

The Role of Non-Formal Education in Preventing Social Deviance: A Qualitative Study on Selected Urdu-Speaking Bihari Camps in Dhaka City

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Abstract

Non-formal education refers to educational programs designed to help learners who may not have had the opportunity to obtain formal education or basic reading and writing skills, addressing a range of community issues. Social deviance encompasses wrongdoing ranging from minor infractions to the most serious crimes, often associated with social exclusion, limited resources, and opportunities. The Biharis are an ethnic minority. They moved to Bangladesh in 1947. They live in camps. For years, they could not get an education or jobs. This marginalization leaves them more vulnerable to involvement in deviant behaviour such as drug misuse, theft, and violent crime. In this context, the present study aims to examine the role of non-formal education in reducing social deviance within the Bihari camps, focusing on the Kalshi, Mohammadpur, and Mirpur-11 camps in Bangladesh. The research employed a qualitative phenomenological methodology, and data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with 30 participants, sampled using convenience and snowball sampling methods. The data collected suggests a significant finding: the absence of skills training and awareness leads to the involvement of Bihari communities in social deviant activities. Vocational education, life skills, and community-oriented programs are shown to play a key role in this regard. Other transformational effects of NFE interventions result from a transformed value system that supports households and communities in escaping poverty and preventing social deviance.

Keywords: Non-Formal Education, Social Deviance, Bihari People, Life Skills, Community Development.

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1.0 Introduction

Non-formal education plays a very crucial role in social development, especially within Compared with formal education, which takes place settings, non-formal education encompasses

a wide variety of educational approaches, including life skills training, community-based education, vocational programs, and after-school activities (Taheri & Welsh, 2016; Botvin et al., 2014). These programs aim to provide flexible learning that can be custom-made to meet the needs of marginalized communities (Jugl et al., 2021; Tolan et al., 2013). Through non-formal education (NFE) programs, the socio-emotional skills of youths are enhanced, reducing the number of risk factors that may lead them to commit a crime. (Liuzzi et al., 2021).

Social deviance, defined as behavior that does not conform to societal expectations and norms, is a significant concern in criminology and sociology. Sometimes, there are bigger problems. People may fight or hurt others. Some may join groups that fight. Some children may stop going to school. (Sampson & Groves, 1989; Agnew, 1992). Social deviance theories, including labeling theory (Becker, 1953), social disorganization theory (Sampson et al., 1997), and strain theory (Merton, 1938), highlight several factors that lead to deviant behavior, such as poverty, social isolation, and lack of educational opportunity.

Non-formal education may be quite effective in resolving the issues of the marginalized population, including the Urdu-speaking Bihari minority in Bangladesh. These people are often referred to as stranded Pakistanis and consist of individuals who immigrated to what was then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) at the time of the 1947 Partition of India (Redclift, 2013; Kuczkiwicz-Fras, 2019). This has created systemic poverty, social ostracism, and political disenfranchisement of the Bihari group (Haider, 2018).

Due to the Bihari community's statelessness, severe socioeconomic problems have aggravated social deviance (Iri, 2020; Kuczkiwicz-Fras, 2019). Conversely, non-formal programs such as vocational training, life skills training, and community-based learning have also proved effective in minimizing the risks of deviant behavior (Botvin et al., 2014; Farrington et al., 2016). DuBois et al. (2022) state that such programs may provide Bihari youth with opportunities to join society and access employment.

Social deviance has been a significant concept in criminological theory. The strain theory (Merton, 1938) indicated that deviation occurs when people fail to obtain culturally acceptable goals legally. According to Sampson and Groves' (1989) social disorganization theory, groups with weak social ties are more likely to experience high rates of abnormal behavior. The labeling theory holds that those branded as deviants may internalize the label and commit even more deviant acts (Becker, 1953). These opinions hold that aberrant behavior should be avoided through social integration, legitimate means of achievement, and positive socialization. International agencies believe that targeted education and NFE, which are citizen-centered, can decrease the drivers of violent extremism and social marginalization by fostering dialogue, the rule of law, and resiliency within marginalized populations. (UNESCO, 2019).

