

## ARTICLE

# From Margins to Integration: Mechanisms of Second Language Acquisition among “Biharis” in the Geneva Camps of Bangladesh

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## ABSTRACT

The prolonged displacement and identity loss of the Urdu-speaking “Bihari” people in the Geneva Camps of Bangladesh since 1971 provide a unique context to examine Second Language Acquisition (SLA). This research investigates their acquisition of Bangla, crucial for social integration, focusing on the interplay of lost identity, forced motivation, and SLA. Drawing upon Sociocultural Theory which emphasizes the role of social interaction in language learning, and motivational framework, specifically instrumental motivation, this investigation explores how economic and social imperatives drive the acquisition of Bangla. Using a mixed-methods approach, surveys of 300 youth and interviews with 15 adults revealed a generational divide: younger Biharis are highly motivated to learn Bangla for socioeconomic reasons, reflecting strong instrumental motivation, while older generations maintain Urdu, resisting full sociocultural integration. Despite linguistic acculturation, discrimination and wretched living conditions prevent complete integration. The study explores the dual nature of forced motivation in SLA, demonstrating its power to drive linguistic adaptation while risking cultural loss. It recommends policies that balance integration with cultural protection and calls for further refugee SLA inquiry, especially regarding its impact on L2 acquisition and sociocultural integration.

**Keywords:** Bihari; Geneva Camp; Forced Motivation; Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

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# 1. Introduction

The international landscape of displacement is marked by an increasing crisis, with UNHCR data presenting a record 108.4 million people forcefully displaced by 2022, an upsurge incited by conflicts in regions like Myanmar (Rohingya), Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Palestine. Millions of refugees face worsening conditions due to ongoing engagements <sup>[1-3]</sup>. Despite exceeding 100 million displaced worldwide <sup>[4]</sup>, the dilemma of Bihari refugees in Bangladesh remains mostly unspoken. Biharis, Urdu-speaking migrants from India, faced integration difficulties after settling in the then East Pakistan before 1971 <sup>[5]</sup>. Abandoned by both Pakistan and Bangladesh after the Liberation War of 1971, they now live in overcrowded Geneva Camps without even bare necessities <sup>[6]</sup>. Caught between two nations, they struggle with a dual and ‘dubious’ identity with constricted provisions to live a life without a state. In spite of many ‘managing’ Bangladeshi citizenship in 2008 <sup>[7]</sup>, some hold onto their conviction of belonging to Pakistan. This investigation explores the challenges and coping mechanisms of Bihari refugees in Bangladesh <sup>[8]</sup>, whereby statelessness drives motivation of many to integrate through a multiplex mechanism involving small roadside business, odd jobs, basic education, inter-cultural marriage, and the main agency for all these being L2 (Bangla) acquisition.

## 1.1. Background to the Study

Since before the Liberation War of 1971, the Biharis of the Geneva camps have retained a unique cultural identity attached to their home language, Urdu, while being 100% Muslim and comparable with the 92% Muslim majority in Bangladesh <sup>[9-11]</sup>. They enjoyed sociocultural dominance prior to independence, ignoring Bangla and attempting to impose Urdu in their day-to-day life. They started to emerge as a bilingual community speaking Bangla outside of their home after being forced to use Bangla as a second language for everyday interactions, education, and communication after 1971 <sup>[12,13]</sup>.

Despite partial integration, the Biharis faced difficulties in merging into mainstream society, often living in Geneva camps but attempting to integrate through friendships, intermarriages, and business partnerships <sup>[14]</sup>. While many younger Biharis now use Bangla daily and have integrated almost fully, the community remains peripheral by economic and social deprivation and continues to feel the stress of class and status discrimination <sup>[15-17]</sup>. Although some have adjusted, others conserve their sociocultural uniqueness, reflecting a dual identity and ongoing battle for inclusion and recognition. Bereft of national identity and balanced access to fundamental rights, the sociocultural condition of stranded Biharis in Bangladesh has long been ‘hushed down’ <sup>[18,19]</sup>. It has emerged into a situation of ambiguity as to whether they want integration into Bengali society or opt to protect their

distinct language and culture remains blurred. Over more than five decades, however, integration has occurred gradually through sociocultural, and academic mechanisms, such as learning Bangla, intermarriage, participation in religious festivals, and socioeconomic dealings through sports and businesses. Sociocultural tolerance, inter-community marriage, religious sameness, and the necessity to integrate have facilitated L2 Bangla acquisition, especially among younger Biharis, who now use it with near-native competency. Supportive of this, Krashen <sup>[20]</sup> highlights critical role of SLA in immigrant integration, a conclusion echoed by Lutringer <sup>[21]</sup> for Syrian refugees in Germany <sup>[22]</sup>.

## 1.2. Theoretical Implication

The study of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) within displaced communities offers invaluable insights into how individuals adapt to new linguistic environments as a survival mechanism. This research on the Biharis community draws upon Sociocultural Theory <sup>[23,24]</sup> and Gardner’s <sup>[25]</sup> motivational framework to investigate this complex process.

According to sociocultural theory, basic interactions and cultural circumstances help shape language acquisition ensuring learning a language fundamentally social. The significance of social context in SLA was highlighted by Klein and Marx, who noted that Syrian refugees in Germany showed notable language adaptation motivated by socioeconomic imperatives. The significance of social context in SLA was highlighted by Klein and Marx <sup>[26]</sup>, who noted that Syrian refugees in Germany showed notable language adaptation motivated by socioeconomic contexts. It is consistent with the experiences of the Biharis, who were forced to speak Bangla for everyday communication and schooling, resulting in a type of bilingualism, even if they maintained their cultural identity linked to Urdu. This concept reflects in the current research, which highlights the importance of acquisition of L2 Bangla in the social integration of the Biharis into the mainstream society of Bangladesh.

The motivational framework advocated by Gardner <sup>[27]</sup>, particularly the concept of instrumental motivation, claims that learners acquire a second language for pragmatic reasons, such as, employment or education <sup>[28,29]</sup>. The Biharis community exemplifies this, as they face unavoidable pressure to learn Bangla for existence and upward mobility. This is concordant with broader patterns experienced globally, where displaced people often exhibit rapid linguistic adaptation to address immediate needs, sometimes at the cost of their L1, mother tongue, retention <sup>[30-32]</sup>.

Furthermore, studies show that the trauma of displacement can hugely impact SLA. According to Kaplan et al. <sup>[33]</sup>, it can sometimes encourage resistance to second language acquisition, a factor that can be relevant in

understanding the preference of the older generation for Urdu in the Bihari community in the Geneva camps of Bangladesh.

While quite a few recent studies extensively covers the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh <sup>[34]</sup>, the specific experiences of the Biharis, particularly concerning their second language acquisition (SLA), remain mostly unexplored <sup>[35]</sup>. This inequality underscores an important research gap that this research aims to address. The issues surrounding L2 acquisition of "Biharis" isolated in the Geneva camps have never been studied before, making this the first investigation into their lost ethnic identity, forced motivation, and integration, diagnosing whether they opted for relocation or sought to preserve their unique identity within Bangladesh. By focusing on the specific circumstances of the Bihari community, this research attempts to provide fresh insights into the dynamics of forced motivation and SLA in a protracted refugee setting, contributing to a more subtle understanding of refugee integration processes.

### 1.3. Research Gap (The Bihari Case)

While existing research has extensively explored the experiences of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, the lived experiences of the Biharis, living in Geneva Camps of Bangladesh, particularly, concerning second language acquisition (SLA), has remained mostly unexplored. This inequality highlights an evidential research gap that calls for further investigation. Specifically, there is a necessity for a more in-depth understanding of the factors impacting Bihari refugees' motivation to learn Bangla. The complexities surrounding L2 acquisition of Biharis residing in the Geneva Camps have not been addressed in any previous research. This study proposes to fill this gap by examining the interplay of lost ethnic identity, forced motivation, and integration dynamics, and by exploring the refugee perspectives on relocation versus the preservation of their unique identity, extraordinary L1 Urdu and distinct culture within Bangladesh.

### 1.4. Statement of the Problem

Despite their experience of a protracted life in the camps, the Bihari community remains socially and economically peripheral, with language acquisition playing a pivotal role in their integration. However, their motivation to learn L2 Bangla is not simply voluntary—it is determined by economic necessity, social pressures, and systemic exclusion from opportunities. This forced motivation for Second Language Acquisition creates a unique dilemma: while younger generations progressively use Bangla for survival and integration, older generations battle with the decline of their linguistic and cultural

heritage. This research problem is situated at the intersection of language, identity, and forced displacement.

While a few studies have explored Bihari statelessness, socioeconomic exclusion, and cultural risks, there remains a gap unaddressed in understanding how forced motivation influences SLA among Biharis. This study addresses this gap by examining the linguistic and sociocultural dynamics of L2 (Bangla language) acquisition by the Biharis, the role of forced motivation, and the wider implications for refugee integration dynamics.

### 1.5. Research Objectives

The study provides fresh insights into the dynamics of forced motivation and SLA in a prolonged refugee surroundings, contributing to a more in-depth understanding of integration processes of a stateless community displaced for over five decades. Specifically, the study seeks:

To explore how the "lost identity" of Bihari refugees motivates them to acquire Bangla as a second language and integrate with the mainstream Bangladeshi community;

To examine the role of 'forced motivation', such as economic necessity and social interaction, in driving Bihari refugees' acquisition of Bangla as L2;

To investigate the sociocultural and linguistic factors contributing to the integration process of the stranded Bihari community living in Geneva Camps; and

To analyze the ways in which Biharis use their acquisition of L2 Bangla to assimilate into the mainstream Bangladeshi community.

### 1.6. Research Questions

How does the "lost identity" experienced by the Biharis and marginalization attribute to their motivation and strategies for acquiring L2 Bangla, and how does this acquisition, in turn, impact their integration within Bangladeshi society?

What particular socioeconomic factors of 'forced motivation', drive 'Bihari refugees' acquisition of L2 Bangla, and how do these factors vary across different age groups within the community?

What are the central sociocultural and linguistic factors that either facilitate or hinder the integration process of the Bihari community in Bangladesh, and how do these factors intersect with their acquisition and use of Bangla?

In what ways do Biharis, particularly the youth, utilize their second language acquisition of Bangla to maneuver social, economic, and cultural assimilation into mainstream Bangladeshi society, and what are the outcomes of these strategies?

### 1.7. Rationale of the Study

This research examines social integration through acquisition of L2 (Bangla) by stranded Biharis, in the Geneva Camps of Bangladesh. It explores their sociocultural conditions, identity, and language adaptability, using diverse methods to gather insights from participants. The study aims to understand the 'Bihari' perspectives on their position in a new society of Bangladesh and how integration through L2 acquisition, contributing valuable knowledge to refugee studies.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Prelude: The Historical Context

Biharis, Urdu-speaking migrants from India, settled in the then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, after the partition of India in 1947, to claim citizenship in the Muslim-majority state of Pakistan. Following the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, they were denied repatriation by Pakistan and Bangladesh had no other alternative than to contain this displaced community of, according to a research report, 6,92,000 leading to their displacement and confinement in refugee camps [36]. The number of Biharis stranded inside the camps must have increased by significantly over the last five decades. The number of Biharis stranded in Bangladesh rose to "971.98 thousand" in 2023 [37]. This research investigates the phenomenon of second language acquisition (SLA) among Bihari refugees residing in the Geneva Camps of Bangladesh. The study delves into the complex interplay between three factors: lost identity, social exclusion and forced motivation for L2 acquisition.

