DISENGAGED YOUTH IN BANGLADESH

Concepts, Causes and Consequences

Citizen's Platform Working Paper 4

Debapriya Bhattacharya

Towfiqul Islam Khan

Fabiha Anbar Huq



Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh

এসডিজি বাস্তবায়নে নাগরিক প্ল্যাটফর্ম, বাংলাদেশ

Partnership and Collaboration

act:onaid



Published in November 2021 by

Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh

Secretariat: Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)

House 40/C, Road 11 (new), Dhanmondi

Dhaka-1209, Bangladesh

Telephone: (+88 02) 48118090, 55001185, 58156979

Fax: (+88 02) 55001181

E-mail: coordinator@bdplatform4sdgs.net

Website: www.bdplatform4sdgs.net

© Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh

Disclaimer: All rights are reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior permission in writing from the publisher. Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh, or any other organisation(s) they are affiliated with.

Tk. 120

USD 5

Citation: Bhattacharya, D., Khan, T. I., Huq, F. A. (2021). *Disengaged Youth in Bangladesh: Concepts, Causes and Consequences*. Citizen's Platform Working Paper 4. Dhaka: Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh.

The current demographic window of opportunity in Bangladesh emphasises youth to be one of the drivers of the country's development strategy. Regrettably, not all youth in the country are equally "engaged" in the development process in general and in the labour market in particular. The present paper, acknowledging heterogeneity of the youth community, explores the concept and manifestation of 'disengaged youth' in Bangladesh. Being informed by the relevant literature, the present paper categorises youth "disengagement" under four heads: economic, social, cultural, and political. Among the four mentioned categories, the paper essentially focuses on the "economic disengagement" of youth as the primary form of youth disengagement. The paper maintains that youth "not in education, employment or training (NEET)" can be a useful approach to explain disengagement of youth in the context of Bangladesh. The paper highlights the determinants of youth disengagement in terms of NEET, including skills mismatch, locational adversity, digital divide, traditional patriarchal norms, and lack of legal rights and discriminatory practices. The manifestations of youth engagements, as the paper identifies, include criminality, radicalisation, mental stress and intimate partner violence. The paper takes note of a number of programmatic experiences in different countries dealing with "disengaged" youth. The paper underscores the need to address the causes and not the "manifestations" of the disengaged youth through these programmatic and policy interventions.

Preface and Acknowledgements

As the title of the paper suggests, the present paper intends on introducing the concept of the 'disengaged youth' to understand and examine the sets of challenges the youth cohort face in integrating into the mainstream development process of Bangladesh. The paper particularly focuses on the economic disengagement of the youth population as explained by the high unemployment, underemployment, and economic inactivity faced by them. The category of the youth not in education, employment and training (NEET) has been used in the study to signify their economic disengagement. Both the underlying causes that lead to the youth NEET and associated manifestations of youth disengagement stemming from it have been identified in this paper. The study suggests policy interventions targeting the identified causes, which will be crucial in counteracting youth disengagement in the country and help better integrate this population into the development process.

The authors convey their sincerest gratitude to all the participants of the expert and stakeholder consultations undertaken in the course of the preparation of this paper (see Annex). Their inputs have been critical in shaping and strengthening this study.

The authors are particularly grateful to *Professor Rehman Sobhan*, Chairman, CPD, and the CPD colleagues for their intellectual and organisational support.

Remarkable contributions of colleagues at the Secretariat of the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh are thankfully recognised. Special mention may be made of *Mr Avra Bhattacharjee*, Joint Director, Dialogue and Communication; *Mr Sarwar Jahan*, Senior Dialogue Associate; *Ms Tarannum Jinan*, Senior Administrative Associate; *Mr Irtaza Mahbub Akhond*, Dialogue Associate; *Mr Hamid Ibne Habib*, Dialogue Associate (Youth Lead); *Ms Anikah Ibtisam*, Programme Associate (Communication); and *Ms Anneysa Zafrin*, Programme Associate (Communication).

Helpful support received from *Mr AHM Ashrafuzzaman*, Deputy Director, IT; and *Ms Tamanna Taher*, Executive Associate, CPD are also recalled.

The inspirations extended by the members of the Core Group and the Advisory Group of the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh are gratefully mentioned.

Finally, special thanks are due to ActionAid Bangladesh, Education and Development Foundation Bangladesh, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Bangladesh, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Transparency International Bangladesh, UNDP Bangladesh, WaterAid, World Vision Bangladesh for their support.



Debapriya Bhattacharya, PhD
Convenor, Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh
and
Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)

About the Platform

Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh was formed in June 2016 with the objective of providing a policy stage to the non-state actors (NSAs) in Bangladesh to contribute to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Platform seeks to enhance transparency and accountability in the SDG process at the country level. It particularly aims to promote the 2030 Agenda's pledge to *Leave No One Behind* in the process of development.

Since its inception, the Platform has emerged as the largest forum for the NSAs that include a unique blend of non-government development organisations, civil society organisations (CSOs) and private sector associations in Bangladesh. The Platform currently has over 120 Partner Organisations (POs). These organisations work on knowledge generation as well as monitoring of national development policies towards delivering SDGs by 2030. Moreover, the Platform undertakes policy advocacy and stirs new conversations on relevant challenges and solutions. All these are accomplished through regular conferences and dialogues at the national level, capacity development workshops, international events and webinars.

At the beginning of its journey five years ago, the Platform sought to outline the scope of the partnership between the government and NGOs and explore the role of the private sector in implementing the SDGs. It emphasised the importance of SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) as central to the overall delivery of the 2030 Agenda. The Platform later provided intellectual inputs to identify the population groups at risk of being left behind in the attainment of the SDGs in Bangladesh. Subsequently, one of its highlighted focuses was on youth, a systematically vulnerable community in Bangladesh, in view of the country's journey through a window of demographic opportunity. The following years saw the Platform bringing together more than 50 POs that actively contributed to documenting Bangladesh's progress towards attaining selected SDGs for review during the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). The Platform, along with a dozen of its POs, also prepared a set of thematic policy briefs with a view to contributing the perspectives of non-state actors towards the Voluntary National Review (VNR) of Bangladesh.

Since the scourge of COVID-19 unleashed itself in the first quarter of 2020, the Citizen's Platform realised the advantage and potential of its substantive network. It immediately engaged in conceptualising initiatives that could address the crisis and particularly uphold the interests of the "left behind". Thus the year was marked by the Platform's many activities widely discussing the implications of COVID-19 at the grassroots level, on the SDGs, and on the pathways towards an inclusive recovery and resilience. Towards this end, the Platform along with its POs embarked on a flagship research and outreach programme titled "Strengthening Citizen's Engagement in Delivering SDGs in view of COVID-19 Pandemic". A number of knowledge products will be created under the programme, to be followed by policy advocacy.

In view of the above, the Citizen's Platform has introduced a Working Paper Series, which features pertinent research on issues related to SDG delivery with a particular focus on the marginalised and vulnerable communities in Bangladesh. The present paper is the fourth of this series.

Series Editor: *Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya*, Convenor, Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh.

About the Authors

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, a macroeconomist and public policy analyst, is the Convenor of the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh, and a Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)—a globally reputed think-tank in Bangladesh—where he had been earlier its first Executive Director. He is a member of the United Nations Committee for Development Policy (CDP) and also the Chair of two global initiatives, viz. LDC Monitor and Southern Voice. He was the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), UN Office, and other international organisations in Geneva and Vienna. Dr Debapriya is engaged in high-level policy designing and advising for the national government and various bilateral and international development agencies at home and abroad. He has published extensively on trade, investment and finance related issues of the least developed countries (LDCs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He serves in the boards and working groups of a number of national, regional and international development organisations and networks and in the editorial board of reputed journals. He holds a PhD in Economics from Plekhanov National Planning Institute, Moscow and had been a Postdoctoral Fellow at Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford. He held a number of visiting positions, including Senior Fulbright Fellow at the Centre for Global Development (CGD), Washington DC.

Mr Towfiqul Islam Khan is an economist and currently a Senior Research Fellow at the CPD. He has undertaken various research and published in a number of areas, including macroeconomic policies, fiscal policy and fiscal transparency, governance, financing for development, inclusive development and SDGs. Khan is a member of the 'SDG Working Team' constituted under the Prime Minister's Office, Government of Bangladesh. He is also a member of the 'SDGs NGO Sub-Committee' constituted under the NGO Affairs Bureau of Bangladesh. Khan received the Australian Leadership Award (ALA) in 2008 to carry out his postgraduation academic degree at University of Melbourne, Australia. Khan also obtained his Masters in Economics from Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh.

Ms Fabiha Anbar Huq is a Programme Associate at the CPD. Her current research work is focused on the challenges faced by the youth cohort in Bangladesh in integrating into and benefiting from the development process of the country. Prior to joining CPD, she has worked at BRAC-James P Grant School of Public Health, where her research was focused on gender inequality and counteracting patriarchal backlash in Bangladesh. She has obtained her Bachelor's degree in Economics and Development, and a Master's degree in Social Development from the University of Sussex, UK.

Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	v
<i>Preface and Acknowledgements</i>	vii
<i>About the Platform</i>	ix
<i>About the Authors</i>	xi
<i>Acronyms</i>	xv
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Methodological approach	
1.2 Layout of the paper	
2. Is the concept of the ‘disengaged youth’ a useful concept in understanding the youth dynamics within Bangladesh?	2
3. What are the major causes of youth disengagement in Bangladesh?	4
3.1 Influence of skills mismatch on Youth NEET	
3.2 Influence of location on youth NEET	
3.3 Influence of the digital divide on youth NEET	
3.4 Influence of traditional socio-cultural norms on youth NEET	
3.5 Influence of discriminatory practices and lack of legal rights on youth NEET	
4. What are the main manifestations of youth disengagement?	10
4.1 Youth and criminality	
4.2 Youth and radicalisation	
4.3 Youth and mental health	
4.4 Youth and intimate partner violence	
5. Policy Interventions	17
5.1 Policy interventions for skills mismatch	
5.2 Policy interventions for youth living in hard-to-reach areas	
5.3 Policy interventions for addressing the digital divide	
5.4 Policy interventions to tackle traditional patriarchal norms	
5.5 Policy interventions to promote inclusion of socially excluded youth groups	
5.6 Summary of Policy interventions	
6. Conclusions and Outlook	22
References	24
Annex	30

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1	: Share of youth NEET within working age population in 2016-17 (%)	2
Table 2	: Youth unemployment rates across different educational attainment levels in 2016-17	5
Table 3	: Youth NEET rates among different locations, sex and age groups (%)	6
Table 4	: Profile of internet users and non-users in Bangladesh by location, gender and education level (%)	7
Table 5	: Factors influencing digital inaccessibility for respondents revealed by the semi-structured interviews	8
Table 6	: Occupation of transgender people	9
Table 7	: Distribution of reasons stated by youth respondents for violence (in %)	11
Table 8	: Reasons cited by respondents for youth radicalisation in Bangladesh.	12
Table 9	: Variables influencing depression, anxiety and stress amongst graduated employment seekers	13
Table 10	: Variables influencing depression and suicidal behaviour amongst university students	14
Table 11	: Socio-demographic variables influencing Intimate Partner Violence during the COVID-19 pandemic	16
Figure 1	: Factors that lead to youth NEET	5
Figure 2	: Manifestations of youth disengagement stemming from the youth NEET	10
Figure 3	: Recommending policy and programmatic interventions to counteract the phenomenon of youth disengagement through youth NEET	17

BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BIPSS	Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
KII	Key Informant Interview
MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund

1. INTRODUCTION

With more than one-third of its population representing youth, Bangladesh is currently experiencing a demographic window of opportunity. Despite this, Bangladesh has not been able to reap the benefits of this window of opportunity adequately. The youth unemployment rate is staggeringly high, about 10.6 per cent in 2017. Indeed, unemployed youth represented 79.6 per cent of the country's total unemployed population. Nevertheless, the youth population in Bangladesh is not a homogenous category. The 'disengaged youth' concept may be useful to understand why a particular segment of this population is excluded or marginalised from the mainstream development process.

