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Gendered Barriers in Higher Education: A Case Study of Female Students at Rajshahi University

Ishrat Jahan^a

^aLaw Graduate

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This research explores the existing inequalities faced by female students at Rajshahi University, Bangladesh, through a feminist legal theory and rights-based framework. Despite a significant increase in female enrolment in higher education, gender-based discrimination remains a critical challenge for female students. The study aims to identify existing barriers that hinder gender equality on the campus and to propose a transformative framework aligned with national and international commitments. Through a mixed-method approach, consolidating quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews, the study identifies five core issues for concern: insufficient residential facilities, inadequate academic infrastructure, discriminatory rules such as sunset laws, limited transport facilities, and weak enforcement of anti-harassment policies. The study reveals that female students experience systemic inequalities that affect their equal access to higher education and personal development. The study also examines relevant domestic laws and policies intended to address these issues and highlights critical gaps between national commitments to gender equality under CEDAW and constitutional guarantees. It argues that existing legal protections are not properly matched by institutional reforms. This paper also concludes that targeted policy recommendations are needed for the improvement of gender equity within the university and to ensure inclusive access to higher education.

Keywords: *gender inequality, women's rights, educational policy, feminist legal theory, constitutional law.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is the foundation of empowerment, particularly for women in developing nations like Bangladesh. Education is the process of receiving and giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university, and gaining consciousness, capabilities, morals and optimism. Moreover, education is a fundamental apparatus that is the only remedy to bring about social development and cherished social change in our country. Higher education can transform lives and society. In our country, women's education plays a momentous role in the construction of the nation, socio-cultural, human capital and economic development.

Females can be empowered through higher education, which is the third stage of education and is undertaken in universities, Colleges and other higher education institutions. Through higher education, female students can be upgraded as role models for other young girls. So nowadays getting an education has become the most important segment for every female. In Bangladesh, universities like Rajshahi University, a leading public institution in Bangladesh, were established in 1953.

Every year, a growing number of female students enrol in Rajshahi University and shape future leaders. But in the present situation, female students are facing a lot of inequalities while studying at universities in our country, which hamper their potential and hinder their personal and professional development. Female students at Rajshahi University face gender-based inequalities that obstruct their potential development.

In the present context, female students of the University of Rajshahi face barriers such as sexual harassment, inadequate accommodation, restrictive policies like the sunset law, limited study spaces and insufficient transport facilities, complications that not only contravene Bangladesh's constitutional guarantees of equality but also violate international commitments like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This article examines these inequalities, critiques the existing policy and legal mechanisms and proposes legal reforms to assure equitable access to higher education.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Female education helps to lead an educated and developed nation. Moreover, an educated woman in the future will be involved in service to serve the nation. Nowadays, access of

female students in higher education at the university level has increased, but unfortunately, higher education sectors like universities are characterised by a wide range of inequalities which influence the lower participation of female students at the university level and also obstruct their equal opportunities in facilities provided by the university.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were generated to guide this study:

1. What are the inequalities that are faced by the female students of Rajshahi University?
2. How much progress is happening regarding the minimisation of such inequalities?
3. What initiatives have been taken by the Government of Bangladesh for the reduction of such inequalities?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to explore the inequalities faced by the female students of Rajshahi University. To make a comprehensive study on the proposed topic, the aim has been formulated into specific objectives, which are mentioned below:

1. Exploring certain inequalities that are faced by Rajshahi University's female students.
2. Examining the legal provisions for the minimisation of such inequalities under the laws of Bangladesh.
3. Assessment of the effectiveness of the present legal mechanism based on the relevant data.
4. Identification of different causes that form such types of inequalities.
5. Finding out the root cause is hampering the implementation of prescribed remedies to eradicate such inequalities.

OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE

For this research, I have studied several official and unofficial records, books, articles, reports and other publications related to my research topic. Those books and related papers have a more or less detailed discussion about the issue of inequalities faced by female students of universities in Bangladesh, which can further be related to the Rajshahi University perspective.