### 2.2. Lost Identity and Social Exclusion Forced Motivation for Second Language Acquisition

The Biharis in Bangladesh have faced protracted displacement and marginalization owing to their dual 'Bangladeshi-Pakistani' identity as a result of the 1971 Liberation War. This dichotomy, marked by blemish and societal exclusion, curbs opportunities and fosters general inequities like limited education and employment opportunities [38]. This phenomenon note the psychological toll of statelessness, while Islam et al. [39] highlight survival mechanisms, including linguistic adjustment, often at the expense of cultural uniqueness. Evan et al. [40] argue for policies addressing compositional inequalities, enabling Biharis to balance cultural preservation with linguistic and social integration [38].

The displaced Biharis in the Geneva Camps are under pressures to learn Bangla for employment, education, and social assimilation, as survival rely on their competence in

the mainstream language, Bangla [41,42]. This scenario is similar to L2 acquisition trends experienced worldwide: Cyrine Hannafi and Mohamed Ali Marouani [43] note Syrian refugees in Germany face the same socioeconomic pressures despite affective impacts. Rahaman, A. [44] posits that generally all refugee communities use the mechanisms of L2 acquisition as their survival strategy as a socioeconomic necessity. Similar trends have been experienced by refugees in Canada and the Netherlands [45]. Soto-Corominas, A. [46] highlights rapid linguistic adaptation in informal settings, often at the expense of L1 retention. Trauma of social exclusion complicates this for refugee youth facing resistance to second language acquisition by their community elders. But among "Biharis" in Geneva Camps, the dominance of Bangla facilitates integration but risks cultural identity erosion [47].

### 2.3. The Paradox of Integration-Two Citizenship Status of the Biharis

The Biharis in Bangladesh face pressures to learn Bangla for survival, driven by socioeconomic needs [48]. Similar patterns globally reveal challenges in linguistic adaptation, often at the cost of native identity [49]. Bangla surrogates among Bihari entity in Geneva camps for integration but jeopardize cultural preservation.

After the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, Bihari refugees left stateless in Bangladesh opted for Pakistani citizenship resulting in their dual-status as a displaced population [50]. To survive the substandard accommodations, unhygienic sanitation, and work challenges they faced, they took up odd jobs, early marriages and child labor. To improve their living conditions, governments, NGOs, and legislators must act quickly.

Despite unrelenting socioeconomic challenges, the Bihari minority in Bangladesh, particularly in the Geneva Camps, exhibit incredible courage and a will to adjust [51].

Many, including women and children, work odd jobs to make ends meet in the face of appalling living conditions [52]. In order to promote education as a means of achieving social mobility and integration, social activists have set up schools inside the camps [53]. Biharis have obtained passports and National Identity Cards (NIDs), allowing for official recognition in spite of obstacles including social stigma and limited possibilities [54-56]. Learning a language is essential to their assimilation. According to John Schumann's [57] Acculturation Model, which emphasizes the value of meaningful contact, Krashen [58] highlights the significance of low-anxiety learning contexts. This study provides a thorough examination of the Biharis' integration process, emphasizing their tenacity and inclusiveness initiatives.

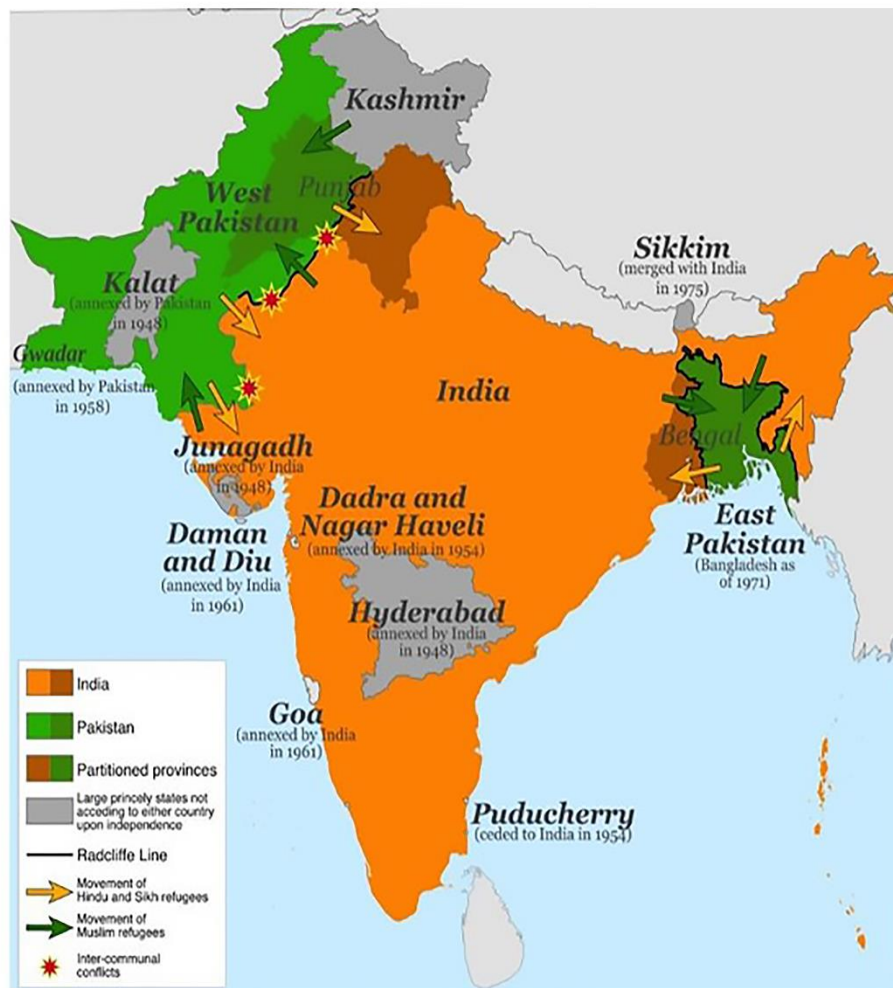


### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Prelude

Using a mixed-methods approach (qual-quant), including surveys and interviews, the research utilizes Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to understand participants'/respondents' lived experiences within the refugee camps. Triangulating data from multiple sources enhances the validity of the study<sup>[59]</sup>, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to capture subjective experiences.

This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem and the complex social issues faced by this displaced stateless community. The research was conducted in the the Geneva Camp of Mohammadpur, Dhaka and surrounding areas, a purposively selected site as the largest Bihari refugee camp in the country. The country, Bangladesh, known as East Pakistan before 1971, is shown in green at the bottom of the globe in **Figure 1** below. **Figure 2** presents the map of Bangladesh itself showing all the 70 Geneva Camps of Bangladesh in the whole of the country.



Map 2: Map of the Partitioned Subcontinent showing Refugee movements.

Source: "Pakistan vs India: Background, Conflict, Analysis."

<https://www.muftisays.com/forums/14-peoples-say/12491-pakistan-vs-india-background-conflict-analysis.html>

**Figure 1.** The map of Bangladesh (The then East Pakistan before 1971) shown in green the globe.



Figure 2. The map of Bangladesh showing the Geneva Camps, the locations of the study.

### 3.2. Participants Profile

(a) Survey respondents: 300 Biharis youth (aged 8–18) growing and living in Geneva Camps of Dhaka, all of whom were born in the post Liberation period.

(b) Interviewees: 18 adults including four community leaders from Bihari community and the Headmaster of the OBAT NLJ High School of the Geneva Camp, were interviewed using a set of pre-designed questions validated by experienced researchers using a semi-structured format.

### 3.3. Data Analysis: Quantitative

Quantitative data from the questionnaire survey were analyzed using SPSS, and qualitative data were manually coded to identify key themes. This mixed research approach utilized SPSS for diverse answer sets, while qualitative analysis focused on grouping common words and phrases. Manual coding allowed for detecting trends, providing deeper insights. Contemporary research emphasizes rigorous analysis, with software like NVivo becoming prevalent. As

Onwuegbuzie and Johnson <sup>[60]</sup> highlight, integration is crucial in mixed methods. The utilization of software like NVivo, as noted by Woods et al. <sup>[61]</sup>, reflects the trend towards enhanced qualitative data analysis.

## 4. Findings

The study reveals a significant shift in the attitude of the Bihari community towards repatriation. A majority (87%) now identify themselves as Bangladeshi, having spent their entire lives in the country. Only 13% still identify with Pakistan. While acknowledging their historical origins, they prioritize securing a better future for their children within Bangladesh. This includes access to quality education, dignified employment, and equal access to societal resources. The community expresses a strong desire to contribute to Bangladeshi society as active citizens, seeking rights and responsibilities while striving to overcome the limitations imposed by their *de facto* statelessness.

#### 4.1. Findings from the Survey

This section includes a table and a graph for each survey question and a description of the table/graph. Among 180 respondents to the questionnaire 66 were males of (aged 8 to 18) and 114 were females of the same age range.

(1) What is your feeling about living in the Geneva Camp?

The survey showed (**Table 1**) that 51% of the male respondents are happy with their lives in the Geneva Camps while almost 23% are unhappy or not much happy on the contrary. Only 5% of the total respondents feel neutral in regard of their feeling.

**Table 1.** Survey participants (male) feelings about living in Geneva Camps od Dhaka.

Question 1 Feeling of Living in the Geneva Camp	(a) Very Happy	(b) Happy	(c) Neutral	(d) Not Much Happy	(e) Unhappy
Age: 8–10 (9)	7	0	0	1	1
Age: 11–13 (29)	21	6	1	1	0
Age: 14–16 (17)	7	5	0	4	1
Age: 17–18 (11)	0	2	2	6	1
Male: 66					

On the other hand, almost 88 % of the female respondents (**Table 2**) are happy with their lives in the Geneva Camps, while 21% are ‘unhappy’ or ‘not very happy’. Only a meager 3% feel neutral.

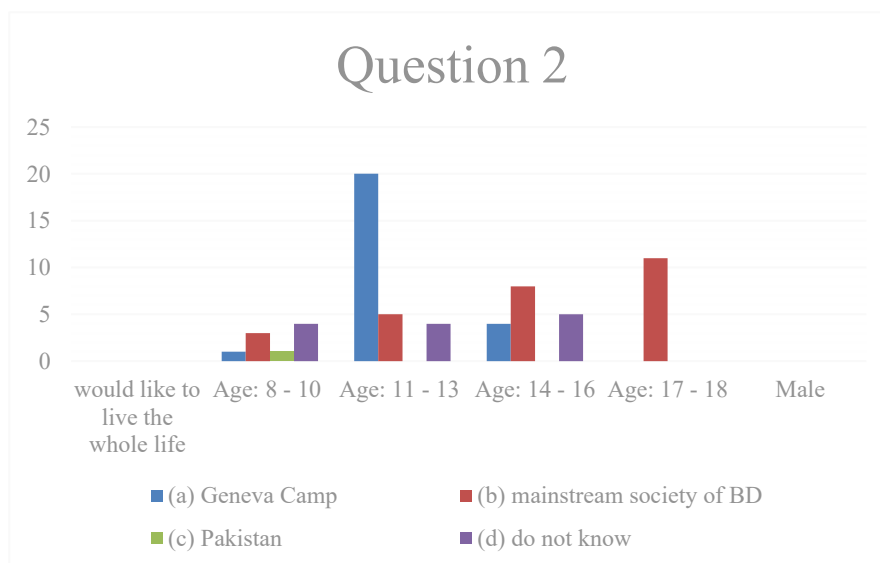
**Table 2.** Survey participants (female) feelings about living in Geneva Camps od Dhaka.

Question 1 Feeling of Living in the Geneva Camp	(a) Very Happy	(b) Happy	(c) Neutral	(d) Not Much Happy	(e) Unhappy
Age: 8–10 (20)	16	2	0	1	1
Age: 11–13 (47)	34	7	1	5	0
Age: 14–16 (36)	17	6	2	10	1
Age: 17–18 (11)	0	4	1	6	0
Female: 114					

(2) Where would you like to live your whole life?

