

Access to Primary Education of the Plain Land Ethnic Community Children in Bangladesh: A Case Study on Ranisankail Upazila

Sadia Sharmin*

Abstract

The plainland ethnic groups in Bangladesh generally live in the northern divisions of Bangladesh and are one of the most socially and economically disadvantaged and vulnerable sections of the population. The main focus of this study is to assess children's access to primary education in the local ethnic community in Bangladesh. This study followed a mixed-method approach that included a survey questionnaire of 276 ethnic guardians, a semi-structured interview of 20 teachers, and a KII of 2 government education officials and two managers of an NGO in Ranisankail Upazila of Thakurgaon District. The financial state, community, awareness about education, breakfast, and tiffin issue, proper guidelines about regular studies, motivation, language and culture, communication and response in classes, and availability of study materials are the major factors that impact the primary education of plain land ethnic community children. The Plainland ethnic community children lag behind in primary education mainly because of poverty, unawareness, illiteracy, different languages and cultures, and the lack of proper guidelines.

By conducting the Chi-square test ($p < 0.05$), the overall result of the study is that the access to primary education of plain land ethnic community children is influenced by the location, community, and gender, and some factors are not influenced ($p > 0.05$) by gender, location, and community. This study's main findings are the factors that mainly impact primary education, significant challenges and initiatives, and the overall scenario of the primary education of plain land ethnic community children. The study findings would be a substantial guideline for education experts, policymakers, teachers, government, and NGOs.

Keywords: Primary Education, Plain Land Ethnic Community, Bangladesh.

* MSS, Department of Public Administration, FASS, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), Email: sadiasharmin41bup@gmail.com

Introduction

An ethnic group mainly indicates the social group or category of the population set apart from other groups in a society. There are approximately two million people from 27 officially recognized ethnic minority groups in Bangladesh. Two broad categories of ethnic minorities in Bangladesh exist: groups that reside in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in the southeastern Chattogram Division and groups that reside in the northern divisions, often referred to as plain land ethnic groups (Azizul, 2014). The plain land ethnic groups in Bangladesh live primarily in the divisions of the north of Bangladesh within Rajshahi, Rangpur, Mymensingh, and Sylhet, and mainly the groups are Santals, Garos, Khasis, Manipuris, Oraons, Pahans, and Murmu. Mundas and Hajongs (Mocdonald, 2021). Most minority groups lag behind in land ownership, income, employment, health, and literacy compared to the mainstream people (Sarkar, 2020). One of the most substantial facts is that the ethnic minority children communicate in their mother tongue in their house. However, they are compelled to face Bengali texts in school, and the teachers are also from the Bengali community. The whole teaching method is in Bangla, and also they do not get proper support from the non-ethnic minority teachers and other classmates, which increases the tendency to drop out of primary school in the plain land ethnic community students. Poverty is also a factor for a lower rate of inclusion in primary education of the plain land ethnic community children. When they fail to lead a better life, parents prefer to employ their children in any work rather than sending them to school. These groups face prejudice, difficult living conditions, failing government services, and land dispossession built on historical discrimination (Sarkar, 2020). The GOs and NGOs try to take various cooperative initiatives to provide primary education to the children of the plainland ethnic communities to keep pace with the mainstream children.

The key objective of this paper is to assess the access to Primary Education of the Plain land Ethnic Community Children in Bangladesh with a focus on Ranisankail Upazila and some other targets, pointing out the current scenario of enrollment in Primary Education of plain land ethnic community children, analyzing the factors effect on entrance to primary education of plain land ethnic community children and also addressing the significant initiatives and challenges regarding access to primary education of the plain land ethnic community children with suggestions.

Literature Review

Ethnic minority children in Bangladesh from the northern part are among the country's least literate and at heightened risk of dropping out of school. They are one of the most vulnerable and socially and economically disadvantaged groups in society. Primary education mainly forms the foundation for a child's educational journey. It is not just about academic achievement but also promotes self-awareness and emotional regulation.

The inclusiveness of ethnic community children in primary education is really needed for their future flourishing. Macdonald (2021) focused on the challenges faced by the people of the plainland ethnic community in Bangladesh. This study showed that many plainland ethnic groups face difficult living conditions, including poor housing, unsafe drinking water, and insecurity. Government services and benefits are insufficient in some areas with large ethnic minority populations. This study recommended that the government and NGOs continue to press for the rights of the plain land ethnic community and assist Bangladesh's ethnic minorities in finding ways to advocate for themselves.

Rashid (2020) focused on the main problems faced by ethnic minority students in primary school and also the role of the NGOs engaged in Multilingual Programs, and the challenges they are facing in promoting education, language, and culture in the Chittagong Hill Tracts ethnic community. This study finds that the access to education of ethnic children has always been more complicated than that of the people of the plains. The lack of educational facilities and insufficient opportunities for learning in the mother language has resulted in significant backwardness of these ethnic communities. This study also finds that BRAC started an "Education for Ethnic Children" (EEC) unit for all the ethnic minorities in Bangladesh. The aim of this project was to provide qualitative education to every ethnic child according to their needs with an informal education system. This study recommends that the NGOs strengthen the ethnic minority education program, including mother tongue-based multilingual education, by involving minority-led institutions and other local actors.

Azizul (2014) examined the cooperation among various actors in primary education. This study indicates that NGOs believe that to mount a literacy movement successfully at all levels, it is crucial to have cooperation among different stakeholders, particularly the government, NGOs, and Civil Society like learners, teachers, teachers associations, researchers think tanks, community, development partners, etc. and other institutions that are dynamic and democratic. Primary education is a fundamental right for human beings that is obligatory for all. This study addressed the primary schools of NGOs that play a supplementary role in primary education, and their achievement is remarkable.

