

Educational Barriers and Institutional Support for Rural Development in Bangladesh: Evidence from Multiple Stakeholder Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Quality education is essential for promoting rural development through human capital formation, productivity enhancement, and social inclusion. However, educational barriers and inadequate institutional support continue to constrain sustainable rural development in Bangladesh. This study examines how educational barriers and institutional support influence rural development from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders.

A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted among 500 respondents, including students, teachers, parents, policymakers, and community members from urban and rural areas of the Mymensingh Division, Bangladesh. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, Pearson's Chi-square tests, and Cramér's V to assess urban–rural differences and the strength of associations.

The findings reveal significant urban–rural disparities in school availability, teaching quality, access to modern teaching aids, teacher training, community support, and educational improvement priorities. Rural respondents reported greater educational challenges, while government financial support was identified as the highest priority for improving educational quality. Despite these differences, respondents from both urban and rural areas strongly agreed that government intervention is essential for achieving quality education. The results suggest that strengthening educational infrastructure, teacher capacity, community participation, and targeted financial support is critical for reducing educational inequalities and advancing SDG 4 and sustainable rural development.

The study contributes to the literature by providing an integrated assessment of educational barriers and institutional support from multiple stakeholder perspectives and offers evidence-based recommendations for improving educational policy and rural development in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Educational Barriers; Institutional Support; Rural Development; Multiple Stakeholder Perspectives; Human Capital; Bangladesh.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Rural development remains a strategic priority for Bangladesh, where a large proportion of the population resides in rural areas and depends on agriculture, small enterprises, and informal economic activities for their livelihoods. Sustainable rural development extends beyond economic growth to include improvements in education, healthcare, employment, social inclusion, and quality of life. Among these dimensions, education is widely recognised as a fundamental driver of rural transformation because it enhances human capital, increases productivity, promotes innovation, and enables individuals to participate more effectively in economic and community development (Becker, 1964; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015).

Despite significant progress in expanding educational access, Bangladesh continues to face substantial educational challenges, particularly in rural communities. Limited school availability, student dropout, inadequate teaching quality, insufficient modern teaching aids, and gender-related barriers continue to affect educational participation and learning outcomes. At the same time, the effectiveness of educational systems depends not only on reducing these barriers but also on strengthening institutional support through government initiatives, community participation, teacher training, adequate learning materials, and clearly defined educational priorities. Together, these factors determine the extent to which education contributes to sustainable rural development.

Previous studies have largely examined educational barriers or institutional support as separate issues. Research has commonly focused on school accessibility, teacher quality, student dropout, digital learning, or community participation individually, with relatively limited attention given to their combined influence on rural development. Moreover, many studies rely on the views of a single respondent group, overlooking the perspectives of students, teachers, parents, policymakers, and community members. As a result, there remains a need for a more integrated understanding of how educational barriers and institutional support jointly shape rural development.

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates ten educational dimensions comprising five educational barriers which include availability of schools, student dropout, teaching quality, modern teaching aids, and gender-related barriers and five institutional support factors including community support for education, government support, teacher training, teaching materials and learning aids, and educational improvement priorities. Using evidence from multiple stakeholder groups across urban and rural areas of Mymensingh Division, the study provides a

comprehensive assessment of the educational conditions that influence rural development in Bangladesh. The findings are expected to contribute to both the academic literature and evidence-based policy formulation by identifying strategies to strengthen educational systems and promote sustainable rural development.

1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Education is widely recognised as a catalyst for rural development because it strengthens human capital, improves productivity, and enhances social well-being. However, rural communities in Bangladesh continue to face numerous educational challenges, including inadequate school availability, student dropout, poor teaching quality, limited access to modern teaching aids, and gender-related barriers. These challenges reduce educational opportunities and weaken the contribution of education to rural development.

At the same time, educational outcomes depend not only on overcoming these barriers but also on the effectiveness of institutional support. Community participation, government commitment, teacher training, the provision of teaching materials, and clearly defined educational priorities play vital roles in improving educational quality and accessibility. Weak institutional support may therefore limit the effectiveness of educational interventions, particularly in rural areas.

