



Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Science (JAHSS)

ISSN: 3006-9491 (Online)

Volume 2 Issue 3, (2025)

 <https://doi.org/10.69739/jahss.v2i3.959>

 <https://journals.stecab.com/jahss>



Published by
Stecab Publishing

Research Article

The Continuing Legacy of the Liberation War: Youth Perceptions on National Identity and Civic Awareness in Bangladesh

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About Article

Article History

Submission: August 29, 2025

Acceptance : October 05, 2025

Publication : October 21, 2025

Keywords

Bangladesh, Liberation War, Post-Liberation, Qualitative Study, Youth Perception

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ABSTRACT

The Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 signified the dawn of a new era of liberty and sovereignty. The nine-month-long bloody war was a natural fallout of West Pakistan's muddled politics, cultural repression, and lopsided economic relations with the eastern part. After proclaiming independence, Bangladesh took on the challenging trek/journey of government formation, eager to secure equitable growth of the economy, social progress, and democratic leadership. This research investigates the extent to which the Liberation War of Bangladesh continues to impact the national identity and civic awareness of the young generation. The study adopted a qualitative research design to explore the views of youth on independence, national integration, growth, and cultural identity. Primary data were collected through structured, in-depth interview. 54 youths were selected as the sample of this study following purposive sampling technique. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and thematic analysis techniques. The findings show that people view the War of Liberation as a very important part of their history and that it has been a source of great pride. Besides recognizing that some goals of the war have been met, they also acknowledge that a considerable number of problems still exist. The research reiterates the significance of democratic governance, economic advancement, and social justice in creating a state that could realize the noble objectives that were set through the Liberation War. This study uniquely illuminates how the Liberation War continues to shape the national identity, civic consciousness, patterns of engagement, and cultural awareness. The findings offer practical insights for policymakers and educators seeking to strengthen national cohesion and build a more engaged young generation capable of advancing Bangladesh's vision of a prosperous, just, and united society.

Citation Style:

Islam, M. R., Banna, H., & Tabassum, T. (2025). The Continuing Legacy of the Liberation War: Youth Perceptions on National Identity and Civic Awareness in Bangladesh. *Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Science*, 2(3), 66-75. <https://doi.org/10.69739/jahss.v2i3.959>



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 is a red-letter event in the history of the nation which not only terminated the colonial clutches of the subcontinent but also initialized a new era of free and sovereign nations. The war, which took place from March 26 to December 16, 1971, lasted for a period of nine months was not merely a military fight, but rather an inevitable culmination of the political unrest, cultural strangulation, and economic exploitation which the then West Pakistani government imposed on its east wing. The war succeeded in establishing Bangladesh as a distinct, sovereign, and independent state on the territory that had been part of Pakistan since 1947, resulting in millions of casualties, extensive destruction to towns and villages, and incalculable human suffering (Hossain, 2015).

Beyond the obvious significance of Bangladesh's independence, the Liberation War had an indelible mark on the country's identity and national consciousness. Bangladeshis gained a strong sense of national identification and pride as a result of the war, which also helped to preserve their language and culture. As Siddiqui points out, the fight for political independence was secondary to the fight to protect and advance Bengali language and culture, which had been marginalized due to Pakistani rulers' attempts to impose Urdu as the official language. Cultural resistance was an important factor in bringing the people of what is now Bangladesh (East Pakistan) together and inspiring them to fight for independence (Siddiqui, 2019).

Bangladesh set out on the difficult path of nation-building after gaining independence, striving for democratic rule, economic progress, and social justice. There was a lot of political unrest, natural disasters, and economic difficulties in the beginning. The nation has overcome these obstacles and achieved great strides in various domains. Major infrastructure projects have been finished, the economy has grown and diversified, and education and healthcare have made tremendous progress (Ali, 2020). Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go before the Liberation War's entire goal can be realized. Corruption, socioeconomic inequality, and political instability are long-standing problems that impede development. Asadullah and Chakravorty defined corruption as a stumbling block for development because it not only undermines trust in institutions but also impacts governance (Asadullah & Chakravorty, 2019). Social inequality, a difficulty arising from varying wealth, educational levels, and availability of resources, remains unsolved. Moreover, it's become difficult to govern and develop the nation when frequent and violent conflicts continue between political parties (Khan & Islam, 2014).