Hossen (2023) discussed BRAC's programs to provide non-formal education and their consequences. The study's evidence showed that BRAC established the Education for Ethnic Children (EEC) unit in 2001 to adapt its non-formal teaching model to meet the needs of Indigenous children who do not speak Bengali. Teachers explain lessons orally in ethnic mother tongues alongside Bangla using educational materials based on local culture and heritage. This method helps Indigenous children do better in class and

A Case Study on Ranisankail Upazila

increase their participation. Reza (2022) examined some initiatives of six NGOs in promoting education in developing countries and explored their successes and challenges. It also highlights some factors that are the causes of children dropping out of primary school in the ethnic community. This study found that NGOs are now gaining widespread attention because they are often viewed as alternative resources that can promote greater awareness, change, and development in societies. This study addressed some challenges, including insufficient quality teachers. Poverty is another factor that prevents some students from continuing their education despite the support provided by the government and NGOs. Language barriers can also affect the quality of education.

Sarkar (2020) discussed the vulnerable situation of the plains' indigenous groups. This study addressed the fact that they cannot exert their ownership of their ancestral agricultural or residential plots. Influential mainlanders invariably grab their croplands. This study also addressed the fact that the grabbers do not have any qualms about evicting the indigenous people from their lands. These ethnic minority people can be defined as being the most helpless in Bangladesh. Hussein (2019) focused on the human rights of ethnic communities in Bangladesh. This study found that plain-land ethnic minorities suffer land deprivation largely because the provisions of the relevant land laws and regulations are not implemented. It is perceived that the successful implementation of the various initiatives by concerned stakeholders will enable all communities, large or small, of ethnic, religious, and cultural diversities, irrespective of differences of any kind, to live in peace and harmony in Bangladesh.

Ali (2023) has addressed the MLE (Multi-Language Education) method of education to facilitate quality education for the children of ethnic communities. This study has shown that most of the ethnic indigenous children lose interest in studies and leave school in a very short period because of language issues. Multilingual education programs are most often a part of a formal educational system, which includes the teaching and learning of multiple languages. This concept enables ethnic minority learners to achieve their educational goals without forcing them to sacrifice their linguistic and cultural heritage. The MLE project has already achieved remarkable success. This study highly recommended continuing this project for a longer term to remove the language barrier of ethnic minority children, especially in primary education.

Khaled (2013) has mainly focused on multicultural classrooms to develop the analytical thinking of learners by introducing sensational pedagogies. Multicultural education is a process of comprehensive school reform that ensures basic education for all students, primarily focused on

ethnic minority groups. This study recommended the proper mechanisms that mainly assist teachers in helping minority students develop a positive group identity. Teachers are the significant factor that can support understanding among students so that they can relate to one another throughout their lives. Multiculturalism and the proper mechanisms are needed to ensure the education of the people of the ethnic community.

Zaman and Akhter (2023) addressed the root causes of social exclusion and reviewed the existing initiatives through value-based social work professionals regarding the people of the plainland ethnic community. The Plainland ethnic minority people are marginalized and discriminated against through social exclusion by the state and society and excluded from full participation in social, political, and economic life, hindering services, education, health, and resources, which are the key factors ensuring their fundamental rights, dignity, and well-being. This study mentioned the project 'Promotion of Rights of Ethnic Minority and Dalit's For Improvement Programs' (PREMDIP), which is implemented by Eco Social Development Organization (ESDO) so that the Ethnic Minority would be empowered on land-related issues and able to create protection and prevention for further land grabbing or become land less. Through this project, the vulnerable condition of the plainland ethnic minority will be reduced.

Kabir and Nath (2005) have focused on the factors functioning in school culture and beyond economic conditions and community culture that have been causing the poorer performance of ethnic minority students and highlighted the factors that can improve the learning achievement of ethnic minority students. He mentioned the influential factors within and outside of school. Developing a good foundation in Bangla as a second language, raising the quality of classrooms, teaching and need-based curriculum reinforcement for slow learners, sensitizing teachers to issues specific to ethnic pupils, eradicating irregularities in the testing system, creating a space to facilitate increased interaction between ethnic and Bengali pupils and developing a comprehensive support system for general and slow learners can improve the learning system of the ethnic minority students.

Liu (2021) has focused on the key factors that influence students' access, participation, and outcomes in preparatory classes and also found out the factors' contribution to achieving educational equality for minority students. This study highlighted that language is the most crucial element in the composition of ethnicity, a vehicle for inheriting culture, and a communication tool among ethnicities. It also demonstrated the strong relationship between ethnic identities and academic achievement. Thuy and Huy (2023) have stated the factors that can ensure the quality education of

A Case Study on Ranisankail Upazila

ethnic community children. Parental awareness, community customs and practices, geographic distance, costs for education, and institutional and policy factors are the main elements of quality education for minority students. This study recommended promoting quality education for ethnic minority groups in Vietnam.

Chairan (2020) has indicated the insufficiency of the teachers' training program to teach the ethnic minority children. The government has already taken the initiative that the ethnic minority students would learn exclusively in their mother tongue. With this aim, the government decided to publish textbooks in ethnic languages in 2012, but the problem is that most teachers can speak in ethnic languages but do not know how to read and write them. This study mainly recommended arranging intensive training on teaching to use textbooks easily while taking classes for ethnic minority students. Hoque (2023) has focused on the assessment of the cognitive achievement (learning outcome) of the students of the ethnic community students (Santal). This study also finds out the gross enrollment rate (GER) and net enrollment rate (NER) in the primary education of ethnic students. This study mentioned that the children of Santal are lagging behind mainstreaming students in academic achievement. It is essential to increase the educational achievement of the children of Santal at primary school to ensure inclusiveness and build up an equity-based society for the future generation.