In response, 38% of male respondents preferred staying in the Geneva Camps.

while 41% favored living in mainstream Bangladesh. 19% were uncertain, and only 1 respondent out of 114 desired to live in Pakistan (**Figure 3**).



**Figure 3.** Responses of male participants in the survey.

On the other hand, 33% of female respondents preferred living in the Geneva Camps, while over 50% wanted integration into mainstream Bangladeshi society. 15% were uncertain, and only 1 respondent expressed a desire to live in Pakistan (Figure 4).

(3) Why would you like to live in the mainstream society of Bangladesh?

Over 53% of respondents preferred living in mainstream Bangladeshi society because it is their birthplace.

Additionally, 4.5% cited Bangladeshi friends, 35% viewed Bangladesh as their native country, and 7.5% disliked life in the Geneva Camp (Table 3).

56% of the female respondents preferred living in mainstream Bangladeshi society because it is their birthplace. Additionally, 8% cited Bangladeshi friends, 25% viewed Bangladesh as their native country, and 10.5% disliked life in the Geneva Camp (Table 4).

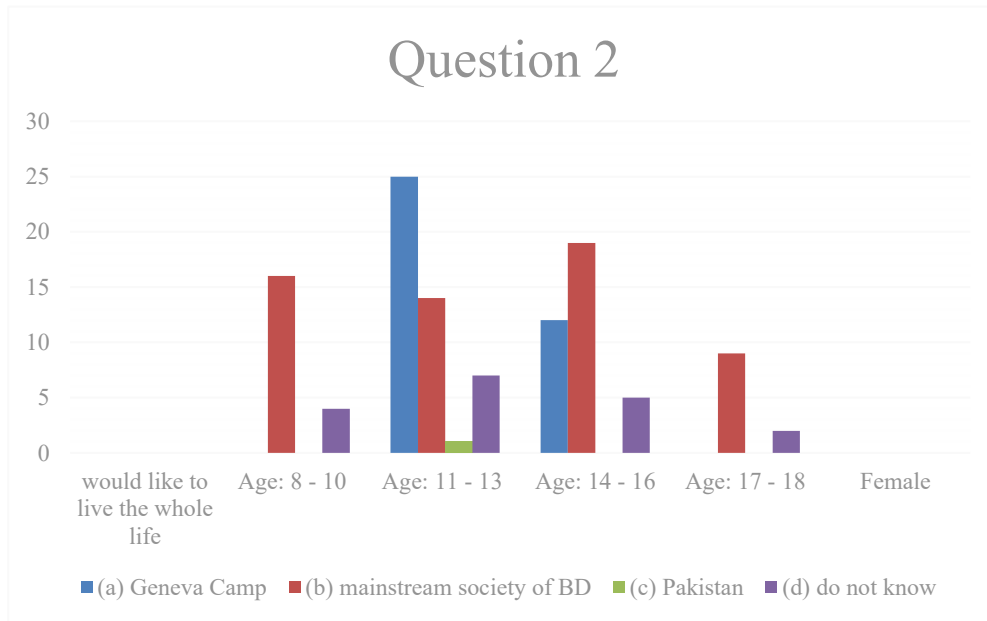


Figure 4. Responses of female participants in the survey.

Table 3. Male Participants' responses about if they like to live in the mainstream society of Bangladesh.

Question 3 Why Like to Live in the Mainstream Society of BD?	(a) As I Was Born Here	(b) I Have Lots of Bangladeshi Friends	(c) As This Is My Country	(d) I Do Not Like to Live in the Geneva Camp
Age: 8–10 (9)	8	0	1	0
Age: 11–13 (29)	18	0	10	1
Age: 14–16 (17)	8	1	4	4
Age: 17–18 (11)	1	2	8	0
Male: 66				

Table 4. Female participants' responses about if they like to live in the mainstream society of Bangladesh.

Question 3 Why Like to Live in the Mainstream Society of BD?	(a) As I Was Born Here	(b) I Have Lots of Bangladeshi Friends	(c) As This Is My Country	(d) I Do Not Like to Live in the Geneva Camp
Age: 8–10 (20)	5	3	11	1
Age: 11–13 (47)	34	2	7	4
Age: 14–16 (36)	20	3	6	7
Age: 17–18 (11)	5	1	5	0
Female: 114				

(4) Do you think your parents would like to live in Bangladesh?

80% of male respondents answered affirmatively,

4.5% negatively, 7.5% were undecided, and another 7.5% were unsure of their parents' opinions on the issue (Table 5).



**Table 5.** Male participant responses about if they like to live in the mainstream society of Bangladesh.

Question 4		(a) Yes	(b) No	(c) Maybe	(d) I Don't Know
Your Parents Would Like to Live in Bangladesh					
Age: 8–10 (9)		5	3	0	1
Age: 11–13 (29)		27	0	0	2
Age: 14–16 (17)		12	0	4	1
Age: 17–18 (11)		9	0	1	1
Male: 66					

60% of female respondents agreed, 7% disagreed, 8% were undecided, and 25% were unsure of their parents' opinions on the issue (**Table 6**).  
(5) How would you like to be identified?

**Table 6.** Female participant responses about if their parents like them to live in the mainstream society of Bangladesh.

Question 4		(a) Yes	(b) No	(c) Maybe	(d) I Don't Know
Your Parents Would Like to Live in Bangladesh					
Age: 8–10 (20)		10	1	1	8
Age: 11–13 (47)		34	1	5	7
Age: 14–16 (36)		17	5	2	12
Age: 17–18 (11)		7	1	1	2
Female: 114					

26% of male respondents identified as Biharis, while 29% of female respondents identified as Bihari, 68% as 74% preferred Bangladeshi. None chose Pakistani, Bangladeshi, 1.75% as Pakistani, and none chose “nobody” or “I don’t know” as their identity (**Table 7**).  
Bangladeshi, 1.75% as Pakistani, and none chose “nobody” or “I don’t know” (**Table 8**).

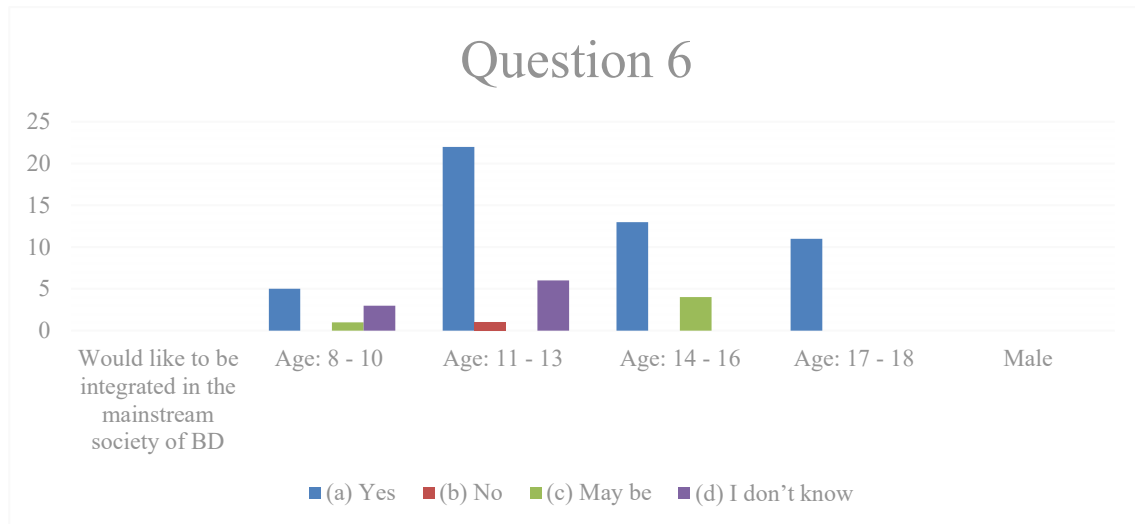
**Table 7.** Male participant responses about if their parents like them to live in the mainstream society of Bangladesh.

Question 5		(a) As a Bihari	(b) As a Bangladeshi	(c) As a Pakistani	(d) As Nobody	(e) I Don't Know
How Would You Like to Be Identified?						
Age: 8–10 (9)		4	5	0	0	0
Age: 11–13 (29)		11	18	0	0	0
Age: 14–16 (17)		1	16	0	0	0
Age: 17–18 (11)		1	10	0	0	0
Male: 66						

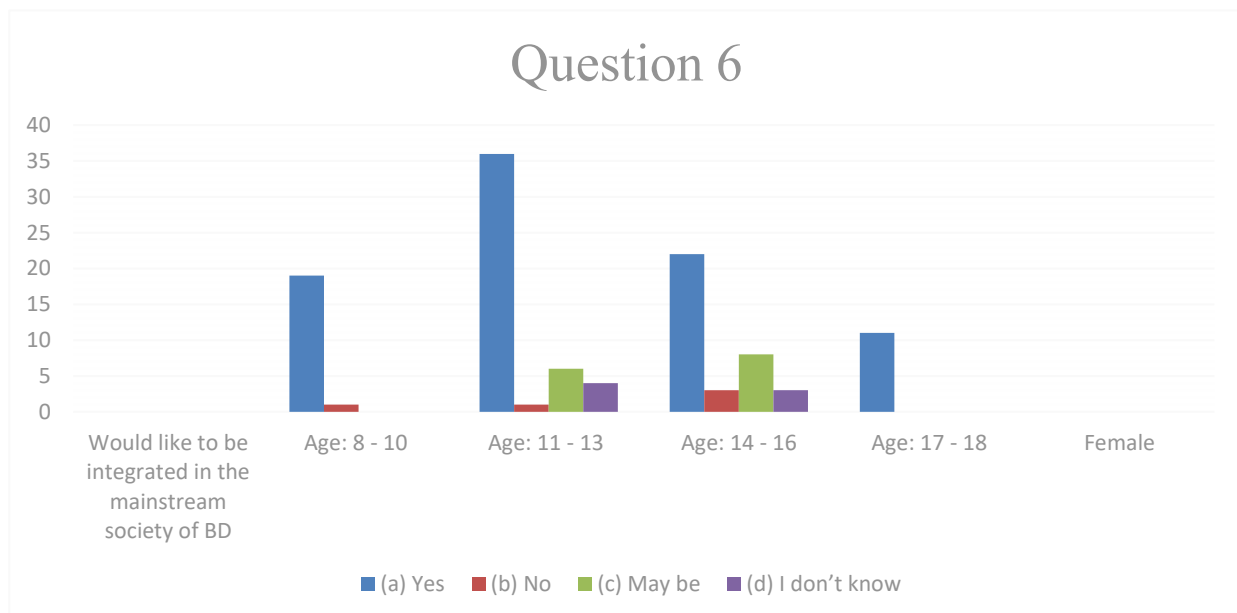
**Table 8.** Female participant responses about how they would like to identify themselves in the mainstream Bangladeshi society.

Question 5		(a) As a Bihari	(b) As a Bangladeshi	(c) As a Pakistani	(d) As Nobody	(e) I Don't Know
How Would You Like to Be Identified?						
Age: 8–10 (20)		10	10	0	0	0
Age: 11–13 (47)		16	29	2	0	0
Age: 14–16 (36)		7	29	0	0	0
Age: 17–18 (11)		1	10	0	0	0
Female: 114						

(6) Would you like to be integrated in the mainstream society of Bangladesh? know the answer (**Figure 5**).  
Among female respondents, 77% answered affirmatively 77% of male respondents answered affirmatively, 1.5% 4.3% negatively, 12% were undecided, and 6% said they negatively, 7.5% were undecided, and 14% said they didn't know the answer (**Figure 6**).



**Figure 5.** Male participant responses about if they would like to integrate into the Bangladeshi community.



**Figure 6.** Female participant responses about how they would you be an integral part of the mainstream society of Bangladesh.