This study aims to investigate the ongoing legacy of the Bangladesh Liberation War and its influence on the national identity and civic awareness of contemporary youth. The precise objectives are to analyse how the principles and noble aims of the Liberation War are understood and internalized by young people, and to explore the role of the war in shaping their sense of national integration, cultural identity, and civic responsibility. By clearly articulating these objectives, the study provides an organized framework for understanding how historical narratives continue to inspire and nurture Bangladesh's emerging generation of leaders contribute to building a fair and equitable nation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been considerable writing on the Bangladesh Liberation War by scholars, who have praised its impact on both history and politics in this country, shaping national identity. The war is often portrayed as a struggle for democracy, human rights, and sovereignty that has come to define Bangladesh's national ethos. The Liberation War of Bangladesh is very significant in history, primarily because it paved the way for a nation to be built from scratch. According to Hossain (2015), the war bonded Bangladeshis like nothing else they ever had; it was an idea worthy of respect that united them across all linguistic, cultural, and economic cleavages (Hossain, 2015). However, while these studies emphasize the unifying role of the war, they often do not explore how contemporary youth perceive and internalize these historical narratives. The entire debate surrounding the war is frequently cast as a moral struggle against oppression, with the Bengali people fighting for their right to exist as an entity and national development. This is embedded to the core in national consciousness and continues today to shape the collective identity of Bangladeshi people.

Ranjan (2016) asserts that the war's promoted values and ideals have left a lasting impact on Bangladeshi society. The country's culture and educational policies, which heavily emphasize remembrance and reverence for those who fought to secure freedom, still bear the echo of the war. These studies collectively suggest that institutional and cultural mechanisms preserve the Liberation War's legacy, yet they rarely account for regional variations or localized youth perspectives. National education curriculum of Bangladesh includes extensive information on the liberation war, ensuring future generation understand and feel their history and national pride. This has in turn been significant in keeping the history of war alive and relevant as part of the national narrative, serving generations after generations of Bangladeshis (Ranjan, 2016). But far from that war, the degree to which modern Bangladesh has fulfilled its goals is a matter of debate. Rahman (2018) and Hasan (2015), for instance, highlight deep-rooted developmental impediments as well as bottlenecks to the extent that the demands during the era of movement could hardly be achieved (Muhammad, 2015; Rahman, 2018). Corruption, political instability, and economic inconsistency have adversely affected the national progress. But even with challenges, the progress in education, health and women rights have been impressive. The literacy rate had improved a great deal since independence, illustrating progress in educational access, but these studies do not examine how youth interpret or relate to this progress in the context of the Liberation War's ideals.

Hossain (2015) provides some excellent analysis of pre-liberation East Pakistan as compared to current-day Bangladesh in a historical context. Despite significant advancements in education, infrastructure, and women's rights since independence, the system that was a hindrance prior to 1971 persists today. This dual trajectory of progress and challenges highlights the complex legacy of the liberation struggle, yet existing research rarely connects this to the perceptions of contemporary youth, especially outside major metropolitan areas. For example, Bangladesh has made significant advancements in economic performance and poverty reduction



but confronts entrenched problems of political corruption and social inequality (Hossain, 2015).

Contemporary youth perspectives on the Liberation War and its long-term legacy help widen the understanding of how this can continue to affect Bangladeshi society. According to Rahman (2020), young people in Bangladesh identified the Liberation War both as a source of motivation and as an important element of their national identity. Nonetheless, there remains a scarcity of qualitative studies examining how youth in specific regions, such as Rangpur, internalize these ideals and how this shapes their civic awareness and national identity. Many young people think that the country is far from where it should be since independence and has much to do, especially in areas like social justice, political accountability, etc. (Rahman, 2020).