Non-formal education equips people, especially youth, with skills and resources to tackle societal problems (Botvin et al., 2015; Tolan et al., 2013). Such learning activities have been observed to enhance self-efficacy, promote social cohesion, and

reduce delinquent behaviors (Farrington et al., 2017; DuBois et al., 2022). To illustrate, programs on life skills emphasising the capacity to decide, solve problems, and regulate emotions have been proven to lessen substance abuse, aggression, and gang affiliation among at-risk kids (Botvin et al., 2015; Farrington et al., 2016). Reviews of the systematic evidence have shown that educational programs, formal or non-formal, are likely to reduce crime rates by keeping youth engaged in productive activities and enhancing social-emotional competencies (De Vries, 2018).

Non-formal education has the potential to address the unique challenges faced by youth in refugee camps and disadvantaged regions of the Bihari community. These programs may assist young people in developing positive identities, reinforcing their social support (Botvin et al., 2014; DuBois et al., 2022).

The Bihari people have long been in Bangladesh but have been denied access to basic services such as employment, health, and education, as well as the right to be citizens (Redclift, 2013; Haider, 2028). Their failure to hold citizenship has seen many Biharis being socially and economically marginalized, especially among the young generation. Kuczkiwicz-Fras (2019) reports that young people in Bihari tend to engage in aberrant behavior due to their inability to integrate socially and to access education.

Non-formal education programs, such as vocational and life skills training, have been promising in equipping disadvantaged adolescents with the means to overcome these challenges (Tolan et al., 2014; Farrington et al., 2017). These initiatives could also reduce the risk of social deviance and enable Bihari youth to integrate into the broader population, as they offer a range of options beyond engaging in criminal or deviant conduct (Botvin et al., 2014; DuBois et al., 2022).

The research is relevant because it addresses a problem that has received insufficient attention: how oppressed and stateless populations (such as the Biharis in Bangladesh) can prevent social deviance through non-formal education (Botvin et al., 2014; Farrington et al., 2016).

1.1 Research Objectives

- i. To analyze the importance of non-formal education as a preventive measure against social deviance in marginalized people in Bihari camps.
- ii. To find out the main problems that prevent the introduction and performance of non-formal education within Bihari society.
- iii. To examine the opportunities that non-formal education has in empowering social inclusion and sustainable development in Bihari camps.

1.2 Research Question

- i. What is the importance of non-formal education as a preventive measure against social deviance in marginalized young people in Bihari camps?
- ii. What are the obstacles to the introduction and persistence of non-formal education within the Bihari Society?
- iii. What are the opportunities of non-formal education that can empower social inclusion and sustainable development in Bihari Camps?

2. Literature Review

Non-formal education (NFE) has been critical in closing education gaps, especially for marginalized communities not covered by formal education systems. The Bihari community, like others, experiences chronic poverty, illiteracy, and social exclusion in Bangladesh, which tends to make them more susceptible to deviance and crime. Current literature highlights the importance of NFE, where literacy, training, and social awareness not only enhance livelihoods but also strengthen community cohesion and reduce deviant behavior.

2.1 Non-formal Education and Community Development

Bangladesh is keen to ensure quality education for everyone through two main avenues: formal Government schools and non-formal schools run by NGOs. Although both aim for quality learning, formal schools tend to be more rigid in their approaches, less engaging, and less likely to integrate life skills, whereas NGO schools are slightly more likely to do so. This paper provides a comparative analysis to determine which system is more appropriate to guarantee quality education in rural communities (Mamun & Akhter, 2019). Ahmed (2024) examines informal and non-formal education as an important factor in developing and enhancing social cohesion and empowerment in Pakistan.