Women in Bangladesh: From Inequality to Empowerment: Nazmunnessa Mahtab: In this book, the author has some information regarding female education in Bangladesh. She added in this book that the participation level of women in higher education is increasing day by day.¹ She added much more information, which is very helpful for me to perform this research because I have collected data on the grounds of the lower participation of women.

Justification: Bangladesh has a population of about 165.16 million. According to the preliminary census, the male and female ratio stands at 98:100.² The total number of females in the country is 83.35 million, which is 50.50 per cent of the total population, while the number of males is 81.71 million or 49.50 per cent.

As we know, being a densely populated country, Bangladesh needs to develop human resources. Literacy rate in Bangladesh is now 74.66 per cent according to the preliminary report of Population and Housing Census 2022, where the rate is higher among the male population, which is 76.56%, while among the female population it is 72.82 percent.³ Educating women is said to educate the whole family. Education is the foundation of women's empowerment because it qualifies them to respond to opportunities and to improve their lives into better situations. If women are to contribute effectively to national development into the twenty-first century, the fundamental question is whether they will be sufficiently equipped to participate fully by receiving a quality education that will prepare them to enter any field, expose them to science, technology and communication and stimulate their creativity⁴.

In Bangladesh, the higher education of female students expedites the level of women's empowerment. But there are certain inequalities faced by female students that expand from the family to the university campus. So, the present study has to be conducted to explore the inequalities faced by female students of Rajshahi University and also the measures to minimise and overcome these inequalities.

¹ Nazmunnessa Mahtab, *Women in Bangladesh: From Inequality to Empowerment* (2nd edn, A. H. Development Publishing House 2007)

² 'Population Census 2022' *The Financial Express* (03 August 2022)

<<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/editorial/population-census-2022-1659283356>> accessed 19 June 2025

³ 'Bangladesh's Literacy Rate Now 74.66%' *The Daily Star* (27 July 2022)

<<https://www.thedailystar.net/youth/education/news/bangladeshs-literacy-rate-now-7466-3080701>> accessed 09 July 2025

⁴ Mahtab (n 1)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a foundation upon which research is based, and it is the ground plan for conducting the research investigation. There are two types of research approaches, i.e., the Quantitative approach, which uses numerical data or data that are quantified, and the Qualitative approach, which uses non-numerical data or data that have not been quantified⁵. Here, the study examined the perception of undergraduate female students on the inequalities faced by them at the campus of Rajshahi University. The study is conducted to identify and examine the major inequalities against female students of Rajshahi University. This paper is mainly based on a field study. Here, data has been collected from primary as well as secondary sources. Primary data has been collected by resorting to a structured questionnaire consisting of questions regarding inequalities faced by the female students of the University of Rajshahi. Besides, secondary data has been collected from various newspapers, websites, journals, etc.

RATIONALE FOR ADOPTING A QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

In the qualitative research paradigm, the most important focus is for researchers to capture accurately the existing experiences and perceptions of participants involved in the phenomenon under investigation⁶. Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) add that exploratory qualitative research helps researchers to acquire information about research issues where little is known.⁷ In this research, qualitative approaches have been used for the detailed analysis of the relevant data. Quantitative research includes some structured techniques of data collection that allow quantification, hypothesis, measurement and operationalisation as well as the use of quantitative methods of data analysis, including statistics and computers.⁸. In this study, quantitative methods have been used to measure the level of inequalities faced by the female students of Rajshahi University.

⁵ Sam Goundar, 'Research Methodology and Research Method' in Sam Goundar (ed), *Cloud Computing* (ResearchGate Publications 2012)

⁶ Vian Ahmed et al.(eds), *Research Methodology in the Built Environment: A Selection of Case Studies* (1st edn, Routledge 2016)

⁷ *Ibid*

⁸ Sotirios Sarantakos, *Social Research* (2nd edn, Palgrave Macmillan 1998)

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study mostly emphasises the grounds of inequalities faced by the female students of Rajshahi University. This study also suggests some ways to eradicate such inequalities so that the female students have equal access to educational facilities provided by the university. But for conducting this study, there have been some problems. Some of them are given below:

- Limitation of Time.
- Respondents are Reluctant to Answer.
- No other university has taken it as the research area for that study. So, this research may not be representative.
- Lack of Awareness about Research.
- The Tendency of the Respondents not to give the correct answer.

INEQUALITIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON FEMALE STUDENTS

The higher education sector at the university-level is characterised by a wide range of inequalities and challenges against female students in the rule of justified efficiency and access. Gender equality is largely absent in the education sector, especially at the university level. There is a lot of gender inequality in university-level education worldwide, but nothing compares to the difficulty that female students face in developing countries like Bangladesh at the university level.

Basic Concept of Inequality: Inequality refers to the matter of unfair and unequal distribution of opportunities among members of society. Inequality is the state of not being equal, especially in status, rights and opportunities.⁹The term inequality refers to a circumstance of being unequal, or of being given an unbalanced portion of treatment, rank and scope. Individuals may experience a sense of inequality in many spheres of their lives owing to their gender, race or other criteria, and feel disappointed about the absence of educational advantages.

⁹ 'Inequality' (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries)

<www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/inequality?q=inequality> accessed 09 August 2025

Inequalities Faced by Female Students of Rajshahi University and Their Perspective: An increasing number of Bangladeshi women are entering higher education institutions like universities, so that they are actively engaged in attempting to secure a prosperous future, although women in Bangladesh are treated as lesser carriers of human rights. But the present situation shows that at public universities in Bangladesh, female students are continuously facing challenges at the university level, and these types of inequalities and challenges influence the lower participation of female students in universities. Especially if we can see the present context of the female students of the University of Rajshahi who are continuously facing many inequalities which are undesirable and unfavourable, which obstruct their potential and hamper their personal development.

Inadequate Facilities of Accommodation for Female Students: The University of Rajshahi was founded in 1953, and in this university, students come from very far. For the proper accommodations of the students in this university, the authority houses residential halls for both male and female students separately. Rajshahi University have 18 residential halls and 11 dormitories for male students of this institution, one for international students, whereas only six are for female students, although the respective capacities of these halls are limited.

Another crucial aim of the Rajshahi University is to provide accommodation facilities to all its students, but no proper initiative has been taken to develop a sufficient number of residential halls for female students despite a growing demand. Due to all these reasons, poor accommodation has been a problem for the female students of Rajshahi University. Because of this poor accommodation problem, most of the female students need to reside outside the campus at a cost lot, and this situation compels the female students to live in rented flats and houses away from the Rajshahi University campus. This category of living outside the campus puts them in precarious circumstances, and they also have to bear additional expenses. To cope with the existing accommodation crisis, the female hall authorities in Rajshahi University have provided female students with spacious rooms, which are known as Gono Rooms in every hall. Female students lead a life within miserable conditions, which is in no way compatible with pursuing their academic curriculum. Moreover, female students staying in the Gono Room have to bear unbearable conditions in summer. Acute heat and the absence of ceiling fans force them to spend their nights in the

dormitory. A large number of female students are living in such mass rooms at the university campus in unhealthy conditions, which notably obstruct their studies.

Sexual Harassment and Insecurity: A Foreboding Shadow for Female Students on Campus: At Rajshahi University, the presence of female students has risen remarkably on campus as a sign of equity, which is also a constitutional right. Although the overall facilities in the university campus should be the same for both male and female students, there is a great extent of inequalities faced by female students regarding safety issues. In Bangladesh, a shocking 76 per cent of students in higher education institutions report having faced sexual harassment on post-secondary campuses.¹⁰ According to the UN Women Research. On our campus, female students usually avoid going outside alone at night or going with their trusted and known male friends when they have to go out for emergency purposes.

