

# Barriers that Women Face to Participate in Politics in Bangladesh

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100400336>

Received: 16 April 2026; Accepted: 21 April 2026; Published: 08 May 2026

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The research has been conducted in order to find out barriers that faces women to participate in politics in Bangladesh. The data has been collected from Khulna city through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was incorporated both open ended and closed ended questions. In this study a convenient sampling technique have been used. Data was collected from 65 respondents who live in Khulna city and Micro soft Excel has been used to analysis the data. The result of the research has been presented in systematic manner. The findings have been discussed descriptively. The research found that Ideological and Psychological factors (Politics is not good work, It is not for woman) has strongly influenced women not to participate in politics in Bangladesh. The study shows Limited access to decision making, Financial problem (poverty and unemployment problem), Lack of political party support(Insufficient representative in political party, masculine nature of politics), Religion factor, Security problem are also strong barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh. This findings help the authority to be alert and to remove this barriers. Results of research are limited to the Bangladesh only. Future researchers can expand the scope of the research.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the study

From the beginning of the civilization women contribute a lot for the society. In Bangladesh women are playing important role for the great welfare of the country. But in politics their contribution is not well, though several times prime minister, opposition leader of the parliament, speaker of the parliament were women. Women face many barriers to participate in politics. This study was intended to identify the barriers that stimulate women to avoid politics

### Objective of the study

The objective of the study is to find out barriers that faces women to participate in politics in Bangladesh.

### Scope of the study

This study was carried out in the Khulna city only. The surveying area were Sonadanga, Nirala, Bagmara, Khalispur, Zero point, Miapara, Tothpara, P.T.I mor, Gollamari, Rupsha, Hazi Mohasin road and Boyra. The respondents were adult person who are living in these area.

### Limitations of the study

Although all the possible cautions have been maintained during the study, there were some limitations. The limitations of the study have been given below:

- a. The numbers of respondents were only 65
- b. The research was conducted only in Khulna City. If the researchers could include other cities, good picture might be come out.

c. Convenience sampling was used in this research

If random selection was taken, it could yield be better result.

d. Financial limitation hindered to conduct the study in a broad scale. No external source of fund could be utilized in this study. Thus the researcher himself needed to do all the field work and here the number of sample could not be increased.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH GAP

The overall development of a country depends upon the maximum utilization of her people, both men and women. In Bangladesh women comprise nearly half of the total population. But the status of women is much lower than that of men in every sphere of life. Women are identified with domestic life while politics is viewed as a male-dominated public activity that is typically masculine in nature. With the advancement of time the fact has now been recognized that without ensuring women development, the national development cannot be achieved. Women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women

There are so many factors constraining women empowerment in all spheres of life particularly hardening the political atmosphere for the women. Patriarchal society is one of the factors that ideologically limiting the gender roles and placing women in the private sphere as mothers and wives while men are associated with public sphere. This gender role is limiting the women's mobility in political parties. Besides, predominance of men in political structure and/in political parties is another obstacle for women's participation in formal political structures. Particularly in political parties, the male roles are prioritized and women's needs are ignored in the regular activities of political parties. Lack of 'access to' and 'control over' resources are two most important economic factors limiting women's vertical and horizontal mobility in the political arena.

Labani. S; Kaehler.CZ and Ruiz.P.D.D (2009) depicted that political participation differs based on: capacity of citizens for demanding accountability for their leaders' actions and decisions; result obtained or to be obtained for the community; level of conflict experienced by these actions; and citizen's level of cooperation to carry out activities.

Findings of a survey conducted by DW(Democracy Watch) (2009) shows , prevalence of male domination of political life, lack of party support i.e. limited access to networks, limited financial support, lack of involvement with social clubs are the major affecting factors hindering women's political empowerment. One of the study objectives was to see the political violence against women during the election period. Among 302 respondents (including 50% female), 10% clearly distinguished evidence of VAW(violence Against Women) that female candidates faced while participating in political activities. The findings also shows that female candidates had to face same type of violence from multiple perpetrators i.e. husband, opposition party, LEBs, even from their own party members.

