Student Politics, Bangladesh and Solutions

Md. Yeasir Arafat

Undergraduate Student, Department of Political Science, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh,
s2211143179@ru.ac.bd.

Abstract: Bangladesh is a developing nation as well as a democratic state. The young generation in every particular country of the earth play the most pivotal role on the most influential issues of the state. Bangladesh is not different from it. From the history of liberation till now, the students are playing the most significant role in politics from the perspective of Bangladesh. But, the way the term "Politics" is exercised, this word just has lost its credibility on the basis of student politics in Bangladesh. They get involved in ruling or opposing political parties with a view to looting at the name of protecting the party interests that results in clashes, killings and political instability. Actually, the ruling party gets dominance on every educational institution of the state, suppressing other political parties which have an impact on distorting the democratic principles. This research paper is based on logical explanation of the situations of student politics in Bangladesh, an estimated figure on when they get into politics and why and what is the way to ensure sound student politics in Bangladesh.

Keywords— **Student politics, Party politics, Model government, Sound student politics.**

Introduction

Student politics is a buzzword in Bangladesh for various aspects. But the aspects are negative in almost every case. Though, the importance of the students and their engagement in the movements related to the liberation of Bangladesh cannot be denied, but the contemporary scenario is totally different. Educational institutions are failing to ensure quality education for the students as well as they are unable to keep the students in touch with proper education, to make them efficient in a certain field or to ensure their career opportunities. Again, the political pressure from the ruling party is apparent on the educational institutions to control and implement their interests. As a result, most students are engaging with politics so that they can be specialized by the ruling party and can develop the pathway of a secured job through nepotism and corruption influenced by the ruling party's leaders. But there is hope as well. Educational institutions can ensure sound student politics to be concerned about political exercises in a disciplined way. Actually, the research paper "Student Politics, Bangladesh and Solutions" begins by recognizing the significant role that student politics has historically played in shaping political landscapes, particularly in regions like Bangladesh. Student movements have often been at the forefront of societal change, advocating for justice, democracy, and social reform. However, the nature of student politics can be complex and challenging, as it is frequently influenced by broader political dynamics, which can sometimes lead to conflicts, disruptions in academic environments, and negative consequences for students' personal and academic lives. In the context of Bangladesh, where student politics has a rich history intertwined with the nation's struggle for independence and democracy, the need for sound and constructive student political engagement is especially pertinent. Despite its potential to serve as a training ground for future leaders and a platform for positive social change, student politics in Bangladesh has also faced criticism for being marred by violence, corruption, and undue influence from external political forces. These challenges raise important questions about how to guide student politics in a way that preserves its democratic values while minimizing its negative impacts. The introduction sets the stage for the research by highlighting the critical importance of addressing these challenges. It underscores the necessity of understanding the current state of student politics in Bangladesh, identifying the factors that influence it, and exploring ways to ensure that it remains a positive force within educational institutions and society at large. The research aims to fill a gap in the literature by providing a focused analysis of student political dynamics in Bangladesh, offering insights that can inform policy and practice to foster a healthier political environment for students. By examining the perspectives and experiences of students involved in politics, the study seeks to uncover the underlying issues and potential solutions for ensuring that student politics contributes positively to both individual development and the broader socio-political context. The introduction emphasizes that this research is timely and relevant, given the ongoing challenges and opportunities within the realm of student politics in Bangladesh and sets the foundation for the detailed exploration that follows.