(7) How would you help yourself to be an integral part of the mainstream society of Bangladesh?

Among boys, 26% believe learning Bangla aids integration into mainstream Bangladeshi society, 3% suggest marrying a Bangladeshi, 12% advocate working with Bangladeshis, 23% favor making Bangladeshi friends, and 36% think mixing socially with Bangladeshis is crucial (Table 9).

Among girls, 35% believe learning Bangla helps integration into mainstream Bangladeshi society, 3.5% suggest marrying a Bangladeshi, 10.5% favor working with

Bangladeshis, 15% emphasize making friends with Bangladeshis, and nearly 36% think socializing is key to integration (Table 10).

(8) Your parents would like you to

71% of male respondents believe their parents want them to learn Bengali well, 7.5% prefer mixing with Bangladeshi children, 20% want them to speak Bengali at home, 1.5% think their parents prefer them marrying a Bangladeshi, and none think their parents want them to bring Bengali friends home (Table 11).

**Table 9.** Male participant responses about how they would you be an integral part of the mainstream society of Bangladesh.

<b>Question 7</b> <b>Help Yourself to Be an Integral Part of the Mainstream Society of Bangladesh</b>	<b>(a) By Learning Bengali</b>	<b>(b) By Getting Married with a Bangladeshi</b>	<b>(c) Working with BD People</b>	<b>(d) Making Friends with BD People</b>	<b>(e) Mixing with BD People</b>
Age: 8–10 (9)	2	0	2	3	2
Age: 11–13 (29)	12	0	4	4	9
Age: 14–16 (17)	3	1	2	3	8
Age: 17–18 (11)	0	1	0	5	5
Male: 66					

**Table 10.** Female participant responses about how they would you be an integral part of the mainstream society of Bangladesh.

<b>Question 7</b> <b>Help Yourself to Be an Integral Part of the Mainstream Society of Bangladesh</b>	<b>(a) By Learning Bengali</b>	<b>(b) By getting Married with a Bangladeshi</b>	<b>(c) Working with BD People</b>	<b>(d) Making Friends with BD People</b>	<b>(e) Mixing with BD People</b>
Age: 8–10 (20)	11	0	1	4	4
Age: 11–13 (47)	18	1	3	7	18
Age: 14–16 (36)	10	2	4	5	15
Age: 17–18 (11)	1	1	4	1	4
Female: 114					

**Table 11.** Survey participants' (male) responses to what language their parents would like they to learn.

<b>Question 8</b> <b>Your Parents Would Like You to</b>	<b>(a) Learn Bengali</b>	<b>(b) Mix with BD Children</b>	<b>(c) Speak Bengali at Home</b>	<b>(d) Get Married with a Bangladeshi</b>	<b>(e) Bring Bengali Friends Home</b>
Age: 8–10 (9)	6	0	2	1	0
Age: 11–13 (29)	25	2	2	0	0
Age: 14–16 (17)	8	2	7	0	0
Age: 17–18 (11)	8	1	2	0	0
Male: 66					

46% of female respondents believe their parents want them to learn Bengali well, 12% prefer mixing with Bangladeshi children, 34% want them to speak Bengali at home, 1.75% think marriage with a Bangladeshi is preferred, and 5% think their parents want them to bring Bengali friends home (**Table 12**).

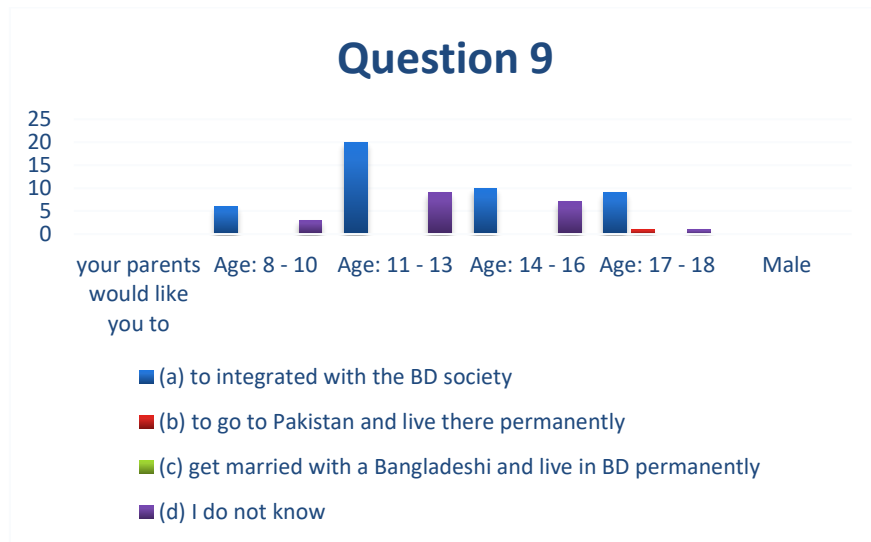
**Table 12.** Survey participant (female) response to what language their parents would like they to learn.

<b>Question 8</b> <b>Your Parents Would Like You to</b>	<b>(a) Learn Bengali</b>	<b>(b) Mix with BD Children</b>	<b>(c) Speak Bengali at Home</b>	<b>(d) Get Married with a Bangladeshi</b>	<b>(e) Bring Bengali Friends Home</b>
Age: 8–10 (20)	12	0	8	0	0
Age: 11–13 (47)	22	8	15	0	2
Age: 14–16 (36)	14	3	14	2	3
Age: 17–18 (11)	5	3	2	0	1
Female: 114					

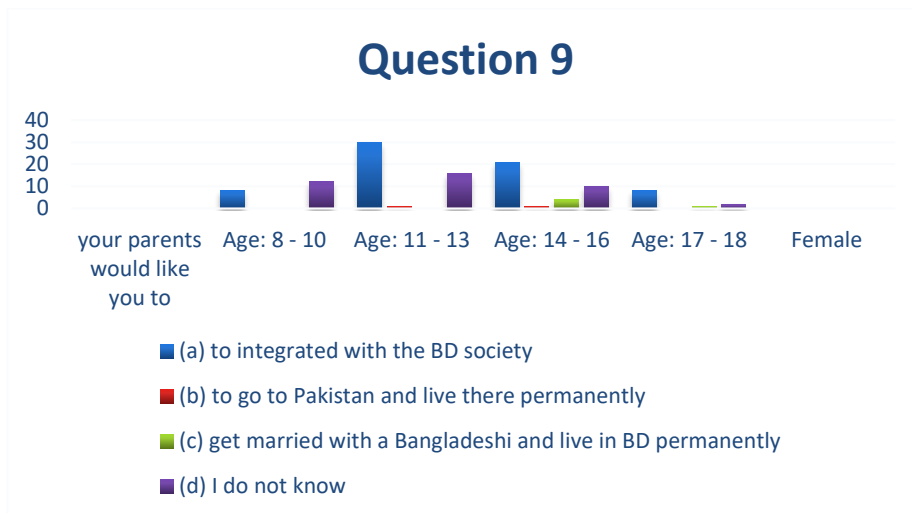
(9) What do you think your parents would like you to do? residence (**Figure 7**).

68% of male respondents believe their parents want them integrated into Bangladeshi society, 1.5% think parents prefer relocation to Pakistan, and 30% are unsure about their parents' preferences regarding marriage or permanent

58% of female respondents believe their parents want integration into Bangladeshi society, 1.75% think parents prefer relocation to Pakistan, 4.3% favor marriage, and 35% are unsure about their parents' preferences (**Figure 8**).



**Figure 7.** Bihari parental choice for their male children whether to integrate into Bangladeshi Community or to repatriate to Pakistan.



**Figure 8.** Bihari parental choice for their female children whether to integrate into Bangladeshi Community or to repatriate to Pakistan.

(10) You would like to

7.5% of male respondents want to move to Pakistan, 7.5% prefer marrying a Bihari, 27% wish to marry a Bengali, and 57% want to live and work independently in Bangladesh (Table 13).

15% of female respondents want to move to Pakistan, 13% prefer marrying a Bihari, 19% wish to marry a Bengali, and 53% want to live and work independently in Bangladesh (Table 14).

(11) What is your mother tongue?

63% of male respondents identified Bangla as their mother tongue, 15% said Urdu, 6% Hindi, 4.5% both Urdu and Bangla, and 10.5% both Hindi and Bangla (Figure 9).

45% of female respondents identified Bangla as their mother tongue, 24.5% said Urdu, 10.5% Hindi, 12% both Urdu and Bangla, and 8% both Hindi and Bangla (Figure 10).

**Table 13.** Survey participants' (male) responses to what they would like to do with their life in Bangladesh.

Question 10 You Would Like to—	(a) Go to Pakistan to Live There Permanently	(b) Get Married to a Bihari and Live with Him/Her Permanently	(c) Get Married to a Bengali and Live in BD Permanently	(d) Work and Live Alone in BD Permanently
Age: 8–10 (9)	3	0	1	5
Age: 11–13 (29)	2	1	8	18



Table 13. Cont.

Question 10 You Would Like to—	(a) Go to Pakistan to Live There Permanently	(b) Get Married to a Bihari and Live with Him/Her Permanently	(c) Get Married to a Bengali and Live in BD Permanently	(d) Work and Live Alone in BD Permanently
Age: 14–16 (17)	0	4	4	9
Age: 17–18 (11)	0	0	5	6
		Male: 66		

Table 14. Survey participants' (female) responses to what they would like to do with their life in Bangladesh.

Question 10 You Would Like to—	(a) Go to Pakistan to Live There Permanently	(b) Get Married with a Bihari Live with Him/Her Permanently	(c) Get Married with a Bengali and Live in BD Permanently	(d) Work and Live alone in BD Permanently
Age: 8–10 (20)	6	4	4	6
Age: 11–13 (47)	7	7	8	25
Age: 14–16 (36)	3	3	6	25
Age: 17–18 (11)	1	1	4	5
		Female: 114		

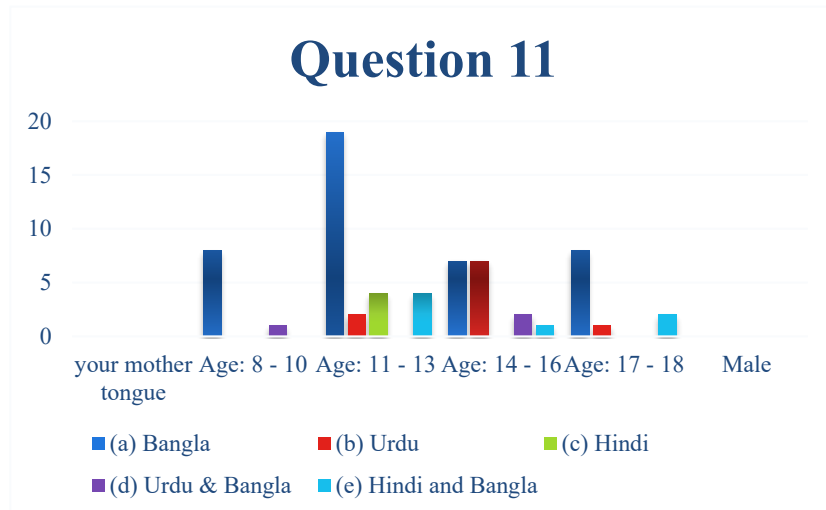


Figure 9. Majority of the young biharis consider Bangla as their mother tongue.