The concept of 'disengaged youth' has been academically studied for a long time. Although the terms used at times may not be the same, they hold similar meanings. Through a review of global literature, it has been found that youth can be economically, politically, socially and culturally disengaged. All four categories of youth disengagement exist in Bangladesh. The present paper focuses on the economic disengagement of youth in Bangladesh to elucidate the causes that lead to high unemployment, underemployment, and economic inactivity amongst them. The youth NEET (not in education, employment or training) is a useful concept in this context.

It is also to be noted that female, educated, and rural youth are over-represented within the youth NEET group, as is evinced from the Labour Force Survey 2016-17 (BBS, 2018). Additionally, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, jobs and job searching opportunities have declined considerably while education and training opportunities have shifted to the digital spaces. As a result, those youth who have worse access to digital services may have been more affected. The labour-market approach to address youth NEET has traditionally focused on providing youth with education and training. This approach assumes that with better skills, they can look for and receive employment opportunities. However, to counteract the NEET, a set of additional underlying causes must be addressed, which include other infrastructural, technological, political and social causes. Furthermore, the additional manifestations of youth disengagement stemming from the NEET will be looked into. Lastly, the types of policy frameworks to counteract youth disengagement are discussed to suggest policy interventions.

1.1 Methodological approach

The main objective of the paper has been to use the concept of the 'disengaged youth' to address and counteract the issue of a segment of the youth population being excluded or marginalised from the development process of Bangladesh. The paper has been centred on the youth NEET population as the focus is on the high unemployment, underemployment and economic inactivity that they face. To this end, literature review has been conducted to establish the current state of knowledge on the subject of disengaged youth. Also, secondary data has been utilised to examine the hypotheses. Three discussions have also been held with young thought leaders, researchers, experts and youth rights activists during the course of the study.

1.2 Layout of the paper

Following this introduction, Section 2 looks at the different categories of youth disengagement that were academically studied in the past and establishes them in the context of Bangladesh. Section 3 explores some of the major influences which lead to the youth NEET in Bangladesh. These are

skills-mismatch, being located in a marginalised geographical location, the digital divide, traditional patriarchal norms and lack of legal rights and discriminatory practices. Subsequently, Section 4 looks at some of the manifestations of youth disengagement within Bangladesh beyond that of unemployment, including criminality, radicalisation, mental health stress and intimate partner violence (IPV). Section 5 puts forward some policy interventions in the Bangladesh context. Finally, section 6 concludes the paper, which puts forward the issues for future studies on the youth NEET more in-depth and the concept of the 'disengaged youth' to be looked into other forms of disengagement within this demography.

2. IS THE CONCEPT OF THE 'DISENGAGED YOUTH' A USEFUL CONCEPT IN UNDERSTANDING THE YOUTH DYNAMICS WITHIN BANGLADESH?

This section explores the usefulness of the 'disengaged youth' in understanding youth dynamics within Bangladesh. Firstly, the concept of the 'disengaged youth', as has been emphasised in global literature, is reviewed. This will range from economic, political, social to cultural disengagement. Next, it looks at these forms of youth disengagement in the Bangladesh context. Finally, it uses the concept of the disengaged youth to explain the limitations of past analytical frameworks in explaining the youth dynamics in Bangladesh.

Economically disengaged youth

The economically disengaged youth are those who, for voluntary or involuntary reasons, become disengaged from mainstream employment, training and education. For example, global literature has referred to the hippie subculture as an instance of voluntary economic disengagement. The hippie subculture emerged during the 1960s due to US involvement in the Vietnam war (Nugroho et al., 2020). Hall (1968) stated that these youth belonged to middle-class backgrounds and were rather academically gifted than traditionally marginalised. However, they rejected the tenets of a meritocratic society and thus rejected the systems of formal education, which led them to drop out or disengage from schools. In a contrasting case of involuntary disengagement, Myrdal (1963) described the 'underclass' population as those who had fallen to the bottom of the American class structure due to inadequate schooling opportunities and lack of marketable skills. In this context, Lerman (1996) described the 'underclass youth' as youth stemming from lower-socioeconomic and minority households with high dropout and unemployment rate.

The rising youth NEET population can depict economic disengagement in Bangladesh. However, this is particularly high for some subsets. For example, Khatun and Saadat (2020) highlighted that female youth were disproportionately over-represented within the youth NEET population. This can be seen in Table 1. Besides, will the age increases, the proportion of female youth in the NEET bracket increases

Table 1: Share of youth NEET within working age population in 2016-17 (%)

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
15-19	9.7	29.5	18.9
20-24	8.6	57.8	36.0
25-29	5.7	59.2	35.7
Total youth	8.1	49.4	29.8

Source: BBS (2018).

while it decreases for the male counterpart. Also, the share of educated youth in unemployment is higher than the share of uneducated youth. The high rate of unemployment among educated youth indicates the mismatch between the skills acquired by educated youth and the market demand.

Politically disengaged youth

The politically disengaged youth are those who, again for voluntary or involuntary reasons, do not participate in mainstream politics or are not interested in political issues. Carpini (2000) has alluded to the growing political disengagement of youth in American society since the 1970s. A very low proportion of youth, about 19 per cent, were likely to follow politics and government regularly. This may be seen as voluntary disengagement as lack of belief in the political process was cited as one of the main reasons for disengagement. Carpini (2000) found only 20 per cent of youth were proud of how the democracy in the states work. Furthermore, he also stated that youth were unlikely to think their political participation mattered and that they felt unrepresented by the political parties and their agendas. This also correlated with a small voter turn-out (about 28 per cent) amongst the 18-24 years. In Bangladesh, declining interest and participation of youth in politics at the national and local levels are also observed. Rashid and Gao (2012) found that the majority of youth are not involved in politics in Bangladesh. BIGD and BRAC (2018) found that only three per cent of youth are involved with political organisations. However, the study also pointed out that 49 per cent of males and 35 per cent of females among the youth surveyed thought that youth should participate in politics.

Socially disengaged youth

Socially disengaged youth are those who become disengaged from society and, therefore, economic and political processes due to voluntary or involuntary reasons. Majid (2012) has pointed out that in the case of the Dalit community in India, historically, the caste system has kept them socially excluded and not let them integrate into mainstream society. They were categorised as 'untouchables'. With the quota system in education and government jobs, a minority of the population has benefited, but the rest are still marginalised. Wong (2012) points to the Hikikomori youth in Japan who can go into social withdrawal and stay without outside contact for a period of six months or longer. However, these youth may be connected to the outside world through the sphere of digital connection, but due to a lack of social interactions, they may lose their face-to-face skills. This impacts other segments of their lives, like employability.

Social forms of disengagement within youth in Bangladesh are occurring due to the traditional social norms dictating that certain segments of the youth population remain disengaged from the labour market, and broader societal and political processes. For instance, Kotikula et al. (2019) found that about 79 per cent of the female respondents stated the responsibility of household work as the reason for them not participating in the labour force. In contrast, no male reported this reason.

Another form of social disengagement is when certain populations are left out of the labour market, voting processes or socially excluded due to discriminatory beliefs and practices. For instance, Aziz and Azhar (2019) found that the transgender population in Bangladesh faces marginalisation at multiple levels. These include being socially excluded by their families, being intimidated by their gurus not to leave the hijra community and seek formal employment, and facing high turnover rates regarding formal employment.

Culturally disengaged youth

Youth disengagement in the cultural context can arise from the processes of acculturation. Kulis et al. (2016) state that the process of acculturation occurs in the context of Native American youth as they migrate inwards towards urban areas and become increasingly displaced from their native lands. Within the urban Native American population in the States, there is a trend of higher unemployment, lack of high school degree, and substance-use related illnesses and mortality. On the contrary, stronger connections and understandings of one's tribal traditions are associated with better educational outcomes, decreased risk of suicide and less susceptibility to substance abuse (Kulis et al., 2016). Moreover, the process of enculturation, which is to connect an individual back to their own traditional culture, was stated as having the ability to provide the social support needed to protect these youth from risk and dangerous behaviours (Baldwin et al., 2011; Kulis et al., 2016).

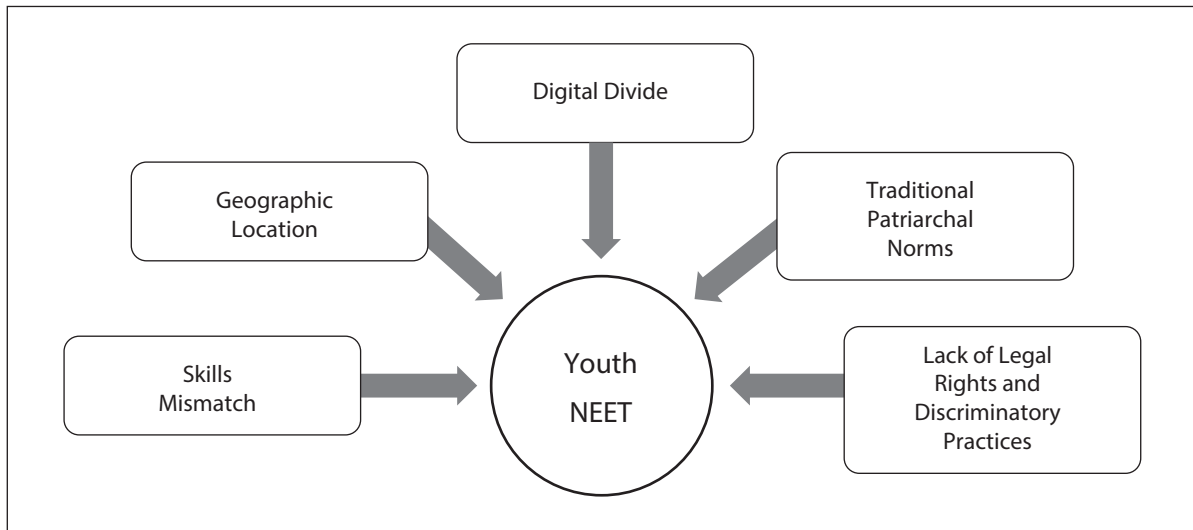
In Bangladesh, due to its official language being Bengali and the other widely used language being English, youth from ethnic minority communities face a disconnection with school and experience higher dropout rates, which causes eventual barriers to employment. Barkat et al. (2009) found that although the school enrolment rate amongst children aged 5-16 were high, the dropout rate was at 65 per cent for ethnic minority communities in Chittagong hill tracts (CHT). Not being able to understand instructions due to the language barrier was cited as one of the reasons behind this. Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh (2019) also highlighted racial discrimination and language barriers as two main reasons for difficulties in access to education, skill development and employment for ethnic minority communities.

While all four categories of youth disengagement are present in Bangladesh, this paper focuses on economically disengaged youth. The other forms of youth disengagement are effectively utilised to understand their influence on economic disengagement. The current analytical framework that has been mostly used to understand youth disengagement within Bangladesh has been that of the youth NEET, i.e. their exclusion from mainstream economic activities and labour market. However, to this end, the central focus has been on the lack of opportunity these youth have for increasing their knowledge and skills base, which makes it hard for them to enter the labour market (Moazzem & Shibly, 2020). Regrettably, looking at NEET from this perspective only may narrow down the solution to providing quality education and training and employment opportunities. Hence, this paper argues that without addressing the other underlying causes of youth NEET, the country will not be able to reintegrate disengaged youth effectively.