Methodology

The methodology of the research study "Student Politics, Bangladesh and Solutions" involves a quantitative approach focused on collecting data from 100 participants through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire addresses three major options: "Very emerging," "I fear," and "Rather not answer," aiming to capture participants' perceptions and attitudes towards student politics in Bangladesh. Additionally, the study provides an estimated figure on the author's perception of when a student involves in politics. Participants are recruited through university networks, social media, and student organizations, ensuring a diverse sample in terms of age, gender, and educational background. The questionnaire is administered either online or in person, based on participants'

accessibility and preferences. The data collection process emphasizes obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring they understand the study's purpose and their rights. The collected data are analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize participants' responses to the three major options of the question. Graphical representations are used to illustrate the distribution of responses and key findings. Most importantly, the participants want to keep their identity confidential regarding this research paper. Finally, the methodology of the research involved a systematic approach to understand the dynamics of student politics within the context of Bangladesh. The study began with the identification of key themes and questions that would guide the data collection process, focusing on the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of students engaged in political activities. Overall, the methodology was designed to provide a deep and nuanced understanding of student politics in Bangladesh, drawing on both empirical data and theoretical insights to develop practical recommendations for fostering a healthier and more constructive political environment among students.

Literature Review

The literature on student politics reveals its significant impact on shaping democratic values and leadership skills, particularly within the context of Bangladesh. Gazi Mahabubul Alam's research provides a critical examination of the complexities of student politics in Bangladesh, highlighting the historical role of student movements in national politics. Alam discusses how student politics has been instrumental in major political shifts in the country, including the independence movement, but also notes the challenges posed by politicization and external influence on student organizations. His work underscores the need for reforms that promote ethical participation and reduce the negative impacts of partisan politics on student life. Md. Enayet Ullah Patwary's research further delves into the dynamics of student politics in Bangladesh, exploring how it is often intertwined with the broader political system. Patwary examines the socio-political influences that shape student political behavior, emphasizing the need for educational institutions to foster environments that encourage independent and constructive political engagement. His studies suggest that by promoting a culture of non-partisan participation and enhancing the political literacy of students, institutions can help mitigate the risks associated with heavily politicized student activities. In a broader context, Philip Altbach's global perspective on student activism complements these findings by highlighting how cultural and political contexts influence student movements worldwide. Altbach's work suggests that the challenges observed in Bangladesh are not unique, but rather part of a broader pattern where student politics can either contribute positively to democratic processes or become mired in conflict and external manipulation if not properly managed. Manja Klemenčič's studies on student representation in Europe further resonate with the challenges in Bangladesh, particularly regarding the need for transparent governance within student organizations. Klemenčič's research emphasizes the importance of creating democratic structures within student politics that can serve as a model for broader societal governance, a principle that is equally relevant in the Bangladeshi context. Rachel Brooks' exploration of international student activism adds another layer by identifying the diverse forms of student engagement across different political systems. Her work highlights the importance of understanding local contexts, like those in Bangladesh, while also recognizing the universal need for inclusivity, ethical participation, and effective institutional support. The research by Leach and Percy-Smith on student participation in governance underscores the need for formal mechanisms that ensure student voices are heard in institutional decision-making processes. This is particularly pertinent in Bangladesh, where student politics often intersects with national political agendas, necessitating clear guidelines and support systems to ensure that student activism remains constructive. Finally, Mowbray and Halse's work on the impact of educational policies on student political agency provides insights into how policy changes in Bangladesh could either support or hinder effective student engagement. Their findings suggest that well-crafted policies, which consider the unique political landscape of Bangladesh, are crucial for fostering sound student politics.

Definition of Student Politics

Student politics involves the active participation of students in political processes, typically within educational institutions, where they engage in activities such as advocacy, governance, and activism. This form of political engagement allows students to address issues that directly impact their academic and social environments. Participation in student politics often includes involvement in student unions, organizing or participating in campus protests, engaging in policy debates, and representing student interests in institutional governance. It serves as an essential platform for students to voice their concerns, influence decisions, and contribute to the democratic processes within their institutions. Student politics is often regarded as a critical arena for developing future political leaders and activists. It provides a unique opportunity for students to learn about democratic principles, leadership, and civic responsibility. As noted by Altbach (1984), student politics forms a significant part of the political landscape in many countries, giving students a structured way to express their views, affect institutional policies, and participate in broader social and political movements. This involvement is not just limited to campus issues but often extends to national and global concerns, reflecting the broader socio-political consciousness of the student body. Moreover, student politics has historically played a pivotal role in advocating for social justice, democratic governance, and educational reform. Furthermore, other authors emphasize that student movements have frequently acted as catalysts for significant political and social change, driving forward agendas that challenge existing power structures and advocate for the rights and welfare of marginalized groups. Through such engagement, student politics

not only shapes the immediate academic environment but also contributes to broader societal transformations by nurturing informed, active, and socially responsible citizens.