Sultana & Haque (2018) examine that to realize a sustainable future, education on sustainable development is necessary in Bangladesh. Non-formal education (NFE) steps in to address literacy gaps and enhance learning opportunities outside the mainstream education system.

Mamun and Rahman (2013) discuss how Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) can improve the lives of poor children in Bangladesh. They gathered data using a mixed-method approach by collecting responses from NGO officers, teachers, students, and guardians who participated in NFPE programs. The research indicates that while these programs significantly enhance children's life skills, health, and environmental awareness, they are not income-generating.

Rahman et al. (2010) explored how the Bangladesh Government and India have extended non-formal education (NFE) to children and adults (ages 8-45) who are not yet in school or who have dropped out of primary school (curriculum-based). The programs offer skill-based training for grades III-VIII, facilitate transfer to formal schools, and support employment. As part of national social mobilization strategies, countries cooperate by exchanging experiences and helping target groups realize their potential.

Ara & Mahjabeen (2010) analyzed moral deviation among the youths (18–35) of Bangladesh, as these individuals comprise one-third of the population. Most of them are illiterate, poor, and lack family guidance, with an estimated number of 28 million adolescents and 60 million youths. Unemployment, peer influence, and a lack of proper education are among the factors that contribute to youth falling out of step with society.

The study analysed transformative learning patterns in marginalized communities through non-formal education, using a qualitative phenomenological approach in the Bondowoso District (Imsiyah et al., 2023). Through interviews, observations, and documentation, the study discovered that local arts and cultural centers contribute to empowerment by offering training in traditional dance, music, handicrafts, welding, carpentry, and other vocational skills.

2.2 Underprivileged Bihari Community

Rahaman et al. (2020) are tracking the historical background and socio-cultural development of the Bihari people in Bangladesh. Being forced to migrate during the 1947 partition, Biharis have had to deal with the problem of assimilation since they possess a unique language and culture. Even after acquiring citizenship, a significant portion of them are marginalized, living in poverty, being socially excluded, and having restricted access to services.

Elahee (2013) compared the livelihoods of the Biharis in the Khalishpur camp, Khulna, with those of similar populations in a nearby Bengali slum. The research identified that Biharis are in extreme poverty conditions, they have no land, are illiterate, and are exploited daily, mostly by local businessmen, by means of surveys and FGDs. Sohel et al. (2024) examined livelihood problems and coping mechanisms among the Biharis residing in the Geneva Camp, Dhaka, through interviews, key informant discussions, and participant observation. The results showed dire housing conditions, poor sanitation, water, fuel, and power shortages, high unemployment, inadequate health care, and weak educational infrastructure.

2.3 Social deviance and illiteracy

In his study, Patoari (2020) identifies the socioeconomic, cultural, and family factors that have led to the increase in juvenile delinquency in Bangladesh. Drug abuse, drug trafficking, sex crimes, extortion, and participation in criminalized politics are some of the problems that the study identifies as the results of poverty, overcrowding, and low-income families.

Sharma, D., & Zaman, K. (2020) discussed the relationship of poverty, unemployment, inequality, and illiteracy as determinants of criminality in Bangladesh. Most of the criminals belong to poor classes, and crimes such as theft, robbery, drug abuse, and drug trafficking are associated with economic distress both in rural and urban regions.

Khan and Talukder (2021) studied the spatial distribution of crime in Bangladesh using Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping, a technology that was not well developed in the country. The paper focused on administrative units, examining crime frequencies in regions between 2016 and 2018, and observed that large urban areas, particularly Dhaka and Chattogram, had higher crime rates.

Haider & Iamtrakul (2022) examined urban street crime (USC) hotspots in the residential and business districts of Chittagong, Bangladesh. Through the primary and

secondary data, findings have shown that males, married landlords, and middle-income groups are at a higher risk of victimization than other demographic groups.