The literature review emphasizes the significant influence of the Bangladesh Liberation War's legacy on the Bangladeshi people's current social values and national identity. The struggle-for-freedom narrative of the war has become an integral part of national identity, shaping modern understandings and ambitions. However, the review reveals a gap in youth-centric, qualitative research from regions like Rangpur that examines how historical narratives are internalized and influence contemporary civic attitudes. This study addresses this gap by exploring the nuanced perceptions of Rangpur's youth, thereby contributing new insights into intergenerational transmission of historical memory and its impact on national identity and civic consciousness.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design and method

The research was a qualitative study that aimed to find out how the national identity and civic responsibility of the young people of Bangladesh have been influenced by the country's war of independence through the youth's perception of the war's legacy. Since the qualitative method is more effective in providing a deeper insight into the respondents' knowledge, experience, attitude, and belief about a phenomenon, it was the most appropriate one for this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). A qualitative approach was adopted to provide the participants flexibility to express their opinions in depth, while ensuring that all key issues were covered.

3.2. Sampling and sampling technique

The study population of the research was the youth of Rangpur division within the age limit of 18-25 years. The purposive sampling technique was employed to select 54 respondents from the sample population as this sampling technique enabled the researchers to make sure that the respondents were knowledgeable about the subject of the research (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015). Inclusion criteria required participants to have at least secondary education and a basic understanding of the Liberation War. Respondents were chosen to ensure diversity in gender, and socio-economic status. The sample size of 54 was determined based on achieving data saturation, where no new themes emerged from additional interviews.

3.3. Data collection tools and strategies

Researchers collected the data employing in-depth interviews

with the respondents using a structured questionnaire and following the interview guideline. In-depth interviews with structured questions provide opportunity to the researchers to gather detailed information and help to organize the qualitative data into different themes (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). These interviews involved the same questions being asked to all participants, which allows a detailed exploration and makes it easier to compare the responses (Bryman, 2016). The interview guide included core questions such as:

- How the history of liberation war inspires the youth?
- To what extent the noble goal of liberation war is achieved today?
- What differences do you observe between the pre-liberation period and present day Bangladesh?

The guideline was developed based on the literature review and expert consultation and pilot-tested with three respondents to ensure clarity and relevance. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, lasting approximately 30-40 minutes, and detailed written notes were taken with participants' consent.

3.4. Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used for analyzing the collected qualitative data as this method helps the researchers in identifying, analyzing and preparing the themes from the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After transcribing and translating the data into English from Bangla, coding was performed inductively in NVivo 14, where meaningful texts were assigned descriptive codes. Codes were reviewed and grouped into categories based on the similarities. Themes were identified from these categories and compared with the full dataset for consistency and coherence. Inconsistencies or ambiguities in coding were resolved through discussion between the researchers. NVivo 14 facilitated the organization, coding, and retrieval of data, enabling systematic comparison and visualization of emerging patterns and themes.

3.5. Ethical consideration

Written consent and proper ethical approval were ensured by the respondents to this study. The respondents were well informed about the objectives and process of the study. Assurance of confidentiality was also provided, along with the right to withdraw from participation at any point of the interview without any issue.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The table 1 provides an insightful overview of the demographic characteristics of the study participants. The gender distribution is relatively balanced, with 52% of respondents identifying as male and 48% as female. Regarding educational attainment, 28% of respondents are in their first year of undergraduate studies, 26% are in their second year, 22% are in their third year, 13% are in their fourth year, and 11% hold a master's degree. The employment status of respondents shows that 69% are students or unemployed, 7% are teachers, 7% are private job holders, 6% are bankers, 6% are NGO workers, and 6% are entrepreneurs. This distribution highlights the diverse professional backgrounds of the respondents.