3. WHAT ARE THE MAJOR CAUSES OF YOUTH DISENGAGEMENT IN BANGLADESH?

The concept of the 'disengaged youth' allows extending the analytical framework beyond that of the traditional labour-market approach. It will help to address the other factors which influence the youth NEET. The paper looks at the economic, infrastructural, technological, social and political causes of the youth NEET, such as skills mismatch, marginalised geographical location, digital divide, traditional patriarchal norms and lack of legal rights (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Factors that lead to youth NEET



Source: Authors' illustration.

3.1 Influence of skills mismatch on Youth NEET

In Bangladesh, there might be a mismatch between the skills gained by youth and those demanded by the labour market. Amin (2013) argued that qawmi madrasahs offer curriculums that solely focus on religious education and thus do not guarantee youth entrance into universities or mainstream gainful employment. Samad (2021) informed that about 14,000 Qawmi madrasahs are functioning in Bangladesh this year. Furthermore, according to data published by Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) (2015), there were 9,319 Alia madrasahs in Bangladesh. Students from these institutions may also face inaccessibility to mainstream employment. According to Mamun and Shaon (2021), while degrees offered by Alia madrasahs are equivalent to those offered in general education and students seem to be doing well in certain subjects and sectors, it still does not prepare them for more specialised sectors like the field of medicine and engineering.

Also, gaining higher education does not necessarily guarantee employment in Bangladesh. Unemployment was the highest for those with secondary and higher secondary levels of educational attainment (Table 2). It was the lowest for those with no formal education, followed by those with only primary levels of educational attainment.

Table 2: Youth unemployment rates across different educational attainment levels in 2016-17

Educational Level	Male	Female	Total
None	2.6	5.5	4.0
Primary	11.6	11.8	11.7
Secondary	25.6	30.4	28.0
Higher Secondary	24.4	20.1	22.3
Tertiary	15.5	11.2	13.4
Others	0.6	0.0	0.3

Source: BBS (2018).

Kotikula et al. (2019) found that about 46 per cent of college graduates were unemployed three years after graduating. Subsequently, out of every 100 graduates, 58 graduates in metropolitan areas and 70 in non-metropolitan areas remained unemployed. Indeed, knowledge and skills gained by graduates in colleges tend not to equip them for the job market. Only one-third of employed graduates reported that they have been able to apply skills learnt in university to their profession. Universities also tend to lag behind in teaching students adequate ICT and soft skills, which are increasingly important for jobs that tertiary-educated graduates tend to apply for. However, within the survey, only about 1 in 10 employed graduates stated that their universities prepared them with adequate ICT skills for their current jobs. Additionally, there is demand in the labour market for those who have graduated in computer science, finance and accounting, English and science, but the highest share of university graduates tend to study courses in humanities and arts. This is why there is a mismatch between the skills that are in demand in the labour market and the skills that graduates tend to possess. Lastly, colleges hardly tend to partner with employers to provide graduates with apprenticeships or employment opportunities. Out of the 235 employers that were surveyed, only three employers reported that they have partnerships for recruitment with universities and only two reported that they have a partnership for providing apprenticeships.

It has also been found that college graduates tend to face higher turnover rates, and once they lose their jobs, they tend to remain unemployed for a long period of time. Kotikula et al. (2019) found that about 30 per cent of the graduates have been unemployed for more than a year. Unemployed graduates are also unlikely to join vocational or technical training programmes that could enhance their employability. Instead, they opt to attain post-graduate or master's degrees, which decreases their employment opportunities in Bangladesh. Moreover, it has been found that graduates are not up to date about Bangladesh's prevailing labour market conditions. About 90 per cent of college graduates were found to be interested in government jobs, while in reality, only 10 per cent of college graduates tend to secure government jobs.

3.2 Influence of location on youth NEET

Youth NEET was higher for rural areas than urban areas (Table 3). This was the case for both sexes and all age groups except for the females in 25-29 age bracket. This shows evidence of a rural-urban divide. Additionally, the Directorate of Primary Education's 2015 Annual Sectoral Performance report stated that amongst the underperforming areas in Bangladesh in terms of learning outcomes and gender participation, 60 per cent were hard to reach areas (Save The Children, 2016).

Table 3: Youth NEET rates among different locations, sex and age groups (%)

Age Group	Rural			Urban		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
15-19	10.0	31.8	19.7	9.0	24.5	16.8
20-24	8.9	60.0	36.8	8.0	53.4	34.3
25-29	6.0	57.6	34.9	5.1	62.5	37.3

Source: BBS (2018).

In Bangladesh, those residing in the CHT, char and haor areas, monga and flood-affected areas and tea gardens remained hard to reach in terms of providing access to quality education (Begum et al., 2018). Barkat et al. (2009) found the primary school enrolment rate in the CHT at 82 per cent amongst

children aged 5-16, which is almost 100 per cent at the national level. Also, about 65 per cent of the children dropped out of school before completing their primary education. Reasons cited for this were financial constraints faced by families, children not feeling welcomed at school, instructions not being understandable due to language barriers and long distance between school and home (Barkat et al., 2009).

Similarly, those living in char and haor areas were also deprived of basic livelihood opportunities. About 55 per cent of the population were found to be hard-core poor, and 65 per cent were unemployed (Ahmed and Nath, 2005; Begum et al., 2018). While the school enrolment rate amongst this population was high, the attendance rate remained low, and the school dropout rate was high (Begum et al., 2018). Reasons cited for this were difficulties in accessing adequate infrastructure to gain access to cities where education institutions were located during the months of monsoon and also lack of good communication systems to access information and resources from schools, and schools may even remain closed during the monsoon season. Children from monga and flood-affected areas, due to poverty, may need to choose work over school and, due to frequent migration brought by seasons of food shortage, may need to drop out of school and partake in child labour instead (Begum et al., 2018).

3.3 Influence of the digital divide on youth NEET

The digitisation process in Bangladesh is mainly focused on developing human resources, connecting citizens, providing services to citizens' doorsteps and enhancing ICT-based business opportunities (Prime Minister Office, 2009; Islam and Inan, 2021). This has become even more prominent during the pandemic as a lot of the educational and employment opportunities and other services have shifted to digital platforms. However, evidence drawn from Bangladesh National ICT Household Survey (2018-19) shows a digital divide within the country along gender, location and qualification lines (Table 4).

Table 4: Profile of internet users and non-users in Bangladesh by location, gender and educational level (%)

Profile Indicator	User	Non-User
<i>Location</i>		
Urban	54.8	45.2
Rural	34.8	65.2
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	34.2	46.8
Female	53.2	65.8
<i>Education Level</i>		
No Formal Education	6.0	94.0
Primary	20.8	79.2
Secondary	48.5	51.5
Higher Secondary	70.2	29.8

Source: Bangladesh National ICT Household Survey (2018-19).

Islam and Inan (2021) found recurring themes when it came to reasons respondents cited for their inability to gain digital access. These could be grouped into educational factors such as lack of education or lack of digital proficiency; infrastructural factors such as limited access to digital services

in rural or remote areas or man-machine ratio; societal factors such as social inequality or lack of trust in digital services; economic factors such as lacking the skills to use IT for economic gain even whilst being able to access digital services and usable design due to the internet not being user-friendly in multiple languages. Table 5 shows some of the common answers that the respondents cited.

Table 5: Factors influencing digital inaccessibility for respondents revealed by the semi-structured interviews

Factors cited as reasons for digital inaccessibility	Percentage of respondents
Lack of UI in Multiple Languages	57.0
Lack of Awareness	53.0
Lack of Encouragement and Assistance	50.0
Lack of Disparity in ICT access	47.0
Lack of Digital Proficiency	47.0
Lack of Trust in ICT	43.0
Social Inequality	43.0
Lack of Internet Skills	43.0
Lack of Basic Education	43.0
Usability/UX	40.0
Lack of Computer Skills	40.0

Source: Islam and Inan (2021).

3.4 Influence of traditional socio-cultural norms on youth NEET

As has been discussed before, female youth are significantly over-represented in comparison to their male counterparts in the areas of NEET. This trend increases as age progresses. This is related to high dropout rates of female youth compared to males from educational institutions and also that education does not necessarily yield employment for females. Traditional patriarchal norms have the potential to dictate whether women can engage in the labour market or not. This can stem from the overarching religiopolitical realm preventing women's economic and social advancement. Women's advancements have often been met with patriarchal backlash due to such norms being expended in the name of religion. This is evidenced in the 240 documented fatwas issued by Islamic clerics from 1992 to 2002 as an objection against women's empowerment driven by NGOs; many of them had suggested that such training programmes violated a principle tenet of Islam which is the control of the husband over the wife (Adams, 2015). Regulation of women's educational and employment opportunities through the 'purdah' imposition has led them to seek education at madrasas. Adams (2015) found that if madrasas are available in communities, women are six-times more likely to attend school than more progressive districts. Asadullah and Chaudhury (2010) found that in comparison to females in government schools, those attending madrasas held less favourable perspectives on expanding women's economic and educational opportunities.

Moreover, the family's traditional patriarchal norms have meant that education does not necessarily lead to employment for women. Asadullah and Wahhaj (2012) found that educational advancement did not necessarily equate to employment for women. Women from wealthier families were less likely to participate in the labour force. This could be due to women's participation in paid employment being stigmatised by the family. In conjuncture to that, Adams (2015) argued that the advancement of upward class mobility leading to expansion of the middle-class families has meant that such families

often partake in an earlier marriage of their daughters to avoid moral suspicion. Moreover, Asadullah and Wahhaj (2012) also found that married women and those who live with their parents-in-law were less likely to participate in paid employment outside of the household.

Additionally, there is a gendered division of labour within the household. Nakata et al. (2019) found that, on average, men spent more time in paid work outside of the household (10 hours a day) compared to women (4 hours in a day). About 79 per cent of those women not participating in the labour force cited household work as their reason for not participating.

3.5 Influence of discriminatory practices and lack of legal rights on youth NEET

The absence of legal rights and prevalence of discriminatory practices can also lead to youth disengagement from the labour market, education (NEET), and wider society. Aziz and Azhar (2019) found that despite showing a desire to work, transgender people face discrimination regarding obtaining formal employment. They instead derived money through traditional income-generating activities of transgender. Hossen (2019) also found that the most common source of livelihood for transgender was Badhai (42.9 per cent), followed by Cholla Manga (35.7 per cent). Aziz and Azhar (2019) also found that even when the transgender people find employment, they face the threats of being fired. Additionally, due to the absence of legal rights, they are not able to take any legal course of action against discrimination faced at employment, education, access to assets or in the hands of family members. Indeed, through discriminatory practices and a lack of access to practice their civic rights, hijra youth may become disengaged from mainstream politics, society and in the economy.

Table 6: Occupation of transgender people

Occupation	Per centage
Badhai	42.9
Cholla Manga	35.7
Sex Worker	10.7
Beauty Parlour	3.6
Employed in NGO	7.4

Source: Hossen (2019).

