

Intuition and role of social workers for development in underprivileged communities: A qualitative inquiry

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Abstract: This study revealed that social workers of Bangladesh play a significant role in the development of underprivileged communities, particularly in remote contexts. To illustrate this relevance, a study was conducted to highlight intuitions and challenges these social workers face, especially those employed in NGOs. For achieving this objective, an exploratory study involving 12 social workers was carried out. The findings revealed that social workers with many years of experience justify their commitment through a strong professional identity, which appears to be diminishing among new social workers, who show weaker interpersonal engagement skills. New social workers tend to lag behind in their dedication to disadvantaged groups due to factors such as younger age, limited experience, job insecurity & lack of ownership, technology-driven alternative career opportunities, bureaucratization of services, and insufficient organizational support. It was found that despite facing various challenges, qualified social workers successfully engage community stakeholders through their positive attitude, sincerity, and strong sense of ownership toward their profession. Lessons learning from this study will be useful and thought-provoking for social workers and other key actors who contribute in this field globally.

Keywords: Attitude; experience; image; profession; roles; social workers; well-being

Teaser Text: Social workers of Bangladesh have myriad contributions towards a better society. This paper portrays experiences, herein, pleasures and pains of social workers who dedicatedly work since many years. Though this paper does not provide any remedial phenomenon but might be useful for upcoming & new social workers and in social work education globally.

Introduction

Social work is an ancient human service for the well-being of people and planet. Social work simply denotes to any organized task directed to help individuals, groups, families and communities to better their conditions of life by promoting capacity and skills for resolving problems through usages their potentialities, efforts, and access to resources. Its definition should not be regarded as exhaustive due to evolving and dynamic characteristics over times. Two bodies i.e., International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) represent international social work. IFSW (2006) defined the social work as, “Social work is a game changer. Social workers work in communities with people finding positive ways forward in the challenges they face in their

lives. They help people build the kind of environments in which they want to live, through co-determination, co-production and social responsibility.” Global definition about social work profession by IASSW (2014) explained that, “Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being.”

Though having many lenses, debates, and discourses; Gibelman and Sweifach (2008) indicated that social work is a professional service; and voluntary activity is one of the approaches. Chowdhury et al. (2019) mentioned that activities of NGOs represent social works. NGO workers are social workers. Campanini (2023) accredited that social workers have numerous contributions globally for socio-economic development of underprivileged communities. They directly engage to implement planned activities of Earth Charter, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), among others.

Rights based, participatory, multi-sectoral and multi-modal interventions of social workers in global south play significantly roles for economic and social development. It drives to poverty reduction and human well-being (Patel, 2023). Pulla et al. (2020) revealed that South Asian social workers have made remarkable efforts despite the legacy of Western-influenced social work education and lack of cultural appropriation within curriculum. Nikku and Rafique (2019) also indicated that South Asian political social workers catalyze robust local governance through citizen participation, resulting in the empowerment of disadvantaged people.

As per World Bank's definition of NGOs, they are private organizations committed to easing suffering, pursuing the poor peoples' interests, offering essential social services, protecting the environment, and championing community development. The WHO further divided operational NGOs into three groups: (a) The Community based organizations (CBOs), which cater to a particular population in a smaller geographical area. The CBOs undertake individual responsibilities compared to other NGOs. (b) National organizations operating in separate developing nations, (c) International organizations pursuing the NGOs' interests in multiple developed countries, while being headquartered in such developed countries (World Bank, 1995). In Bangladesh, local NGOs usually work in 2/3 *Upazilas* (sub-districts) with local offices and programs limited in small areas. Some funds are raised locally, and rest usually comes from foreign donors (Ahmad, 2001). According to NGO Affairs Bureau (2024), total 2,349 local & national NGOs and 269 foreign NGOs work in Bangladesh.