Ahsan (2023) discusses the nature of poverty in Dhaka, Bangladesh, during the COVID-19 era. Although countries have made national developments in terms of GDP growth and human development, urban poor populations are experiencing complex problems such as income-consumption poverty, unemployment, stigmatization, eviction, and poverty, leading to social crimes. Kamruzzaman and Hakim (2015) investigated juvenile delinquency in Dhaka city by surveying boys (65.7%) and girls (34.3%). Results indicate that family conflict (77.8) and poverty had a powerful effect on the youth engagement in crime, drug abuse (42.6), theft (32.4), and hijacking (10.2). There was also peer influence, with 34.3% of the influence attributed to negative peer groups. Educational disruption was also present as a result of poverty, since 66.7% had dropped out of education, with almost half (49.1%) of the interviewees being illiterate. In their study, Sypion et al. (2024) examined how the socioeconomic factors influencing crime in Szczecin, Poland, have been affected using regression and random forest models. They discovered that poverty indicators were more likely to contribute to crime than the prosperity indicators, especially unemployment and dependency on municipal support.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study draws on two theories to explain why people break rules. The first is Strain Theory. Merton (1938) said that society tells everyone to want money and success. But not everyone can go to school or find a good job to get these things legally. When people cannot reach their goals the right way, they feel pressure. This is called strain. Some people react by committing crimes to get what they want. This is called innovation (Agnew, 1992; Bernard, Snipes, & Gerould, 2016). Others may give up on success completely and turn to drugs or withdraw from society. This is called retreatism (Curran & Renzetti, 2001). Some people reject society's goals and try to create new ones. This is called rebellion (Taylor, Walton, & Young, 2013). Merton (1938) believed that crime is not just a personal problem. It comes from problems in society. The second theory is Social Learning Theory. Bandura (1977, 1986) said that people learn by watching others. There are four steps. First, you must pay attention to the behaviour. Second, you must remember it. Third, you must be able to copy it. Fourth, you must have a reason to do it, like a reward. Akers (1973, 1998) used this idea to explain crime. He said that people learn to commit crimes by spending time with others who do. If they see these people receive rewards rather than punishment, they will copy the behaviour (Akers & Jennings, 2009; Sutherland, 1947).

Table-01: Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance and the Role of Non-Formal Education in the Bihari Camps Community

Theory	Main Idea	Connection to Bihari Camps Community & NFE
Merton's Strain	Society wants everyone to be rich and successful. But not	People in Bihari camps are poor and lack jobs or schools. This strain may

Theory (1938)	everyone can go to school or find a good job to achieve this legally. This gap creates pressure that may lead to crime or to giving up (Merton, 1938; Agnew, 1992).	lead to crime (innovation) or drug abuse (retreatism) (Bernard et al., 2016; Curran & Renzetti, 2001). NFE reduces strain by teaching skills to achieve goals legally (Merton, 1938).
Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977; Akers, 1973)	People learn by watching others. If someone sees friends commit crimes and face no punishment, they learn that crime is okay (Bandura, 1977; Akers, 1998).	In the camps, people live near delinquent peers. They watch and learn deviant acts (Akers, 1998; Sutherland, 1947). NFE changes learning by providing teachers as positive models and rewarding good behavior (Bandura, 1977).
Combined Framework	Strain creates the <i>reason</i> for frustration. Social learning explains the <i>process</i> of how deviance is copied from others. NFE can fix both problems.	NFE prevents deviance by: 1. Reducing Strain: Offering new skills for legal success (Merton, 1938). 2. Changing Learning: Replacing bad role models with good teachers (Bandura, 1977; Akers, 1998).

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4. Methodology

This study used a qualitative research design to explore the factors contributing to social deviance among people living in camps in urban Dhaka and to examine how non-formal education can prevent deviant behavior among these residents. This qualitative study has adopted a phenomenological approach (Husserl, 2001) to understand the subjective means and their involvement in various deviant activities among these people (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Through this approach, the study has captured detailed insights into why non-formal education is needed to prevent social deviance and support community development.