Khan. M.R and F. Ara (2006) shows that patriarchal society, lower level of educational quality, socio cultural norms and religious misinterpretation enforces rules and laws in such a way that affects the self-confidence of women, limits their access on resources and information and thus keeps them in a lower status than men in political participation.

Khan.M.I (2014) found that the elected women representatives are not included in the Shalish process as they have been considered substandard by their male counterpart. Only 16% of the EWRs (Elective Women Representative) exercise their decisions in the shalish process where as the victims prefer to complain to the EWRs on marriage, divorce, polygamy and dowry issues. The report also depicts that most of the respondents get partial members' support from their family rather than all members.

The relevant studies in literature review provided the detailed knowledge about barriers that face women to participate in politics in Bangladesh. But there is gap. Lack of family support and Violence against women and lack of political education have influenced women not to participate in politics in Bangladesh. Lack of acknowledgement of women's work ability and Lack of time have influenced women.

In this research the researcher tried to find out barriers that face women to participate in politics in Bangladesh.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

Methodology is the process used to collect information and data for the purpose of making decisions. The Methodology of the study has been discussed in the following sections:

### **Population**

Bangladesh is a densely populated country. The population of this country is about 173.60 million(2024). The population of the study was the people of Bangladesh . However this study was confined as the Khulna city, the subpopulation of the study was the people of Khulna.

### **Sampling technique and sampling size**

Sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals represent the larger group from which they are selected. In this study a convenient sampling technique was used. It is the selection of whichever individuals are easiest to reach. It was done at the convenience of the researcher. The surveying area were Sonadanga, Nirala, Bagmara, Khalispur and others including Zero point, Miapara , Toth para, P.T.I mor, Gollamari, Rupsha, Hazi Mohasin road and Boyra. Due to shortage of time this study ended up surveying 65 respondents.

### **Questionnaire design and data collection**

Data was collected by a set of structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was incorporated both open ended and closed ended questions. The questionnaire was designed based on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 ( 1= strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree) which has been used to measure the importance associated with each criteria set. The questionnaire has two sections (Section-‘A’, Section-‘B’)

In section ‘A’ there were some questions, there were also some factors which might be affected woman not to participate in politics. The interviewee gave their opinion about those factors.

In section ‘B’ there was some questions to find out demographic information. The interview was conducted in Bangla then translated into English. The interview data were noted and recorded with the permission of the participants. The area of survey was Khulna city.

### **Data analysis**

Several statistical tools were used to analyze and evaluate the data. The collected data was analyzed with the help of statistical tool Microsoft Excel.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Introduction:**

The study collected 65 (sixty five) responses by using a set of structured questionnaire. The data was then verified and checked. Afterwards the data was entered into Microsoft Excel for analyses. The findings of the result presented in following sections.

### **Demographic profile of the respondent:**

The demographic profiles of the respondents are discussed in the following sections.

**Age**

The age of the respondents are shown in the following table:

Table 4.1 The age of respondent

Age	Number of respondents	Percentage
Below 20 years	8	12.31
20 to 30 years	13	20
30 to 40 years	34	52.31
Above 40 years	10	15.38
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100</b>

From the Table 4.1, it can be seen that 12.31% of the respondents were below 20 years, 20% were 20 to 30 years, 52.31% were 30 to 40 years and 15.38% were above 40 years. From the above stated data it can be observed that most of the respondents are the age between 30 to 40 years followed by 20 to 30 years old person.

**Sex**

Data were collected from both male and female. Percentage of male and female are shown in pie chart:

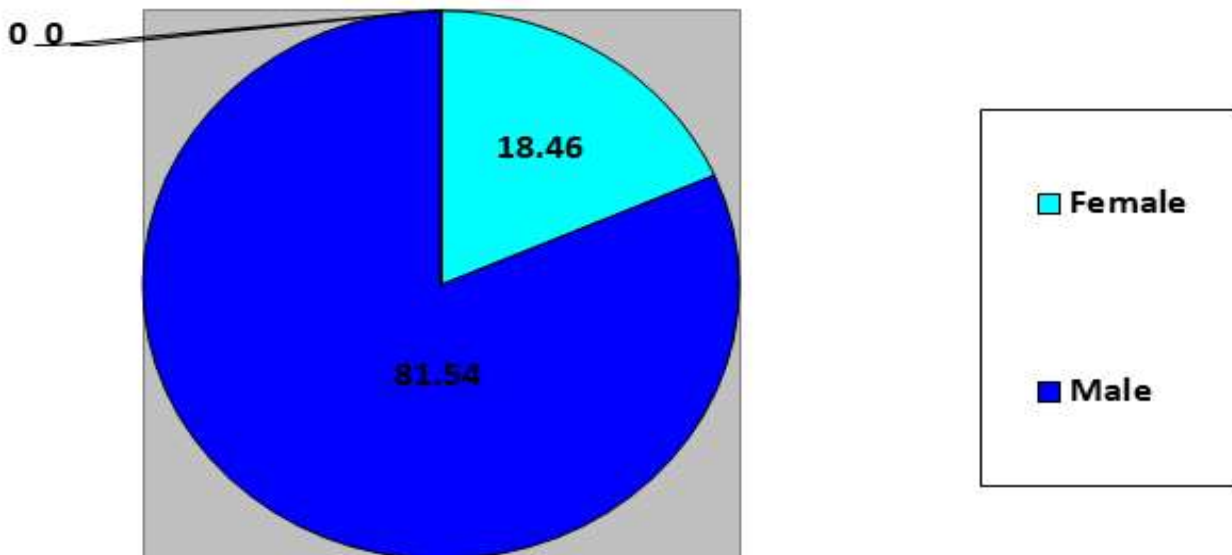


Figure 4.1: Sex of respondent

**Yearly income of the respondent**

Table 4.2: yearly income of the respondents

Income	Number of respondent	Percentage
Below TK10,000.00	09	13.85
TK 10,001.00 to 25,000.00	19	29.23

TK 25,001.00 to 50,000.00	19	29.23
More than TK50,000.00	18	27.69

**Profession**

Data was collected from the people who hold different occupations. They were teachers, engineers, doctors, students, business persons and govt. job holders. The percentage of those professions of the respondent are shown in the table 4.3

Table 4.3: Profession

Profession	Number of respondents	Percentage
Govt. job	17	26.15
Business person	16	24.62
Teacher	10	15.38
Engineer	08	12.31
Student	09	13.85
Doctor	03	4.62
Other	02	3.08
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100</b>

**Residential area**

The area from which data was collected were Sonadanga, Nirala, Bagmara, Khalispur and others including Zero point, Miapara, Toth para, P.T.I mor, Gollamari, Rupsha, Hazi Mohasin road and Boyra. The percentages of data collecting area are given in the table which was drawn on the next page:

Table 4.4: Residential area:

Area	Number of respondent	Percentage
Sonadanga	22	33.85
Nirala	14	21.54
Bagmara	09	13.85
Khalispur	07	10.77
Others (Zero point, Miapara, Toth para, P.T.I mor, Gollamari, Rupsha, Hazi Mohasin road and Boyra)	13	20.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100</b>

**Marital status**

Marital status is shown below in pie chart:

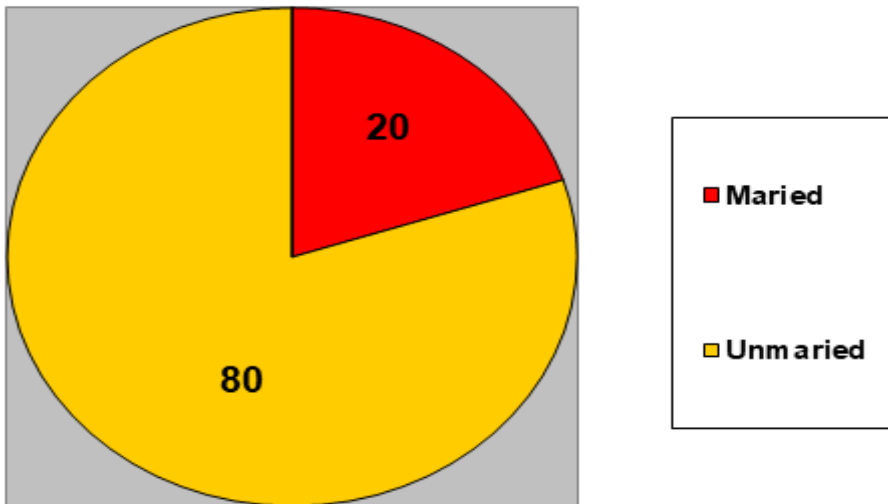


Figure 4.2: Marital status of the respondents

**Opinion of respondent about assumed barriers to participate in politics for women**

As stated earlier, this study surveyed 65 respondents by a set of structured questionnaire who are living in Khulna city. In this survey some hypothetical factors which influenced or not were asked to the respondents. The average score of respondents of each question sequent (Highest to lowest) are shown below table 4.5