Contemporary Political Situations

Contemporary student politics in Bangladesh is highly significant yet teeming with different significant challenges. Historically, student politics has played a crucial role in the country's key political movements such as the Liberation War and the removal of military dictatorship in the 1990s. There's no doubt that student organizations continue to be very influential in upholding justice and democracy. Moreover, in recent times, student politics has become increasingly involved with anomalies, violence, corruption, and unethical behavior. Nevertheless all major political parties have student wing (Jugantor, 2010). Student wings of major political parties, particularly the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), have been criticized for their involvement in violent activities, extortion, and controlling campus amenities through intimidation and force. These practices have led to a fearful environment on campuses, where students feel pressured to align with ruling party politics to avoid repercussions. The current situation of student politics is totally related to gaining the political interest of a certain party by suppressing them, to make it an economic and earning sector, to establish politics as the most profitable organization. Now, the general students in Bangladesh fear all kinds of political organizations for their dominating and vicious activities. Actually, it has been found that the students, in the universities, engage with party politics, are the actual dropouts or painfully surviving in their academic life. There is a chain of command in every political unit of the universities where a student has to suffer a lot at their beginning for the never ending pressures from the political leaders or seniors of that party. It brutally hampers their educational life and career. Moreover, the frustrated political leaders or members do terrible acts that come at the newspapers everyday. In 2009, according to Md. Enayet Ullah Patwary, there were at least 141 student violence in different higher institutions which caused 3 students to die and 1463 injured. Among 141clashes 57 were committed due to intra conflict of the student wing of the ruling party, 22 were between Chhattra League and Chattra Shibir, 7 between Chattra Dal and Chattra League and the rest incidents were held among other organizations and student-police conflict (Daily Prothom Alo, Samakal, Naya Diganta, & Sangbad, n.d.). During the time between January 2009 to June 2010, at least 9 students were killed in different institutions. During this period 4 universities including Rajshahi And Comilla universities had to be closed for 287 days (Naya Diganta, 2010). In July – August 2010 more than one thousand violence were occurred in different Institutions. At least 10 students were killed in these incidents. Only in the Jahangirnagar University about 60 clashes were held within 19 months (Janakantha, 2010). The clashes and anomalies are not over yet. In recent time, a leader of a major political party at the Jahangirnagar University has raped a woman by calling the woman with her husband in the university area (The Daily Star, 2024). Recently in 2024, Dr. Sultan Mahmud Rana, a professor of the University of Rajshahi has shown the control over halls of that university by the Chhatraleague (Khoborer Kagoj, 2024). Establishing the supremacy in the campuses, hall occupation, extortion, tender manipulation, admission trade are the major causes for student violence. The major reasons for this type of perverted political exercises are intra party conflict, intolerant attitude towards opposite organizations, monetary affairs and supremacy over the institution, irresponsible role of the policy-makers, formulation of the committees of political parties irregularly and undemocratically, negligence of the authority of universities, lack of good will, contradictory teachers' politics, central control over the institutions etc. Despite these issues, student politics remains a vital platform for grooming future leaders and providing young people with experience in democratic engagement and civic responsibilities. Some student organizations have also demonstrated their capacity for positive impact, such as the BCL's efforts to assist communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Till now, the main purpose of keeping student politics in Bangladesh in undemocratic way is to gain party interest in any way. Student groups in Bangladesh are notoriously violent, punishing those accused of failing to adhere to the party line, such as in the case of Mr. Fahad, who had criticised the government on social media (Packer, 2024) . The debate over the role of student politics is ongoing, with some advocating for campuses free from political influence to ensure a safer and more focused academic environment. This debate was highlighted by recent events at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), where the High Court overturned a ban on political groups, raising concerns about potential increases in campus violence. Overall, while student politics in Bangladesh faces significant challenges, it continues to be an essential part of the nation's political landscape, offering both opportunities and obstacles for the country's future leaders.