4.1 Data Sources and Collection

In-depth interviews were conducted with 30 Individuals. A semi-structured interview format (Harrell & Bradley, 2009) allowed for flexible discussion, encouraging participants to express their thoughts on this issue. This design was chosen for its possibilities to capture significant understanding regarding this issue and to produce meaningful qualitative data. Both primary and secondary data sources have been used.

4.2 Study Area

The research was conducted purposefully in three selected camps in Dhaka City. The camps are Kalshi Bihari Camp, Mirpur 11 Bihari Camp, and Mohammadpur Geneva Bihari Camp; all are located in urban areas of Bangladesh's capital city. These three

camp are chosen because of frequent deviant activity in these areas, and, in most cases, no formal education system is available to the people living there.

4.3 Criteria of Primary Data Collection and Sampling Technique

A total of 30 participants were chosen using both purposive and snowball sampling.

The inclusion criteria of these participants are

- i. Be aged over 15 years.
- ii. Reside in these three selected camps of Dhaka city
- iii. Have some knowledge about the importance of education and how it can prevent social deviance in their community.
- iv. Be willing to share their experiences through interviews.

Purposive sampling (Campbell et al., 2020) was used to select potential participants. The second type of sampling technique, snowball sampling, has been used to obtain meaningful information from difficult-to-reach potential candidates (Goodman, 1961; Noy, 2008). Interviews were collected in both their native language and Bengali. Before the interview, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the process at any time if anything contradicted their beliefs (Jossenson, 2007). Each interview lasted about 30 minutes.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

The article was founded on the ethics of the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its amendments (Riis, 2003). The purpose of the study, the participants' right to withdraw, and the precautionary measures for confidentiality and anonymity were explained to each participant. No verbal consent was obtained for the data collection. No information was kept secret, and no identifying details were provided as the report was released. The study is free from bias and has no intention to harm anyone.

4.5 Limitations of the Study

There are limitations to this study. The study was conducted with a small sample (30 respondents) and in only three camps in Dhaka, making it difficult to generalize the results to other Bihari groups. The data were primarily based on self-reports, which can be influenced by social desirability or recall bias. Validation was challenging because no reliable records were available to verify previous non-formal education programs.

4.6 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic characteristics of the thirty participants from Kalshi and Mirpur 11 and Mohammadpur camps in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Table 02: Demographic profile of Respondents (N = 30)

Demographic variable	Category	Frequency(n)	Percentage(%)
Study Area	Kalshi	10	33.33%
	Mirpur 11	10	33.33%

	Mohammadpur	10	33.33%
Age	Under 18	5	16%
	18-25	7	23%
	26-40	7	23%
	41-60	6	20%
	Above 60	5	16%
Gender	Male	18	60%
	Female	12	40%
Education Level	Illiterate	19	63.3%
	Primary	9	30%
	Secondary	1	3.33%
	Higher Secondary	1	3.33%
	Graduate/Postgraduate	0	0%
Employment Status	Unemployed	11	36.67%
	Employed (Full-time)	5	16.67%
	Employed (Part-time)	7	23.33%
	Self-employed	5	16.67%
	Student	2	6.67%
Duration of living in the camp	Less than 1 year	0	0%
	1-5 years	5	16.67%
	5-10 years	8	26.67%
	More than 10 years	17	56.67%

Source: Created by authors

5. Findings and Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed word-for-word in Bengali and then translated into English for analysis. An audio recording was done to verify transcriptions. Important

patterns in the data were identified and described using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The themes were analyzed together to ensure they were consistent with the research objectives. The researchers understood their assumptions and remained reflexive and objective during the investigation.

Table 03: Thematic Analysis of Perceptions on Non-Formal Education and Social Deviance in the Bihari Camps Community.