Table 4.5 sequence of reasons that are strongly affected

Position	Name of the factors	Mean point
1	Ideological and Psychological factors (Politics is not good work, It is not for woman)	4.52
2	Limited access to decision making	4.02
3	Financial problem(poverty and unemployment problem)	3.97
4	Lack of political party support(Insufficient representative in political party, masculine nature of politics)	3.91
5	Religion factor	3.89
6	Security problem	3.83
7	Lack of family support	3.77
8	Violence against women	3.63
9	Lack of political education	3.26
10	Lack of acknowledgement of women’s work ability	2.95
11	Lack of time	2.49
12	Child marriage	2.08

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The opinion of the respondents about each factor are discussed one by one below

### **Ideological and Psychological factors (Politics is not good work, It is not for woman)**

It was anticipated that Ideological and Psychological factors (Politics is not good work, It is not for woman) may be a valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh. The study result shows that average mean of this point is 4.52 that is well above the agree point (4.00) and very close to strongly agree point (5.00), means that the respondents have a highly positive feeling about Ideological and Psychological factors (Politics is not good work, It is not for woman). Thus this study indicates that Ideological and Psychological factors (Politics is not good work, It is not for woman) is the barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh.

### **Limited access to decision making**

It was anticipated that Limited access to decision making may be a valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh. The study result shows that average mean of this point is 4.02 that is above the agree point (4.00) and have tendency to go to strongly agree point (5.00), means that the respondents have a highly positive feeling about Limited access to decision making. Thus this study indicates that Limited access to decision making is the barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh.

### **Financial problem (poverty and unemployment problem)**

It was anticipated that Financial problem (poverty and unemployment problem) may be a valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh. The study result shows that average mean of this point is 3.97 that is well above the average point (3.00) and very close to agree point (4.00), means that the respondents have a positive feeling about Financial problem (poverty and unemployment problem). Thus this study indicates that Financial problem (poverty and unemployment problem) is the barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh.

### **Lack of political party support (Insufficient representative in political party, masculine nature of politics)**

It was anticipated that Lack of political party support (Insufficient representative in political party, masculine nature of politics) may be a valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh. The study result shows that average mean of this point is 3.91 that is well above the average point (3.00) and very close to agree point (4.00), means that respondents have a positive feeling about Lack of political party support (Insufficient representative in political party, masculine nature of politics). Thus this study indicates that Lack of political party support (Insufficient representative in political party, masculine nature of politics) is the valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh

### **Religion factor**

It was anticipated that Religion factor may be a valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh. The study result shows that average mean of this point is 3.89 that is well above the average point (3.00) and very close to agree point (4.00), means that the respondents have a positive feeling about Religion factor. Thus this study indicates that Religion factor is the valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh.

### **Security problem**

It was anticipated that Security problem may be a valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh. The study result shows that average mean of this point is 3.83 that is well above the average point (3.00) and very close to agree point (4.00), means that the respondents have a positive feeling about Security problem. Thus this study indicates that Security problem is the valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh.

### **Lack of family support**

It was anticipated that Lack of family support may be a valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh. The study result shows that average mean of this point is 3.77 that is well above the average point (3.00) and very close to strongly agree point (4.00), means that the respondents have a positive feeling about Lack of family support. Thus this study indicates that Lack of family support is the valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh

### **Violence against women**

It was anticipated that Violence against women may be a valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh. The study result shows that average mean of this point is 3.63 that is well above the average point (3.00) and very close to agree point (4.00), means that the respondents have a positive feeling about Violence against women. Thus this study indicates that Violence against women is the valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh.