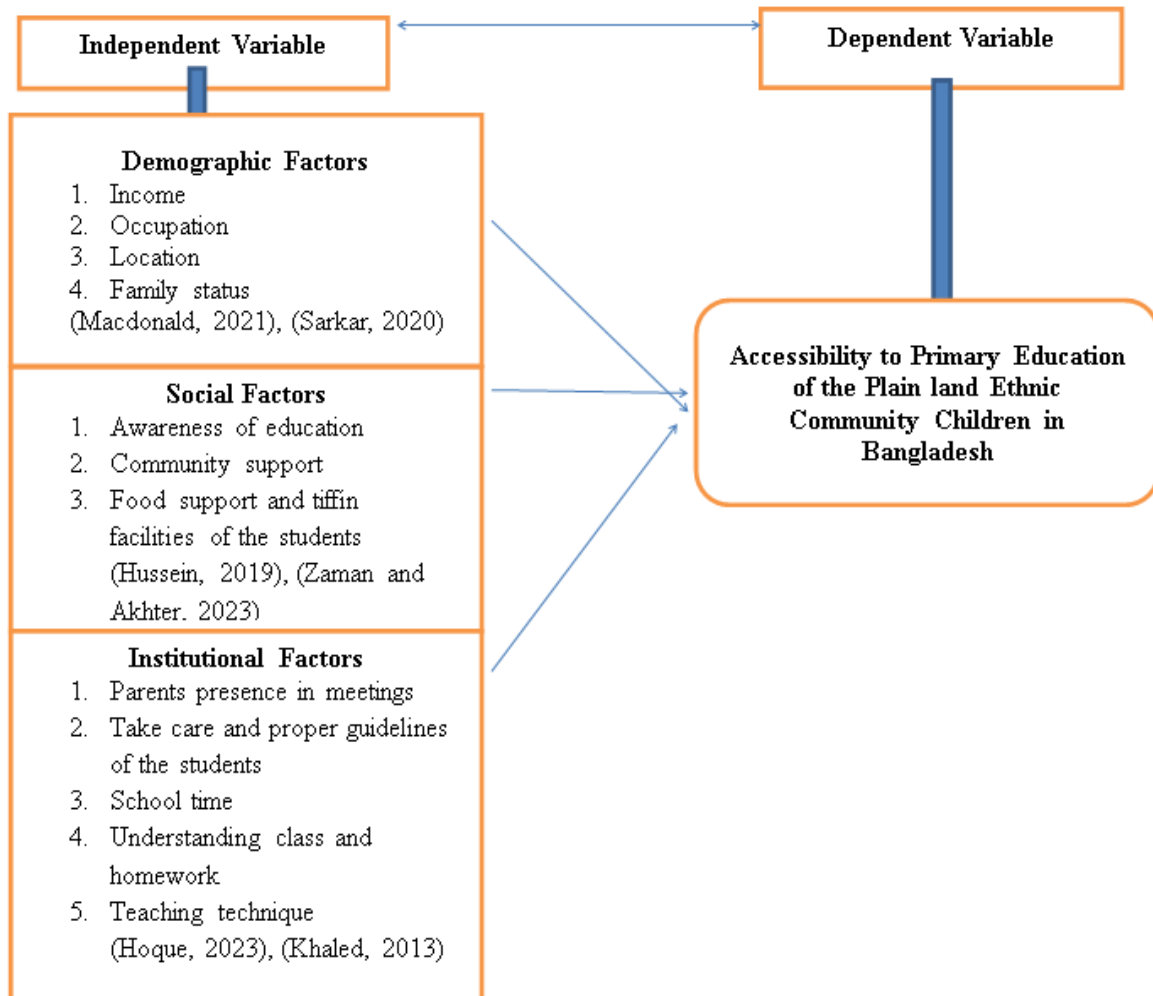
Research Gap

Most of the research showed the vulnerable situation of the ethnic community people and some NGOs' initiatives about their primary education. The articles also indicate that the children of plainland ethnic communities are lagging behind in primary education because of language problems and poverty. However, the articles fail to show the other factors clearly, which also impact the primary education of ethnic minority students. These articles also do not find the cooperative initiatives of GOs and NGOs for promoting primary education and reducing the dropout ratio of ethnic minority students.

This paper mainly identifies the gaps of previous research and tries to show the real scenario of the primary education of plain land ethnic community children clearly. It also finds out the other essential factors and the significant relations among the factors that affect primary education and also the proper solutions to ensure the primary education of the plain land ethnic community children.

Analytical Framework

Based on the literature reviews, this study identified the mentioned independent variables, which are demographic factors, social factors, and institutional factors. These variables help assess the access to primary education of the Plains Land ethnic community children.



Source: Author's Own Work

Methodology

This research follows the mixed-method approach, where qualitative and quantitative methods are used to get effective results regarding children's primary education in the plainland ethnic community. Quantitative data determines the guardians' opinions of the four unions. In contrast, qualitative data is used to determine the views of the teachers and the officials of GOs and NGOs. The study covered the Survey method, Semi-structured Interview, and KII.

Regarding this paper, both open-ended and close-ended questions were used in the questionnaire. During the survey, the maximum number of questions was kept for the respondents, who are the guardians of the plain land ethnic community children. The semi-structured questionnaire method was used, where both open-ended and close-ended questions were kept. Regarding this research, semi-structured interviews are taken with primary school teachers to get an idea about the inclusiveness of the Plainland ethnic community children in primary education. In KII, interviews were conducted with the officials of GOs and NGO managers.