Percentage of Students' Political Engagement

The students mostly join at any political party at the time of securing the undergraduate degrees at the national or public universities. Moreover, it happens for having a seat of living at the halls at university, poverty or rather for gaining certain interests. In fact, the engagement in the political parties starts from the high school level for local pressure, impact of other friends, curiosity for student politics, allurement by the political members. The estimated figure of the author's perception on when the students start involving in political parties in their life is given below from the total participation in party politics:

Institution	Age	Percentage
High School	14-17	10%
College	17-20	18%
University	20-26	72%

Major Disadvantages

Though, the parties try to show their diligence and patriotism by several activities and functions, but these are nothing against the chaos they create. Moreover, these are nominal and only for creating a good impression on the public. But, the internal anomalies are known to each and every person of Bangladesh. A study on 100 people of Bangladesh by asking a common question:

"What is your perception of the student politics of Bangladesh?"

There were three major options there including:

• Very emerging

• I fear

• Rather not answer.

The result of that study is given below on a percentage basis:

Percentage of People	Answers
60%	I Fear
15%	Very Emerging
25%	Rather Not Answer

The results from those people are taken anonymously and they were quite assured that their names will never be revealed though 25% people did not answer. It is also a result of political fear in the case of Bangladesh. According to Muhammad Yeahia Akhter, a research survey shows that 91% of the respondents (students, guardians, and teachers) opined that student teacher politics should not exist. About 93% of the respondents were of the opinion that subservient party politics of teachers and students should be stopped. Furthermore, the prime concern is regarding the constraint as a result from the student politics, that was placed by the unrest and other inevitable circumstances in which it has deteriorated the quality of education. The whole political program, activities, actions and committees are formulated by the political units of the University of Dhaka, which control the other universities and institutions. As it is mentioned before, doing politics at student level requires much time and one has to tolerate many things by the political leaders and the seniors. As a result, it hampers the educational and career opportunities of a student. Moreover, at the level of higher education, it is necessary to know more about sound and effective politics and then to implement them whereas a student involved in student politics stays far, far away from his academic education. Finally, it makes a student forget to be worthy for his family, society and nation rather impulses to do anything illegally and forcefully. Another anomaly is related to the appointment of the highest ranked officials and administrators in the universities. At present, it has become a common culture that V.C., Pro-V.C. and other members of the important bodies are appointed considering their activities in the ruling party supporter group (Akhter, 2008). Considering present circumstances, it can be concluded that the present Bangladeshi student politics is an activity which is guided by and for the national political parties' competition, interests and outlook (Alam et al., 2011).

The Ways to Ensure Sound Student Politics

There is certainly necessity of student politics for the demand of political awareness and competent leadership. But for student politics, it is necessary to create such an environment from where students can speak out against corruption, nepotism and other injustices and prepare to run the country with competent and just leadership. That is why politics needs to be practiced within a certain framework and law. There are certain conditions for implementing that healthy stream of student politics. The conditions are as follows:

1.   Administrative Controls:

All political practices should be done under the strict control of educational institutions. As in various clubs or organizations (e.g.: Model United Nations).

2.   Selection and Training:

Selection of members of political practice based on some determinants related to leadership qualities like ideological and mental status test, public speaking, communication skills and some other basic qualities. If someone has a strong desire, he should be provided training in that regard. If possible, it is better to start a course on politics.

3.   Practicing Anonymous Politics:

Ideological political parties should be formed without practicing the politics of any party in power or opposition (e.g.: justice party, socialist party, progressive party, conservative party, etc.) so that political conflict does not arise. Later, members can join political parties or form new political parties according to their choice and conscience.