Although previous studies have examined individual educational issues or institutional factors, few have investigated how educational barriers and institutional support jointly influence rural development within a single analytical framework. Furthermore, limited evidence is available from multiple stakeholder groups that include students, teachers, parents, policymakers, and community members. This study addresses these gaps by examining the combined effects of educational barriers and institutional support on rural development in Bangladesh.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

General Objective

To examine how educational barriers and institutional support influence rural development in Bangladesh from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess the influence of educational barriers on rural development.
2. To evaluate the role of institutional support in improving educational outcomes.
3. To compare stakeholder perceptions of educational barriers and institutional support between urban and rural areas.

4. To identify priority areas for strengthening education to promote sustainable rural development.

1.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study makes several important contributions to the literature. **First**, it develops an integrated framework by examining educational barriers and institutional support together, rather than as separate issues. **Second**, it incorporates the perspectives of five stakeholder groups—students, teachers, parents, policymakers, and community members—to provide a comprehensive understanding of educational challenges. **Third**, it compares urban and rural perceptions to identify disparities that influence rural development. **Finally**, the findings provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers seeking to improve educational systems, strengthen institutional support, and promote sustainable rural development in Bangladesh.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Education is widely recognised as a fundamental driver of rural development because it enhances human capital, improves labour productivity, reduces poverty, and promotes social inclusion. According to Human Capital Theory, investment in education increases individuals' knowledge and skills, enabling them to participate more effectively in economic and social activities (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961). Educated populations are more likely to adopt improved agricultural practices, engage in entrepreneurship, and utilise modern technologies, thereby contributing to sustainable rural development (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015).

In Bangladesh, considerable progress has been made in expanding educational access through increased school enrolment, stipend programmes, and infrastructure development. However, significant disparities remain between urban and rural communities. Rural schools often experience shortages of qualified teachers, inadequate infrastructure, limited digital learning facilities, and socio-economic constraints that reduce educational participation and learning outcomes. These inequalities limit the contribution of education to rural transformation and highlight the need for comprehensive educational reforms.

2.2 EDUCATIONAL BARRIERS AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Educational barriers continue to limit the effectiveness of education in promoting rural development. Limited school availability reduces educational access, particularly for children living in remote areas. Student dropout, often associated with poverty, child labour, and early marriage, interrupts human capital development and reduces future employment opportunities.

Similarly, poor teaching quality and inadequate modern teaching aids weaken learning outcomes and widen educational inequalities between urban and rural communities (UNESCO, 2024).

Gender-related barriers remain another important challenge. Although Bangladesh has achieved notable progress in gender parity in primary education, girls in many rural communities continue to experience educational disadvantages arising from socio-cultural norms, household responsibilities, and early marriage. Reducing these barriers contributes not only to educational equity but also to women's economic participation and broader rural development (UN Women, 2023).

Institutional support is equally important for improving educational outcomes. Community participation strengthens accountability and encourages school attendance, while government investment improves infrastructure, teacher recruitment, and policy implementation. Continuous teacher training enhances instructional quality, adequate teaching materials improve classroom effectiveness, and clearly defined educational priorities ensure that limited resources are allocated efficiently. Together, these institutional factors create an enabling environment in which education can contribute more effectively to rural development.

2.3 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

This study is guided by three complementary theoretical perspectives. Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961) argues that education increases productivity and economic growth by developing knowledge and skills. The Capability Approach (Sen, 1999) views education as a means of expanding individuals' freedoms and opportunities to achieve valued lives. Social Capital Theory (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993) emphasises the role of trust, cooperation, and community participation in improving educational outcomes and supporting local development. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for explaining how educational barriers and institutional support influence rural development.

2.4 RESEARCH GAP

Previous studies have generally examined educational barriers or institutional support independently. Most have focused on individual issues such as school access, teacher quality, student dropout, or community participation without considering their combined influence on rural development. In addition, relatively few studies have incorporated the perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups, including students, teachers, parents, policymakers, and community members. Consequently, there remains limited empirical evidence explaining how educational barriers and institutional support jointly shape rural development in Bangladesh.