Ahmad (2001b) remarked that dependency on donor, loss of quality in service provision, lack of transparency and accountability, bureaucratic control, unfair practice, nepotism, and false promise to worker are major problems for NGOs in Bangladesh. Most of field workers come from rural lower-middle class. Majority of them wanted government job but joint in NGO work when they failed to obtain it. NGOs often abandon long-service and skilled workforce to recruit cheaper younger field workers. They had to carry pressures for fulfilling expectation of Executive Director. Executive Director is the organizational rules. Nevertheless, the roles of frontline NGO workers are immense in promoting the socio-economic development of underprivileged communities.

Energetic NGO workers in Bangladesh actively mobilize marginalized groups at the grassroots level to help them establish their rights and gain access to various government and non-

government organizations. Such initiatives are instrumental for empowering poor communities to raise a collective voice and claim their entitlements from duty bearers (Bhuiyan et al., 2018). Rezaul et al. (2020) revealed that, despite numerous challenges, government agencies of Bangladesh and NGO-led social workers should collaboratively implement an integrated action plan aimed at achieving progressive and sustained income growth, empowering communities, promoting socio-economic inclusion, ensuring equal opportunities, and reducing inequalities by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices to foster greater equality.

Rashid et al. (2020) identified that frontline workers of local NGOs have myriad contributions for socio-economic and political empowerment of deprived communities in Bangladesh. But their jobs are very unsecured and neglected by the organization. Dignity of NGO workers is underestimated from social perspective. Recognition of professional social work and the need for quality social work education in Asian countries including Bangladesh has been moving at a slow pace (Nikku, 2014). Azam and Mazid (2022) claimed that though social work is a publicly recognized profession in developed countries; but it is still at immaturity stage and not recognized nationally as a profession in Bangladesh.

NGOs are a major development actor in many developing countries like Bangladesh. There is huge gap in NGO literatures about a significant development- NGOs' impact on social structure especially through shaping social roles and identities of their employees (Haque, 2021). There are numerous studies on the socio-economic impacts of NGOs, its governance structures, and management styles in the context of Bangladesh; however, inadequate scholarly research focusing on the insights and roles of NGO workers, hereby, social workers. The main objective of this study is to examine the intuitions and roles of social workers. Specifically, it explores the pleasures and challenges faced by social workers in Bangladesh, which may offer valuable lessons for the global community.

Literature Review

This section highlights the roles of social workers employed in Bangladesh and critically examines the varying attitudes toward social workers across high- and low-income countries. Aligned with the study's objectives, literature review explores both the functions of social workers and perspectives of different societal groups—including beneficiaries, general public, government officials, and other stakeholders—toward them.

After liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, few prominent NGOs shifted from relief to development. They contributed for adult education, health and family planning, agriculture and horticulture, fisheries, vocational and other training programs (Chen, 1986). Edwards (1999) revealed that NGOs in Bangladesh had a robust empowerment agenda and focused on grassroots mobilization. It tackled many socio-economic crises and transformed towards a better society. Though Ahmad (2001b) identified some management-related problems of NGOs but roles of real social workers are recognized globally.

Bangladesh has commendable progress in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) particularly in the areas of poverty reduction, primary education, health, and women empowerment (Bangladesh Planning Commission, 2016). NGOs played dynamic roles for making progress in those areas through partnership (ibid, pp. 42-72). From policy perspective, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has acknowledged roles of NGOs. Rahman and Tasnim (2023) articulated that NGO workers contribute significantly in social and governing issues such as women empowerment, disaster management, environment conservation, support during

COVID-19 pandemic. Das et al. (2024) emphasized the need for greater engagement of social workers to enhance disaster risk reduction, green economy, promote economic development, implement government policies, bolster anticipatory action systems, and establish a locally led climate-resilient system in Bangladesh.

Groenningsaeter and Kiik (2012) revealed that social workers of Estonian and Norway act professionally and recognized by the state. Culture, tradition, possibilities, attitudes, colleagues at agency level express high esteemed to social workers. They usually come into contact with decisions taken by politicians, bureaucrats, and officials. Views of community people are reflected by social workers and addressed in decision making. Social workers accept as true that it is necessary to constantly update their skills and knowledges for professional relationship among other social workers, institutions, and service users.