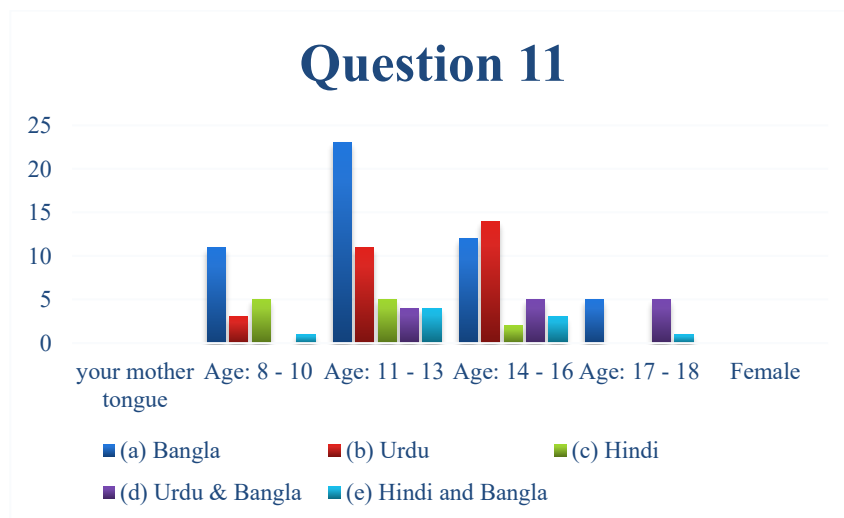


Figure 10. Language the participants (female) use in thir family.

(12) What language do you use with your family?  
47% of male respondents use Bangla to communicate with their family, 14% use Urdu, 21% use both Urdu and Bangla, 12% use Urdu, Hindi, and Bangla, and 6% also use English (Table 15).

35% of female respondents use Bangla, 20% use Urdu, 23% use both Urdu and Bangla, 10.5% use Urdu, Hindi, and Bangla, and 11% use all four languages including English to communicate with their family (Table 16).

(13) What languages do your parents use?

Table 15. Language the participants (male) use in their family.

Question 12 Language You Use with Your Family	(a) Bangla	(b) Urdu	(c) Urdu & Bangla	(d) Urdu, Hindi & Bangla	(e) Urdu, Hindi, Bangla & English
Age: 8–10 (9)	8	0	1	0	0
Age: 11–13 (29)	16	4	3	4	2
Age: 14–16 (17)	3	5	6	2	1
Age: 17–18 (11)	4	0	4	2	1
Male: 66					

Table 16. Language the participants (female) use in their family.

Question 12 Language You Use with Your Family	(a) Bangla	(b) Urdu	(c) Urdu & Bangla	(d) Urdu, Hindi & Bangla	(e) Urdu, Hindi, Bangla & English
Age: 8–10 (20)	10	1	3	2	4
Age: 11–13 (47)	18	12	6	6	5
Age: 14–16 (36)	11	9	11	2	3
Age: 17–18 (11)	1	1	6	2	1
Female: 114					

41% of male respondents said their fathers speak Bangla, 33% Urdu, 9% Hindi, 10.5% both Bangla and Urdu, 3% both Bangla and Hindi, and 3% all three languages.

48% of male respondents said their mothers speak Bangla, 26% Urdu, 9% Hindi, 10.5% Bangla and Urdu, 3% Bangla and Hindi, 3% all three languages (Table 17).

Table 17. What language do parents use in their family (male respondents).

Question 13 Languages Your Parents Use	Father							Mother						
	Bangla	Urdu	Hindi	Bangla & Urdu	Bangla & Hindi	Bangla, Urdu & Hindi	Urdu & Hindi	Bangla	Urdu	Hindi	Bangla & Urdu	Bangla & Hindi	Bangla, Urdu & Hindi	Urdu & Hindi
Age: 8–10 (9)	6	1	0	1	1	0	0	7	0	0	1	1	0	0
Age: 11–13 (29)	14	9	6	0	0	0	0	16	7	6	0	0	0	0
Age: 14–16 (17)	3	11	0	2	0	1	0	4	9	0	3	0	1	0
Age: 17–18 (11)	4	1	0	4	1	1	0	5	1	0	3	1	1	0
Male: 66														

46% of female respondents said their fathers speak Bangla, 26% Urdu, 6% Hindi, 12% Bangla and Urdu, 7% Bangla and Hindi, 1.75% all three languages.

41% of female respondents said their mothers speak Bangla, 30% Urdu, 8% Hindi, 10.5% Bangla and Urdu, 7% Bangla and Hindi, 2.5% all three, and 1 respondent mentioned only Urdu and Hindi (Table 18).

(14) Your parents would like you to learn-----

3.33% of male respondents said their parents want them to learn Urdu, 42.42% said Bangla, 12.12% English, 10% all three languages, and 15% said Urdu and Bangla (Table 19).

6.14% of female respondents said their parents want them to learn Urdu, 78.78% said their parents would like

them to learn Bangla, 20.17% English, 14.91% all three languages, and 13.15% said Urdu and Bangla (Table 20).

(15) Does media (Television, Radio, Internet, Newspaper, and Social Media) have any impact on your learning of Bangla?

In answer to this question 40.90% of the male respondents answered in affirmative, while 15.15% answered in negative. 43.93% of the total respondents of 66 said that they don't know the answer (Table 21).

In case of female respondents, 27% answered in affirmative, 13% answered in negative while 50% of the total respondents said that they don't know what the answer should be (Table 22).

**Table 18.** What language do parents use in their family (female respondents).

Question 13				Father				Mother						
Languages Do Your Parents Use	Bangla	Urdu	Hindi	Bangla & Urdu	Bangla & Hindi	Bangla, Urdu & Hindi	Urdu & Hindi	Bangla	Urdu	Hindi	Bangla& Urdu	Bangla & Hindi	Bangla, Urdu & Hindi	Urdu & Hindi
Age: 8–10 (20)	11	3	0	1	5	0	0	9	6	0	0	5	0	0
Age: 11–13 (47)	25	14	4	0	3	1	0	23	14	5	1	3	1	0
Age: 14–16 (36)	13	12	3	8	0	0	0	12	13	3	8	0	0	0
Age: 17–18 (11)	4	1	0	5	0	1	0	3	1	1	3	0	2	1
Female: 114														

**Table 19.** What language would your parents like you to learn (male respondents).

Question 14		(a) Urdu	(b) Bangla	(c) English	(d) Urdu, Bangla & English	(e) Urdu and Bangla
Your Parents Would Like You to Learn						
Age: 8–10 (9)		1	3	1	1	3
Age: 11–13 (29)		1	13	5	5	5
Age: 14–16 (17)		0	6	1	8	2
Age: 17–18 (11)		0	6	1	4	0
Male: 66						

**Table 20.** What language do parents use in their family (female respondents).

Question 14		(a) Urdu	(b) Bangla	(c) English	(d) Urdu, Bangla & English	(e) Urdu and Bangla
Your Parents Would Like You to Learn						
Age: 8–10 (20)		2	14	2	1	1
Age: 11–13 (47)		5	26	6	7	3
Age: 14–16 (36)		0	9	10	6	11
Age: 17–18 (11)		0	3	5	3	0
Female: 114						

**Table 21.** Impact of media in learning Bangla (on male participants).

Question 15		(a) Yes	(b) No	(c) I Do Not Know
Impact of Media on Your Learning Bangla				
Age: 8–10 (9)		3	1	5
Age: 11–13 (29)		14	5	10
Age: 14–16 (17)		5	2	10
Age: 17–18 (11)		5	2	4
Male: 66				

**Table 22.** Impact of Media in learning Bangla (on female participants).

Question 15		(a) Yes	(b) No	(c) I Do Not Know
Impact of Media on Your Learning Bangla				
Age: 8–10 (20)		5	4	11
Age: 11–13 (47)		19	7	21
Age: 14–16 (36)		13	3	20
Age: 17–18 (11)		4	1	6
Female: 114				

(16) Does your contact or interaction with Bangla native speakers help you to learn the language more effectively and makes it easy for you to be assimilated with the Bengali society?

60.60% of male respondents out of a total of 66 answered affirmatively, 10.60% negatively, and 28.78% said they didn't know the answer (Table 23).

40% of female respondents answered in affirmative, 19% in negative and 45% said that they didn't know the answer (Table 24).

(17) What would you like to do with your life?

65% of male respondents want to learn Bengali and English for job opportunities, 4.5% prefer Urdu and English for potential relocation to Pakistan, 23% will follow their parents' decision, and 7.5% are unsure (Table 25).

46% of female respondents want to learn Bengali and English for job opportunities, 14% prefer Urdu and English for potential relocation to Pakistan, 27% will follow their parents' decision, and 12% are unsure (Table 26).

(18) Do you like Bangladesh?

86% of the male respondents answered in affirmative, while a 14% answered in negative (Figure 11).

**Table 23.** Male Participants' responses on if interaction with Bangla native speakers help you to learn the language to be assimilated with the Bengali society.

Question 16			
Interaction with Bangla Native Speakers Help You to Learn the Language to Be Assimilated with the Bengali Society	(a) Yes	(b) No	(c) I Do Not Know
Age: 8–10 (9)	4	2	3
Age: 11–13 (29)	23	2	4
Age: 14–16 (17)	7	1	9
Age: 17–18 (11)	6	2	3
Male: 66			

**Table 24.** Female Participants' responses on if interaction with Bangla native speakers help you to learn the language to be assimilated with the Bengali society.

Question 16			
Interaction with Bangla Native Speakers Help You to Learn the Language to Be Assimilated with the Bengali Society	(a) Yes	(b) No	(c) Know
Age: 8–10	7	6	7
Age: 11–13	14	9	24
Age: 14–16	10	7	19
Age: 17–18	10	0	1
Female: 114			

**Table 25.** Male participants' responses on what would they like to do with your life.

Question 17	(a) Learn Bengali and English Well to Get a Good Job Here	(b) Learn Urdu & English to Use Them When I Go to Pakistan	(c) Will Decide According to My Parents' Decision	(d) Do Not Know
What Would You Like to Do with Your Life?				
Age: 8–10 (9)	4	1	1	3
Age: 11–13 (29)	15	2	10	2
Age: 14–16 (17)	15	0	2	0
Age: 17–18 (11)	9	0	2	0
Male: 66				

**Table 26.** Female participants' responses on what would they like to do with your life.

Question 17	(a) Learn Bengali and English Well to Get a Good Job Here	(b) Learn Urdu & English to Use Them When I Go to Pakistan	(c) Will Decide According to My Parents' Decision	(d) Do Not Know
What Would You Like to Do with Your Life?				
Age: 8–10 (20)	3	7	6	4
Age: 11–13 (47)	19	6	16	6



Table 26. Cont.

Age: 14–16 (36)	22	3	7	4
Age: 17–18 (11)	9	0	2	0
Female: 114				

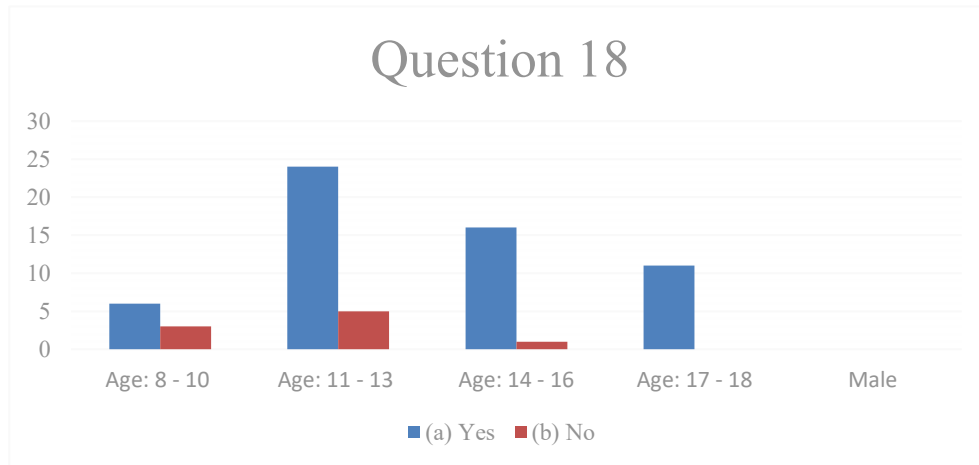


Figure 11. Number of male participants liking for Bangladesh.