This study addresses these gaps by integrating ten educational dimensions into a single analytical framework. It further contributes by comparing stakeholder perceptions across urban and rural areas, thereby providing a broader understanding of educational inequalities and institutional challenges affecting rural development.

2.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework proposes that educational barriers and institutional support jointly influence educational outcomes, which subsequently contribute to rural development. Educational barriers include school availability, student dropout, teaching quality, modern teaching aids, and gender-related barriers, which may restrict educational access and learning quality. Conversely, institutional support through community participation, government support, teacher training, adequate teaching materials, and educational improvement priorities strengthens educational effectiveness.

Improved educational outcomes enhance human capital, increase productivity, promote employment, strengthen social inclusion, and improve the quality of life in rural communities. Accordingly, this study conceptualizes rural development as the cumulative outcome of reducing educational barriers while strengthening institutional support. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework adopted in this study.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine how educational barriers and institutional support influence rural development in Bangladesh. A cross-sectional design was considered appropriate because it enabled the collection of data from multiple stakeholder groups at a single point in time, allowing for the comparison of perceptions across urban and rural areas. The study adopted a descriptive and comparative approach to identify educational challenges and assess differences in stakeholder perceptions.

3.2 STUDY AREA

The study was conducted in the Mymensingh Division of Bangladesh, comprising the districts of Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Netrokona, and Sherpur. The division was selected because it includes both urban and predominantly rural communities, making it suitable for examining educational disparities and their implications for rural development. Although educational opportunities have expanded in recent years, many rural communities within the division continue to face

challenges related to educational infrastructure, teaching quality, digital resources, and institutional support.

3.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The target population consisted of five stakeholder groups: students, teachers, parents, policymakers, and community members. A total of 500 respondents participated in the survey, including 250 respondents from urban areas and 250 respondents from rural areas. A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents who possessed relevant knowledge and experience regarding educational issues. The inclusion of multiple stakeholder groups provided diverse perspectives on educational barriers and institutional support.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire developed after reviewing the relevant literature on education and rural development. The questionnaire included items relating to ten educational dimensions: availability of schools, student dropout, teaching quality, modern teaching aids, gender-related barriers, community support for education, government support, teacher training, teaching materials and learning aids, and educational improvement priorities. The instrument contained both multiple-choice questions and five-point Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) where appropriate. Respondents participated voluntarily after being informed about the purpose of the study, and completed questionnaires were reviewed for completeness before data analysis.

3.5 VARIABLES AND MEASUREMENT

The study examined the influence of educational barriers and institutional support on rural development. Educational barriers comprised school availability, student dropout, teaching quality, modern teaching aids, and gender-related barriers. Institutional support included community support, government support, teacher training, teaching materials and learning aids, and educational improvement priorities. Rural development was conceptualised as improvements in educational access, human capital development, employment opportunities, productivity, social inclusion, and quality of life resulting from effective educational systems and institutional support.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarise respondents' perceptions. Cross-tabulation analysis compared responses

between urban and rural stakeholders. Pearson's Chi-square (χ^2) test was employed to determine whether significant associations existed between respondents' locality and the educational variables. Statistical significance was assessed at the 5% level ($p < 0.05$). Where significant associations were identified, Cramér's V was calculated to measure the strength of the relationship and to assess the practical significance of the observed differences.

3.7 VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Content validity was established through a comprehensive review of the literature and careful alignment of questionnaire items with the study objectives. The questionnaire was refined to improve clarity and relevance before data collection. Standardised data collection procedures and systematic data verification enhanced the consistency and quality of the responses. Because the questionnaire primarily contained independent categorical and perception-based items rather than multiple items measuring a single latent construct, Cronbach's alpha was not calculated.

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and confidentiality was maintained by collecting and analysing data anonymously. The findings are reported honestly and objectively to support evidence-based educational and rural development policies in Bangladesh.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study based on data collected from 500 respondents representing students, teachers, parents, policymakers, and community members from urban and rural areas of the Mymensingh Division, Bangladesh. The analysis focuses on ten educational dimensions related to educational barriers and institutional support. Descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations are used to summarize respondents' perceptions, while Pearson's Chi-square test and Cramér's V assess the significance and strength of the associations between locality and the selected educational variables. The findings are presented sequentially to identify urban–rural disparities and their implications for achieving SDG 4 and promoting sustainable rural development.