A female student was harassed on the Paris Road on the campus by an outsider, but the perpetrator couldn't be identified as there was no CCTV camera or guard. A fourth-year female student said. Adding fuel to the fire, nowadays, the campus has turned into a paradise for drug addicts, and female students often face harassment from these addicts. One of the most common allegations of Rajshahi University female students is the sexual harassment from their male companions and seniors on campus. This type of harassment troubles the base of moral susceptibilities. Students and teachers blamed the inactive role of varsity administrations and their indifferent outlook regarding such incidents. The High Court in 2009 issued a guideline on prohibiting physical, mental and sexual harassment of females at educational institutions, workplaces and other public places.¹¹ The Court further directed the construction of a Sexual Harassment Prevention Committee at every educational institution, asking all universities to increase awareness against sexual harassment, which is hardly implemented. A female student of Master's said that our university has never organised any seminar on this issue, and many don't even know that such a committee exists.

There is no effective policy, and steps are frequently taken by the varsity administration in such cases. We can start by plotting a particular day of the year to object to the humiliation

¹⁰ Samara Mortada, 'Students Confront Sexual Harassment on Campus in Bangladesh' (*UN Women Asia and the Pacific*, 08 August 2018) <<https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2018/10/students-confront-sexual-harassment-on-campus>> accessed 19 June 2025

¹¹ Taslima Yasmin, *Overview of laws, policies and practices on gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work in Bangladesh* (International Labour Organization 2020)

and harassment of female students at the Rajshahi University campus. Moreover, among other issues, the security issues of female students are also noteworthy. Unfortunately, in the Rajshahi University campus, the safety and security of the female students remain uncertain, while it is not so much a concern for male students. The momentous gender inequalities in perceptions reflecting insecurity and realised risk, etc., exhibit that the standards and rules obtained by the authorities don't make the female students confident that they are safe on the campus.

A few years ago, a female student of the Bangla Department who was a resident of Taposhi Rabeya Hall was picked up in a microbus in the morning while she was walking to an exam hall.¹² This type of incident happened because there is no effective policy concerning the campus safety of female students at Rajshahi University. And for this reason, parents usually remain highly worried about sending their daughters to campus. Moreover, a lack of appropriate punishment for such perpetrators has created a culture of their impunity, and the Rajshahi University campus has become more unsafe for female students, comparable to their male counterparts.

Sunset Law Hinders Further Opportunities for Female Students: In Rajshahi University, there are Sunset Law provisions that are allocated for female residential students, which specify a requirement for them that they must get back to their residence halls before dusk for their security. This rule is strict for residential female students on this campus, while it is not so much a concern for the male students of Rajshahi University.

The presence of female students has risen remarkably, and a great number of residential female students are financially disadvantaged. Most of the female students bear their expenses and, in some cases, support their families by tutoring school or college-going students. But the sunset law hinders all these opportunities for female students who reside in the hall. Sometimes, the hall administration embarrasses female students, including calling their parents, even if they go out after hours for a justifiable cause and fail to come back to their halls after the stipulated time. Sunset law places female students at a grave

¹² 'Protest at Rajshahi University Over Kidnapping of Female Student' *The Daily Star* (17 November 2017) <<https://www.thedailystar.net/country/protest-rajshahi-university-over-kidnapping-female-student-1492681>> accessed 19 June 2025

disadvantage compared to male students, and here, female students face inequalities regarding the availability of many opportunities.

Shortage of Transport Facilities for Female Students: A great number of female students have been enrolled every year in Rajshahi University, and most of them are living off campus due to the accommodation crisis in the dormitories. They depend on university transportation for their daily communication. For the large number of students, the university has only 39 buses, 22 for the male students and 5 for the female students, as per the concerned source. At least 2000 students travel on these buses per day, sources informed. Among all the 16 routes of the university buses, a great number of students are travelling in Shaheb Bazar, New Market and C & B routes, but each one of these routes has only a double-decker bus service. And active buses are now covering 16 routes, which are inadequate for the students. A large number of female students who live off campus have to rely on the university buses. Although the number of female students at Rajshahi University has increased over the years, the buses carrying them to and from the campus have not increased, causing untold suffering to the female students.