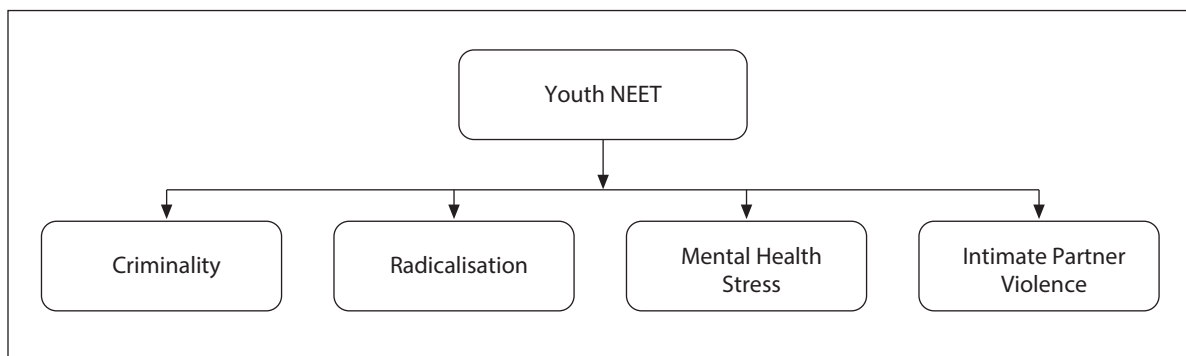
To summarise, this section helped understand how factors such as skills mismatch, living in marginalised geographical locations, the digital divide, traditional patriarchal norms and lack of legal rights, and discriminatory practices make certain segments of the population more vulnerable to economic disengagement than others. For instance, as has been shown, skills mismatch means that traditional forms of education are not able to provide youth with gainful employment. Living in hard to reach areas is associated with higher dropout rates and unemployment. The digital divide can lead segments of the population who do not have access to the digital space to become disconnected from educational and employment opportunities. Furthermore, traditional patriarchal norms dictate women stay at home and limit their occupational opportunities. Therefore, this can contribute to forming a higher NEET rate among the female population. Subsequently, lack of legal rights and the existence of discriminatory practices means that certain populations are left more vulnerable to unemployability and have higher chances of being laid off even after being employed. The existence of the digital divide within Bangladesh has meant that certain populations, such as those without relevant skill and

education, appropriate devices and access to the internet, particularly those who live in rural or remote areas, are more prone to fall into the youth NEET population. Indeed, the factors mentioned above play a huge contributory role in influencing NEET among the youth population in Bangladesh.

4. WHAT ARE THE MAIN MANIFESTATIONS OF YOUTH DISENGAGEMENT?

This section explored, the manifestations of youth disengagement that stem from the youth NEET and whether the youth NEET influences other forms of youth disengagement. This section also identifies additional contributory factors which influence these youth disengagements. The paper has identified four such manifestations (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Manifestations of youth disengagement stemming from the youth NEET



Source: Authors' illustration drawn from the literature review.

4.1 Youth and criminality

With the rise of youth gangs in Bangladesh, youth criminality has become a looming threat to the social cohesion of Bangladesh. Saad and Rahman (2020) quoted law enforcers to highlight that there are about 40 teen gangs in Dhaka that allegedly commit pretty crimes, as well as more serious offences like mugging, drug abuse, murder, etc. (Saad and Rahman, 2020). Indeed, it is important to look into factors that drive and proliferate this gang culture amongst youth in Bangladesh.

Haque et al. (2020) conducted research on the young prisoner group and found that lack of education, unemployment and financial conditions played a role in influencing youth criminality amongst these prisoners. Twenty-five per cent of the young prisoner group had no literacy, followed by only primary levels of literacy for about 22 per cent. It was found that some respondents had failed to secure a job after dropping out or completing their studies. Additionally, there was a correlation between the financial conditions of the respondents and youth juvenility. About 80 per cent of them stated that they were involved in crime due to financial crisis. Due to poverty and constraints to earn money, they tried to achieve their goals by committing different criminal activities. Uddin (2020) also found that 27 per cent of the young survey respondents stated poverty as their primary reason for violence, followed by unemployment (22.3 per cent), family problems (18.8 per cent) and flaws in the education system (15.7 per cent) (Table 7). These studies stress that financial deprivation plays a significant role in influencing youth criminality.

Table 7: Distribution of reasons stated by youth respondents for violence (in %)

Reasons for youth violence	Percentage of respondents
Unemployment	22.3
Education System	15.7
Poverty	27.9
Family Problem	18.8
Affair	8.7
Others	6.6

Source: Uddin (2020).

4.2 Youth and radicalisation

In Bangladesh, violent extremism has had a long history of threatening the social cohesion of the country; in recent times, this has manifested in the form of violent attacks on bloggers, liberal academics and other religious minorities. The most prominent example was perhaps the Holey Artisan attack in 2016. It was observed that most of the attackers came from well-off families and were educated in English-medium schools. This may be contrary to what conventional knowledge would dictate—that it is usually those who were economically underprivileged, were more susceptible to radicalisation.

A study by Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (2017), intended to find out the local drivers and dynamics of youth radicalisation in Bangladesh, was conducted amongst students, academics, practitioners, law enforcement agents, and victims and an eye witness of violent extremist attacks. It was conducted through a series of surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs). For the survey, the participants were 105 students from private universities, public colleges and government and private colleges. For the FGDs, it was 63 students from these institutions. The KIIs were conducted amongst three academics (those with vast experience on topics related to violent extremism), two practitioners (with direct experience in dealing with violent extremist and related activities), two law enforcement agents, one eye witness (of violent extremist attacks) and two victims (of violent extremist attacks). About half of the respondents stated that it was students belonging to private universities who are more susceptible to radicalisation, followed by 14 per cent stating that it was students belonging to qawmi madrasas and 13 per cent stating no specific institutions. When it came to citing reasons for the radicalisation of youth, 39.6 per cent cited political matters (Table 8). Among these political matters were factors such as temptation of power, keeping own existence, creating political unrest, etc. This was followed by religious reasons, which was cited by 30.5 per cent of the respondents. Religious reasons included factors such as politics in the name of religion, fabricated promises made in the name of religion, insufficient religious knowledge, etc. Economic factors were cited by 18.8 per cent. Economic factors included poverty, temptation, unemployment, etc.

Haider (2017) found that perceived barriers to job and political disengagement contributed to radicalisation. An overwhelming majority (around 63 per cent) did not believe that the government adequately ensured citizens' human rights, which may then influence the radicalisation process. Among the institutional variables which influenced student radicalisation was the belief that their institutions prioritise profit-making rather than service-providing for students. This belief had a positive correlation with the probability of students becoming radicalised. About 72 per cent

Table 8: Reasons cited by respondents for youth radicalisation in Bangladesh

Reasons cited for radicalisation	Factors influencing these reasons	Percentage of respondents that cited these reasons
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Temptation of power -To keep own existence -Political frustration -To create political unrest -Rival attitude/hatred -Exhibit power 	39.6
Religious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Misinterpretation and wrong concept -Excessiveness -Protect religion -Lack of values -Teaching wrong methods -Politics in the name of religion -Fabricated promises made in the name of religion 	30.5
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Poverty -Temptation of power -Contact with foreign power to earn money -Unemployment -Social Inequity -Unrest in family 	18.8
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Indecent dress of women -Degenerate culture -Obscene cinema -Rapid change of culture 	4.0
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Frustration in personal life -Social change -Oppression of expression -Lack of awareness -No anti militancy write up in school textbooks -Economic recession -Foreign power 	7.0

Source: BIPSS (2017).

of the students surveyed believed in this. Furthermore, students may feel that due to the lack of quality education provided by their institutions, they might be unable to secure a job. In this case, perceptions of future unemployment could influence radicalisation. It can be said that the lack of trust in universities to provide them with adequate education and future job security, along with the denial of their political rights and other perceived barriers to finding decent employment, increased these students' probability of becoming radicalised.

4.3 Youth and mental health

There has been a rise in suicide rates amongst youth in Bangladesh during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nawaz (2021) reported a 44 per cent rise in the suicide rate during the pandemic, and 49 per cent of the individuals were aged between 20 and 35, citing a survey conducted by a youth organisation named the Aachol Foundation. Khan et al. (2021) found that being female, a housewife, unemployed or facing a job loss was positively correlated with high levels of depression, anxiety and stress amongst youth during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mamun et al. (2020) conducted a survey among unemployed youth graduates and job-seekers in six major cities in Bangladesh in 2019. They found that women graduate job seekers tend to suffer from mental health issues more than men. The reasons for this gender disparity in mental health outcomes amongst unemployed youth could be influenced by prejudice women face in the labour market by employers or the cultural beliefs that women should be in the domestic sphere, a barrier for them to enter the labour market (Mamun et al., 2020). The study also found that youth who graduated from public universities had lower depression, anxiety, and stress rates than graduates from other institutions. This may be due to their dynamic skills, good curriculums and being provided adequate time for jobs might mean that they are more likely to secure better jobs. The study further found that graduates from national university colleges had the highest level of stress. This could be because, Alam (2008) and Haque et al. (2020), cited in Mamun et al. (2020), pointed out that those from national universities had lower employability due to their outdated curriculum, which failed to meet the requirements of employers (Table 9). It was also found that medical college students had a high level of stress. Mamun et al. (2020) stated that there had been an increase in the number of medical graduates in the past decade. Still, there have not been enough satisfactory job creations for them. Consecutively, the study found that being satisfied with the academic result was related to lower levels of depression and stress but higher anxiety levels. However, this study also found that lifestyle variables such as not exercising were related to higher depression, anxiety and stress. Additionally, being a cigarette smoker was associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety but a very negligible decline in stress.

Table 9: Variables influencing depression, anxiety and stress amongst graduated employment seekers

Variables	Category	Depression	Anxiety	Stress
Gender	Female	83.8	64.8	70.1
	Male	78.5	58.5	60.1
Socio-economic Status	Lower Class	80.2	72.4	73.3
	Middle Class	82.4	64.9	67.8
	Upper Class	82.6	58.2	62.2
Graduated Institute	Private University	82.5	63.2	68.4
	National University	87.3	62.9	59.5
	Medical College	80.5	66.3	76.3
	Public University	76.6	57.6	61.1
Satisfaction with Academic Result	Yes	79.7	90.6	63.1
	No	83.2	64.5	67.2

Source: Mamun et al. (2020).

The findings of Sakib et al. (2020) also confirm the conclusions of Mamun et al. (2020) that being female was associated with higher rates of depression. They also found that it was associated with a higher prevalence of suicidal behaviour. Those who chose what to study based on future career prospects only also had a higher prevalence rate of depression and suicidal behaviour. This might be because these students emphasise future employability, and with the growing rates of unemployment amongst graduates, they may become demoralised. In tandem with this, those who did not perceive their university teachers as supportive or unsatisfied with the curriculum had a higher prevalence of depression and suicidal behaviour. However, contradictorily, those who were satisfied with their curriculums had a higher prevalence of suicidal behaviour. This might be because of the additional academic pressure they take upon themselves. It was also found that those who had a lower autonomy in terms of subject and university choice showcased higher levels of depression and suicidal behaviour. This might be due to these students being unable to articulate their own sense of purpose in life. Additionally, lifestyle choices like higher social media use, engaging in less physical exercise, and were not engaging in regular religious practice found to be related to higher levels of depression and suicidal behaviour within this study (Table 10). This might be because of these work as coping mechanisms and protective measures against depression and suicidal behaviour.