Sitepu (2017) recorded that social workers of Indonesia have virtuous involvement in poverty alleviation programs. They are trained to help poor people to meet needs by utilization of tangible resources, knowledges, skills, and values. Whatsoever, community people have both positive and negative attitudes towards social workers. Yusof et al. (2019) also stated that mental health social workers are very important in Malaysian mental healthcare setting. Their roles are widely accepted and appreciated by general public. Specialized training in the field of mental health would benefit social workers and their healthcare counterparts.

Mendes and Binns (2017) identified that community-based interventions are relatively marginal in Australia particularly to social work practices. Community people have a good outlook to social workers. Osmanaga (2019) also mentioned that social workers especially female have excellent contributions in European counties for mental health, troubled teenagers, prison and probation, drug addiction, and health-adapting to illness. Service delivering departments are cooperative to social workers. Social workers have good contributions to help people to get resources, speak out against injustice, and influencing on social policy those are merely known to mass people because of limited information dissemination by newspapers and magazines, books; social media, and television.

Papell (2015) appreciated that social workers of Afghanistan play a crucial role in healing of the country and strengthening of rights for women. But they face different challenges particularly negative views from men. Muchiri and Nzisabira (2020) revealed that Burundi is very poor country where people are constantly divided into gender hierarchies. Women are treated as unable, in many areas, to participate with men for decision-making. They are considered as lagging behind from men in points of socially, intellectually, economically, and politically. Social workers have roles for educating women and men about importance of women in poverty reduction. Community people urged social workers to work with women through encouragement of more opportunities in education, business, and decision-making. Francisco and Jumail (2023) also specified that social workers of Philippines are exemplary for case management particularly in handling special cases. Their roles for community organizing and case management are positively valued by general public.

Stanley et al. (2021) described that social workers of India face high-stress. Self-esteem, general self-efficacy, extraversion, internal locus of control, agreeableness, conscientiousness, hardiness and emotional stability have been negatively associated with depersonalization and emotional exhaustion among a number of social workers. They play roles in a variety of settings that include women and child welfare, working with the elderly, mental health, and community development projects in villages and slums. There is a contention that social work is only a

'semi-profession' as it lacks awareness and recognition from major stakeholders including the government.

Methods

This study followed qualitative method. Creswell (2013) revealed that case study approach of qualitative method involves to learn issues explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context). It might be for one individual, several individuals, a group, an entire program, or an activity. In-depth interview with selected social workers was conducted to scrutinize their intuitions obtained from societal aspects. Exploring experiences and roles is a sensitive endeavor; as personal histories, perspectives, opinions and feelings are discussed, highlighting the appropriateness of employing semi-structured and open-ended questions in the study.

Study informants. A total of 12 social workers (6 females and 6 males) who work in local, national, and international NGOs were selected to participate in this study. Robinson (2014) advised for selection of 3 to 16 samples especially in case study to avoid data burden. Muellmann et al. (2021) also urged that more than 12 to 15 participants may change results of community readiness assessment. Bhardwaj (2019) noted that snowball sampling is used where one respondent identifies other respondents and population is unknown. It is usually applied in social research and qualitative enquiry. Based on these suggestions of scholars, snowball sampling technique was used to recruit above participants.

Informant selection procedure. Participants were social workers of Bangladesh. Major inclusion criteria were followed to select the participants: 1) Social workers of local, national and international NGO, 2) Minimum 10 years working experiences in NGO, 3) Bangladeshi citizen by origin, 4) Currently work in an NGO, 5) Consideration of latest organization to category the type of NGO, 6) Working place means existing work station, 7) Voluntary participation, 8) Gender balanced among informants, and 9) Free consent to be a participant.

Data collection. Author prepared one interview guideline based on study objectives; and a semi-structured interview technique was adopted. In-depth interviews were conducted on May 2024, and each interview lasted between 30 and 35 minutes. Due to very far away of location, interviews were conducted via phone after obtaining full consent from participants. All nuances of conversations were recorded in audio recorder as per consent of informant; and translated from Bengali into English. All 12 informants were in pseudonyms to protect their identity and ensure confidentiality.