Ethnicity and minority status data indicate that 7% of



Table 1. Demographic information of the respondents

		Frequency (n = 54)	Percentage
Gender	Male	28	52%
	Female	26	48%
Education	Undergraduate 1st Year	15	28%
	Undergraduate 2nd Year	14	26%
	Undergraduate 3rd Year	12	22%
	Undergraduate 4th Year	7	13%
	Master's	6	11%
Employment	Student/unemployed	37	69%
	Teacher	4	7%
	Banker	3	6%
	Private Job Holder	4	7%
	NGO worker	3	6%
	Entrepreneur	3	6%
Ethnicity/minority	Ethnic	4	7%
	Minority	12	22%
	General People	38	70%
Leadership	Leader of political party (student)	5	9%
	Leader of Social Organization	18	33%
	Not involved	31	57%

Source: Field Data

respondents are from ethnic groups, 22% are classified as minorities, and 70% are general population. Leadership roles among respondents reveal that 9% are leaders of political parties (students), 33% are leaders of social organizations, and

57% are not involved in any leadership activities.

Table 2 displays the three themes and thirteen subthemes that emerged from the analysis of the gathered qualitative data and the word cloud from the interviews has been showed in Figure 1.

Table 2. Theme derived from interviews:

Theme	Sub-theme	f	Illustrative Quote
Inspiration from the Liberation War	Pride in Independence	21	"We can present ourselves as a free and sovereign state to the world. I feel very proud because I am a Bengali, and I speak my Bengali language because of our hard-won independence." (IDI 1, March 8, 2024)
	Historical Significance	7	"The Liberation War itself is an inspiration. How bravely did a small country fight so hard to achieve independence and geographical recognition!" (IDI 9, March 10, 2024)
	National Unity	5	"The history of our Liberation War inspires deep love and devotion to our motherland and induces patriotism among the youths like me via a collective voice on certain national concerns." (IDI 5, March 9, 2024)
	Sacrifice and Bravery	18	"I am inspired by the Liberation War when I see how freedom fighters risked their lives and fought zealously for the sake of the country to get justice and independence." (IDI 6, March 9, 2024)
	Cultural Identity	9	"Linguistic and cultural differences prompts to build an autonomous state which is founded solely on Bengali nationalism." (IDI 17, March 12, 2024)



Realization of Liberation War Goals	Partial Realization	12	"The promise to make the country a Golden Bengal and a self-reliant nation is gradually being realized." (IDI 8, March 9, 2024)
	Unfulfilled Aspirations	8	"We have achieved robust advancement in many sectors still not all goals have been achieved." (IDI 3, March 8, 2024)
	Corruption and Mismanagement	23	"Even 50 years after independence, Bangladesh has not achieved the expected level of development due to corruption." (IDI 53, March 28, 2024)
Differences Between Pre- and Post-Liberation	Democracy and Governance	7	"We fought for our democratic rights, but after 53 years we are still lacking this practice in our country" (IDI 20, March 18, 2024)
	Economic Development and Social Justice	36	"Post-independence, Bangladesh has become much more economically self-sufficient, we still aspire for a society free from inequality " (IDI 31, March 22, 2024)
	Human Rights	7	"The Liberation War united all independence-seekers regardless of religion, caste, profession, education, or skin color. This helped us develop a nation with equal rights for all." (IDI 38, March 18, 2024)
	Educational and Healthcare Advancements	24	"Government measures to promote equal educational and healthcare access for all have achieved substantial educational and healthcare achievement, " (IDI 19, March 18, 2024)
	Continuing Struggles	8	"Protecting independence is harder than achieving it and we are still struggling to build our nation" (IDI 15, March 10, 2024)

Source: Field Data

4.1. Inspiration from the liberation war

4.1.1. Pride in independence

The sentiment of pride in Bangladesh's independence is a recurrent theme among respondents. The nation's struggle and eventual victory against a formidable adversary instills a sense of pride and accomplishment. One respondent stated, "*Our independence was hard-earned; it reminds us of everyday that we must cherish and protect our sovereignty with utmost dedication*" (IDI 21, Personal Communication, March 18, 2024).