### **Lack of political education**

It was anticipated that Lack of political education may be a valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh. The study result shows that average mean of this point is 3.26 that is well above the average point (3.00) and very close to agree point (4.00), means that the respondents have a positive feeling about Lack of political education. Thus this study indicates that Lack of political education is the valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh.

### **Lack of acknowledgement of women's work ability**

It was anticipated that Lack of acknowledgement of women's work ability may be a valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh. The study result shows that average mean of this point is 2.95 that is very close to average point (3.00), means that Lack of acknowledgement of women's work ability slightly influence women not to participate in politics in Bangladesh.

### **Lack of time**

It was anticipated that Lack of time may be a valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh. The study result shows that average mean of this point is 2.49 that is well above the disagree point (2.00) and close to average point (3.00), means that the answer of this question( Lack of time ) is less satisfactory.

### **Child marriage**

It was anticipated that Child marriage may be a valid barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh. The study result shows that average mean of this point is 2.08 that is close to disagree point (2). So We can say that the answer of this question (Child marriage) is less satisfactory.

### **Summary of the findings**

The research found that Ideological and Psychological factors (Politics is not good work, It is not for woman) has strongly influenced women not to participate in politics in Bangladesh. Limited access to decision making has also strong effect woman not to participate in politics in Bangladesh. Financial problem (poverty and unemployment problem), Lack of political party support(Insufficient representative in political party, masculine nature of politics), Religion factor, Security problem are also strong barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh . Lack of family support and Violence against women and lack of political education have influenced women not to participate in politics in Bangladesh. Lack of acknowledgement of women's work ability and Lack of time have influenced women very little not to participate in politics in Bangladesh. Very few of the women are affected by the reason of Child marriage.

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## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### Introduction:

According to research the researcher found some barriers for women to participate in politics in Bangladesh. Research indicates that Ideological and Psychological factors (Politics is not good work, It is not for woman) is one of the barriers and it has significant influence and thus trend into an important reason for women not to participating in politics. Limited access to decision making, Financial problem (poverty and unemployment problem), Lack of political party support(Insufficient representative in political party, masculine nature of politics), Religion factor, Security problem are also strong barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh . Lack of family support and Violence against women and lack of political education are also other significant reasons. These issues are discussed in the following sections.

### Discussion

#### **Ideological and Psychological factors (Politics is not good work, It is not for woman)**

The study result revealed that Ideological and Psychological factors (Politics is not good work, It is not for woman) is a valid barrier as the mean value is 4.52. This finding is valid and acceptable because most of people think that politics is a bad and dirty work and it is not for the women. This research proved that Ideological and Psychological factors (Politics is not good work, It is not for woman) highly attract the women.

#### **Limited access to decision making**

According to the research it is justified that women cannot involve to the politics for their limited access to decision making. Respondent agreed with a mean of 4.02 that they cannot work in politics due to Limited access to decision making. Based on this research it can be said that Limited access to decision making influence the women not to participate in politics.

#### **Financial problem (poverty and unemployment problem)**

The study result revealed that Financial problem (poverty and unemployment problem) is a valid barrier as the mean value is 3.97. This findings is valid and acceptable because poverty and unemployment make the women inactive in politics.

#### **Lack of political party support (Insufficient representative in political party, masculine nature of politics)**

Women often lack adequate support from their own political parties which can limit their access to resources and opportunities. The study result revealed that Lack of political party support (Insufficient representative in political party, masculine nature of politics) is a valid reason for not to participate in politics as the mean value is 3.91. This findings is valid and acceptable because the presence of woman in political party is very small.

#### **Religion factor**

Respondent agreed with a mean of 3.89 that women face huge obstacles to participate in politics for religion factor. Religion plays a very vital role in keeping woman at home rather than going outside and participating in political decision making process. Sometimes the leadership of women is not accepted . So it has affect and this findings is valid and acceptable.

#### **Security problem**

The study result revealed that Security problem is a valid reason for women not to participate in politics as the mean value is 3.83. This findings is valid and acceptable because women often face physical and mental harassment outside home .In political work woman faces more risk than male. According to BRAC, 94% of Bangladeshi women have experienced sexual harassment in public spaces.