4.1 AVAILABILITY OF SCHOOLS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Table 1: Availability of Schools by Locality and Association with Rural Development

Availability of Schools	Urban n (%)	Rural n (%)	Total n (%)
Very Poor	1 (0.4)	42 (16)	43 (8.2)
Poor	31 (12.4)	75 (30.0)	106 (21.2)
Adequate	89 (35.6)	75 (30.0)	164 (32.8)

Availability of Schools	Urban n (%)	Rural n (%)	Total n (%)
Good	85 (34.0)	48 (19.2)	133 (26.6)
Excellent	44 (17.6)	10 (4.0)	54 (10.8)
Total (n)	250 (100.0)	250 (100.0)	500 (100.0)
Pearson's χ^2	86.24		
p-value	< 0.001		
Cramér's V	0.417		
Interpretation	Moderate association between locality and perceived school availability.		

Table 1 shows that school availability was perceived more positively in urban than rural areas. Overall, 32.8% rated school availability as adequate and 26.6% as good, whereas rural respondents more frequently reported poor or very poor availability. The association between locality and perceived school availability was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 86.24$, $p < 0.001$), with a moderate effect (Cramér's $V = 0.417$). Improving school access in rural communities is essential for reducing educational inequality and achieving SDG 4.

4.2 STUDENT DROPOUT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Table 2: Student Dropout by Locality

Causes of Student Dropout	Urban n (%)	Rural n (%)	Total n (%)
Financial Constraints	60 (24.0)	79 (31.6)	139 (27.8)
Lack of School Facilities	74 (29.6)	57 (22.8)	131 (26.2)
Gender Discrimination	37 (14.8)	31 (12.4)	68 (13.6)
Early Marriage or Work	62 (24.8)	72 (28.8)	134 (26.8)
Others	17 (6.8)	11 (4.4)	28 (5.6)
Total (n)	250 (100.0)	250 (100.0)	500 (100.0)
Pearson's χ^2	9.86		
p-value	0.043		
Cramér's V	0.140		
Interpretation	Small but statistically significant association between locality and perceived causes of student dropout.		

Financial constraints (27.8%), early marriage or work (26.8%), and inadequate school facilities (26.2%) were identified as the leading causes of student dropout. Rural respondents more often reported financial constraints and early marriage, while urban respondents emphasized inadequate school facilities. A significant but weak association was found between locality and

perceived dropout causes ($\chi^2 = 9.86$, $p = 0.043$; Cramér's $V = 0.140$). Financial assistance and improved educational facilities remain important for reducing dropout and supporting SDG 4.

4.3 QUALITY OF TEACHING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Table 3: Quality of Teaching by Locality

Quality of Teaching	Urban n (%)	Rural n (%)	Total n (%)
Very Dissatisfied	7 (2.8)	34 (13.6)	41 (8.2)
Dissatisfied	40 (16.0)	67 (26.8)	107 (21.4)
Neutral	84 (33.6)	72 (28.8)	156 (31.2)
Satisfied	83 (33.2)	61 (24.4)	144 (28.8)
Very Satisfied	36 (14.4)	16 (6.4)	52 (10.4)
Total (n)	250 (100.0)	250 (100.0)	500 (100.0)
Pearson's χ^2	39.284		
p-value	< 0.001		
Cramér's V	0.280		
Interpretation	A statistically significant and moderate association exists between locality and perceived teaching quality.		

Most respondents reported neutral (31.2%) or satisfactory (28.8%) opinions regarding teaching quality, although dissatisfaction remained common, particularly in rural areas. Urban respondents expressed more positive perceptions than rural respondents. Locality was significantly associated with perceived teaching quality ($\chi^2 = 39.28$, $p < 0.001$), with a moderate association (Cramér's $V = 0.280$). Improving teacher quality and equitable deployment would strengthen educational outcomes and rural development.