This pride comes out in the national identity and collective memory, paying tribute to those who showed exceptional bravery during the war (Ranjan, 2016). This independence cultivated pride in it, emboldening the country to defy all odds and gain its own sovereign state, which is celebrated everywhere on Independence Day, followed by Victory Day (Hossain, 2015).

4.1.2. Historical significance

The national consciousness deeply instills the historical significance of the Liberation War. It serves as a reminder of the sacrifices made and the resilience shown by the people. A respondent commented, "*The Liberation War is not only a part of our history but the bedrock on which we rest our identity and determination as inhabitants.*" (IDI 22, Personal Communication, March 18, 2024).

Researchers have argued that the historical narrative of the war is key to understanding modern Bangladesh's sociopolitical tapestry (Hossain, 2015). This historical background is fundamental to understanding the advancements that have been made since 1971 and those that continue to occur as we strive towards a more fair and equitable society (Jahan, 2015).

4.1.3. National unity

During the war of liberation, individuals from all walks of life

fought unitedly to win their freedom. This significantly created a national sentiment among people, and that sentiment is glued through generations as well. As one individual put it, "While the war raged on, everyone banded together alongside each other despite our differences. We try to keep that unity alive even today (IDI 3, Personal Communication, March 8, 2024).

It is this unity that has been praised by literature as the most significant reason behind its power during Bangladesh's independence movements (Jahan, 2015). This unity was not in any way restricted to the liberation war alone; rather, it was powerful enough to continue for decades and be an integral part of Bangladesh's national ethos (Khan & Tabbasum, 2022).

4.1.4. Sacrifice and bravery

The bravery and sacrifices of the freedom fighters and ordinary citizens are a source of immense inspiration. Young people still feel encouraged by their ancestor's bravery and in every movement after independence the young generation remember their sacrifices in great honor. A respondent mentioned, "*The courage shown by our freedom fighters teaches us that no challenge is too great if faced with determination and unity*" (IDI 14, Personal Communication, March 10, 2024).

The valor of the freedom fighters is frequently celebrated in national commemorations and is a significant aspect of Bangladesh's national narrative (Khan & Tabbasum, 2022). The stories of sacrifice and bravery are passed down through generations, instilling a sense of duty and patriotism in the younger population (Saikia, 2011).

4.1.5. Cultural identity

The Liberation War also reinforced the cultural identity of the Bangladeshi people. The struggle for independence was closely tied to the preservation of Bengali language and culture. One



respondent highlighted, *"Our fight was not just for the land but also for our language and culture, which makes our victory even more significant"* (IDI 25, Personal Communication, March 19, 2024).

The emphasis on cultural identity has been crucial in shaping the post-war nation's policies and societal values (Siddiqui, 2019). This cultural renaissance post-independence has led to a resurgence in the celebration of Bengali traditions, festivals, and linguistic pride (Ranjan, 2016).

4.2. Realization of liberation war goals

4.2.1. Partial realization

Bangladesh has celebrated its golden jubilee of independence. In these years, Bangladesh has achieved high GDP growth and made significant progress in various social and economic spheres. However, many respondents believe that the goals of the Liberation War have only been partially realized. According to a respondent, *"We have achieved independence, but the dream of a completely just and equal society is still a work in progress"* (IDI 6, Personal Communication, March 8, 2024).

This sentiment is echoed in various studies that critique the pace and distribution of post-war development (Rahman, 2018). Despite economic growth (Makhdum *et al.*, 2024), there remain disparities in wealth distribution, and many areas still lack basic amenities and services (Chowdhury, 2017; Makhdum *et al.*, 2021; Rumi *et al.*, 2020; Rumi *et al.*, 2021b, 2021a).

4.2.2. Unfulfilled aspirations

There is a sentiment that many aspirations of the Liberation War remain unfulfilled. Although political parties and leaders attempt to exemplify the great aspirations of the Liberation War, a genuine political will is lacking, and factors such as corruption and social inequality continue to impede the attainment of the Liberation War's noble goals. A respondent claimed, *"Our forefathers envisioned a prosperous and fair Bangladesh, but we still face many hurdles in achieving that dream"* (IDI 27, Personal Communication, March 20, 2024).