Table 10: Variables influencing depression and suicidal behaviour amongst university students

Variable	Category	Depression	Suicidal Behaviour
Gender	Female	52.7	35.3
	Male	43.4	22.6
Socio-economic Status	Lower-Class Income	45.3	26.9
	Middle-Class Income	48.2	25.6
	Upper-Class Income	48.2	33.5
Family Type	Nuclear	47.7	30.4
	Joint	47.0	20.8
Engaging Regularly in Religious Practice	Yes	43.8	27.1
	No	54.6	31.4
Social Media Use (More than six hours daily)	Yes	63.0	38.5
	No	38.5	22.6
Preference to be Alone	Yes	55.6	34.5
	No	41.0	23.8
Weekly Physical Exercise	Less than 5hrs	88.6	29.8
	More than 5hrs	33.7	20.2
Studying in Desired Department/Subject	Yes	45.1	29.1
	No	49.6	28.0
Studying in Desired University Institution	Yes	39.0	23.3
	No	52.2	31.3
Parental Influence in Subject Selection	Yes	51.9	33.2
	No	46.1	26.9
Subject Chosen due to Career Prospects Only	Yes	52.8	31.8
	No	43.2	26.1

(Table 10 contd.)

(Table 10 contd.)

Variable	Category	Depression	Suicidal Behaviour
University Teachers Are Supportive	Extremely	42.1	26.0
	Moderately	49.9	28.3
	Not At All	58.9	37.7
Study-friendly Environment	Extremely	45.6	28.2
	Moderately	49.1	32.4
	Not At All	58.5	27.0
Satisfied with Existing Curriculum	Extremely	45.4	31.4
	Moderately	39.9	26.4
	Not At All	52.9	29.5

Source: Sakib et al. (2020).

In sum, unemployment is one of the main influences behind the mental health issues present within university students and youth graduate job seekers. However, it is not the only one with lower autonomy in choice of subject and university institution. Also, lifestyle factors such as higher social media use and lower physical exercise can impact the mental health of this demography.

4.4 Youth and intimate partner violence

Due to the pandemic, there has been a rise in financial uncertainty, anxiousness about job/income loss, and depression, which aggravated violence (Rayhan and Akter, 2021). MJF (2020) reported that there were 4,249 victims of domestic violence during April 2020, and about 39.5 per cent had faced this for the first time. Rayhan and Akter (2021) undertook a study to understand the socio-demographic factors that gave rise to domestic or intimate partner violence (IPV). The study was conducted amongst 400 women aged between 16 and 49 years. They found that women belonging to the youth age groups, between 21-25 and 26-30, were significantly more likely to face intimate partner violence (IPV) than other age groups (Table 11). Furthermore, unemployed women or homemakers were 1.70 times more likely to face IPV than employed women. It was also found that for those who had below secondary levels of education, the prevalence rate of IPV was 56.8 per cent. This was significantly higher than for those groups who had higher than secondary levels of education (17.0 per cent). Additionally, evidence showed that those with educated husbands (above secondary education) were 0.69 times less likely to face IPV than those with uneducated husbands. Indeed, being part of the youth NEET may be one of the major driving forces as women who were unemployed, had fewer years of education, and has a partner with fewer years of education were more likely to face IPV.

Additionally, the socio-economic characteristic was also a factor of influence. Women who belonged to the lower-income group were more likely to face IPV than those from middle-income families. The families with significant income loss were 9.16 times more likely to commit IPV than those with a slight reduction. This, in turn, may be influenced by unemployment.

Naved et al. (2018) found that female workers in the garment sector faced more physical, sexual and economic IPV in the past year since the study was conducted. It concluded that among the lower-income groups where patriarchal norms have a stronger hold, paid work through garments did little to protect them against IPV. Indeed, women's employment and education may lead to a decrease

Table 11: Socio-demographic variables influencing Intimate Partner Violence during the COVID-19 pandemic

Variables	Category	Intimate Partner Violence (%)
Women's Age	16-20	2.35
	21-25	15.49
	26-30	15.49
	31-35	9.02
	36-40	2.35
	41-45	0.59
Marital Duration (years)	<3	11.76
	3-6	15.29
	7-10	10.00
	>10	8.24
Types of Marriage	Arranged Marriage	42.75
	Love Marriage	2.55
Residence	Rural	38.86
	Urban	8.43
Women's Level of Education	≤Secondary School	40.39
	>Secondary School	4.90
Women's Employment Status	Employed	8.63
	Unemployed/Housewife	36.67
Husband's Age	<30 years	18.63
	30-40 years	23.53
	>40 years	3.14
Husband's level of Education	≤Secondary School	40.20
	>Secondary School	5.10
Family Monthly Income	Lower Income	27.84
	Middle Income	13.53
	Upper Income	3.92
Family Income Reduced During the COVID-19 Pandemic	Not At All/Slightly	19.22
	Moderately/A Lot	26.08

Source: Rayhan and Akter (2020).

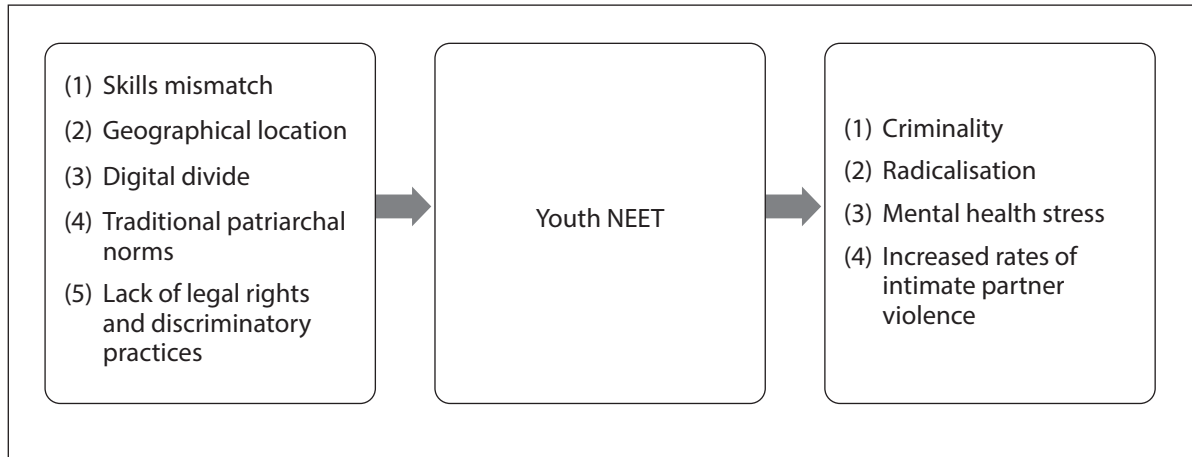
in IPV within some segments of the population, and thus high NEET rates among women can also negatively affect it. Also, having formal employment might not be enough to curb the IPV in lower socio-economic households. In these contexts, interventions that shift the gender balance and patriarchal norms may be more important.

To summarise, as found in this section, NEET plays a significant contributory role in influencing youth criminality and radicalisation, increased mental health stress, and increased rates of IPV amongst this population. Therefore, addressing the youth NEET may help to inhibit all these other manifestations of youth disengagement. However, the importance of other factors of influence must also be addressed.

5. POLICY INTERVENTIONS

This section looks at the possible policy interventions that can help alleviate the phenomenon of disengaged youth, targeting the causes of the youth NEET that have been identified in this paper. This will expectantly help to mitigate the other manifestations of disengagement stemming from the youth NEET (Figure 3). To this end, this section cites some good examples of policy and programme interventions in other countries and suggests policy recommendations for Bangladesh.

Figure 3: Recommending policy and programmatic interventions to counteract the phenomenon of youth disengagement through youth NEET



Source: Authors' illustration.

5.1 Policy interventions for skills mismatch

The Eighth Five Year Plan of Bangladesh acknowledged that the skills mismatch faced by youth in Bangladesh leads to a higher youth unemployment rate. The policy document also recognised that it is necessary to connect literacy, basic skills development and lifelong learning opportunities and envisage learning provisions, facilities and resources complementing and supplementing the formal education system. Additionally, the need for the widespread use of ICT resources for organised lifelong learning should be prioritised. Further, there was an acknowledgement of the requirement of a public-private partnership for on-the-job training schemes to be developed. Khan (2019) observed that the TVET system in Bangladesh has poor outreach and that a large segment of the population tends to acquire vocational and skills training on the job.

In this context, lessons may be drawn from India's National Policy and Skills Development Framework. In 2009, the Government of India initiated a National Policy and Skills Development framework. It aimed to guide strategies for skills development and involve multiple actors such as the private industries and employers, non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations (Mehrotra, 2016). The objective was to unify general and vocational education under a single National Skills Qualifications Framework. The National Skills Qualification Framework aimed to form linkages between vocational, general and technical education. Through this, one level of learning became linked to another. This meant that whilst enhancing the participants' employability through vocational

education, it ensured that core skills were also harnessed, enabling them to switch between jobs and professions. A previously centrally-sponsored scheme that targeted the vocationalisation of secondary education was revised to include higher secondary education under the National Vocational Educational Qualification Framework. Haryana was the first to implement this in 2012; the Haryana State Government introduced four vocational subjects in Retail, Security, Automotive and Information Technology in grade IX. Later in 2013-14, the State Government introduced another three vocational subjects in Healthcare, Physical Education and Sports, and Beauty and Wellness sectors. The vocational graduates are employed by multinational companies in IT-enabled services, automotive, security, and retail sectors. It is also necessary to unify all schools' education under a particular national curriculum, including madrasas.

5.2 Policy interventions for youth living in hard-to-reach areas

Due to the lack of opportunities to attain the quality education and employment in Bangladesh's rural and hard-to-reach areas such as char, haor, coastal, CHT, etc., the youth NEET is significantly higher in these areas. An effective programme to mitigate in these areas needs to incorporate promoting inclusive and better quality education, empowering existing industries, promoting non-agricultural industries, skilling youth to match those demanded by the labour market and providing better connectivity for these youth through ICT training and adequate physical infrastructure.

To ensure that these youth receive inclusive education, it is necessary to ensure the availability of quality schools within these localities. As areas such as chors and haors are vulnerable to climate change, it is important to mitigate the impacts of this on the population. Schools that are resistant to cyclones and flooding need to be built like the ones built by UNICEF in Madagascar (UNFCC, 2013). This needs to be accompanied by adequate roads and transportation. These have to be ensured by partnerships between the state and non-state actors. Moreover, curriculums need to be provided in multiple languages that are understandable by those from ethnic minority backgrounds residing in these areas. In addition to this, non-formal education can be provided alongside formal education as has been implemented in Indonesia (Fakhrudin, 2019). Such programmes may focus on youth life skills specific to their ecologies and pair them with formal schooling teaching literacy. It provides a gateway for children out-of-school to access formal schooling, and those who have been unable to receive formal education can advance into non-formal education. In each of the 10 sub-districts where it was implemented within the Pati Regency in Indonesia, it was able to increase education, human resource, life-skill or economic growth, and at times multiple of these indicators simultaneously (Fakhrudin, 2019).

Training programmes implemented in such areas need to be multi-faceted. Lessons can be drawn from the Eco-Emploi projects implemented by GIZ in Rwanda (Knobloch & Pirzer, 2020). The objective was to promote employment, particularly in non-agricultural areas and teaching skills in ICT and e-commerce amongst rural youth. Eco-Emploi improved the competitiveness of SMEs. It taught young entrepreneurs ICT skills so that they could have a more demand-oriented solution to their businesses. Additionally, it provided a highly-effective demand-based vocational system in partnership with Rwanda's Ministry of Education and representatives from private sectors. The programme helped job centres improve and expand their services so it could bring job-seekers and employers together. Between June 2016 and September 2019, the programme was able to create 3,160 new jobs and a total of 2,241 job seekers registered with the job centres and 817 people were provided with employment or an internship.