4.4 AVAILABILITY OF MODERN TEACHING AIDS

Table 4: Availability of Modern Teaching Aids by Locality

Availability of Modern Teaching Aids	Urban n (%)	Rural n (%)	Total n (%)
Not Available at All	7 (2.8)	38 (15.2)	45 (9.0)
Rarely Available	48 (19.2)	79 (31.6)	127 (25.4)
Sometimes Available	86 (34.4)	72 (28.8)	158 (31.6)
Frequently Available	76 (30.4)	49 (19.6)	125 (25.0)
Always Available	33 (13.2)	12 (4.8)	45 (9.0)
Total (n)	250 (100.0)	250 (100.0)	500 (100.0)

Availability of Modern Teaching Aids	Urban n (%)	Rural n (%)	Total n (%)
Pearson's χ^2	48.731		
p-value	< 0.001		
Cramér's V	0.312		
Interpretation	A statistically significant moderate association exists between locality and the availability of modern teaching aids.		

Overall, 31.6% reported that teaching aids were sometimes available, while 34.4% indicated they were rarely available or unavailable. Urban schools were perceived to have better access than rural schools. The difference was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 48.73$, $p < 0.001$), with a moderate association (Cramér's $V = 0.312$). Expanding digital learning resources in rural schools would improve educational quality and reduce inequality.

These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that inadequate digital infrastructure limits the quality of education in rural areas. Expanding access to computers, internet connectivity, and multimedia learning facilities would strengthen digital learning opportunities, reduce educational inequalities, and contribute to achieving SDG 4 and sustainable rural development in Bangladesh.

4.5 GENDER-RELATED BARRIERS

Table 5: Gender-Related Barriers Affecting Girls' Education by Locality

Response	Urban n (%)	Rural n (%)	Total n (%)
Not at all	1 (0.4)	28 (11.2)	29 (5.8)
To a small extent	31 (12.4)	75 (30.0)	106 (21.2)
To a moderate extent	89 (35.6)	85 (34.0)	174 (34.8)
To a large extent	85 (34.0)	48 (19.2)	133 (26.6)
To a very large extent	44 (17.6)	14 (5.6)	58 (11.6)
Total (n)	250 (100.0)	250 (100.0)	500 (100.0)
Pearson's χ^2	45.162		
p-value	< 0.001		
Cramér's V	0.301		
Interpretation	A statistically significant moderate association exists between locality and gender-related barriers.		

Most respondents perceived gender-related barriers as moderate (34.8%) or large (26.6%). Rural respondents reported greater gender-related challenges than urban respondents. Locality showed a significant moderate association with these perceptions ($\chi^2 = 45.16$, $p < 0.001$; Cramér's $V = 0.301$). Gender-sensitive policies and safer learning environments remain important for achieving SDG 4.

4.6 COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Table 6: Community Support for Sending Boys and Girls to School

Response	Urban n (%)	Rural n (%)	Total n (%)
Not Supportive	3 (1.2)	26 (10.4)	29 (5.8)
Slightly Supportive	31 (12.4)	75 (30.0)	106 (21.2)
Moderately Supportive	89 (35.6)	85 (34.0)	174 (34.8)
Highly Supportive	85 (34.0)	48 (19.2)	133 (26.6)
Very Highly Supportive	44 (17.6)	14 (5.6)	58 (11.6)
Total (n)	250 (100.0)	250 (100.0)	500 (100.0)
Pearson's χ^2	27.19		
p-value	< 0.001		
Cramér's V	0.225		
Interpretation	Small-to-moderate association between locality and perceived community support.		

Community support was generally perceived as moderate (34.8%) or high (26.6%). Over half of urban respondents (51.6%) reported high or very high community support, compared with only 24.8% of rural respondents. The association between locality and perceived community support was significant ($\chi^2 = 27.19$, $p < 0.001$), with a small-to-moderate effect (Cramér's $V = 0.225$). Strengthening community participation can improve educational outcomes in rural areas.