Analysts argue that the persistence of systemic corruption hampers the realization of the war's foundational goals (Chowdhury, 2017). Moreover, the dream of an egalitarian society where all citizens have equal opportunities is still far from reality (Banu, 2022).

4.2.3. Corruption and mismanagement

Corruption and mismanagement are often cited as major obstacles to realizing the full potential of the Liberation War's goals. Bangladesh has experienced significant structural advancement in recent years; yet corruption and mismanagement of the country's limited resources have resulted in increased costs for these development initiatives. According to a response from IDI, *"Corruption undermines our progress and hinders the fulfillment of the dreams for which many sacrificed their lives"* (IDI 31, Personal Communication, March 22, 2024).

Studies indicate that corruption remains a critical issue that affects governance and development outcomes (Shah, 2025; Zaman, 2021). The prevalence of corruption in both public and private sectors has led to a lack of trust in institutions and

hindered sustainable development (Chowdhury, 2017).

4.3. Differences between pre- and post-liberation

4.3.1. Democracy and governance

The people of Bangladesh started their liberation war in response to the Pakistan's undemocratic and oppressive nature towards Bangladesh. After independence, the progress in establishing a robust democratic governance system is acknowledged. The increase in political freedom in post-liberation is significant, yet there are calls for greater political reforms. One of the respondents expressed, *"We have come a long way in terms of democracy, we are politically freer than before, but true governance and political freedom require more systemic changes"* (IDI 8, Personal Communication, March 10, 2024).

Scholars suggest that while democratic institutions have strengthened, there is still a need for deeper democratic reforms to ensure fair representation (Islam, 2016). Issues such as electoral integrity, political transparency, and accountability continue to be areas requiring significant improvement (Hassan & Nazneen, 2017). Analyses highlight the need for more robust democratic institutions to support political freedom (Hassan & Nazneen, 2017). The freedom of press and expression, while improved, still faces occasional restrictions and challenges (Islam, 2016; Makhdum *et al.*, 2022).

4.3.2. Economic development and social justice

Economic development is seen as one of the successes of post-liberation Bangladesh. Bangladesh has become one of the emerging new economies of South Asia. It's now heading towards getting emancipated from LDC country status. Respondents recognize considerable economic and social advancement since the independence. It has seen significant progress in GDP, GNP, and per capita income. It has also exceeded Pakistan on many categories since gaining independence. The poverty rate and child mortality rate have declined, while the literacy rate and life expectancy have increased. Infrastructure development is highlighted as a major post-liberation achievement. However, achieving social justice continues to be a significant challenge. With the growing nature of GDP, the rich-poor and rural-urban gap is also increasing. For getting different services, these gaps play important an important role though the constitution of the country clearly states the equal opportunity for all. One of the respondents claimed that, *"Our economic indicators have improved, and we see better social infrastructure, which was unimaginable during the pre-liberation era. Projects like the Padma Bridge symbolize our progress and aspirations for a developed nation. However, we still have a long way to go to ensure that every citizen enjoys equal rights and opportunities"* (IDI 29, Personal Communication, March 21, 2024).

Research supports this view, noting improvements in healthcare, education, and economic diversification (Ahsan *et al.*, 2025; Haque *et al.*, 2020; Islam *et al.*, 2025; Makhdum *et al.*, 2024). The country's Human Development Index (HDI) has improved, reflecting better living standards and increased life expectancy (Rahman & Bari, 2018). Infrastructure improvements are often cited as indicators of national progress and modernization (Rahman & Bari, 2018). The development of



opportunities for quality services and accessibility for all continue to persist. One respondent illustrates, “*Our educational sector has seen remarkable growth, which is crucial for our continued progress. While healthcare services have improved, access and quality need to be more uniformly distributed*” (IDI 32, Personal Communication, March 22, 2024).