5.3 Policy interventions for addressing the digital divide

Two key issues need to be addressed to bridge the digital divide in Bangladesh. First, increasing access to digital services for populations who have not gained access previously. For instance, as data from Bangladesh ICT Household Survey (2018) has shown in Section 3, gender, geographical location, income status, and educational attainment create a significant digital divide among population groups in Bangladesh. In the case of geographical location, the government needs to ensure adequate fixed broadband connections for rural and hard-to-reach areas. When it comes to gender, programmes need to target both skills and create a less stigmatised and safe space to increase access. The 'Digi Wana Era Digital (DWEI)' in Malaysia is a nationwide initiative started by a public-private partnership to educate and integrate women into the online community (United Nations, 2018). This programme is a good example to follow, which uses internet centres to conduct basic ICT training and introduce women to safe usage of smart devices and the internet.

Second, increasing digital literacy amongst those vulnerable groups who lack those skills. United Nations E-Governance Survey (2012) emphasises the need for websites to be accessible in multiple languages to increase user-friendliness. Digital literacy is an essential tool to increase the employability of youth. Programmes such as Aijalcom in France aimed to enable youth to join the workforce and increase their computer literacy through establishing community learning centres (United Nations, 2012). In Malaysia, for instance, the government launched its Computer in Education programme to improve digital literacy education in school (Curtain, 2001). Indeed, the existence of a digital divide means certain populations lack internet access more than others. It is critical to promote digital access for these segments of the population. Lastly, there is a need to bridge the gap between the digital economy and the informal sector so that entrepreneurs and others in the sector can connect with customers better. For example, the Foundation of Occupational Development in India operates telecentres and established a website that provides market access for craft people. As a result, the indigenous sellers could fetch a better price through better connectivity with the international community (Curtain, 2001).

5.4 Policy interventions to tackle traditional patriarchal norms

Traditional patriarchal norms need to be tackled through policy and legislative change or implementation, gender-responsive education, community awareness programmes to change gender norms and behaviour and social change communication that shifts gender norms at the family level. In Bangladesh, the legal and political framework needs to ensure women of their rights and protection and promote their participation in the public sphere of work. The constitution of Bangladesh has placed certain laws to ensure that. For example, Article 19 enforces the principle of equality of opportunity. Article 28 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex and reinforces women's advancement. Article 38 guarantees the right to form labour unions that can promote women's rights indirectly. In addition to this, Labour Act 2006 ensures maternity leave and provision for maternity benefits. However, an assessment of the apparel sector in Bangladesh by Choudhary (2021) showed that many of these legislations and policies are violated in practice. The workers are not given proper appointment letters or employment status and tend to work under dire conditions, which leads to pregnant employees leaving their jobs in fear of a miscarriage. Women also face constant physical and verbal abuse from their male superiors and do not join trade unions in fear of further backlash (Choudhary, 2021). However, job security, adequate working conditions, maternity leave, legal actions against discriminatory practices and trade union participation needs to be ensured

for women workers by appropriate legal bodies and the government. Along with this, Bangladesh can ensure a more balanced gender division of labour at home by allowing for paternity leaves through amendments made to the Labour Act and ensuring workplaces follow these regulations. Effective implementation of this policy can enhance the participation of women at work and their productivity. For example, in Sweden, it has resulted in women earning more over the following four years since it was implemented (Hellman et al., 2017; Kring, 2017).

Additionally, Bangladesh needs to promote a more gender-responsive education provided by partnerships between the state and non-state actors. Adopting a gender-responsive education approach needs to incorporate both gender-targeted and gender-integrated interventions. Gender-targeted interventions would address the challenges, risks and disadvantages faced by girls, boys, women and men (GPE, UNGEI & UNICEF, 2017). In the Bangladeshi context, it needs to be guaranteed that there is a quota for enrolment and attendance of female students in schools, technical training institutions, and universities. Besides, adequate safety measures for women across educational facilities and the transportation system need to be ensured. And lastly, bursary or conditional cash-transfer schemes need to be allocated to female students subject to their attendance. Gender integration involves identifying and responding to gender differences and inequalities during every phase of the programme implementation—from planning and designing (GPE, UNGEI & UNICEF, 2017). Curriculum reform incorporating a gender-integrated approach would ensure that the education content and classroom practices promote equitable gender norms and model non-violent behaviour. A gender-responsive education sector planning needs to be informed by gender analysis and participatory stakeholder consultations and participation (GPE, UNGEI & UNICEF, 2017). Gender analysis would involve being sensitive to context and knowing about the broader economic and political environment, including laws, policies, customary practices and norms and how they affect men and women. The participatory stakeholder consultations would involve perspectives from a diverse range of stakeholders—representing women, men and those belonging to the third gender category—and hearing their views during programme planning, monitoring and evaluation. This needs to be supported by the disbursement of adequate financial investment and development of the institutional capacity to provide gender-responsive education along with political willingness both at the national and local levels. Additionally, a proper system of monitoring and evaluation needs to be implemented to observe whether desired impacts have been achieved.

It is important to target perceptions and practices related to child marriage at the family and community level. Arnab and Siraj (2020) pointed out that the practice of child marriage is more common in rural areas compared to urban areas. The reasons they have cited are dowry practices that are still common in these areas, which tend to increase with the age of the daughter and stigmatisation of pre-marital relationships. Both of these make early marriages of daughters a more appealing ordeal for families. As a result, programmes that engage families and communities to prevent early marriage is necessary. Family and community members need to be taught of the benefits of keeping girls in education for longer and the reproductive health effects and intimate partner violence that could be ensured after early marriage for women. This could be conducted on a large scale through state and non-governmental organisation partnerships.

5.5 Policy interventions to promote inclusion of socially excluded youth groups

The policies and programmes that need to remove the barriers faced by socially excluded youth in learning and participation in addressing the inclusion of socially excluded youth groups have to

come from a rights-based approach that focuses on promoting their rights as equal citizens. The constitution provides them with the right to equality, liberty and social justice. But, supportive policies need to address their historical exclusion from economic, political and social engagement and promote social equity.

Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India (2017) puts forward some recommendations to this end which are also applicable for Bangladesh. First, the ministries that directly work on youth issues must coordinate with each other and marginalised youth communities to promote their civic rights and encourage their civic participation. Second, periodic meetings should be held to incorporate their needs and aspirations. Third, ministries working directly with youth must monitor the inclusion of these groups and possibly the effectiveness of policy measures. Fourth, financial investments must be allocated for equity measures for these groups. Finally, justice must be ensured at both individual and community levels.

In the Bangladesh context, it is also necessary for the voter registration system and the national identification card to recognise transgender as a separate category. In addition, the transgender community needs to get inheritance rights, the new inheritance law that the government has announced needs to be implemented effectively.

To gain social equity, marginalised groups would need protection from discriminatory practices. As such, a comprehensive anti-discriminatory law needs to be established and also implemented. In addition, marginalised communities such as transgender, Dalit and nomadic river gypsies need to be provided with an environment that enables them to gain meaningful quality education and employment opportunities. Indeed, the national statistical office needs to produce further research and disaggregated data to elicit information on these groups.

5.6 Summary of Policy interventions

To summarise, the policy interventions towards economically engaging the NEET youth need to address the identified causes. To address the issues concerning skill mismatch, market-oriented skill trainings need to be prioritised by both public and private service providers. To this end, future demands for employment considering the forthcoming fourth industrial revolution need to be taken into cognisance. The government must make significant reprioritisation in terms of budgetary allocations and enhance budgetary allocations for the education and skills of the marginalised population groups. For example, the government needs to consider channelling funds from traditional institutions under National University to skill programmes.

To address the issues concerning locational disengagement, policy actions will be required to decentralise opportunities for quality education and skills. At the same time, both physical and social infrastructures need to be ensured in hard-to-reach areas. Private investments and job opportunities need to be promoted beyond the traditional growth centres so that youth residing in periphery areas can participate in economic activities without migrating from their present homes.

To address the issues concerning the digital divide, ICT related infrastructures need to be developed beyond traditional growth centres and urban areas. Prices of ICT communication-related gadgets and the internet need to be reduced through regulations and incentives. Furthermore, ICT skills

improvement programmes need to be initiated targeting the disadvantaged youth groups in terms of income, geographic location, education, ethnicity, etc.

To address the issues concerning traditional patriarchal norms, education for young women, including young married women, needs to be promoted further. Issues related to child marriage, IPV, barriers to movement need to be addressed. There should be Campaign against harmful traditional social norms and views in collaboration between state and non-state actors.

To address the issues concerning lack of legal rights and discriminatory practices, the government must enact an appropriate Anti-Discrimination Law to address the challenges faced by marginalised communities, including Adivasi, Dalits, PWDs, transgender, etc. A Uniform Family Law is also needed to ensure equal rights to all in the areas of inheritance, marriage, property etc. Indeed, implementation of the aforesaid legal frameworks needs to be ensured while all discriminatory social norms and practices must be stopped.

The policy actions mentioned above may also be useful in counteracting the associated manifestations of youth disengagement stemming from the NEET. However, it is also recognised that there will be needed for programmes that target the manifestations such as criminality, radicalisation, mental health, IPV, etc.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

This paper has tried to use the concept of “disengaged youth” to develop a contemporary understanding of the youth dynamics in Bangladesh. The disengaged youth community has been broadly defined in the paper as those who are excluded, not necessarily coming from the “left behind” communities, but from the mainstream development processes. More concretely, in view of the high level of unemployment and underemployment among youth in Bangladesh, the core concept has been defined by the labour market dynamics and, specifically, by those who are “neither in employment, education or training” (NEET). This group consists of about one-third of the youth community in Bangladesh.

Admittedly, the category of NEET does not have enough explanatory power by itself since a labour market approach may not capture the full complexity of the issues concerned. The study remains aware that there are also socio-cultural and political dimensions of youth disengagements, i.e. beyond the economic domain. In this connection, the following five leading causes underpinning the NEET situation of the youth in Bangladesh were identified in the study: (i) mismatch between supply of and demand for skills, (ii) geographical barrier to market access, (iii) digital divide, (iv) prevalence of patriarchal norms, and (v) lack of legal rights.

It needs to be recognised that deficiency in state policies and inability to implement existing legal and regulatory provisions have often pushed certain vulnerable populations (e.g., women, ethnic minority groups, transgender people and Dalits) to become excluded from—both state-supported and market-driven development activities. The study distinguishes between the “causes” and “manifestations” of youth disengagement. It has been maintained that the major consequences of disengagement manifested through the increase of the following among the youth: (i) criminality, (ii) mental stress, (iii) radicalisation, and (iv) intimate partner violence.

The paper reviews several programmatic interventions being implemented in different developing countries dealing with youth disengagement, which may be adapted in the Bangladesh context. Taking a critical view of the traditional youth-oriented policies, the paper strongly suggests interventions focusing on the causes, besides the manifestations of youth disengagement. These interventions may include legal and institutional reforms, innovative programmatic approaches and effective implementation of existing policies. These are (i) reforms of the education system (e.g. integration of vocational education with general education, the introduction of a unified school curriculum, implementation of a gender-responsive education); (ii) ensuring equitable access to education and employment across all geographical regions (e.g., establishing quality educational institutions and infrastructure, such as power and energy, transport and connectivity in hard-to-reach areas); (iii) equitable digital access (e.g., ensuring better digital connectivity for youth living in hard-to-reach or rural areas to digital technologies, promoting digital literacy amongst women or other excluded youth groups); (iv) a social movement against patriarchal norms and practices; and (v) new legal provisions and effective implementation of existing laws (e.g., enacting a comprehensive anti-discriminatory law, introduction of Uniform Family Code, inclusion of third-gender voter category).