A Master's student of the Bangla Department said she has to travel to and from campus riding jam-packed buses every day, which takes a toll on her mentally and physically. She talked about her frustration and added that the Rajshahi University authorities are indifferent to their sufferings. According to the Transport office sources, for carrying female students, only 3 double-decker buses ply the routes of Shaheb Bazar, New Market and C & B each. The number of buses carrying many female students is still not adequate for the large number of female students residing in the areas. The authorities never forget to collect transport fees from us, but they seem to be indifferent to the woes of the female students, said an undergraduate female student. Female students coming from a distance suffer a lot due to a lack of reliable transport facilities, and at Rajshahi University, female students are the worst sufferers as they are allocated only five buses for them, which is very inadequate compared to the number of buses allocated for the male students. The female students have to undergo suffering almost daily due to the shortage of buses carrying them from the campus.

Lack of Reading Room Facilities for Female Students: The country's largest university has 18 residential halls, of which 11 are for male students and only six are for female students. Although male students have separate reading room facilities in the 12 halls allocated for them, the female students find it difficult to concentrate while studying in the reading room because there is not enough space in the reading room for the female students. Monnujan Hall's reading room has 25 seats for 1010 students, and Taposhi Rabeya Hall's reading room has almost 25-30 seats for a large number of female students residing in the hall. A residential student of Monnujan Hall said, I reside in a room called the mass room of the hall with a capacity for 100 students. So, it is difficult for me to study here. Moreover, in the reading room, around 20-25 students are always there, and there are not enough seats in the reading room; as a result, my studies are affected. She added that she wanted to draw the attention of the university authorities to the problem. Moreover, the central reading room has a low capacity for a large number of students, and here it is difficult for a female student to secure a seat and study. A Master's student said, A great number of students have kept their bags in a queue in front of the central library reading room to secure their turn in getting a seat, and this is a daily practice. As a female student, I have to face difficulties here compared to a male student.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS AND TABLES WITH DISCUSSIONS

Nowadays, female students of Rajshahi University have been deprived of accessing equal facilities provided by the varsity due to some inequalities that hinder their personal and institutional development. This study is mainly based on the identification and examination of such inequalities.

Data analysis regarding responses on inequalities faced by Rajshahi University's female students: A self-developed instrument of items titled Inequalities Faced by Female Students Questionnaire, which was answered by female students, was used for that study. A four-point adapted Likert-scale of measurement was used, thus: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The questionnaire was administered to the female students by some undergraduate students. A simple percentage was used to analyse the data collected in the study.

Sl No	Items	SA	Agree	%	D	SD	%	Total
1	Inadequate facilities for accommodation for female students	39	61	100%	-	-	-	100
2	Poor implementation of policies protecting female students from sexual harassment	47	28	75%	16	9	25%	100
3	The sunset law obstructs further opportunities for female students	58	31	89%	7	4	11%	100
4	Shortage of transport facilities for female students	64	36	100%	-	-	-	100
5	Lack of reading room facilities	35	57	92%	8	-	8%	100

	for female students							
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Table 1: Responses on inequalities faced by the female students of Rajshahi University

RESULT ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Results from research question one item one showed that 100% of the respondents agreed that there are inadequate facilities for accommodation for female students at Rajshahi University. Item two results collected revealed that 75% of the respondents agreed that there is poor implementation of policies regarding the protection of female students on university campus, while 25% of the students disagreed. In item three from the table, the result obtained disclosed that 58 students strongly agreed and 31 students agreed regarding the obstruction created by sunset law, which affects the equal opportunities of female students at university, while 11% students disagreed in this regard. Item four from that table showed that 100% of the respondents agreed on the shortage of transport facilities for female students. Item five from the table, the results collected revealed that 92% of the respondents agreed about the lack of reading room facilities for female students on campus. In this research paper, direct interviews have been conducted, and extensive online sources have been studied to collect essential data for the present study. Through this data analysis, an effort has been made to explore the present situation of female students of Rajshahi University regarding inequality issues on the campus.