This study used fieldwork, a Questionnaire, and a Pilot study to collect data, which were mainly secondary. Primary sources include survey

A Case Study on Ranisankail Upazila

questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and KII. To get primary data, the four unions of the Ranisankail Upazila were visited. Some articles, journals, books, and websites were used to gather knowledge, which is mainly secondary data.

This research collected qualitative data through questionnaires, interviews, KII, open-ended questions, one-to-one interviews, process observations, and record-keeping methods. The quantitative data collection analysis is followed by SPSS, MS Excel, and Statistical Tools such as Descriptive Statistics (Frequency and Chi-square). However, initially, Google Forms was also used to input the raw data to get the primary results of the findings.

Area Selection & Population Size

This paper covers the four unions, including Bachor, Hossaingaon, Nekmarad, and Nanduar, of the Ranisankail Upazila of Thakurgaon District.

Table 1: Area selection of Ranisankail Upazila

Upazila	Demographic Area	Population
Ranisankail	Bachor	15884
	Hossaingaon	34109
	Nekmarad	23658
	Nanduar	24558
	Total Population	= 98209

Source: Bangladesh Population Census, 2011

Sampling and Respondents

In this study, probability and non-probability sampling are used. Cluster sampling, convenience sampling, and snowball sampling were used in this research. The cluster sampling is under probability sampling, where the four unions are selected among the eight unions of Ranisankail Upazila. The unions are the Bachor, Hossaingaon, Nekmarad, Nanduar. In convenience sampling, the convenient people (ethnic guardians) who are easy to access in the specific areas are chosen as the respondents of the questionnaires. In this paper, the total sample size is 300, where the ethnic guardians are selected for the survey from each union, and the sample size of the ethnic guardians is 276. A total of 20 teachers from each union were selected for interview, and at last, the officials of GO and the managers of NGOs were considered KII, and the sample size for KII was 4.

Findings

Socio-demographic Profile

Table 3 provides information about the respondents who have provided valuable opinions about the primary education of Plains Land ethnic community children. It gives information about the gender, income, religion, educational qualification, and living area of the respondents.

According to this research, 32.2% of data are collected from the Hossaingaon Union. The Santal, Oraon, and Pahan are the major communities in Ranisankail Upazila, and the ratios are 26.4%, 23.9%, and 24.3%, and most of them are Hindu and Christian. The female respondents are 65.9%, and the male respondents are 34.1%. Most respondents are day laborers and housewives whose primary monthly income is less than 5000 taka. The pre-primary and class three school-going ethnic minority children are more than the other classes, and the percentage is 23.9%.

Table 2 shows the overall socio-demographic profile of the people of the local ethnic community.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of the samples (n=276)

	n(%)
Living Area	
- Bachor	69 (25)
- Nanduar	69 (25)
- Hosseingaon	89 (32.2)
- Nekmorod	49 (17.8)
Gender	
- Male	94 (34.1)
- Female	182 (65.9)
Occupation	
- Day Laborer	176 (63.8)
- Housewife	92 (33.3)
- Businessmen	7(2.5)
- Govt. job	1 (.4)
Monthly Income	
- Less than 5000	129 (46.7)
- 5000-10000	118 (42.8)
- 10000-15000	27 (9.8)
- 15000- 2000	1(99.6)
Religion	
- Christian	134 (48.7)
- Hindu	142 (52)
Ethnic Community	
- Santal	73 (26.4)
- Oraon	66 (23.9)
- Pahan	67 (24.3)
- Munda	30 (10.9)
- Murmu	14 (5.1)
- Tudu	13 (4.7)
- Barman	13 (4.7)
Number of children	
- 1-3 in number	237 (85.9)
- 4-6 in number	36 (13)
- 7- more	3 (1.1)

A Case Study on Ranisankail Upazila

Age of children	
- 1-5	79 (28.6)
- 6-10	206 (74.6)
- 11- 15	98 (35.5)
- 16 -more	18 (6.5)
Education of children	
- Pre-primary	80 (29)
- Class 1	38 (13.8)
- Class 2	66 (23.9)
- Class 3	37 (13.4)
- Class 4	66 (23.90)
- Class 5	67 (24.3)
- Other	27 9.8)

Enrollment and Participation Level in primary schools of ethnic children

Table 3 shows that 52.9% of guardians always send their children to school, 22.5% spend maximum time there, and only 0.4% never send their children to school. This table indicates that guardians are somewhat aware of regularly sending their children to school.

Table 4 mentions the opinion of the teachers about the participation rate of the plain land ethnic community children in school. 50% of teachers said that the participation level of ethnic minority children in the school is (60%-80%). And 15% of teachers said the participation rate is (20%-40%). One reason for not including the children in school is that the school-going children must care for their little brothers and sisters when their parents go out to work. Because of poverty, they engage their children in work with them, and the children cannot be present in the classes.

The two tables mainly highlight the opinions of the guardians and teachers about the enrollment and participation level of the Plains Ethnic Community children in school. From the tables, it is clear that the inclusiveness ratio in primary education of the Plains Ethnic Community children is quite better.