These types of programmes may enable alleviation of the concerns of the youth NEET and associated challenges of youth disengagement. Further, marginalised youth, need to be accorded with more agency and ability to engage in the policy influencing processes; if not by directly participating in policymaking, there is also a need for an inclusive and integrated mechanism to project the youth voices through a bottom-up approach.

The present study also emphasises the crucial role of the family members and the immediate social milieu in helping mitigate some of the causes for youth disengagement. Furthermore, creating support based on universal human values may equip these disengaged youth with mental strength and resolve to counteract different adversities.

The present paper also indicates the need for further research and analysis to improve our appreciation of the magnitude and composition of the disengaged youth. No less critical is the need to assess the evolving trends among them. To reach the disengaged youth, the effectiveness of the ongoing youth programmes may also be evaluated. Indeed, it is also necessary to establish the circular interlinkages between the causes and manifestations of the youth NEET. The existing analytical framework demands further strengthening to become amenable to fitting in quantitative data and information for deriving a more conclusive policy direction.

REFERENCES

- Adams, N. (2015). Religion and women's empowerment in Bangladesh. Retrieved from: <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/1052072/151215WFDDReligionandWomensEmpowermentinBangladesh.pdf?sequence=1>
- Alam, G. M. (2008). Quality Assurance at the affiliated institutions of higher education of the National University of Bangladesh. *Conference Proceedings. International Association for the Scientific Knowledge. Portugal*, 68 (2), 26–28. 10.1007/s10734-013-9712-y
- Amin, M. B. (2013). Madrasah Education in Bangladesh. *Ideas for Development (IFD)*, 2. Retrieved from: <http://www.ideasfd.org/assets/IFDNote2.pdf>
- Arnab, A. T., & Siraj, M. S. (2020). Child marriage in Bangladesh: Policy and ethics. *Bangladesh Journal of Bioethics*, 11(1), 24-34. <https://doi.org/10.3329/bioethics.v11i1.49193>
- Asadullah, M. N. & Chaudhury, N. (2010). Religious schools, social value and economic attitudes: Evidence from Bangladesh. *World Development*, 38(2), 205-217. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2009.10.014>
- Asadullah, M. N., & Wahhaj, Z. (2012). Going to School in Purdah: Female Schooling, Mobility norms and Madrasas in Bangladesh. Discussion paper no. 7059. 2-25. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2189797>
- Aziz, A., & Azhar, S. (2019). Social exclusion and official recognition of Hijra in Bangladesh. *Journal of Research on Women and Gender*, 9(1), 3-19. Retrieved from: <https://digital.library.txstate.edu/handle/10877/12901>
- Baldwin, J. A., Brown, B. G., Wayment, H. A., Nez, R. A., & Brelsford, K. M. (2011). Culture and context: Buffering the relationship between stressful life events and risky behaviors in American Indian youth. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 46, 1380–1394. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3109/10826084.2011.592432>
- BANBEIS (2015). *Bangladesh Education Statistics 2014*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics. Retrieved from: https://lib.banbeis.gov.bd/BANBEIS_PDF/Bangladesh%20Education%20Statistics%202015.pdf
- Barkat, A., Halim, S., Poddar, A., Zaman, B., Osman, A., Khan, S., Rahman, M., Majid, M., Mahiyuddin, G., Chakma, S., & Bashir, S. (2009). *Socio-Economic Baseline Survey of Chittagong Hill Tracts*. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Bangladesh. Retrieved from: <http://www.hdrc-bd.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/6.-Socio-economic-Baseline-Survey-of-Chittagong-Hill-Tracts.pdf>
- BBS. (2018). *Labour Force Survey Bangladesh 2016-17*. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. Retrieved from: http://203.112.218.65:8008/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/LatestReports/LFS_2016-17.pdf

- Begum, H. A., Perveen, R., Chakma, E., Dewan, L., Afroze, R. S., & Tangen, D. (2018). The challenges of geographical inclusive education in rural Bangladesh. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23(1), 7-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1514729>
- BIPSS (2017). *Local Drivers and Dynamics of Youth Radicalisation in Bangladesh*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies. Retrieved from: <http://bipss.org.bd/pdf/Local%20Drivers.pdf>
- BIGD and BRAC (2018). *Youth of Bangladesh: Agents of Change?* Dhaka, Bangladesh: BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), BRAC University and Advocacy for Social Change, BRAC. Retrieved from: https://www.brac.net/program/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/YOUTH-SURVEY-2018_full.pdf
- Carpini, M. X. (2000). Gen.com: Youth, Civic Engagement, and the New Information Environment. *Political communication*, 17(4), 341-349 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600050178942>
- Choudhary (2021, August 16). Gendered Assessment of Labour Laws in Bangladesh. Retrieved from: <https://www.law-order.org/post/gendered-assessment-of-labour-laws-in-bangladesh>
- Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh (2019). *Youth Conference 2018: Proceedings*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh. Retrieved from: <https://bdplatform4sdgs.net/%e0%a6%af%e0%a7%81%e0%a6%ac-%e0%a6%b8%e0%a6%ae%e0%a7%8d%e0%a6%ae%e0%a7%87%e0%a6%b2%e0%a6%a8-%e0%a7%a8%e0%a7%a6%e0%a7%a7%e0%a7%ae/>
- Curtain, R. (2001). Promoting Youth Employment through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT): Best Practice Examples in Asia and the Pacific. In *ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific*. Bangkok, 1-53. Retrieved from: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.112.2659&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Fakhruddin, I. S. (2019). The Impact of Non-Formal Education in Community Development: A Case Study in Pati, Indonesia. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 5(5), 339-352. Retrieved from: https://www.ijicc.net/images/vol5iss5/5525_Fakhruddin_2019_E_R.pdf
- GPE, UNGEI, & UNICEF. (2017). *Guidance for Developing Gender Responsive Education Sector Plans*. GPE, UNGEI and UNICEE, New York. 1-141. Retrieved from: <https://www.ungei.org/sites/default/files/Guidance-for-Developing-Gender-Responsive-Education-Sector-Plans-2018-eng.pdf>
- Haider, B. M. K. (2017). *Students' Radicalisation: A study on private universities of Bangladesh* (Master's thesis, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Ås). 1-83. Retrieved from: <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/2425972>
- Hall, S. (1968). *The Hippies: An American 'Moment'*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Retrieved from: http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/3336/1/Hall_1968_SOP16.pdf
- Haque, I. E., Haque, M., & Muniruzzaman, M. (2020). Young Age and Crime in Society: A Study on Youth Prisoners in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, 8 (3), 90-104. <https://doi.org/10.11114/ijsss.v8i3.4779>

- Hellman, B., Levto, R., van der Gaag, N., Hassink, A., Barkert, G. (2017). *The state of the world's fathers: A time for action* (Washington, DC, Promundo Sonke, Gender Justice, Save the Children and MenEngage Alliance).
- Hossen, M. L. (2019). *Challenges of Right to Employment Faced by Transgender Hijra in Bangladesh* (Doctoral dissertation, Master's Thesis, Mahidol University, Thailand). Retrieved from: <https://asiapacific.gchumanrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Liton-Hossen-thesis.pdf>
- ICT & Alliance for Affordable Internet. (n.d.). *Bangladesh National ICT Household Survey 2018-19*. Retrieved from: <https://1e8q3q16vyc81g8l3h3md6q5f5e-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Bangladesh-National-ICT-Household-Survey.pdf>
- Islam, M. N., & Inan, T. T. (2021). Exploring the Fundamental Factors of Digital Inequality in Bangladesh. *SAGE Open*, 11(2), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211021407>
- Khan, M. A. (2019). *Situation Analysis of Bangladesh TVET Sector: A background work for TVET SWAPs*. ILO, 5-104. Retrieved from: https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Publications/WCMS_735704/lang-en/index.htm
- Khan, M. A. S., Debnath, S., Islam, M. S., Zaman, S., Ambia, N. E., Barshan, A. D., Hossain, M. S., Tabassum, T., Rahman, M., & Hasan, M. J. (2021). Mental health of young people amidst COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. *Heliyon*, 7 (6), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e07173>
- Khatun, F. and Saadat, S. Y. (2018). *The Ignored Generation: Exploring the dynamics of youth employment in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh. Retrieved from: <https://www.think-asia.org/bitstream/handle/11540/9493/The-Ignored-Generation-Exploring-the-dynamics-of-youth-employment-in-Bangladesh.pdf?sequence=1>
- Knobloch & Pirzer (2020). *What Works in Rural Youth Employment Promotion? Good practices and lessons from GIZ programmes on rural youths employment*. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Germany. Retrieved from: https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2020_eng_employment_promotion.pdf
- Kulis, S. S., Robbins, D. E., Baker, T. M., Denetsosie, S., & Deschine Parkhurst, N. A. (2016). A latent class analysis of urban American Indian youth identities. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 22(2), 215. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000024>
- Kotikula, A., Hill, R., & Raza, W. A. (2019). *What Works for Working Women? Understanding Female Labor Force Participation in Urban Bangladesh*. World Bank. <https://doi.org/10.1596/32535>
- Kring, S. A. (2017). *Gender in employment policies and programmes what works for women?* (No. 994972793402676). International Labour Organization. Retrieved from: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_613536.pdf
- Lerman, R. I. (1996). *Helping disconnected youth by improving linkages between high schools and careers*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute. Retrieved from: <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/67216/406603-Helping-Disconnected-Youth-by-Improving-Linkages-Between-High-Schools-and-Careers.pdf>

- Majid, A. (2020). Future of Untouchables in India: A Case Study of Dalit. *South Asian Studies*, 27(1), 263-285. Retrieved from: <http://journals.pu.edu.pk/journals/index.php/IJSAS/article/viewFile/2853/1098>
- Mamun and Shaon (2018, January 16). Why are madrasas mushrooming? Dhaka, Bangladesh: *Dhaka Tribune*. Retrieved from: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/special/2018/01/16/why-are-madrasas-mushrooming>
- Mamun, M. A., Akter, S., Hossain, I., Faisal, M. T. H., Rahman, M. A., Arefin, A., Khan, I., Hossain, L., Haque, M. A., Hossain, S., Hossain, M., Sikder, M. J., Kircabunun, K., & Griffiths, M. D. (2020). Financial threat, hardship and distress predict depression, anxiety and stress among the unemployed youths: A Bangladeshi multi-city study. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 276, 1149-1158. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2020.06.075>
- Manusher Jonno Foundation (2020). Amid lockdown, 4249 women and 456 Children became victims of domestic violence in April: MJF. Retrieved from: http://www.manusherjonno.org/latest_stories/amid-lockdown-4249-women-and-456-children-became-victims-of-domestic-violence-in-april-mjf/
- Mehrotra, V. S. (2016). NVEQF: Skill development under the National Skills Qualifications Framework in India: Imperatives and Challenges. In M. Pilz (Ed.), *India: Preparation for the world of work*. 281-310. Springer VS, Wiesbaden http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-08502-5_14
- Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India (2017). Promoting Social Inclusion of Excluded Youth Groups through Volunteering. UNDP (New Delhi). 1-60. Retrieved from: https://www.in.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/UNV/Promoting_Social_Inclusion_of_Excluded_Youth_Groups_2017_UNV_in.pdf
- Moazzem, K. G., & Shibly, A. S. A. (2020). *Challenges for the Marginalised Youth in Accessing Jobs How Effective is Public Service Delivery?* Working Paper 132. Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). Retrieved from: <https://www.think-asia.org/bitstream/handle/11540/11675/CPD-Working-Paper-132-Challenges-for-the-Marginalised-Youth-in-Accessing-Jobs.pdf?sequence=1>
- Myrdal, G. (1963). *Challenge to Affluence*. New York: Random House.
- Nakata, S., Chowdhury, A. R., Nagashima, Y., Rahman, M. M., Rahman, T., Rahman, M. A., & Asia, S. (2019). Graduate Employability of affiliated colleges: New evidence from Bangladesh. *World Bank*, Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335893366_Graduate_Employability_of_Affiliated_Colleges_New_Evidence_from_Bangladesh
- Naved, RT, Mamun, M.A., Parvin, K., Willan, S., Gibbs, A., Yu, M., & Jewkes, R. (2018). Magnitude and correlates of intimate partner violence against female garment workers from selected factories in Bangladesh. *PLoS ONE*, 13(11), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0204725>
- Nawaz (2021, October 9) Covid and the rise in suicidal behaviour in youths. *Dhaka Tribune*. Retrieved from: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2021/10/09/covid-and-the-rise-in-suicidal-behaviour-in-youths>