Theme	Codes under each theme	Illustrated Quotes
Understanding the concept of Non-Formal Education	NFE is skill-based, adaptable, and practical, differing from formal education.	<p><i>"We find it difficult to buy food; how are we going to think about school fees? Every day is a struggle to survive until the next meal. Education is nice, of course, but when a father cannot earn a living with rice, how would he consider spending money on books and tuition? This is the reason our children cease to attend school."</i> (Respondent 3)</p> <p>Another respondent emphasized the conditional nature of educational aspirations, noting:</p> <p><i>"If education were free, more of our children could continue. The Government schools ask for money in many ways, even if they say it is free. Parents get tired, and the children stay at home. We want education, but survival comes first."</i> (Respondent 11)</p> <p><i>"We want to make our children also educated like the other people, we want to make them a good human as well but it remains only a dream, we do not have that extra money to give education to our child, and we do not get proper recognition from the formal schools so we feel discourage to admit our children in those schools but if non-formal schooling come to our premises then we will be happy to admit our children in these types of schools."</i> (Respondent 23)</p>
Non-Formal Education and Its Positive Impact	NFE brought economic empowerment, self-confidence, and hope,	<i>"The NGOs immediately began to teach sewing. After several months of membership, I could sew clothes for my</i>

	<p>particularly to women and youth.</p>	<p><i>neighbors. I was respected, people came to me for help, and I earned some cash. It was different, and at that time, we were hopeful."</i> (Respondent 5)</p> <p><i>"The men were given driving lessons. Others even became bus attendants, and others became rickshaw runners. At least they were not hanging around with the wrong people, nor doing anything. They could live a respectable life due to their education."</i> (Respondent 9)</p> <p><i>"They were hopeful about the parlor training of our girls. They believed that they could act on their own. However, there is nothing of the sort now. Hope is lost as well when such projects are discontinued."</i> (Respondent 14).</p>
<p>Development of a Community through Non-Formal Education</p>	<p>NFE is regarded as an instrument of group development that enhances living, cohesiveness, and social esteem.</p>	<p><i>"When an individual in a family is taught something, it is beneficial to the entire family. When a boy learns to drive, he earns money at home. When a girl is taught to sew, she may help her siblings get an education. Gradually, the community is strengthened. It is the way in which training is developing us as a group, rather than as individuals."</i> (Respondent 08)</p> <p><i>"Our community has been deprived of schooling; this is the reason we are not literate. Since we are not literate, our community is often viewed negatively in society. If non-formal education can be brought, at least we can educate our children and make our community better in the future"</i> (Respondent 27)</p>
<p>Challenges and Opportunities of Providing Non-Formal Education</p>	<p>Despite numerous opportunities, one of the most significant obstacles is the lack of resources, institutional support, and sustainability.</p>	<p><i>"Training should not be performed once, but oftentimes. People get bored when it comes and goes. We can trust it when we know that it will go on. Shows fade in and out of existence like summer rain."</i> (Respondent 16)</p> <p>A combination of free education and</p>

		<p>skills will improve our lives. When job skills training is paired with literacy lessons, people will read and earn income. That will bring change to our camps. (Respondent 7)</p>
<p>Learning through a Role Model in Informal Settings</p>	<p>Success stories of peers make people more involved, and role models motivate people.</p>	<p><i>"When one is taught how to sew or learns how to drive, people look up to them. The little boy says that he is working. I want to do it too. Books do not teach us these examples. However, here is the issue: few such role models are going to last, since there are no shows anymore to make such a role model."</i> (Respondent, 7) <i>"It is true that if any role model or influential people come to our community, we have seen people try to admire him, few months ago a famous religious scholar visited in our camps and requested us to do halal earning that means he requested not to involve any illegal activities, at that time many people were motivated to earn a meaningful life with honest income."</i> (Respondent 26)</p>
<p>Social Deviance and Non-Formal Education</p>	<p>NFE can also reduce deviant behavior by reducing unemployment and idleness, particularly among youth.</p>	<p><i>"We are just wasting time since we are not being trained by anyone anymore. Being seated in groups, the boys become bad. They are fighters, smokers, and some are drug users. They will lack employment and not be able to escape crime. This is something that we must accept in real life. When skills training is returned, boys will be working and not using drugs or committing crimes. Education would keep people busy doing good; otherwise, they would be busy doing something wrong. NFE may buy back the youth, but already lost men might have lost their lives permanently."</i> (Respondent 18) <i>We grow up in a community where we</i></p>