Study also shows that educational reforms and increased access to education are key factors in the nation's development strategy (Mamun-ur-Rashid, 2023). The expansion of primary and secondary education, as well as higher education institutions, has played a critical role in human capital development (Makhдум, 2025; Ranjan, 2016). The healthcare sector's progress is seen as a vital component of the country's overall development (Ahsan *et al.*, 2025; Makhдум, 2024; Nahar, 2020). Despite advancements, rural areas still face significant challenges in accessing quality healthcare services (Haque *et al.*, 2020).

4.3.5. Continuing struggles

Even though they have achieved independence from the British and Pakistan, respectively, respondents believe that their legacy has continued to be a part of the culture. Political dominance, the autocratic nature of the ruling party, political instability, and inequality continue to create obstacles in the way of the country's transformation into a just and inclusive nation, which was the revolutionary dream of the people who fought for independence. According to one of the respondents, *"Maintaining our independence and achieving sustainable development remains an ongoing challenge"* (IDI 13, Personal Communication, March 12, 2024).

The ongoing efforts to improve human rights are documented in various reports and studies (Saikia, 2011). Issues such as gender-based violence, minority rights, and labor rights continue to require focused attention (Banu, 2009).

In 1947, East Pakistan (Bangladesh) possessed a greater number of primary and secondary schools than West Pakistan in absolute terms. By 1971, East Pakistan had fewer primary schools than it had acquired in 1948. Ironically, while educational infrastructure deteriorated in the East, it significantly improved in West Pakistan during the years following 1947 (Asadullah, 2006). However, after the independence different measures like full free primary education, stipends, free books, mid-day meal initiatives have contributed to the educational advancement in Bangladesh. Regarding healthcare facilities, the people of Bangladesh had limited access. Post-independence health policies, community clinics, and family planning initiatives have significantly improved healthcare, evidenced by reduced child death rates and increasing life expectancy. Nonetheless,



Figure 1. Word cloud developed from the interviews

stability and social cohesion (Sarker, 2015), issues such as poverty, unemployment, and political unrest remain significant hurdles (Rahman, 2018).

5. CONCLUSION

The Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 remains a cornerstone of the nation's identity, shaping the collective memory and aspirations of its people. This conflict not only secured the country's independence but also instilled a profound sense of pride and cultural identity among Bangladeshis. The war's historical significance continues to resonate, reminding citizens of the sacrifices made and the resilience demonstrated during that pivotal time. Findings from this study reveal that young people in Rangpur Division deeply value the ideals of freedom, equality, and justice derived from the Liberation War, yet they perceive a noticeable gap between those ideals and the present socio-political reality. While participants acknowledged notable progress in economic growth, and infrastructure development they also expressed concern over political intolerance, and growing inequality and believe it is also struggling to uphold the moral and civic spirit envisioned in 1971.

The findings of this study emphasize that the road to the ultimate vision of the liberation war is still miles ahead. Based on youth perspectives, electoral integrity, transparency, and accountability must be accompanied by institutional reforms that ensure the rule of law as well as individual rights to fulfill the vision of the Liberation War. Public offices should be more transparent; accountability of the officials and strict implementation of laws should be ensured to combat corruption. To address inequality, the rural-urban divide should be minimized, SMEs should be promoted, and skill development initiatives should be implemented on a large scale. Public policies should be gender-friendly, ensuring minority rights and the proper distribution of resources. Cultural programs focusing Bengali culture, arts and traditions should be celebrated nationally, which will foster and promote national unity and pride. Dialogue between diverse ethnic, religious and social groups will strengthen the process of building a harmonious society.

By emphasizing youth perspectives, this paper contributes to the understanding of how historical narratives continue to shape civic identity and national consciousness in post-independence Bangladesh. It highlights the enduring relevance of the Liberation War not merely as a historical event but as a living framework for social values and citizenship formation. Future research could build upon these insights by conducting comparative studies across regions or exploring intergenerational differences in the interpretation of the Liberation War's ideals. By addressing the identified challenges and building on the nation's strengths, Bangladesh can move closer to realizing the vision of a prosperous, just, and united country that its forefathers fought for.

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