In the case of female respondents, 72% answered in the affirmative, 28% answered in the negative (Figure 12).

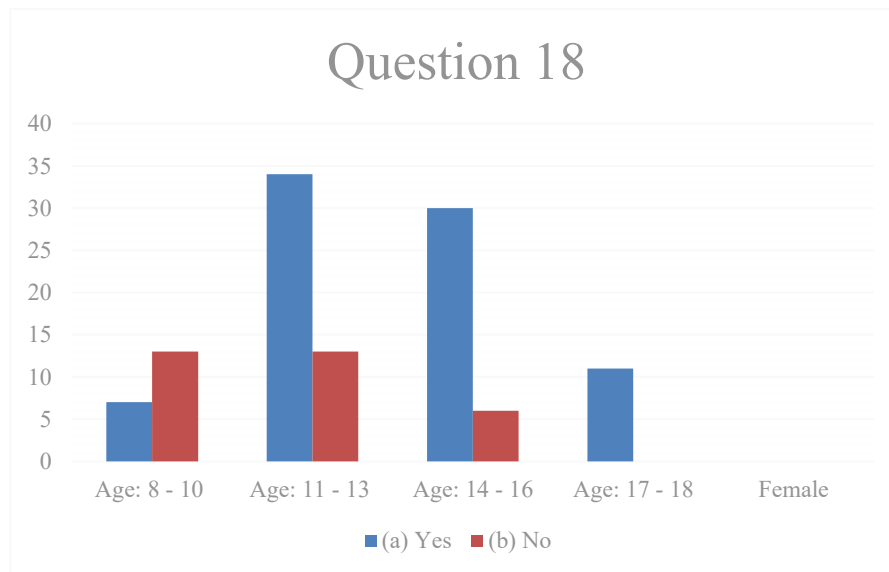


Figure 12. Number of female participants liking for Bangladesh.

(19) When you are an adult, who would you like to get married with? from the Biharis community, 25% prefer someone from Bangladeshi society, 9% would marry a foreigner, and 47% are unsure (Table 27).  
18% of male respondents prefer marrying someone

Table 27. Responses of male participants' idea of their future marriage.

Question 19 Who Would You Like to Get Married with	(a) A Bihari	(b) A Bangladeshi	(c) A Foreigner	(d) I Don't Know
Age: 8–10 (9)	2	2	1	4
Age: 11–13 (29)	5	5	4	15
Age: 14–16 (17)	4	5	0	8
Age: 17–18 (11)	1	5	1	4
Male: 66				

17% of female respondents prefer marrying someone from the Biharis community, 25% prefer someone from Bangladeshi society, 10.5% would marry a foreigner, and 47% are unsure (**Table 28**).

**Table 28.** Responses of female participants' idea of their future marriage.

<b>Question 19</b>				
<b>Who Would You Like to Get Married with</b>	<b>(a) A Bihari</b>	<b>(b) A Bangladeshi</b>	<b>(c) A Foreigner</b>	<b>(d) I Don't Know</b>
Age: 8–10 (20)	4	4	3	9
Age: 11–13 (47)	10	14	5	18
Age: 14–16 (36)	5	5	4	22
Age: 17–18 (11)	0	6	0	5
Female: 114				

(20) You would feel comfortable to go to -----

65% of male respondents prefer studying in a mainstream Bangladeshi institution, 26% prefer camp schools, 3% want private home education, and 6% are unsure (**Table 29**).

47% of female respondents prefer studying in a mainstream Bangladeshi institution, 16% prefer camp schools, 13% want private home education, and 24% are unsure (**Table 30**).

(21) What type of job would you like to do?

In response to future job preferences, 9% of male respondents want to follow their fathers' occupation, 20%

want to run a business, 6% aspire to be doctors, 3% to be engineers, and 4.5% bankers. Additionally, 7.5% aim to become police officers, 12% teachers, 21% government officials, 1.5% armed forces, and 15% prefer other professions (**Table 31**).

In response to future job preferences, 8% of female respondents want to follow their fathers' occupation, 8% want to run a business, 23% aspire to be doctors, 1.75% engineers, and 9% bankers. Additionally, 10.5% want to be police officers, 15% teachers, 13% government officials, 3.5% armed forces, and 9% prefer other professions (**Table 32**).

**Table 29.** Male participant choice of education in Bangladesh.

<b>Question 20</b>				
<b>You Would Feel Comfortable to Go to</b>	<b>(a) A Mainstream BD School</b>	<b>(b) A School in the Camp</b>	<b>(c) Learn at Home Privately</b>	<b>(d) I Don't Know</b>
Age: 8–10 (9)	4	3	1	1
Age: 11–13 (29)	14	12	1	2
Age: 14–16 (17)	14	2	0	1
Age: 17–18 (11)	11	0	0	0
Male: 66				

**Table 30.** Female participant choice of education in Bangladesh.

<b>Question 20</b>				
<b>You Would Feel Comfortable to Go to</b>	<b>(a) A Mainstream BD School</b>	<b>(b) A School in the Camp</b>	<b>(c) Learn at Home Privately</b>	<b>(d) I Don't Know</b>
Age: 8–10 (20)	11	4	3	2
Age: 11–13 (47)	18	10	9	10
Age: 14–16 (36)	17	4	2	13
Age: 17–18 (11)	8	0	1	2
Female: 114				

**Table 31.** Male participant choice of job.

<b>Question 21</b>	<b>(a) The Job My Father Used to Do/Is Doing</b>	<b>(b) Business</b>	<b>(c) Doctor</b>	<b>(d) Engineer</b>	<b>(e) Banker</b>	<b>(f) Police Officer</b>	<b>(g) Teacher</b>	<b>(h) Govt. Job</b>	<b>(i) Defense Job</b>	<b>(j) Others</b>
Age: 8–10 (9)	3	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	1

**Table 31. Cont.**

Age: 11–13 (29)	2	2	1	0	3	4	4	6	0	7
Age: 14–16 (17)	1	6	1	0	0	0	3	3	1	2
Age: 17–18 (11)	0	4	0	1	0	0	1	5	0	0
Male: 66										

**Table 32.** Female participant choice of job.

<b>Question 21</b> <b>Job You</b> <b>Would Like to</b> <b>Do</b>	<b>(a) The Job</b> <b>My Father</b> <b>Used to Do/Is</b> <b>Doing</b>	<b>(b)</b> <b>Business</b>	<b>(c)</b> <b>Doctor</b>	<b>(d)</b> <b>Engineer</b>	<b>(e)</b> <b>Banker</b>	<b>(f) Police</b> <b>Officer</b>	<b>(g)</b> <b>Teacher</b>	<b>(h) Govt.</b> <b>Job</b>	<b>(i)</b> <b>Defense</b> <b>Job</b>	<b>(j) Others</b>
Age: 8–10 (20)	6	0	5	0	0	3	3	3	0	0
Age: 11–13 (47)	3	3	10	2	3	3	9	7	4	3
Age: 14–16 (36)	0	4	10	0	5	5	4	4	0	4
Age: 17–18 (11)	0	2	1	0	2	1	1	1	0	3
Female: 114										

(22) Do you think you are being forced to live in Geneva Camp?

In response to this question, 23% of male respondents answered affirmatively, 61% answered negatively, and 17% were unsure (Table 33).

In the case of female respondents, 25% answered in the

affirmative, 52% answered in the negative and 24% said that they don't know what the answer should be (Table 34).

(23) How much are you happy to live in Geneva Camp?

Overall, 57% of male respondents are very happy or somewhat happy living in Geneva Camp, 10.5% are unhappy, and 32% are neutral (Table 35).

**Table 33.** Whether the young biharis are being forced to live in Geneva camps (male participants).

<b>Question 22</b> <b>You Are Being Forced to Live in Geneva Camp</b>	<b>(a) Yes</b>	<b>(b) No</b>	<b>(c) I Do Not Know</b>
Age: 8–10 (9)	3	3	3
Age: 11–13 (29)	8	17	4
Age: 14–16 (17)	2	14	1
Age: 17–18 (11)	2	6	3
Male: 66			

**Table 34.** Whether the young biharis are being forced to live in Geneva camps (female participants).

<b>Question 22</b> <b>You Are Being Forced to Live in Geneva Camp</b>	<b>(a) Yes</b>	<b>(b) No</b>	<b>(c) I Do Not Know</b>
Age: 8–10 (20)	6	9	5
Age: 11–13 (47)	15	23	9
Age: 14–16 (36)	6	21	9
Age: 17–18 (11)	1	6	4
Female: 114			

**Table 35.** Perception of Male respondents about their living in Geneva camps.

<b>Question 23</b> <b>How Much Are You Happy to Live in Geneva Camp?</b>	<b>(a) Very Much</b>	<b>(b) Very</b>	<b>(c) So-So</b>	<b>(d) Not So Much</b>	<b>(e) Not at All</b>
Age: 8–10 (9)	3	4	2	0	0
Age: 11–13 (29)	8	15	6	0	0
Age: 14–16 (17)	1	6	7	3	0
Age: 17–18 (11)	0	1	6	3	1
Male: 66					

Overall, 51% of female respondents are happy to live in Geneva Camp, 23% are unhappy, and 26% are neutral (Table 36).

(24) Are you scared of your future?

In answer question 24, 70% of the male respondents answered in the affirmative, while 30% answered in the negative (Figure 13).

In case of the female respondents, 67% answered in the affirmative, 33% answered in the negative (Figure 14).

(25) Which country do you like? And why?

In question of country preference among the males 96% said they like Bangladesh while only 3% said that they like Pakistan (Figure 15).

92% of Females on the other hand said they like Bangladesh, 4.3% said that they like Pakistan, 1.75% said they like America, and for 1 respondent it was India, and for 1 other it was England (Figure 16).

Table 36. Perception of Female respondents about their living in Geneva camps.

Question 23						
How Much	Are You Happy to Live in Geneva Camp?	(a) Very Much	(b) Very	(c) So-So	(d) Not So Much	(e) Not at All
	Age: 8–10 (20)	2	12	1	4	1
	Age: 11–13 (47)	9	21	6	6	5
	Age: 14–16 (36)	3	10	15	6	2
	Age: 17–18 (11)	0	1	8	2	0
		Female: 114				

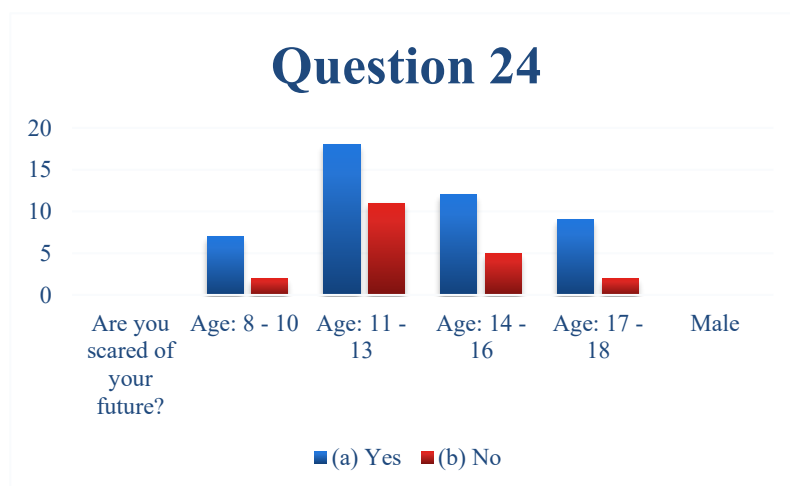


Figure 13. Respondent (male) perception of their future in Bangladesh.