- Nugroho, D. M., Firdaus, M. J., & Wijaya, A. J. (2020). The Anti-War Movement through Romanticism of the Hippies Culture on Vietnam War 65-73. *Jurnal Hubungan Internasional*, 13(2), 295-312. <http://dx.doi.org/10.20473/jhi.v13i2.21290>
- Prime Minister Office. (2009). Concept Digital Bangladesh. Retrieved from: [https:// a2i.gov.bd/publication/concept-digital-bangladesh/](https://a2i.gov.bd/publication/concept-digital-bangladesh/)
- Rashid, M. & Gao, Q. (2012). Determinants of rural youth's attitude and involvement in Bangladesh politics. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2(23), 183-193. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334249555_Determinants_of_Rural_Youth's_Attitude_and_Involvement_in_Bangladesh_Politics
- Rayhan, I., & Akter, K. (2021). Prevalence and associated factors of intimate partner violence (IPV) against women in Bangladesh amid COVID-19 pandemic. *Heliyon*, 7(3), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e06619>
- Saad, M., & Rahman, F.M.M. (2020, November 15). Teen Gang Culture: Too dangerous to be ignored. Dhaka, Bangladesh: *Daily Star*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/teen-gang-culture-too-dangerous-be-ignored-1994957>
- Sakib, N., Islam, M., Al Habib, M. S., Bhuiyan, A. K. M. I., Alam, M. M., Tasneem, N., Hossain, M., Islam, S. M. S., Griffiths, M. D. & Mamun, M. A. (2021). Depression and suicidality among Bangladeshi students: subject selection reasons and learning environment as potential risk factors. *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care*, 57(3), 1150-1162. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ppc.12670>
- Samad (2021, April 21). OP-ED: Mainstreaming madrasa education in Bangladesh. *Dhaka Tribune*. Retrieved from: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/2021/04/21/op-ed-mainstreaming-madrasa-education-in-bangladesh>
- Save the Children (2016). Giving All Children in Bangladesh a Fair Start in Life. Retrieved from: https://bangladesh.savethechildren.net/sites/bangladesh.savethechildren.net/files/library/Final%20Spotlight_Bangladesh.pdf
- Uddin, M. (2020). Risk factors of Youth Violence in Bangladesh: A Statistical Investigation. *Asian Journal of Social Science and Management Technology*, 2(6), 73-80. Retrieved from: <http://www.ajsmt.com/Papers/267380.pdf>
- United Nations (2012). *United Nations E-Government Survey 2012: E-government for the People*. United Nations (New York). <https://doi.org/10.18356/b1052762-en>
- United Nations (2018). *United Nations E-Government Survey 2018: Gearing E-government to Support Transformation towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies*. United Nations (New York). <https://doi.org/10.18356/d54b9179-en>
- United Nations Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth and Climate Change (UNFCC) (2013). *Youth in action on climate change: Inspirations from around the world*. United Nations Joint Framework

Initiative on Children, Youth and Climate Change. Retrieved from: https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/publication_youth_2013.pdf

Wong, V. (2012). Social withdrawal as invisible youth disengagement: Government inaction and NGO responses in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 32 (7/8), 415-430. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/01443331211249057>

ANNEX

Consultations undertaken in the course of preparation of the paper and list of participants (in alphabetical order)

Virtual Dialogue on 'Disengaged Youth' in Bangladesh: Who, Why and How? (11 August 2021)

1. *Mr Shamim Ahmed*, Executive Director, Youth Engagement for Sustainability (YES), Bangladesh
2. *Ms Jimi Amir*, Project Manager, ESDG4BD, Bangladesh Open Source Network (BdOSN)
3. *Mr Avra Bhattacharjee*, Joint Director, Dialogue and Outreach, CPD
4. *Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya*, Convenor, Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh and Distinguished Fellow, CPD
5. *Joshiah Sangma Chibol*, Disability Rights Activist, Physically-challenged Development Foundation (PDF)
6. *Mr Tony Michael Gomes*, Director- Technical Program, Advocacy and Communications, World Vision Bangladesh
7. *Ms Tarannum Jinan*, Network Focal, Citizen's Platform
8. *Mr Towfiqul Islam Khan*, Senior Research Fellow, CPD
9. *Ms Maha Mirza*, Researcher and Activist
10. *Mr Sudipto Mukerjee*, Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
11. *Mr Mohon Rabidas*, Tea Garden Worker Rights Activist, CPD
12. *Ms Tashnuva Anan Shishir*, Transgender Rights Activist and News Anchor

In-house Discussion on "Exploring the Concept of Disengaged Youth- In search of Answers to Four Questions" (01 September 2021)

1. *Mr Irtaza Mahbub Akhond*, Dialogue Associate, CPD
2. *Ms Marfia Alam*, Programme Associate, CPD
3. *Ms Najeeba Mohammed Altaf*, Research Associate, CPD
4. *Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya*, Convenor, Citizen's Platform and Distinguished Fellow, CPD
5. *Mr Avra Bhattacharjee*, Joint Director, Dialogue and Outreach, CPD
6. *Ms Afra Tahsin Chowdhury*, Research Associate, CPD
7. *Mr Hamid Ibne Habib*, Dialogue Associate, CPD
8. *Ms Fabiha Anbar Huq*, Programme Associate, CPD
9. *Ms Anikah Ibtisam*, Programme Associate, CPD
10. *Mr Md Sarwar Jahan*, Senior Dialogue Associate (Web), CPD
11. *Ms Tarannum Jinan*, Senior Administrative Associate, CPD
12. *Mr Muntaseer Kamal*, Senior Research Associate, CPD
13. *Ms Rakshanda Khan*, Research Associate, CPD
14. *Ms Fabiha Bushra Khan*, Research Associate, CPD
15. *Mr Towfiqul Islam Khan*, Senior Research Fellow, CPD
16. *Professor Mustafizur Rahman*, Distinguished Fellow, CPD
17. *Ms Syed Yusuf Saadat*, Senior Research Associate, CPD
18. *Ms Rehnuma Siddique*, Programme Associate, CPD
19. *Ms Tamanna Taher*, Executive Associate, CPD
20. *Ms Faria Tahmeen*, Research Associate, CPD
21. *Ms Anneysha Zafrin*, Programme Associate, CPD

Expert Group Meeting on “Perception and Motivation of the Informal Workers in the Informal Sector in Bangladesh” (8 November 2021)

1. *Ms Marfia Alam*, Programme Associate, CPD
2. *Ms Najeeba Mohammed Altaf*, Research Associate, CPD
3. *Ms Nazneen Ahmed*, Country Economist, UNDP Bangladesh
4. *Ms Ferdaus Ara Begum*, Chief Executive Officer, Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD)
5. *Mr Avra Bhattacharjee*, Joint Director, Dialogue and Outreach, CPD
6. *Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya*, Convenor, Citizen’s Platform and Distinguished Fellow, CPD
7. *Ms Lopita Huq*, Research Fellow, BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD)
8. *Mr Asif Ibrahim*, Core Group Member, Citizen’s Platform and Vice-Chairman, New Age Group of Industries
9. *Mr Salekeen Ibrahim*, Head of SME business, Eastern Bank Limited
10. *Dr Kazi Iqbal*, Senior Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS)
11. *Ms Tarannum Jinan*, Network Focal, Citizen’s Platform
12. *Ms Sarah Sabin Khan*, Research Officer, UNDP Bangladesh
13. *Mr Towfiqul Islam Khan*, Senior Research Fellow, CPD
14. *Professor Mustafizur Rahman*, Core Group Member, Citizen’s Platform and Distinguished Fellow, CPD
15. *Dr Ramiz Uddin*, Head of Experimentation, Accelerator Lab, UNDP Bangladesh

Expert Group Meeting on “Disengaged Youth in Bangladesh: Concepts, Concerns and Challenges” (10 November 2021)

1. *Mr Shamim Ahmed*, Executive Director, Youth Engagement for Sustainability (YES), CPD
2. *Ms Jimi Amir*, Project Manager, ESDG4BD, Bangladesh Open Source Network (BdOSN)
3. *Ms Fairooz Faizah Beether*, Co-founder of Moner School
4. *Mr Avra Bhattacharjee*, Joint Director, Dialogue and Outreach, CPD
5. *Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya*, Convenor, Citizen’s Platform and Distinguished Fellow, CPD
6. *Mr Amiya Prapan Chakraborty*, General Secretary and Executive Director, Dhruvotara Youth Development Foundation (DYDF)
7. *Mr Shadhan Kumar Das*, Programme Co-ordinator, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Bangladesh
8. *Mr Mahmudul Hasan*, Project Officer, Governance Cluster, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
9. *Mr Mehedi Hossain*, 2021 National Committee Chair, JCI Bangladesh
10. *Ms Fabiha Anbar Huq*, Programme Associate, CPD
11. *Ms Tarannum Jinan*, Network Focal, Citizen’s Platform
12. *Mr Muntaseer Kamal*, Senior Research Associate, CPD
13. *Mr Syed Mafiz Kamal*, Head of Research and Communications, Centre for Research and Information (CRI)
14. *Mr Towfiqul Islam Khan*, Senior Research Fellow, CPD
15. *Ms Maha Mirza*, Researcher and Activist
16. *Mr Sadat Rahman*, Founder of Cyber Teens
17. *Mr Kh. Mahabub-E-Hasib Shahrier*, Deputy Manager, Youth Development Programme, JAAGO Foundation
18. *Ms Eshrat Sharmin*, Senior Research Associate, SANEM
19. *Ms Nahian Azad Shashi*, Research Associate, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS)
20. *Ms Anneysha Zafrin*, Programme Associate, CPD

This exploratory study uses the concept of 'disengaged youth' to understand the youth dynamics in Bangladesh and reflects on how to integrate these youth in the development process of the country. The paper highlights various dimensions of youth disengagement, viz. economic, political, social and cultural, and strongly urges to put policy focus on youth who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). This NEET category comprises about one-third of the total youth cohort in Bangladesh. Analysing the underlying factors that compel a significant segment of the youth cohort to become excluded from mainstream economic development, the paper argues for addressing the "causes" rather than the manifestation of the youth disengagement viz. criminal activities, radicalisation, mental stress and domestic violence.



Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh
এসডিজি বাস্তবায়নে নাগরিক প্ল্যাটফর্ম, বাংলাদেশ

Partnership and Collaboration

act:onaid



**FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG**



World Vision
Hope, Joy and Justice for ALL Children