		<p><i>are seen a person of hatred in our society, we do not have any education, we do not have any skills, we are like alien, people do not want to talk to us, but we have our own family, we have our children and wives we have to feed them as a result many of us are involving in these types of deviant behavior. Still, if our community has the opportunity to receive non-formal education, we believe that our people will try to become better.</i> (Respondent 21)</p>
<p>Precautions of Deviant Behavior through Non-Formal Education</p>	<p>It is perceived as a preventative measure to curb future deviance by fostering positive interactions with children.</p>	<p><i>"Our boys will not lose time in case there is regular training. They will work and ponder over their future. In the absence of such programs, they are left idly, and a mind with nothing to do always tends to drift towards crime. NFE is education-protection of our children."</i> (Respondent 6) <i>"Education, formal or non-formal, helps in keeping people occupied with good things. It is a barrier between them and crime. When it is free and continuous, it will save numerous young lives."</i> (Respondent 13)</p>

Source: Created by authors

6. Discussion

The findings of this paper highlight a compelling link between poverty and the persistence of educational injustice and social deviance in Bihari camps in Dhaka. Respondents placed high emphasis on economic hardship as the cause of irregular school attendance, as Sultana and Haque (2018) note that socioeconomic disparities adversely impact formal education in Bangladesh. This is congruent with Lal (2015), who relates illiteracy to poverty cycles, welfare dependency, and participation in crime. It is possible to attribute it to the Strain Theory elaborated by Merton: the youth at the camps are socialized to achieve mainstream goals (e.g., stability, respectability), but the structural barriers of poverty and isolation deprive them of the means to do so, consequently driving them to deviance.

The physical benefits of community-based learning are evident in the respondents' memories of NGO-held non-formal education (NFE) courses, where they learned to sew, drive, and train at the beauty parlour. This agrees with Ahmed (2024), who discovered that informal and non-formal education empowers marginalized

societies, provides them with opportunities to participate in governance, and helps them feel included. Additionally, one respondent noted that when a family member learns something, it benefits *the entire family*. *When a boy learns to drive, he earns money at home. When a girl is taught to sew, she may help her siblings get an education. Gradually, the community is strengthened. It is the way in which training is developing us as a group, rather than as individuals.*" By (Respondent no 08). Equally important, Imsiyah et al. (2023) underscored the same fact in Indonesia, stating that the marginalized youth in Indonesia had been able to break the poverty cycle owing to the cultural and vocational NFE programs, as one of the respondents stated that *"The NGOs immediately began to teach sewing. After several months of membership, I could sew clothes for my neighbors. I was respected, people came to me for help, and I earned some cash. It was different, and at that time, we were hopeful."* (Respondent 5), so it can be said that non-formal education can break the poverty cycle.

These lessons can be traced to the fact that in regions where NFEs were skill-based, respondents recalled feeling more dignified, less idle, and having more opportunities for a limited livelihood.

However, these failures in the recent past of such programs have led to frustrations and vulnerability of the idle youth to deviance, and this is also reflected in Ara and Mahjabeen (2010), who discovered that lack of education, unemployment, and influence of peers have co-existed with moral deviation among the youth in Bangladesh. The stories of the respondents, where the boys sit and consequently get into bad activities, have a direct relation with the results of Kamruzzaman and Hakim (2015), where the role of disrupting their education and the pressure of peers was significant in contributing to juvenile delinquency in Dhaka it also matches with one respondent comments *We grow up in a community where we are seen a person of hatred in our society, we do not have any education, we do not have any skills, we are like alien, people do not want to talk to us, but we have our own family, we have our children and wives we have to feed them as a result many of us are involving in these types of deviant behavior. Still, if our community has the opportunity to receive non-formal education, we believe that our people will try to become better (Respondent-21)*. Here, the structure of Merton recurs when the means of a legitimate life (education and work) are denied, deviant ways of adaptation (drug use, crime) become increasingly likely.