Table 3: Send children to school (Guardian's opinion)

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Send children in school= (%)	0.4	1.4	22.8	22.5	52.9

Table 4: Participation level in school of the students (Teachers perception)

Percentage	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	80-moe
Participation rate in school= (%)	15	20	50	15

Time Duration at School of the Children

In Figure 1, 57.0% of guardians indicate that their children have to stay in school for 4-5 hours, and 31.4% of parents said that the students have to

stay in school (for 2-3) hours. The parents also informed that the school time is continued chiefly from 9 am to 3 pm where the (pre-primary- class 2) students stay from 9 am to 12 pm and the class (3-5) students have to stay from (9 am-3 pm) but the double shift school has some different timing. This chart indicates that most students remain in school (4-5) hours.

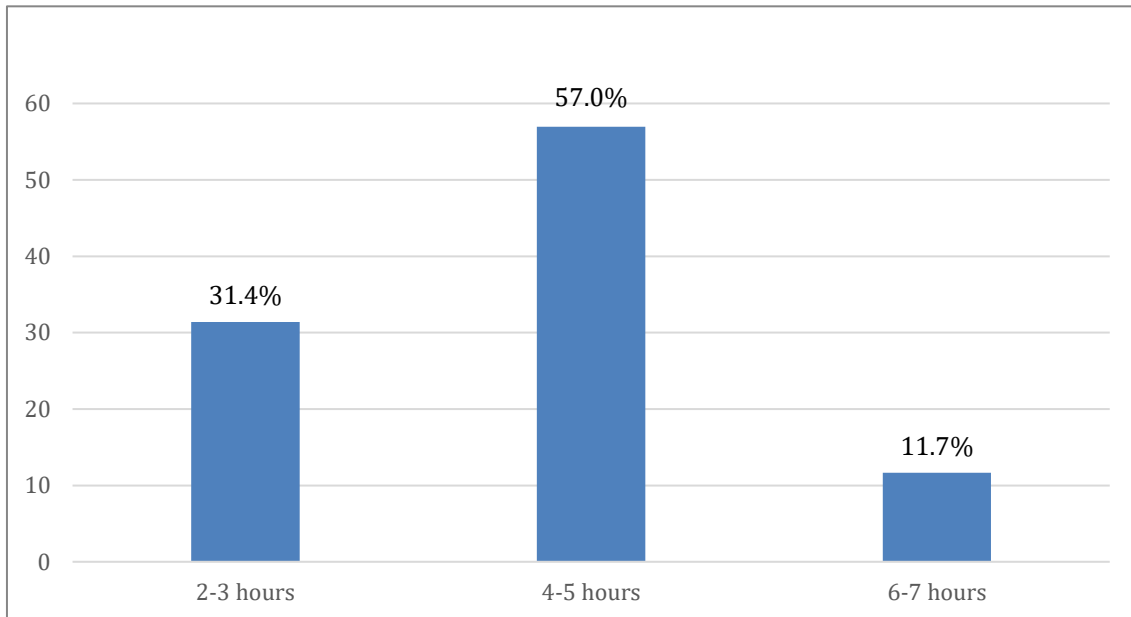


Figure 1: Time Duration at School

Regularity in Academic Activities

According to Table 5, it is shown that 55.1% of guardians ensure their children's breakfast before going to school, and 1.4% of guardians say that they never ensure breakfast for their children. 33.7% of parents never give tiffin to their children. Most said that children come home to eat lunch because the homes are near school, so they do not carry tiffin. Breakfast and tiffin are the most critical factors for attention in the class of the students. When the students are hungry, they cannot concentrate in the classes; this table indicates that the guardians are little concerned about the tiffin and breakfast of their children.

During the interview, one teacher said,

“Maximum time the ethnic students come to school without breakfast, sometimes they only take raw tea. Even they do not take tiffin, which causes them to remain hungry in class and cannot concentrate.”

34.4% of guardians said that they always take care of their children's regular studies, and 1.8% never do. As most guardians are not literate, they cannot properly care for their children's studies.

34.8% of guardians said that they regularly participate in the parents' meeting, and 4.0% never join because they are busy. As most guardians are day laborers, they cannot manage their time easily.

Table 5: Regularities on academic activities (Guardian’s perception)

Factors	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Always (%)
Ensure the breakfast	1.4	2.9	16.3	24.3	55.1
Ensure the tiffin	33.7	20.3	25.4	10.9	9.8
Taking care of regular studies	1.8	11.6	24.3	27.5	34.4
Participate in parent meetings	4.0	15.6	28.3	17.4	34.8

According to Table 6, teachers think children from the plainland ethnic community do not get proper care in their studies at home. 40% of teachers said that the guardians sometimes take care of their children's studies. 60% of teachers say that the guardians are present at the meetings at maximum time. 50% of the teachers stated that children from the Plains Land ethnic community rarely complete their homework. The teachers think that unawareness and lack of proper care are the factors for which ethnic minority children cannot improve their primary education.

In an interview, another teacher said,

“The parents cannot take care of the regular studies of their children because of illiteracy; even guardians do not want to participate in the meetings properly.”

Table 6: Regularities on academic activities (teacher’s perception)

Factors	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Always (%)
The guardians take care of the regular studies at home.	0.0	35.0	40.0	20.0	5.0
Guardians' participation in meeting	5.0	5.0	30	60	0.0
Ethnic community students complete homework.	0.0	50	10	25	15

The two tables mainly highlight the controversial opinions of the guardians and teachers about regular academic issues. Most of the guardians said that they are aware of their children's studies, but the teachers indicated that the guardians should be more aware of their children's education.

The Tendency of Children to Eat Out

In Figure 2, 50.36% of guardians say that sometimes their children want to eat out, so they must bear extra costs. Most of the time, they take unhealthy food from a street shop. On the other hand, 5.40% of children do not have the tendency to eat out because most of the time, they take their breakfast before going to school and also bring tiffin.