LAWS, POLICIES AND PRACTICES SEEKING AN END TO INEQUALITIES FACED BY FEMALE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL IN BANGLADESH

From the very beginning, the colonial government and educated persons in the urban areas of Bangladesh have had a significant influence on female education. Raja Rammohan Roy and Vidyasagar have provided the concept of female education, which is essential for the country as well as the male partners. But from the writings of Begum Rokeya, it has been found that the female students are not allowed to receive formal learning, but rather religious

learning.¹³ Furthermore, parents like to invest in their son's education rather than their daughter's education.¹⁴

Although female education at the university level has often been key to the empowerment and support for our country to enhance successfully the human resources for national promotion and progress, female students are falling behind male students because they face inequalities comparable to those of their male peers. Inequalities faced by female students in many universities, such as Rajshahi University, are to be addressed, and for this reason, the government of Bangladesh has formulated various objectives and policies to resolve the issue of inequalities.

Some Laws, Policies and Initiatives for the Eradication of Inequalities against Female Students –

Several national documents of Bangladesh have been formulated for the extermination of inequalities faced by female students in the education sector and to ensure equal access for female students in the educational sector at the university level. To accelerate equal access of female students in educational facilities, the Bangladesh government has taken many effective initiatives, and some of them have been discussed below.

Constitutional Provisions: The Constitution of Bangladesh pledges equality for men and women in all stages of life, including educational facilities. The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh is an empowering constitution because it stipulates incorporation of certain space for women's rights in public life and also states that women can have equal position as men in all spheres of public life. The Constitution of Bangladesh has provided very dynamic and gender friendly provisions for women in particular. The Government of Bangladesh has, therefore, acknowledged in the constitution the need for the reduction of gender inequalities between men and women, and has helped to ensure the development of women's participation in every sphere of national life.

¹³ Naima Akhter Lina, 'The Growth of Women's Education in Bangladesh' (2023) 2(3) American Journal of Education and Technology <<http://dx.doi.org/10.54536/ajet.v2i3.1276>> accessed 09 September 2025

¹⁴ Nazmunnessa Mahtab, *Women, Gender and Development: Contemporary Issues* (A.H. Development Publishing House 2012)

Article 10: Participation of women in national life:¹⁵ Steps shall be taken to ensure the participation of women in all spheres of national life.

Article 17: Free and Compulsory Education:¹⁶ The state shall adopt effective measures for establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such a stage as may be determined by law. Relating education to the needs of society and producing property-trained and motivated citizens to serve these needs, removing illiteracy within such time as may be determined by law.

Article 19: Equality of Opportunity:¹⁷ The state shall endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens.

Article 27: Equality before the Law:¹⁸ All citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection under the law.

Article 28: Discrimination on grounds of religion, etc:¹⁹ The state shall not discriminate against any citizen on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the state and of public life.

Fifth Year Plan (1997-02):²⁰ The main theme of the Fifth Year Plan (1997-02) is the mainstreaming of females in development policies and other gender purposes of this plan to reduce gender inequality in all sectors. Reduction of the gender gap in literacy rate is highly accentuated in the Fifth Year Plan of our country. Women-specific objectives set in this plan for the education sector are as follows:

To develop participation of women in every stage of education, as well as to eradicate the gap between the facilities provided for males and females in education. Given co-education existing at the primary level and widespread at the secondary level, sporadic programs for setting up gender specific higher educational institutes will be reviewed.

¹⁵ Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 10

¹⁶ Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 17

¹⁷ Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 19

¹⁸ Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 27

¹⁹ Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 28

²⁰ 'Women in Higher Education in Bangladesh' (Assignment Point) <<https://assignmentpoint.com/women-in-higher-education-in-bangladesh>> accessed 19 June 2025

Interim-Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (1-PRSP):²¹ Interim-Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (1-PRSP) of Bangladesh emphasises the issue of women's education, and the main objectives recommended by it are as follows: Activities towards altering the present educational curriculum to eradicate inequalities against women and address legal and women's rights issues at all levels of education, including higher levels. Develop women's access to education at secondary and higher levels.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

- Bangladesh is committed to the world to provide women with educational facilities and obliterate inequalities against them, since it is a signatory country of a remarkable international treaty for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Article 10 of that convention outlined an extensive agenda for promoting gender equality in education as follows: **Article 10: Equal Rights in Education:**²² Women have equal rights to education, including vocational training and guidance, continuing education, sport and scholarships. The content of the curriculum should prevent the repetition of negative stereotypes, and sexual health education should be available.