The findings also show that the community strongly believes the introduction of NFE programs would deter crime. This preventive element is parallel to Rahman et al. (2010), who have proven that NFE programs in South Asia are not only literacy formats, but also mobilization sites within the community that reduce social vulnerabilities, as one of the respondents said, *"Education, formal or non-formal, helps in keeping people occupied with good things. It is a barrier between them and crime. When it is free and continuous, it will save numerous young lives.* The respondents' adaptability to continuous training is also consistent with the findings of Mugabi et al. (2021), who reported that irregular or inconsistent education (during COVID-19 in Uganda) diminished employability and increased the risk of marginalization. Thus, the necessity of long-range, multifaceted NFE programs in the community is an international and even

local sign that it is essential to engage people on the ground for extended periods to prevent deviance by empowering them.

Within the broader context of the marginalization of the Bihari people, literature points to ongoing service denial, challenges in obtaining citizenship, and socioeconomic deprivation (Rahaman et al., 2021; Sohel et al., 2023). These institutional inequalities explain why formal schooling is inadequate to address the community's needs. Non-formal education has the potential to replace not only social inclusion but also crime prevention, as it is a flexible, community-based, and skill-based education type. Meanwhile, NFE may be a social equalizer, either by empowering youth in informal contexts through livelihood training, literacy, and role-model learning, or by serving as a guardian against deviance.

Overall, the discussion has established that the findings contribute to and expand the existing literature, demonstrating that non-formal education is not only an alternative source of literacy but also a preventive and enabling factor in disadvantaged settings. By placing the findings of this research within the framework of Strain Theory outlined by Merton, one can understand why structural exclusion leads to deviance and why NFE offers alternative, yet legal, methods for achieving social mobility and belonging for youth.

7. Recommendation

Based on the qualitative findings, this study offers the following concise recommendations:

- i. All Bihari camps need to increase their non-formal education programs to train youths in the required vocational and life skills that will help them reduce social deviance.
- ii. In each camp, free evening learning centers need to be established to instill optimism and a positive future orientation among children and adolescents.
- iii. Non-formal educators should receive specialized training to mentor young people effectively, fostering responsible choices and ethical development.
- iv. Effective collaborations among families, community leaders, and education providers are to be established to make camp environments safe and favorable.
- v. Government and non-governmental support for non-formal education is necessary to ensure the long-term objectives of reducing social problems among the Urdu-speaking communities in Bihari camps.

8. Conclusion

In this study, we have examined the positive role of non-formal education in alleviating social deviance in Urdu-speaking Bihari community camps. This study also demonstrates the value of non-traditional pedagogy in the face of social challenges, making such alternative approaches more useful. Moreover, non-formal education offers flexible, community-focused, and self-directed learning opportunities in the Bihari community. This opened and sustained various developmental learning opportunities for this community, enabling individuals to acquire and practice applicable life skills that

positively influence behavior in social contexts. These programs help the community retain more socially positive skills. The programs help empower individuals with an understanding of and practice in community integration and active, positive participation. Within the Bihari community, non-formal education offered individuals various approaches that enabled and sustained favorable behavioral modification. Such programs also counter the limited negative formal educational structures accessible in the community. These programs help the community retain more socially positive skills. Moreover, the programs promoted active citizenship and integration, encouraging community members to defy socially deviant behaviors.

Authors' Declaration

We declare that the submitted manuscript is our original work and has not been published, nor is it under consideration for publication elsewhere. All sources have been appropriately cited, and the work is free from plagiarism, falsification, and fabrication. Any use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in preparing this manuscript has been transparently disclosed, and full responsibility for the content rests with the authors.

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