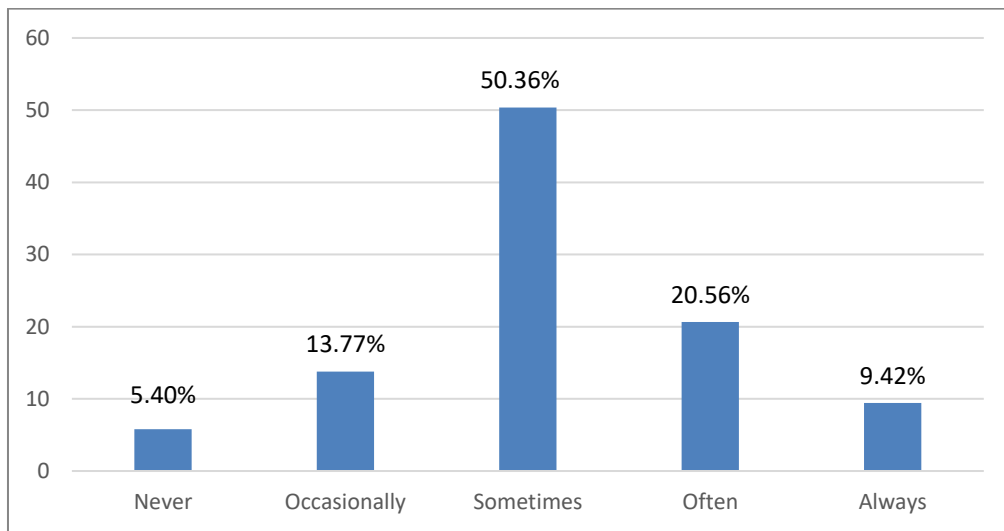


Figure 2: Tendency of children to eat out

Responsibility of the teachers to the students (Guardian's opinion)

Table 7 shows that 50% of guardians agree that teachers always take care of the students. (41.7%) Guardians strongly agree with this. Only 0.4% of parents disagree with this statement. They think that school management should be improved and teachers should be more responsible for the total management of all students. Overall, it can be said that guardians are satisfied with teachers' responsibilities.

One of the guardians said,

“Teachers do their duty best, but my child does not want to study, and his result is not good.”

Table 7: Responsibility of the Teachers to the Students

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderate	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Responsibility of the teachers= n(%)	41.7	50.0	8.0	0.4	0.0

Problems faced by the Ethnic guardians

Figure 3 indicates that 72% of parents do not face any problems ensuring their children's primary education. Thirty percent of parents highlight their problems with this issue. Financial problems, language problems, lack of proper guidelines, unwillingness of children to go to school, etc., are significant issues. This figure indicates that the majority do not face problems continuing their children's primary education.

During the interview, it was known that the GO and NGOs had taken various initiatives to ensure the primary education of the Plains ethnic community children, such as providing study materials, awareness programs, financial support, etc.

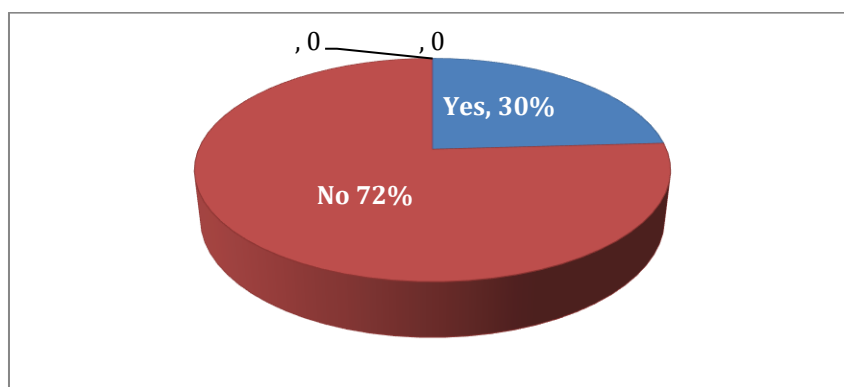


Figure 3: Problems faced by the guardians

The Chi-square Test is Based on Gender, Location, and Community and Includes the Following Factors

This research is about “Access to Primary Education of the Plain Land Ethnic Community Children in Bangladesh: A Case Study on Ranisankail Upazila.” The study tries to determine the significance of independent and dependent variables.

Table 8 shows that ‘gender’ does not influence the ‘awareness of sending the children to school’, ‘take care of regular studies’, ‘caring of teachers’, and ‘problem facing level’ based on ($p > 0.05$). However, gender significantly impacts the ‘joining parents meetings regularly’ factor based on $p < 0.05$.

‘Location’ significantly influences the factors of ‘sending children to school’ and ‘taking care of regular studies’ based on $p < 0.05$. On the aspects of ‘joining the parent’s meetings,’ ‘caring for the teachers’, and ‘problem-facing level,’ the location has no impacts based on $p > 0.05$.

‘Community’ significantly influences the first, second, third, and fifth factors based on $p < 0.05$, which indicates that the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The community does not influence the ‘caring of the teachers’ factor based on $p > 0.05$, so the null hypothesis failed to be rejected.