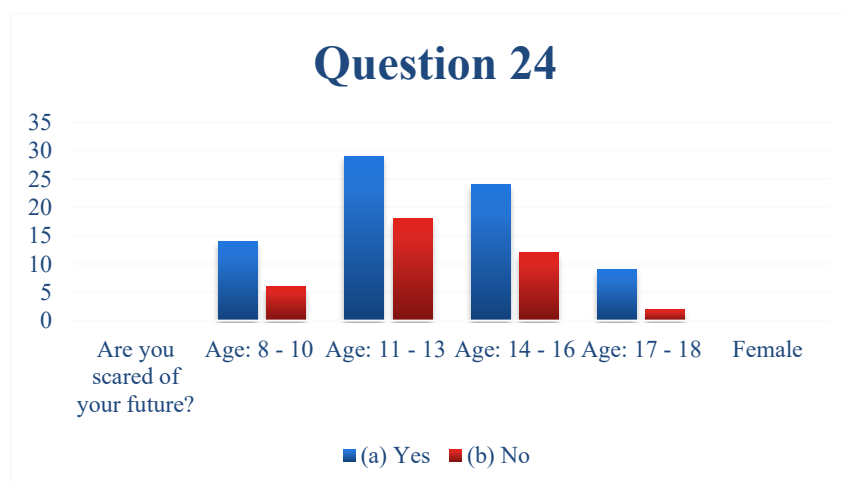


Figure 14. Respondent (female) perception of their future in Bangladesh.



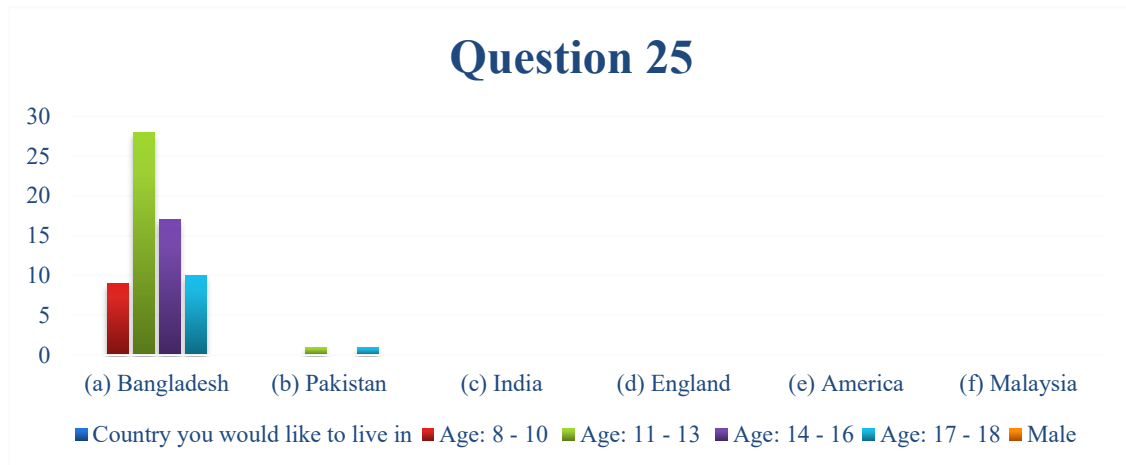


Figure 15. Country they would like to settle in (male).

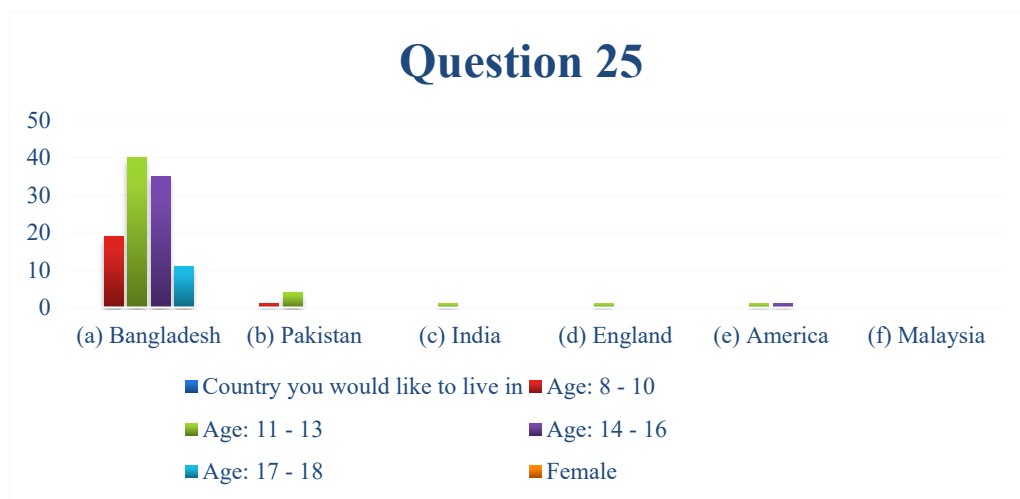


Figure 16. Country they would like to settle in (female).

## 4.2. Findings from the Interview

### 4.2.1. "Biharis" Face Numerous Challenges in Their Daily Lives

Many older participants noted incremental improvements in their lives, but persistent challenges remain in the Geneva Camps they live in. Common issues raised in focus group discussions include social alienation, harassment, and discrimination due to ancestry. Biharis often hide their identity by speaking Bangla, but their national ID cards list their camp address. Despite growing intermarriage, many Bengalis still refuse intermarriage between Biharis and Bengalis, and employers often discriminate, demanding bribes for jobs, especially government positions.

Participant 18, a female stated, *"Bengalis look down upon the camp residents....."* *"She lives in a camp, no one will marry her."* P17, a male, claimed his experience of job market discrimination, *"If employers see a camp address, they put our applications under the others."* P 16 opined, *"We were born in Bangladesh. In schools and coll-*

*eges, people don't like us. Why? We are humans before "Biharis". I'm a Bangladeshi just like you."*

Some camp residents have access to adequate healthcare, whereas in other areas government run hospitals are far away and private clinics are too expensive. While some participants said the police provide protection in the camps, others said police officers ignore their problems or unfairly blame "Biharis" for crimes. P11 testified, *"I saw my father giving bribes to the police for his small shop outside the camp."*

The living conditions in the camps are poor. Housing is cramped and dilapidated. Whole families, often with six or more members, live together in a single room, with little space to sleep, study or cook. P15 reported, *"We share beds with two or three other people at night and then use the floor also."* Fire is a constant hazard. Toilets are scarce and often dirty or broken. P10, P14, P17, P18 reported that in many camps fewer than 10 public toilets service hundreds of residents.

P 13 said, *"The condition of the toilets is so bad .... We*

*use the toilet with our eyes closed."*

P1, P2, P9, P11, P12 P17, P18 reported of 'Dirty drinking water', 'filthy floor,' 'skin rash', etc. P2, P4, P7, P8, P12, P16 came up with complaints of 'stomach problems,' 'child labour,' 'extra marital affairs, while' P7, P10, P11, P13, P15, P16, P17, P18 expressed their concerns about 'futile arguments between neighbours,' 'elopement of Biharis girls with Bengali boys.' P16, P17 and P18 showed a visible worry, recorded in the field notes, that they would be forced to take up 'odd jobs,' or 'small street business,' or even apprehended of being rejected by their families to live in the 'crammed accommodation' of Geneva camps.

#### 4.2.2. Biharis Demand the Government to Provide Housing Outside of the Camps

In Bangladesh, "rehabilitation" involves government-provided subsidized housing for Biharis living in squalid camps, which many see as symbols of their inferiority. Most participants stressed the importance of rehabilitation, with the Headmaster of OBAT NLJ High School stating, "*The government should allot plots for everyone ... Everything will be improved if there is rehabilitation.*" P15 described the camps as "*like hell,*" expressing a desperate desire to escape. The preferred solution is permanent housing near the camps, allowing job retention and integration with the Bengali community. An 18-year-old female, emphasized, "*We want to merge with the Bengali community ... where both Biharis and Bengalis live side by side.*" Another male participant, P17, reiterated, "*Everything will be improved if there is rehabilitation.*"

#### 4.2.3. Biharis Identify Themselves Primarily as 'Bangladeshis'

Most participants unequivocally identified themselves as Bangladeshis. A female participant, P16, asked,

*"Why should we be called 'Biharis'? We are not 'Biharis' any longer. By birth we are Bengali and Bangladeshi."*

A male participant, P15, explained that Bengalis and "Biharis" share many commonalities including "*Your Allah is my Allah too; We have the same prophet.*" P17 claimed, "*We were born in this country; We belong to this country. No difference with you.*"

P12, P14, and P17, reinforced, "*We love Bangladesh from the bottom of our hearts. Why can't the Bangladeshis tolerate us?*" P8, P11, P15, P16, P18 voiced their concerns about why they should be considered as Pakistanis. They won't go anywhere, they will stay here (Bangladesh).

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Discussion of Findings of the Quantitative Data

The quantitative data details the aspiration among Geneva Camp residents to integrate, with 77% of both males and females expressing this desire. This tendency aligns with the concept of instrumental motivation within Gardner's motivational framework, where individuals acquire a second language, in this case Bangla, for practical reasons such as admittance into better educational institutions and availing job opportunities. Participants favor these opportunities in government and teaching roles, further emphasizing the instrumental nature of their motivation.

The data highlights that learning Bangla is considered crucial for integration, as it alleviate connections with the host society. This necessity for linguistic adaptation is aligned with Sociocultural Theory, which prescribes that language acquisition is essentially social and shaped by inter-community interactions and cultural contexts advocated by Vygotsky; The inclination to connect with the wider Bangladeshi community indicates a need to participate more fully in the sociocultural landscape, a central tenet of Sociocultural Theory.

There is a generational divide about this strong desire for integration. 30% of males and 35% of females are unsure about their parental choice for their future. This dubiety indicates differing levels of instrumental motivation or varied perceptions of the importance of sociocultural integration between generations.

Most participants and respondents identify themselves as Bangladeshi and consider Bangla their mother tongue, which exemplifies the impact of linguistic adaptation over time. Nevertheless, the retention of Bihari heritage, with many using a mix of Urdu, Bangla, and Hindi at home, exhibits a complex interplay of L2 Bangla acquisition and the conservation of cultural identity. This complexity aligns with findings that refugee communities often demonstrate linguistic adaptation for survival, sometimes risking their first language<sup>[62]</sup>.

Sociocultural exposure and day-to-day interactions with Bangladeshis are considered as effective drivers of integration, helping residents learn the L2 Bangla and accommodate culturally. These factors are consistent directly with Sociocultural Theory, highlighting the role of social context and interaction in language learning and cultural adaptation.

However, uncertainties about the future prevail, with many exposing concern and confusion about their parental wishes and the grounds for their continuing camp life. To help integration, there is a need for increased language programs, encouraging social interactions, support systems to decrease anxieties, and active parental involvement in the integration process. These recommendations accentuate the significance of creating supportive social and educational environments that facilitate further integration, in line with

Sociocultural Theory and Gardner's motivational framework.

## 5.2. Discussion of Findings of the Qualitative Data

**The Plight of Biharis in Bangladesh:** Social Exclusion, Poor Living Conditions, and a desire for Belonging.

The qualitative data uncover the complex inter-relationship of social exclusion, hard living conditions, and a powerful desire for belonging among the Bihari community in Bangladesh.