Data analysis. Recorded interviews were precisely transcribed at least twice to confirm data accuracy. Creswell and Plano Clark (2023) suggested that qualitative content analysis involves several key steps: defining the research objectives, selecting and preparing the data, developing a coding scheme with relevant categories, systematically coding the content, analyzing the coded data to identify patterns and themes, and finally drawing conclusions based on the findings. The ATLAS.ti software (version 8) was utilized for coding and categorizing the qualitative data. Findings section of the study was structured-based qualitative analyses. Similar types of codes were considered to emerge themes. Verbatim quotes from respective participants were used to aid in thematic analysis. Main theme i.e., intuitions and roles of social workers in Bangladesh was divided into sub-themes and finally, the sub-themes were clustered into different analytical categories to fulfill the research objectives more specifically.

Ethical considerations. Author properly explained the entire process and objectives of this study to each participant; and their corresponding questions were also answered. No one can identify who participated and their opinion i.e., ensuring the confidentiality of informants. It was a voluntary participation of interviewees. They had rights to discontinue from interview at any time. Analysis of their opinions was non-judgmental. Interviews were conducted in a professional and comfortable language as per convenient time of participants.

Limitations. Field data was collected from 12 participants by following case study approach. Therefore, the results of the existing study must be generalized with care. One of major limitations, in-depth interviews were conducted via telephone. Face to face engagement for enough rapport building and more feedbacks from informants had been missed. However, author acknowledges that level of communication and trust with the informants were affected by this process.

Findings

Informant details. The age range of majority of participants (66.67%) is between 43 and 48 years. Among all participants, 91.67% are married. Total 11 participants (91.67%) have post-graduation degree. Working experience of nine participants (75%) is between 16 and 22 years. Details of informant is in Table 1.

Table 1. Interview participants

Participant	Sex	Age	Education	Marital Status	Type of NGO	Experience in Year	Working Place
1	Female	32	MSS	Married	Local	11	Barguna
2	Female	45	MA	Married	Local	16	Feni
3	Male	43	BA	Married	Local	23	Bhola
4	Male	52	MSS	Married	Local	24	Noakhali
5	Female	48	MSS	Married	National	21	Cox's Bazar
6	Female	37	MA	Married	National	12	Patuakhali
7	Male	47	MBA	Married	National	18	Chittagong
8	Male	45	MA	Married	National	18	Sylhet
9	Female	43	MSS	Married	International	16	Dhaka
10	Female	44	MSS	Unmarried	International	17	Dhaka
11	Male	47	MSS	Married	International	22	Cox's Bazar
12	Male	52	MSS	Married	International	25	Rajshahi

Source: Author

Personal views. NGOs contribute in Bangladesh from the British colonial period. Religious trust-based schools, hospitals, orphanages, and other charity organizations emerged. It played vital roles for poverty alleviation programs mainly from 1980s in the areas of awareness building, non-formal education, mother and child health, drinking water, sanitation, disaster management, microcredits, income generating activities, poultry and livestock, aquaculture, legal aids, family planning, advocacy, gender development, etc. Besides, now NGOs more emphasize on climate change, environment, agriculture, value chain and market development, microfinance, social entrepreneurship; children, adolescent and youth development; vocational trainings, persons with disabilities and ageing, ethnic communities, women empowerment, access to justice, policy promotion, human rights, and so on. All Interview Participants have same connotation on following statement. They told:

We are pride for serving the underprivileged communities. As social workers, we move at grassroots and hard-to-reach areas. Though we face many challenges but can help poor people to ensure their basic needs. It is our peace. If any social worker perceives self-negative image on occupation, then it is his or her identity or personality crisis.

Beneficiaries. Ten social workers revealed that beneficiaries are kings or queens of their works. It is noted from storytelling of participants that service delivery and capacity building of vulnerable people are their main responsibilities for improving quality of life of beneficiaries. Interview Participant-5 shared her experience briefly. She said:

I always hear pains and pleasures of my beneficiaries. Our senior colleagues paid more effective times with beneficiaries like greetings, group meeting, discussion on health, education, meals, participation in festivals and condolence to funeral of dead body, etc. There was a friendly atmosphere. New social workers are not such positive emotional with beneficiaries.