4.   Model Government Formation:

They should be given the opportunity to form governments for a fixed term by holding regular debates, discussions and appropriate elections where they exercise powers similar to the Model United Nations under the supervision of institutions.

5.   Acknowledgment:

Members of successful governments or successful opposition parties should be recognized by certificates or other means so that they can later be employed in the national political arena.

6.   Above all, all decisions should be taken based on the principles of transparency, accountability, justice, rule of law, absolute tolerance etc.

7.   The UGC and the commission of national universities and other institutions must enact laws and policies for the controlled, sound and effective exercise of student politics in Bangladesh.

Ensuring sound student politics in Bangladesh involves creating a robust regulatory framework with clear guidelines and a code of conduct for student political activities. This framework should promote ethical behavior and hold students accountable for their actions. Encouraging a non-partisan approach is crucial, where student organizations focus on campus-specific issues rather than national political agendas, limiting the involvement of national political parties in student politics to ensure autonomy. Leadership training is essential, offering workshops, seminars, and mentorship programs to equip student leaders with the skills needed for ethical governance and effective leadership. Conflict resolution mechanisms should be established, including mediation services and dialogue forums, to peacefully resolve disputes among student groups and foster a culture of cooperation and understanding. Democratic processes must be upheld through transparent and fair elections, with independent oversight to prevent malpractice. Voter education campaigns are necessary to ensure students are informed and engaged participants in the electoral process. Accountability and oversight can be maintained by establishing independent bodies to monitor student organizations and conduct regular audits of their activities and finances. Inclusivity and representation are key, promoting the participation of students from diverse backgrounds, including marginalized groups, to ensure equal opportunities for all. Balancing academic responsibilities with political engagement is vital, with support services available to help student leaders manage their roles effectively. Civic engagement programs should be developed to involve students in community service and foster a sense of social responsibility. Civic education can be incorporated into the curriculum to teach students about their rights, responsibilities, and the importance of active citizenship. Collaboration with university authorities is also important, fostering partnerships to address common concerns and improve campus life. Regular meetings between student representatives and university officials can help resolve issues collaboratively, ensuring a more positive and constructive environment for student politics. At present the government must be promise-bound to minimize the criminalized activities of student politics. To check the terrorist, government and police administration must play a neutral and effective role. Government agencies must do their duties sincerely without any discrimination whether terrorists belong to the ruling party or oppositions. If the practice of student politics is so necessary, it should not be suppressed by any particular party interest. It must be carried out in a healthy manner through further additions and subtractions of these principles and conditions. If it is not implemented, then it should be understood that no one is concerned about political awareness, spread of political education, establishment of justice in the country, proper implementation of democracy, etc. The headache is only about party interests. The university is an autonomous institution (There are four in Bangladesh). Establishing a healthy stream of student politics there is very possible if the administration wants it. Otherwise, it is only a nominally autonomous institution and the country is a nominally

democratic state. Ensuring sound student politics requires a combination of education, structural reforms, and supportive environments that encourage ethical and responsible participation. One critical aspect is the promotion of political literacy among students, which helps them understand the importance of democratic engagement, the responsibilities that come with leadership, and the potential impact of their actions on the wider community (Giroux, 2009). By integrating political education into the curriculum, institutions can cultivate informed and thoughtful student leaders who are equipped to contribute positively to both their campuses and society. Effective student politics also depends on the establishment of transparent and democratic processes within student organizations. According to Kezar and Maxey (2012), transparency in governance and clear communication channels between student representatives and the wider student body are essential for building trust and ensuring accountability. These practices prevent the concentration of power and reduce the risk of corruption, making it more likely that student politics will reflect the genuine interests of the student population. Support from educational institutions is another crucial factor in fostering sound student politics. This support can take various forms, including mentorship from faculty advisors, access to resources for organizing events, and platforms for dialogue and debate (Astin, 1993). By providing a supportive environment, universities can help mitigate the potential for conflicts and ensure that student politics remains focused on constructive outcomes rather than divisive or disruptive activities. Additionally, sound student politics should be inclusive, giving a voice to all students, regardless of their background or beliefs. Inclusivity ensures that student politics reflects the diversity of the student body and addresses a broad range of issues that are important to different groups within the campus community (Benneworth, 2013). Encouraging diverse participation helps to create a more dynamic and representative political environment that can better serve the needs of all students. Lastly, fostering a connection between student politics and broader social issues can enhance the relevance and impact of student political activities. By engaging with local communities and participating in social justice initiatives, student leaders can extend their influence beyond the campus and contribute to meaningful societal change (Rhoads, 1998). This connection to real-world issues ensures that student politics is not just an academic exercise, but a platform for developing leadership skills that are applicable in the wider world. In conclusion, ensuring sound student politics requires a multi-dimensional approach that includes political education, transparent governance, institutional support, inclusivity, and a connection to broader societal issues. By implementing these strategies, educational institutions can foster a healthy political environment that empowers students to engage responsibly and effectively in the democratic process.