Table 8: Association between Gender, Location, and Community with Factors affecting Issues

Factors	Gender (p-value)	Location (p-value)	Community (p-value)
1. Awareness of guardians to ensure the children go to school regularly	0.137	0.016*	0.005*
2. Joining the parent's meeting	0.001*	0.223	0.025*
3. Take care of the regular studies	0.250	0.004*	0.002*
4. Caring for the teachers	0.065	0.084	0.146
5. Problem facing level	0.494	0.289	0.013*

The Cooperation between GOs and NGOs Regarding Ensure the Ethnic Primary Education

The GOs and NGOs collectively work to ensure the primary education of the children of the Plain land ethnic community. As NGOs mainly work at the field level, they can quickly identify significant problems for the people. From the KII session, it is stated that the NGOs mainly work at the field level to find out the critical issues or demands of the people of the plains and ethnic community. Then, they talk about the problems to the government officials. After that, the field-level administrators represent the demand to the government to take some initiatives and policies, and then the government initiatives are finalized by higher authority. After that, the government has to get the help of NGOs to reach out to the people of ethnic minority groups. NGOs also get the help of the government when taking any initiative. Through this process, the GOs and NGOs work together to solve this issue. The work is also easy when the GOs and NGOs can maintain a good relationship.

One Government Official Said,

“We jointly work with NGOs to improve the primary education of the plain land ethnic community children. The NGOs mainly find out the root problems and the demands of the ethnic minority and inform us about them, and we propose some initiative to the government.”

The Challenges Mainly Facing the Ethnic Minority Children

The most common problem among students of the ethnic community is language. As they have their language, they cannot adjust to the classes in the language of Bangla easily. They have to face the challenges of keeping pace with mainstream children.

Another challenge for Plainland ethnic community children is financial insufficiency. Because of this, the parents cannot afford their study materials, such as books, uniforms, bags, shoes, etc. The children also have to work out with their parents, which hampered their education.

The ethnic community students have different cultures and communication systems. For this reason, they have to face challenges coping with the culture of mainstream children, which impacts education. Some students said they cannot communicate easily with mainstream children and cannot understand class lessons most of the time.

The survey and interviews found that many students attend classes without eating breakfast or taking tiffin. For these reasons, they must remain hungry and cannot concentrate and respond in class. The ethnic guardians cannot always afford breakfast and tiffin.

During the interview, the teachers said that most ethnic community guardians are illiterate, and they cannot take care of the regular studies of their children. Also, they are not aware of education, so the ethnic children lose interest in their studies.

A Case Study on Ranisankail Upazila

One reason for the lagging behind in primary education of plains ethnic minority children is the guardians' unawareness. As most guardians are day laborers, they cannot keep track of their children's studies and cannot attend parents' meetings. Family crises are also a factor impacting the education of the children.

During the Interview, one of the teachers said,

“The ethnic guardians are maximum day laborers. That’s why they cannot regularly attend the guardian's meetings. They are not so aware of the education of their children.”

The ethnic community teacher can precisely understand the gaps between ethnic children. The low recruitment rate of ethnic community teachers is a challenge for ethnic minority children in school. They cannot get proper direction because of their different cultures and languages, which the ethnic community teachers can ensure.

According to KII, the manager of the NGO said,

“The ethnic community children can be easy in classes if any ethnic teacher takes their classes, but there is a huge crisis of ethnic teachers in primary schools.”

Discussion

The study aims to determine the current situation, some significant factors, initiatives, and challenges regarding the primary education of Plains Land ethnic community children.

From this research, it is found that the Plain Land ethnic community people lead a very challenging life because of their poverty, own language and culture, and illiteracy, which impacts the education of the Plain Land ethnic community children. The vulnerable situation of the ethnic community is also highlighted by Macdonald (2021), Sarkar (2020), Islam et al (2022) and Hussein (2023) in their studies. This study mainly focused on determining the factors related to the primary education of the children of the Plainland ethnic community. The most common factor is the different language cultures of the ethnic groups, which are also defined by Kabir and Nath (2005) and Liu (2021). The breakfast and tiffin of the students is another significant factor identified in this study. Unawareness, illiteracy, communication, and language problems are the critical challenges to inclusiveness in the primary education of ethnic minority children. NGOs take some eye-catching initiatives, as found in this study. Rashid (2020), Azizul (2014), and Hossein (2023) also mention some initiatives taken by NGOs, but those are different from this study.

This study mainly presents the overall educational situation of children in the Plains land ethnic community. The financial state, community, awareness about education, breakfast, and tiffin issue, proper guidelines about regular studies, motivation, language and culture, communication and

response in classes, and availability of study materials are the major factors of the primary education of plain land ethnic community children. Poverty, language, illiteracy, and unawareness are the most substantial reasons for lagging in the primary education of this group.

The findings about the current scenario are that the parents of the ethnic children have begun to understand the significance of primary education and become somewhat aware of it. Some initiatives can reduce the challenges regarding the primary education of the Plain land ethnic community children. According to the chi-square test, it is also clear that there are some significant relations among the dependent and independent variables that impact the primary education of the plain land ethnic community children. The government and NGOs have taken various initiatives jointly and separately to improve the children's primary education in the Plainland ethnic community. The initiatives taken should be implemented precisely to achieve the mission of ensuring the primary education of the ethnic community.

Conclusion

The main target of this paper is to access the primary education of plainland ethnic community children in Bangladesh. These groups live primarily in the northern divisions of Bangladesh and are among the most socially and economically disadvantaged and vulnerable sections of the population. This study has tried to find out the factors that are closely related to the primary education of ethnic children. The financial state, community, awareness about education, breakfast, and tiffin issue, proper guidelines about regular studies, motivation, language and culture, communication and response in classes, and availability of study materials are the major factors of the primary education of plain land ethnic community children. Poverty, language, illiteracy, and unawareness are the most substantial reasons for lagging in the primary education of this group.