Interview Participant-4 recounted:

I interact regularly with targeted community members. Respects of beneficiaries have gradually declined to us. Now majority of beneficiaries treat us as contractor or helper. Unhealthy competition and profit-centric mentality among microfinance institutions are mainly responsible for it.

In sum, interaction between beneficiaries and social workers has weakened slowly. It is quite hard to distinguish between microfinance institutions and local moneylenders in terms of interest rate and behavior. Stereotyped project, lack of fruitful training for social workers, commercialization approach of NGOs creates this gap.

Families. It is identified that family members have neutral views to social workers i.e., neither highly positive nor seriously negative. But family members are concern for frequent travelling in hard-to-reach areas, accidents, and insecurity of job. Most of field-based social workers live without family due to some unavoidable circumstances. Their family members are emotionally shocked. In addition, family members of female social workers are in tensed when they stay in remote areas at night. Interview Participant-7 raised one interesting issue about his marriage. According to him:

I married one high school teacher in early 2010. My job was to serve disadvantaged *Jaladas* (low-caste Hindu marine fishermen) communities in Chittagong district. I naively disclose the nature of my job and monthly salary BDT 17,000 (1 USD = BDT 70 in 2010).

Two possible family of bride did not proceed after hearing about my job and salary. I did not care it. Still, I love my job so much.

Neighbors. Social workers have different insights from neighbors regarding their jobs. All participants mentioned that they heard impressions and comments about their salary, nature of work, job security, working environment. Interview Participant-1 described about working of female as a social worker. According to her:

Attitude of neighbors and wider community has positively changed regarding job of a female in an NGO though have few exceptions in highly conservative mindset. Noted, the lower middle-class sentiment of *Purdha* (veil) is now withering away due to the economic hardship which compels women to engage in work outside their homes. Both male and female members have to come out of their homes and work to survive. Now my neighbors want to send their daughter in social work career.

Interview Participant-9 also narrated:

I work in an international NGO. My job has been discontinued two times due to completion of project duration. Now donor funds move away to African countries because Bangladesh crossed over from a World Bank classified low-income economy to a lower middle-income economy in 2015. Neighbors negatively perceive the uncertainty of my job.

Friends and relatives. It is identified from conversation of all participants that issues and concerns of neighbors, friends and relatives are almost similar. In majority cases, relatives want to compare salary and societal position of a social worker with others. Interview Participant-12 explained:

We, friends, attend in get-together, reunion and religious festival. Consciously or unconsciously attention goes to particular friend(s) who exercise power like police officer, military officer, magistrate. Look, a social worker who works in WASH then s/he protects whole community from outbreaking diseases. A mental health social worker tries best for well-being of a survivor. Unfortunately, we are still in hole of power exercises.

Community engagement. Engagement of community people especially formal and informal leaders is key driving force of social workers. A good rapport building and relationship with community stakeholders like members of Union Parishad (lowest tier of local government in Bangladesh), teachers, *Sardars* (traditional leaders), associations of occupational groups, clubs, cooperatives, cultural activists, health workers, journalists, lawyers, local doctors, market committees, religious group, women leaders, youth volunteers, Ansars, Village Defense Party (VDP), and others are helpful for social workers. Effective involvement of people in community-based planning and implementation process makes easy the life of a social worker. Interview Participant-3 mentioned in this regard. According to him:

I started my career with WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) activities in Hatiya Island supported by DANIDA. There were serious crisis of drinking water and deplorable conditions by open defecation & open latrine in 2000. I directly worked with Union Parishad (UP) and community leaders; and become successful. I am happy to say that Hatiya Island is very up to mark in WASH facilities.