Results and Conclusion

The students are the emerging, significant and most vital part of the development of a certain nation. It is not different in the case of Bangladesh as well. It is a densely populated country with the young generation at the peak of the percentage of the population. But, this stigma named "Student Politics" is a hindrance to educational, developmental and socio-economic improvement of this country as it is not exercised in a just and proper democratic manner. So, it is high time to take some appropriate initiatives to bring structural and functional changes in this body. The steps are provided above, but the basic thing to do is to control it legally and make it an effective and non-violent organization. Students tend to be curious about unknown things. If they are provided with actual and proper democratic and political knowledge and practices through a disciplined and organized way, the state will have a peaceful and developing environment which will allow efficient leadership, better governance and continuous development. No one was harmed while doing this research. The information taken by the participants is confidential and it has their consent. It is also declared by them to not mention their names in any case. The research article is based on data collection from the 100 participants, an estimated figure on the perception of the author about when the students start involving in student politics at their life. Finally, the article reveals possible ways to ensure effective and sound student politics in the perspective of Bangladesh.

Conflicts of Interest

The author has declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

1. Altbach, P. G. (1984). Student politics in the Third World. *Higher Education, 13(6), 635-655.* *https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00137017*
2. Jugantor. (2010, March 23).
3. Naya Diganta. (2010, July 22).
4. Janakantha. (2010, September 23).
5. Patwary, M. E. U. (2011). Recent trends of student politics in Bangladesh. *Society & Change*, 5(4), 67-78.
6. Alam, G. M., Rabby, T. G., Boon, T. L., Khan, I., & Hoque, K. M. (2011). National development and student politics in Bangladesh. *African Journal of Business Management,* 5(15), 6044–6057.
7. Akhter, M. Y. (2008). Corruption in public universities: Nature and remedies (p. 22). *A.H. Development Publishing House.*
8. The Daily Star. (2024, February 4) https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/ju-bcl-leader-among-4-arrested-raping-woman-after-confining-husband-hall-room-3535906
9. Khoborer Kagoj. (2024, May 29).
10. Packer, H. (2024, April 12). Bangladeshi students urge end to violent campus politics. *Times Higher Education*. https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/bangladeshi-students-urge-end-violent-campus-politics
11. Astin, A. W. (1993). What matters in college? Four critical years revisited. *Jossey-Bass.*
12. Benneworth, P. (Ed.). (2013). University engagement with socially excluded communities. *Springer*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4875-0
13. Giroux, H. A. (2009). Youth in a suspect society: Democracy or disposability?. *Palgrave Macmillan*. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230100565
14. Kezar, A., & Maxey, D. (2012). The changing faculty and student success: National trends for faculty composition over time. *Association of American Colleges and Universities.*
15. Rhoads, R. A. (1998). Freedom's web: Student activism in an age of cultural diversity. *Johns Hopkins University Press.*
16. Daily Prothom Alo, Samakal, Naya Diganta, Sangbad. (n.d.). [Collected from features].