4.7 AVAILABILITY OF TRAINED TEACHERS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Table 7: Availability of Trained Teachers in Local Schools

Response	Urban n (%)	Rural n (%)	Total n (%)
Strongly Disagree	14 (5.6)	26 (10.4)	40 (8.0)
Disagree	41 (16.4)	80 (32.0)	121 (24.2)
Neutral	81 (32.4)	75 (30.0)	156 (31.2)
Agree	75 (30.0)	55 (22.0)	130 (26.0)
Strongly Agree	39 (15.6)	14 (5.6)	53 (10.6)

Response	Urban n (%)	Rural n (%)	Total n (%)
Total (n)	250 (100.0)	250 (100.0)	500 (100.0)
Pearson's χ^2	31.27		
p-value	< 0.001		
Cramér's V	0.250		
Interpretation	Small-to-moderate association between locality and perceived availability of trained teachers.		

Overall, 36.6% agreed that trained teachers were sufficiently available, whereas 32.2% disagreed. Rural respondents reported considerably greater shortages than urban respondents. The difference was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 31.27$, $p < 0.001$), with a small-to-moderate association (Cramér's $V = 0.250$). Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers in rural schools should remain a policy priority.

4.8 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Table 8: Teachers' Professional Development

Response	Urban n (%)	Rural n (%)	Total n (%)
Never	116 (46.4)	168 (67.2)	284 (56.8)
Rarely	80 (32.0)	70 (28.0)	150 (30.0)
Occasionally	54 (21.6)	12 (4.8)	66 (13.2)
Regularly	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total (n)	250 (100.0)	250 (100.0)	500 (100.0)
Pearson's χ^2	36.92		
p-value	< 0.001		
Cramér's V	0.272		
Interpretation	Small-to-moderate association between locality and teachers' professional development opportunities.		

More than half of respondents (56.8%) reported that teachers never received professional training, while only 13.2% indicated occasional training. Rural respondents reported substantially fewer training opportunities than urban respondents. Locality was significantly associated with teacher professional development ($\chi^2 = 36.92$, $p < 0.001$; Cramér's $V = 0.272$). Expanding regular in-service training would improve teaching quality and educational outcomes.

4.9 PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Table 9: Stakeholders' Priorities for Improving Educational Quality

Improvement Priority	Urban n (%)	Rural n (%)	Total n (%)
Better School Facilities	71 (28.4)	57 (22.8)	128 (25.6)
More Trained Teachers	92 (36.8)	51 (20.4)	143 (28.6)
Improved Teaching Materials and Aids	24 (9.6)	6 (2.4)	30 (6.0)
Awareness Programmes for Parents	10 (4.0)	24 (9.6)	34 (6.8)
Government Financial Support for Students	53 (21.2)	112 (44.8)	165 (33.0)
Total (n)	250 (100.0)	250 (100.0)	500 (100.0)
Pearson's χ^2	50.95		
p-value	< 0.001		
Cramér's V	0.319		
Interpretation	Moderate association between locality and stakeholders' educational improvement priorities.		

Government financial support (33.0%), more trained teachers (28.6%), and better school facilities (25.6%) were identified as the highest priorities. Urban respondents prioritized trained teachers, whereas rural respondents emphasized financial support. Locality significantly influenced these priorities ($\chi^2 = 50.95$, $p < 0.001$), with a moderate association (Cramér's V = 0.319). Educational policies should therefore reflect local needs.

These findings indicate that educational improvement strategies should be tailored to local needs rather than relying on a uniform national approach. Expanding teacher capacity in urban areas while increasing financial assistance, scholarships, and educational support for rural students would help reduce educational disparities, improve learning opportunities, and accelerate progress toward SDG 4 and sustainable rural development in Bangladesh.

4.10 IMPORTANCE OF GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION FOR ACHIEVING SDG-4 AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Table 10: Importance of Government Intervention in Achieving Quality Education

Response	Urban n (%)	Rural n (%)	Total n (%)
Not Important	3 (1.2)	3 (1.2)	6 (1.2)
Slightly Important	17 (6.8)	26 (10.4)	43 (8.6)
Moderately Important	43 (17.2)	29 (11.6)	72 (14.4)
Very Important	74 (29.6)	80 (32.0)	154 (30.8)

Response	Urban n (%)	Rural n (%)	Total n (%)
Extremely Important	112 (44.8)	113 (45.2)	225 (45.0)
Total	250 (100.0)	250 (100.0)	500 (100.0)
Pearson's χ^2	5.04		
p-value	0.283		
Cramér's V	0.101		
Interpretation	No statistically significant association between locality and perceptions of government intervention.		