Interview Participant-8 also said:

My areas of expertise are DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction) and non-formal education. I on tracked journey from remote and disaster-prone zone of Sunamganj district. Then, I worked in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar districts at non-formal education project. Community people supported us a lot such as social mapping, making learning centers, partial honorarium for teachers, readmission of dropped out learners, scholarship. Total 12,500 disadvantaged learners completed PSC (Primary School Certificate) by endeavor of my team.

In summary, community acceptance is vital issue for a social worker. Commitment to work, patience, organizational appreciation to social worker, and transparency & accountability among community people bring good results. Alternatively, community stakeholders gradually expect cash money and kinds from NGOs that recapped from statement of Interview Participant-10. According to her:

Community leaders and members of Union Parishad (UP) demand cash money as honorarium or transport cost and different kind supports for them. The honorarium culture adopted by some NGOs has undermined their credibility. Few NGOs demolish the in-built, and collective initiative of people. As for example, now community people look to an NGO for construction or repairing a small road.

General public. Public perception to social works is primarily concerned with uplifting vulnerable communities. They are catalysts of development process. Therefore, in most of cases, knowledge and skills of social workers are underrated. Their social dignity, position, and status are generally below than government officials. Interview Participant-11 raised many anxieties about general public views to a social worker. He described pains and gloomy words of his life. In narration:

I shifted at one international organization i.e., Save the Children in 2012. Now I work in another INGO where salary is attractive. I went in my village (Noakhali district) last week to attend one social ceremony. My close friend (government official) also attended at same place. Majority of people valued him with extra care due to his government job. I have social valuation because of family aristocracy; not for my existing job.

In short, majority of general public see social workers in microcredits, health services, livelihoods, and other activities at grassroots. Their contributions in policy promotion and global well-being are unknown to critical mass.

Government officials. By laws, NGOs are reported to respective government officials especially Deputy Commissioner at district level, and Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) at sub-district level. Social workers have to retain liaison with above officials and respective departments like social welfare, education, health, agriculture, fisheries, livestock, child and women affairs, youth development, environment, forest, disaster management, law enforcing agency, etc. Senior social workers keep functional relationships with line ministries. All respondents have intuitions; and most common dialogue, "Attitudes of governmental officials to social worker vary person to person; not for position of a government official." Interview Participant-5 specified:

Mindset of government officials have positively changed than earlier. Young and energetic officials understand that we (social workers) support development agendas of the government. These are closely linked with global framework like Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Interview Participant-6 also told:

I started career from BRAC in 2012. I work in different districts; and continue field-based job at other NGOs. Liaison with government officials is my prime responsibility. Knowledge, communication skills, and quality program are helpful for good cooperation from government officials.

Interview Participant-10 shared her experiences where one was so bitter. She remarked:

In 2007, I join in a national NGO. Then, I long-time worked in CARE International. Government officials of Jessore district cooperated us in all activities. Later, I join in another Dhaka-based INGO to support Rohingya refugee response. Once I went to meet with Camp-in-Charge (CiC) of Rohingya refugee camp, Cox's Bazar district. One social worker of other organization entered in room of CiC and gave him a document. CiC became angry and throw out it from table. In any circumstance, CiC could not do it. It is a serious humiliation to a social worker. I am so sad.

In nutshell, relationship with government officials depend on knowledge, quality program, communication skills of social worker, and personality traits of respective officer.

Discussion

This study explored how a social worker gathers different learnings and playing roles within socio-economic, political and cultural context of Bangladesh. Findings of existing study have been explained critically to discover the domains of echo and discordant linking with past studies.

All respondents of this study believe that if any social worker realizes self-negative image on his or her occupation then it is a personal problem. Collective opinions of majority social workers evidence a highest level of confidence on their occupation. Likewise, Cheng and Jiang (2022) mentioned that social workers are professional forces providing social services. Currently, the lack of professional identity among Chinese social workers threatens the sustainability of social service provision. But they have enthusiasms and professional commitments.