Some Government Initiatives (Projects):²³ The government of Bangladesh has taken several initiatives, such as the formulation of projects for the development of the gender friendly educational sector. Some of the projects have been mentioned below: Rosc Project, Seqaep Project, Higher Secondary Female Stipend Project (Phase 4)

World Conferences: The World Conference on Education for All, sponsored by UNESCO, UNICEF, The World Bank and The UNDP in 1990, took stock of the presence and dimensions of the gender gap in education. Looking to the year 2000, its final declaration stated, the most urgent priority is guaranteeing access to the improving quality of education for girls and women and removing obstacles to their active participation. All gender stereotyping in education should be eliminated. Upgrading higher education for female students is a top priority for the Government of Bangladesh. Female access to higher education in Bangladesh has remarkably expanded in recent years. The government of Bangladesh has taken a big

²¹ *Ibid*

²² Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979, art 10

²³ Muhammad Salahuddin et al., 'Present Situation of Female Education in Bangladesh: A Comprehensive Analysis of Last Decade' (2014) 1(2) Bpdm Journal of Research

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329962795_Present_Situation_of_Female_Education_in_Bangladesh_A_Comprehensive_Analysis_of_Last_Decade> accessed 19 June 2025

step in creating equitable access for female students in higher education at the university level, comparable to male students, through various laws, policies and enactments.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The researcher, while preparing the monograph, has made some important observations. Those are projected below:

- Actually, inadequate facilities of accommodation are a major problem and are another important issue for inequality against female students at university, which frustrates equal educational facilities for female students at university.
- Poor implementation of policies protecting female students from sexual harassment and insecurity on campus is another major concern that affects the safety of female students, while it is not a major concern for male students.
- The provision of sunset law is affecting the opportunity of many financially disadvantaged female students, and this provision of law places a female student at a disadvantage compared to their male peers in university.
- Shortage of transport facilities for female students affects the equal access of female students in the realm of opportunities provided by the University, which is comparatively lower than that of male students, and because of this reason, female students of Rajshahi University have been facing an acute crisis of transport.
- Lack of reading room facilities is hampering the education of residential female students, and in a central library with low capacity, it is very difficult for the female students to study there.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research, some recommendations regarding the eradication of the discussed inequalities against female students of Rajshahi University have been mentioned below:

- The Government should expand educational facilities at the university level for female students.
- More residential halls, especially for female students, should be provided on the university campus to resolve the accommodation problem.

- The Government, through UGC (University Grants Commission), should come up with proper laws and policies for the protection of female students from sexual harassment and insecurity on the university campus.
- There should be an arrangement of social safety net programmes to encourage the female students and ensure the safety of the female students in the university campus. Some policy suggestions for the university: Providing residential facilities for the female students. Effectuation and execution of gender sensitive policies regarding equal opportunities for female students in Rajshahi University.

CONCLUSION

Higher education without any obstacles accelerates the level of women's empowerment in our society. Improving the educational level of females at university has been recognised to have an obvious impact on the development of the entire community. In Bangladesh, the education participation of female students has changed remarkably in recent decades, but female students are deprived of equal access in the realm of educational facilities at the university level as compared to their male peers. Actually, inequality against female students at the university level is the result of certain and continuous discrimination between male and female students.

Napoleon Bonaparte says, "Give me a good mother, I will give you a good nation".

Therefore, no nation can prosper except by ensuring female education at all levels, free from any kind of inequalities and exploitation. The university's education services are to be enjoyed by all students, including both male and female students. One of the main objectives of university education is to provide equal educational facilities to all students. But it is unfortunate that in Bangladesh, many female students are not properly enjoying the university's educational facilities due to many inequalities and obstacles. This study mainly explore the perception of female students on the inequalities facing by female students of Rajshahi University and the result analysed and collected showed that inadequate residential halls, poor implementation of policies protecting female students from sexual harassment and insecurity, lack of reading room and inadequate number of transport in the Rajshahi University are the major inequalities facing by female students at university which greatly hamper their educational facilities and personal development.