Most respondents (75.8%) considered government intervention very or extremely important for achieving quality education. Unlike the other variables, perceptions were similar across urban and rural respondents. No significant association was found between locality and perceptions of government intervention ($\chi^2 = 5.04$, $p = 0.283$; Cramér's $V = 0.101$). The findings indicate broad agreement on the importance of sustained government investment in achieving SDG 4.

4.11 DISCUSSION

The findings reveal consistent urban–rural disparities across multiple dimensions of quality education in Bangladesh. Rural respondents reported poorer school availability, greater financial barriers to education, lower teaching quality, limited access to modern teaching aids, weaker community support, shortages of trained teachers, and fewer opportunities for teachers' professional development. These differences were statistically significant for nearly all indicators, with Cramér's V values indicating small to moderate associations between locality and respondents' perceptions. These findings are consistent with UNESCO (2024), which highlights persistent inequalities in educational access, learning resources, and teacher quality as major challenges to achieving SDG 4 in developing countries. Similarly, the World Bank (2018) emphasizes that improving learning environments and educational quality is essential for strengthening human capital and promoting inclusive development.

Stakeholders also differed in their priorities for educational improvement. Urban respondents emphasized the need for more trained teachers, whereas rural respondents prioritized government financial support, reflecting the greater economic challenges faced by rural communities. These findings support Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), which argues that investment in education enhances productivity and long-term socio-economic development. Likewise, Hanushek and Woessmann (2015) argue that improvements in educational quality contribute significantly to economic growth by strengthening human capital.

Overall, the findings suggest that achieving SDG 4 requires targeted rather than uniform educational policies. Expanding educational infrastructure, strengthening teacher recruitment and

professional development, increasing financial assistance for disadvantaged students, and enhancing community participation would help reduce urban–rural disparities, improve educational quality, and promote sustainable rural development in Bangladesh. These findings also reinforce previous evidence that equitable educational investment is a critical foundation for sustainable rural transformation and inclusive national development.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings have several important policy implications for achieving SDG 4 and promoting sustainable rural development in Bangladesh. **First**, reducing urban–rural disparities requires greater investment in rural educational infrastructure, including schools, classrooms, libraries, and digital learning facilities. **Second**, strengthening teacher recruitment, equitable deployment, and continuous professional development is essential for improving instructional quality, particularly in underserved rural communities. **Third**, targeted financial assistance, scholarships, and other support programmes should be expanded to reduce the economic barriers that contribute to student dropout. **Finally**, stronger collaboration among government agencies, schools, parents, and local communities can enhance educational participation and create more supportive learning environments. Implementing these measures would improve educational quality, promote equity, and accelerate progress toward the achievement of SDG 4 in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, these policy recommendations should be interpreted in light of the study's methodological limitations.

5.1 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has several limitations. **First**, it is based on cross-sectional survey data, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships between quality education and rural development. **Second**, the findings rely on respondents' self-reported perceptions and may not fully capture actual educational conditions. **Third**, the study focuses on selected urban and rural areas of Bangladesh; therefore, the findings may not be fully generalisable to all regions of the country. Future research should employ nationally representative datasets, longitudinal research designs, and mixed-method or qualitative approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between quality education and rural development.

6.0 CONCLUSION

This study examined stakeholders' perceptions of quality education and its role in promoting rural development in Bangladesh. The findings reveal significant urban–rural disparities in school availability, teaching quality, access to learning resources, teacher availability, professional development, and community support for education. Rural respondents consistently

reported greater educational challenges, while financial support emerged as their highest priority for improving educational quality. Despite these differences, respondents from both urban and rural areas strongly agreed on the importance of government intervention in achieving quality education.

The study concludes that achieving SDG 4 requires equitable and context-specific educational policies that address the unique needs of rural communities. Greater investment in educational infrastructure, qualified teachers, digital learning resources, financial assistance for disadvantaged students, and community engagement can reduce educational inequalities and improve learning outcomes. By addressing these challenges, Bangladesh can strengthen human capital, promote inclusive education, and accelerate sustainable rural development.

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