Interviews with participants detailed the pervasive nature of sociocultural exclusion, wherein Biharis experience discrimination and mistreatment rooted in their ethnic identity. This marginalization manifests in various forms: limited access to employment opportunities, especially within governmental sectors, and limited access to educational and healthcare provisions. As a female, P18, stated, *"Bengalis look down upon the camp residents....."* She lives in a camp, no one will marry her. P17, a male, claimed that he is discriminated in the job market, *"If employers see a camp address, they put our applications under the others."*

The living conditions in the camps are defined by overcrowding, crowded and unsafe housing, inadequate sanitation facilities, and the regular threat of fires. P15 reported, *"We share beds with two or three other people at night and then use the floor also"*. P10, P14, P17, and P18 reported that in many camps fewer than 10 public toilets service hundreds of residents. P 13 said, *"The condition of the toilets is so bad ....We use the toilet with our eyes closed."*

Despite these hardships, the participants in the interviews emphasize a strong sense of Bangladeshi identity and a desire for complete integration into mainstream Bangladeshi society. A female participant, P16, asked, *"Why should we be called 'Biharis'?"* She reiterated, *"We are not 'Biharis' any longer. By birth we are Bengali and Bangladeshi."* Participants stated a desire to relocate from the camps and integrate into communities with the Bengali society, considering such "rehabilitation" as crucial for overcoming sociocultural stigma and improving their general quality of life. An 18-year-old female, P10, emphasized, *"We want to merge with the Bengali community ... where both 'Biharis' and Bengalis live side by side."*

This scenario aligns with wider global research, which indicates that displaced refugees often exhibit rapid linguistic adaptation motivated by survival needs, sometimes at the expense of their first language. Furthermore, studies show that the trauma of displacement can sometimes invigorate resistance to second language acquisition, a

factor that can be relevant in understanding the preference of the older generation for Urdu in the 'Bihari' community.

## 6. Data Triangulation

The validity of the findings increases when quantitative survey results are triangulated with qualitative interview data. The interview provide more in-depth insights about the lived experiences of the Bihari refugees in Bangladesh, which is supported by the survey statistics. For example, interview narratives scribe prejudice and exclusion in day-to-day life correspond with the survey findings that 77% of respondents desire to integrate.

Similarly, the poor living conditions detailed in interviews substantiate quantitative findings on dissatisfaction with camp life. This triangulated approach help examine the complex interplay between general barriers and individual resilience, presenting a holistic view of the Bihari community struggles and aspirations [63].

### 6.1. Triangulation of the "Quan-Qual" Data

The triangulation of quantitative survey results with qualitative interview data enhances the validity of the findings. While the survey provides a broad statistical understanding of the Bihari aspirations and challenges, the interviews offer deeper insights into the lived experiences of individuals within the camps. For instance, the survey indicates that 77% desire integration is contextualized by interview narratives detailing discrimination and exclusion in daily life. Similarly, the dire living conditions highlighted in interviews corroborate quantitative findings on dissatisfaction with camp life. This triangulated approach underscores the complex interplay between systemic barriers and personal resilience, providing a holistic view of the Bihari community's struggles and aspirations.

### 6.2. Quantitative Data Contextualized by Qualitative Insights

The integration aspirations of Biharis in Bangladesh are strongly reflected in both quantitative and qualitative data. A significant 87% of survey respondents identify as Bangladeshi, with 77% eager to integrate into mainstream society. Learning Bangla is emphasized, particularly by 65% of males and 46% of females, as essential for economic and social participation. Qualitative insights reveal that the desire for integration stems from the stigma of being "camp residents" and the associated social exclusion, with many recounting job rejections due to their names or addresses.

Living conditions in the camps are dire, with over 70% expressing dissatisfaction due to overcrowding, poor sanitation, and inadequate infrastructure. Fewer than ten functional toilets often serve hundreds, and interviews depict

a harsh reality of insufficient privacy, fire hazards, and unsafe water, exacerbating social issues like drug abuse. Barriers to employment and education are also significant, with 60% reporting limited access to quality education. Many face discrimination in job applications and schools due to their heritage, reinforcing their alienation.

A generational divide exists, where younger Biharis are more likely to identify themselves as Bangladeshi and embrace integration, while older generations cling to their Pakistani heritage. Language serves as a critical integration tool, with 60% of males and 36% of females crediting interactions with Bangladeshis and media exposure for improving Bangla proficiency, fostering both language skills and cultural understanding.

### 6.3. Quantitative Data Contextualized by Qualitative Insights

The integration urge of Biharis in Bangladesh are vividly reflected in findings through both quantitative and qualitative data. A high 87% of survey respondents identify themselves as Bangladeshis, with 77% anxious to integrate into mainstream society. This tendency towards integration aligns with Gardner's (1985) motivational framework, specifically instrumental motivation, as respondents desire to acquire L2 Bangla for practical reasons like obtaining better education and suitable job opportunities. Acquiring Bangla is emphasized, by 65% of males and 46% of females, as essential for economic and social engagement.

Qualitative insights uncover that the inclination for integration emerges from the stigma of being "camp residents" and the related social exclusion, with many narrating job rejections owing to their names or addresses. This social exclusion and discrimination, revealed through the qualitative data, underscore the importance of societal factors in language acquisition, consistent with Sociocultural Theories of Vygotsky, Lantolf, and Gardner, which argue for the role of social interaction and context in L2 acquisition.

Living conditions in the camps are awful, with over 70% reporting dissatisfaction due to overcrowding, unhygienic sanitation, and inadequate accommodations. These findings are agreeable with recent studies like that of Soheli et al. (2024), which uses qualitative methods to posit the crisis and coping mechanisms within the Geneva Camps, further validating the quantitative reports of dissatisfaction. Interviews describe a rough reality of inadequate privacy, fire hazards, and unsafe water, aggravating social issues like drug abuse.

Significant barriers exist for both education and employment; 60% of respondents reporting restricted admittance to high-quality education. Owing to their lineage, many Biharis experience prejudice in schools and on job settings, which furthers their sense of isolation, which shows

that displaced refugees in Bangladesh continue to face challenges of employment and education. Obstacles to employment and education are also alarming, with 60% reporting constricted access to appropriate standard of education. This is consistent with findings in which detail constant impediments in accessing education and employment for Biharis living in Geneva camps in Bangladesh.

Data from the interviews reveal generational tension, where younger Biharis are more inclined to learn Bangla to identify themselves as Bangladeshi and eager to embrace integration, while older generations tend to stick to their Urdu language, culture, and heritage. This divide is manifest in the differing levels of instrumental motivation, with younger generation showing a greater interest to learn Bangla for upward mobility. Survey data shows that 60% of males and 36% of females crediting interactions with Bangladeshis and media exposure for improving Bangla proficiency, fostering both language skills and cultural understanding. These findings align with Sociocultural Theory, highlighting the role of social interaction in language learning and cultural adaptation.

Nonetheless, uncertainties about the future prevail, with many reporting fear and confusion about their parental choices and the justifications for their continued camp residence. To ensure positive integration, there is a need for pedagogically sound language programs, enhanced social interactions, productive support systems to address communal fear, individual anxieties, and greater parental engagement in the integration process. These recommendations stress the significance of creating congenial social and educational environments that facilitate integration, in line with Sociocultural Theory of Vygotsky and Gardner's motivational framework.

### 6.4. Cross-Referencing Multiple Data Sets

**Camp Residency and Marginalization:** Quantitative data reveals significant employment discrimination linked to camp addresses. 23% of males and 25% of females fear being 'trapped' in a limbo of camp-life. Qualitative narratives highlight the emotional cost of poverty and exclusion. Recent studies including, Fattah & Walters<sup>[64]</sup>, Bhanye<sup>[65]</sup>, Boeyink et al.<sup>[66]</sup>, and Bhattarai & Yousef<sup>[67]</sup> also document similar experiences of marginalization and spatial stigmatization in other displaced communities, providing a comparative perspective.

**Health and Sanitation Challenges:** A 70% discontentment rate with sanitation is supported by interviews describing overflowing toilets and inadequate clean water, with field notes confirming these poor conditions. Research on urban sanitation in Bangladesh further contextualizes these findings, indicating that insufficient sanitation provisions are a burning issue that disproportionately affects refugee communities.



Language and Social Mobility: Bangla proficiency is crucial (65% males, 46% females), but interviews reveal it as both a ‘barrier and a bridge’ for accessing education and employment opportunities amid social antagonism. This exposes the complex interplay of instrumental motivation and social context in L2 acquisition.

## 7. Alignment of Findings with Research Objectives and Research Questions

The findings align closely with the research objectives. Research Objective 1 is addressed in how the ‘lost identity’ of Bihari refugees motivates Bangla acquisition. The dual identity of the Biharis has led to their ‘forced motivation’, with Bangla serving as a survival tool for social and economic integration <sup>[68]</sup>. Research Objective 2 has been examined through the analysis of economic necessity and social interaction in driving the camp residents learning Bangla. The data highlights language skills as vital for employment, education, and social mobility. Research Objective 3 has been exemplified through sociocultural and linguistic factors in integration. Inter-community marriages and shared cultural practices emerged as significant, though hindered by discrimination and poor living conditions. Finally, Research Objective 4 has been illustrated through examination of how Bangla acquisition aids assimilation. Biharis proficient in Bangla experience better integration, particularly among youth who identify themselves as Bangladeshis.

### **The research questions were addressed as follows:**

Research Question 1 found that the "lost identity" drives survival-based motivation for learning Bangla. Research Question 2 identified economic necessity and social integration as key motivators for language acquisition. Research Question 3 highlighted how learning Bangla enabled access to education and employment, promoting social inclusion. Research Question 4 revealed generational differences in language acquisition, influenced by interactions with native speakers.

## 8. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study reveals the complex relationship between linguistically intrigued sociocultural dynamics and second language acquisition (SLA) among the Biharis community in Bangladesh. The findings include a visible desire for integration into Bangladeshi society, especially among the younger generation, motivated by instrumental motivation, a key concept in Gardner’s motivational framework, for better education and employment provisions. The older generation's attitude to preserve their cultural identity, reflective of a generational split in language use and integration urges.

The study also uncovers the unpleasant realities of life in the Geneva Camps, where subhuman living conditions, social exclusion, and discrimination prevail. These challenges call for the urgent need for interference aimed at improving overall living standards and quality of life without social inclusion of the Bihari community. The findings are consistent with Sociocultural Theories and frameworks of Vygotsky, Gardener, and Lantolf. The research findings stress the crucial role of host-community language, Bangla, in the integration process.

To address these pertinent issues, it is recommended that policies promote both Bangla acquisition and cultural preservation, modify living conditions, eliminate discrimination, and empower the refugees through education and skills development. Further research should look into the long-term impacts of integration policies and explore the experiences of other displaced communities to provide a broader understanding of language, identity, and integration dynamics.

## Author Contributions

M.S.H. and A.S.M.M.H.C. contributed to the conceptualization of the study. M.S.H. was responsible for the methodology, questionnaire development, original draft preparation, final draft, editing, and addressing reviewers’ comments. A.S.M.M.H.C. and T.S. conducted the survey and the interviews. A.S.M.M.H.C. and T.S. also transcribed the audio records of the qualitative data. T.S. used relevant software for Data curation and to design and final visual representations of findings. M.S.H., A.S.M.M.H.C. and T.S. conducted validation of the research. The review and editing of the manuscript were carried out by M.S.H. M.S.H. also handled supervision and project administration. There was no funding available for the project. It was funded by the authors themselves on a sharing basis. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Not applicable.

## Informed Consent Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of Daffodil International University, Dhaka, Bangladesh, and University of Development Alternatives (UODA), Dhaka, Bangladesh.

## Data Availability Statement

All the data from the survey and the interview have been preserved in hard and soft copies available for any relevant authority for inspection. All the data and relevant documents have been preserved with the authors, and they are available for inspection by the journal or any other relevant authorities.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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