The government and NGOs have taken various initiatives jointly and separately to improve the children's primary education in the Plainland ethnic community. The initiatives taken should be implemented precisely to achieve the mission of advancing the primary education of the ethnic community. The teachers can play an influential role in motivating ethnic students and taking extra care of them as they belong to different languages and cultures. The recruitment of ethnic community teachers is highly needed to encourage ethnic students. The government and NGOs should emphasize children's primary education in the plainland ethnic community. This study can be the future guideline for education experts, policymakers, researchers, teachers, government, and NGOs to know the overall condition, challenges, and initiatives about the primary education of the Plain Land ethnic community children.

A Case Study on Ranisankail Upazila

Ethnic people face financial problems most of the time, as they cannot afford to provide educational materials to their children, which is why the participation level of ethnic minority children in school remains low. Providing educational materials (books, pens, bags, notebooks, uniforms) will be helpful for the ethnic community children. Ethnic community children have their own languages and culture, which is totally different from mainstream children. They get help coping with the general language and culture when at least one teacher is recruited from an ethnic group. The ethnic teacher can identify the problem and give proper solutions to the ethnic community students. The home visit program should represent the importance of education to the guardians and also to the ethnic children, which will increase their awareness of primary education. As the ethnic students have their own language, they face the challenges of keeping pace with the Bangla language, for which they lag in class and cannot communicate easily. So, they should get extra facilities in primary education.

References

- Ali, k, S. (2023). Primary Education Mother Language and Ethnic Communities CHT Experience from Bangladesh. Academia. <https://rb.gy/e5v7vk>
- Azizul, A. M. (2014). The Role of NGOs in Primary Education. *Institute of Education and Research (IER)*. <http://rulrepository.ru.ac.bd/handle/123456789/707>
- Bangladesh National Portal. (2014). *Assessing the Education Status of Ethnic Communities*. Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) <https://rb.gy/cfjwla>
- Chiran, M. (2020). Education in mother tongue: Govt. move for ethnic minority students faltering. *The Daily Star*. <https://rb.gy/if7bhn>
- Hoque, k. M. M. (2023). Access to and Quality of Primary Education of the Children of Santal, an Ethnic Minority: An Exploratory Study in Godagari Upazila Under Rajshahi District in Bangladesh. *SSRN*. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4390870
- Hossen, M. B. (2014). BRAC's role in promoting education among the poor in Bangladesh. *Dhaka university*. https://www.academia.edu/7364149/BRACs_role_in_promoting_education_among_the_%20poor_in_Bangladesh%204.Hussein,%20D,%20A.

- Hussain, D. A. (2019). Ethnic Minorities in Bangladesh and Their Human Rights. *Daily-sun*. <https://www.daily-sun.com/post/383942/Ethnic-Minorities-in-Bangladesh-andTheir-Human-Rights>
- Islam, M. R., Al Gharaibeh, F., Azman, A., Hashim, I. H., Islam, M. R., & Rahman, A. (2023). Social behavior practices for child protection and well-being among low-income urban households in Bangladesh. *Asian Social Work and Policy Review*, *17*(1), 39-51. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aswp.12270>
- Kabir, M. M., & Nath, S. R. (2006). Needs of ethnic minority students for learning improvement in secondary schools. *ResearchGate*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/48140080_Needs_of_Ethnic_Minority_Students_for_Learning_Improvement_in_Secondary_Schools
- Khaled, P. (2013). Education for ethnic children in Bangladesh. Panorama. https://www.academia.edu/5114199/Education_for_ethnic_children_in_Bangladesh
- Liu, X. (2021). Ethnic minority students' access, participation and outcomes in preparatory classes in China: a case study of a School of Minzu Education. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, *43*(1), 173–188. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2021.1926918>
- Mocdonald, G. (2020). The Challenges Facing Plainland Ethnic Groups in Bangladesh: Land, Dignity, and Inclusion. *International Republican Institute*. https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/bangladesh-plainland-1_2.pdf
- Rashid, S. (2020). *Ethnic Education, Language and Cultural Diversity in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) of Bangladesh: An Analysis of the Role of NGO's from SDG4 Perspective*. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341494300_Ethnic_Education_Language_%20and_Cultural_Diversity_in_the_Chittagong_Hill_Tracts_CHTs_of_Bangladesh_An_Analysis_of_the_Role_of_NGO%27s_from_SDG4_Perspective
- Reza, F. (2022). The Role of NGOs in Promoting Education: Successes and Challenges. *International Journal of Education, Learning and Development*, *10*(1), 24–43. <https://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Role-of-NGOs-in-Promoting-Education.pdf>
- Sarker, S. (2020). Plight plain land of indigenous groups. *The Financial Express*. <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/views/opinions/plight-of-plain-land-indigenousgroups-1578759970>
- Staff, C. (2023, November 29). What is sample size? *Coursera*. <https://www.coursera.org/articles/what-is-sample-size>

A Case Study on Ranisankail Upazila

- Thomas, L. (2023, June 22). Cluster Sampling | A Simple Step-by-Step Guide with Examples. *Scribbr*. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/cluster-sampling/#:~:text=In%20cluster%20sampling%2C%20researchers%20divide,that%20are%20widely%20geographically%20dispersed.>
- Thuy, D.V.T., & Huy, D. T. N. (2023). Quality of education of ethnic minority communities in vietnam - problems and recommendations. *Elementary Education Online*, 20(4), 600–605. <https://doi.org/10.17051/ilkonline.2021.04.65>
- Zaman, M, S, U., & Akhter, S. (2023). Ethnicity, Social Exclusion & Plain Land Ethnic Minorities of Bangladesh: An Analysis through Social Work Values. *ESDO*. <https://web.esdo.net.bd/attachments/SPED/Final%20Study%20on%20Ethnic%20Minority%20Exclusionx.pdf>