### **Lack of family support**

Deep-rooted patriarchal norms often undervalue women's rights and capabilities, limiting their opportunities in the public sphere. They do not get enough family support. So this finding is valid and acceptable.

### **Violence against women**

The study result revealed that Violence against women is a valid reason as the mean value is 3.63. This findings is valid and acceptable because women often face acid throwing problem, they often raped. It is a major concern, and women face harassment both physically and verbally, including in the cyber space. All these discourage women to join politics.

### **Lack of political education**

Lack of political education women cannot participate in politics. So it is valid reason

### **Lack of acknowledgement of women's work ability**

The study result shows that average mean of this point is 2.95 that is very close to average point (3.00), means that Lack of acknowledgement of women's work ability slightly influence the woman

### **Lack of time**

Women have to work enough at home like cooking, child caring etc. So they do not have enough time for politics. This research identified that some women are influenced by this barrier.

### **Child marriage**

The child marriage rate is very high in Bangladesh. After marriage the women get less opportunity for politics. This research proved that a very few of the women are influenced by this reason.

### **Managerial implications**

According to research this study found some barriers that faces women to participate in politics in Bangladesh. This research helps the women to be conscious about politics. The political party will be aware about womens' capability to contribute in politics. All the members of the family can evaluate the quality of the women. The society can understand the real explanation of religion's concept about politics. Non Government Organizations will be able to play a important role for the involvement of women in politics. This research helps the Government to take necessary steps to remove these barriers.

Ultimately womens' participation in politics will be increased and the country will be developed.

### **Conclusion**

The study was conducted in order to identify the barriers that faces women to participate in politics in Bangladesh. Data was collected through a set of structured questionnaire and quantitative approach was used to analyse the data. The researcher used 65 respondents who were selected the convenience sampling method. The researcher used Microsoft excels to find out result.

According to the result of this study Ideological and Psychological factors (Politics is not good work, It is not for woman) is one of the barriers and it has significant influence. Limited access to decision making, Financial problem (poverty and unemployment problem), Lack of political party support(Insufficient representative in political party, masculine nature of politics), Religion factor, Security problem are also strong barrier for woman to participate in politics in Bangladesh . Lack of family support and Violence against women and lack of political education are also other barriers. This research will help the women to be conscious about politics.

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## APPENDIX

### Questionnaire

Title: Barriers that women face to participate in politics in Bangladesh

**Section – A**

Direction: Please put tick (√) Mark on the box that best describes you.

1) Do you think political party system in Bangladesh is women friendly?

Yes  No

Don't know  Unanswered

2) What are you think about current state of womens' participation in politics?

Self-motivation  Constitutional and legal obligation

Decorative  No answer

3) Do you like womens' participation in politics?

Yes  No  Don't know  Unanswered

4) Do you feel comfortable on current level of womens' participation in politics in the country?

Low satisfactory  Fairly satisfactory

complete dissatisfactory  No answer

5) Do you think womens' participation in politics is necessary?

Yes  Don't know

No  Unanswered

Direction: Please Put tick (√) Mark on the appropriate box that best describes your opinion where SD = Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree N= Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree

Barriers that women face to participate in politics in Bangladesh					
	SD	D	N	A	SA
Ideological and Psychological factors (Politics is not good work, It is not for woman)					
Limited access to decision making					
Financial problem (poverty and unemployment problem)					
Lack of political party support (Insufficient representative in political party, masculine nature of politics)					
Religion factor					
Security problem					
Lack of family support					
Violence against women					



Lack of political education					
Lack of acknowledgement of womens' work ability					
Lack of time					
Child marriage					

**Section – B**

**Direction: Please Put tick (√) Mark on the box that best describes you.**

1) Age

- Below 20 years
- 20 to 30 years
- 30 to40 years
- Above 40 years

2) Sex

- Male
- Female

3) Monthly income

- Below Tk10000
- Tk 10000 to Tk 25000
- Tk 25000 to Tk 50000
- More than Tk 50000

4) Profession

- Govt. job
- Business person
- Teacher
- Engineer
- Student
- Others(please specify)

5)Residential area

- Sonadanga



- Nirala
- Bagmara
- Khalipur
- Other(please specify)

6) Marital Status

- Married
- Unmarried