Findings of existing study explore that social workers get some visible and invisible apprehensions from friends, relatives and general public about dignity on their occupation. Shafiqul (1997) identified that Bangladesh was under British colonialization for 200 years. Power exercise and dominated rules obtained one kind of pride, within exploitative society, in mindset of mass people. Tartakovsky (2024) also claimed, the societal value system is important regarding attitudes towards social workers. Regarding public image, Legood et al. (2016) mentioned that if social workers perceive a negative public image of their occupation this may create a threat to their self-esteem, especially amongst those who identify strongly with their profession.

Uddin (2023) highlighted the plights confronted by human rights (HR) NGOs. HR NGOs in Bangladesh face significant challenges in fulfilling their roles effectively. They struggle to promote and protect human rights, as the government often fails to uphold its responsibilities toward victims and human rights safeguards. The state tends to restrict the operations of these organizations. Major challenges confronting HR NGOs include political interference by the ruling elite, government oppression and harassment of NGO officials, a prevailing culture of

impunity, dependence on foreign funding, restrictive laws limiting their growth, weak financial conditions, political bias within some organizations, and the overall ineffectiveness of human rights institutions in the country. Rashid (2017) identified that a number of microfinance borrowers of Bangladesh are dissatisfied to NGO workers due to high interest rate, early repayment, low profitability. Amin (2024) stated that, given Bangladesh's vulnerability to natural disasters such as cyclones, floods, and landslides, the effectiveness of disaster management strategies—particularly those implemented by NGOs—is crucial. Victims and community stakeholders of disaster-prone areas have positive impression to social workers engaged in disaster risk reduction. Drawing on insights from various scholars, existing study reveals that the level of esteem afforded to social workers is highly contextual and influenced by numerous internal and external factors.

Present study evidences that social workers are dedicated to engage community stakeholders in program interventions. New social workers are knowledgeable and more skills; but comparatively have limited interactions with beneficiaries. Tham and Lynch (2014) indicated that new incumbents in social works have education, self-development, and self-confident but seeking organizational support and guidance for effective interaction with service users. Result of current study is similar with Tham and Lynch (2014); and thus, Bangladeshi NGOs should arrange more trainings and motivations, storytelling from senior colleagues and dissemination for new social workers to be client-centric and devoted with beneficiaries.

McLaughlin (2025) noted that Canadian social workers are seeking to promote social justice and transform society to one that upholds the rights of all to 'fair and equitable access to services, resources and opportunities.' It considers as a macro approach to practice with direct impact on policy – namely, a career in politics. Canadian government is proactive to support social workers. In contrast, Swillum (2024) narrated that humanitarian situation of Burkina Faso has sharply deteriorated due to escalating violence, which has displaced approximately two million people, destabilized communities, and severely limited access to basic services. The Human Development Index (HDI), measuring health, education, and living standards, shows the country's significant challenges. Crackdowns on NGOs, 65% of civil society organisations reported state harassment. This existing study finds that collaboration between government agencies and social workers are moderate. Ahmed and Karim (2022) urged to increase professional relationship between government departments and social workers for expediting multidimensional development issues of Bangladesh particularly reaching to middle-income country.

Nikku (2014) described that social workers in the world are mostly familiar with knowledge and practice of social work based on Western and European societies. Rashid et al. (2023) suggested that curriculum and teaching-learning methods of social work education, in South Asian countries, must be revised and based on local contexts. Azam and Mazid (2022) also urged for state recognition of social work as a profession in Bangladesh. Present study clearly finds that social work education is well respected by society than social work practices.

Conclusion

Despite its limitations, existing study significantly advances to scrutinize pleasures and silent pains of social workers in Bangladesh. It provides insights regarding attitudes towards social workers from surrounded people like beneficiaries, families, neighbors, friends, relatives, general public. The study results reveal that nonetheless few social workers perceive occupational image crisis but they successfully go ahead through community engagement and

communication with key actors. Commitment to work, occupational ownership and positive emotion towards service-users are major inspirational forces of social workers for delivering quality services. In Bangladesh, social work is not recognized nationally as a profession. Beside advocating for professionalization of social work, standard social work education and training for new social workers and prospective students must be ensured; and particularly focus to client-oriented approach.

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