

Letter to the Editor

The Importance of Social Impact Assessment Research with the Community People Before Establishing New Universities in Bangladesh: An Issue of Concern

Dear Editor,

Social impact assessment of community people before establishing new universities holds significance in securing their agreement and effectively handling any issues they may have. This practice fosters a positive relationship between the university and the surrounding community. The development of new universities can significantly impact local communities, both positively and negatively (Chen & Vanclay, 2021). However, in Bangladesh, to our knowledge, there has been no attempt to engage community members before establishing new universities, which creates discontent and subsequent conflicts once the university is established. The majority of university-community partnerships incorporate aspects of social exclusion ideas at the community level (Ofek, 2017). However, these effects are frequently overlooked, leaving community members with persistent doubts and conflicting emotions (Chen et al., 2019). The absence of conceptual and analytical frameworks for assessing university-community engagement exacerbates this issue (Nkoana & Dichaba, 2017). In Bangladesh, community participation in determining the location of new university campuses is an issue of contention (Momtaz, 2006). Thus, failing to conduct a social impact assessment of local communities before establishing new universities may result in issues such as ambiguity, conflicting emotions, and a lack of actual ties between the institution and the community. Bangladeshi authorities do not conduct social impact assessments before establishing new universities.

Beyond community conflicts, newly established universities also face several operational challenges, including governance and curriculum development. These factors include universities needing reforms to cater to emerging economic and technical structures effectively. Additionally, universities should be more receptive to external influences, such as the labor market. Furthermore, the escalation of precarious employment conditions and the increasing prominence of managerial roles in university administration are noteworthy developments (Thompson & Cook, 2019). The development of web-based courses at these educational institutions may run into complications such as poor website access rates, a lack of regular content updates, and insufficient instructional resources (Liu, 2012). The quality of education offered by many institutions has suffered due to their reliance on adjunct and junior faculty members (Ahmed, 2013).

Most new universities in Bangladesh are established in rural areas due to the difficulty of finding ample space in cities. That is why the government or other leading NGOs should conduct a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) to understand how community members will perceive and interact with the new university. Every year, many conflicts in the university area hamper the educational environment. Clashes broke out between students at Jahangirnagar University and community people when two leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) sought extortion from the university's students. The community people made accusations of repression committed by members of the BCL who were involved with the student politics of the governing party. Students said that residents of Gerua village assaulted their messes and the school, causing 35 students to get injuries. The subject of extortion demands was brought to light during the conflict that took place on February 19, 2021 (Prothom Alo English, 2021). Another conflict occurred in SUST. On Friday, there were fights between students from Shahjalal University of Science and Technology and local inhabitants in Akhalia in Sylhet. As a result of these disturbances, at least fifty people were hurt, and stores were vandalized. According to SUST assistant proctor Muhammad Mizanur Rahman, who spoke to New Age about the incident, 25 students sustained injuries (New Age, 2023). The same thing happened in Rajshahi University during the brawl that broke out between students from Rajshahi University and members of the surrounding community; over 200 persons, including school journalists, sustained injuries (Dhaka Tribune, 2023). Daffodil University has faced the same thing. According to reports from UNB, students from Daffodil International University and residents of Savar's Ashulia Union engaged in violent confrontations, which resulted in at least five people receiving injuries. During the violence, more than one hundred stores were broken into and

looted. The fight broke out in the Gauripur and Kumkumari region of Ashulia at around 10 p.m. on Monday, September 4. After some time had passed, authorities arrived at the scene and controlled the situation (Prothom Alo English, 2023). The students of GSTU (BSMRSTU- EX) have witnessed many conflicts with locals. For example, students from Gopalganj Science and Technology University (GSTU) and local villagers fought over a petty dispute in Gobra village in Sadar Upazila. The incident resulted in at least thirty persons being hurt (Zahid 2018). This antithetical relationship continues to this day. Recently, at Chittagong University, it has been fairly prevalent. A confrontation between locals and students at Chittagong University occurred in March 2024. According to witnesses, a gang of locals ambushed two university students out of the blue and then remained in the area near the rail crossing. Then it became a major problem. Five or more students at universities were hurt (The Daily Star, 2024). In October 2024, Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur, faced the same thing. The fight started when Abdullah Al Mamun, a fourth-year student in the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, was drinking tea with his friends outside the university, near Park Mor, according to police, witnesses, and students. Mamun protested when a local kid reportedly made lewd gestures at a female student. After an altercation, the young people from the area fled, only to return with a gang of cronies who assaulted and hurt Mamun. Finally, it resulted in 7 injuries (Dhaka Tribune, 2024).

Seven affiliated colleges of Dhaka University have been an ongoing issue in recent years. Seven affiliated colleges began their journey under Dhaka University in 2017 and are currently working toward separation. These colleges are Dhaka College, Kabi Nazrul Government College, Eden Women's College, Begum Badrunnessa Government Women's College, Government Shaheed Suhrawardy College, Government Bangla College, and Government Titumir College. On January 27, 2025 students from Dhaka University (DU) and its seven associated institutions clashed in the Mirpur Road district of the city, injuring at least 50 people (The Business Standard, 2025). After clashes between Dhaka University (DU) students and those from the seven DU-affiliated colleges escalated into the early hours of January 27, 2025, steps have been initiated to formally separate the seven colleges from DU (Dhaka Tribune, 2025). Dhaka University and its seven associated institutions have chosen to break up their relations eight years after they re-affiliated. Under DU, no new students from the seven institutions would be accepted for the 2024–25 academic year (The Daily Star, 2025). In order to manage these seven institutions in the capital city, the authorities have chosen to create a new university named Dhaka Central University (Prothom Alo, 2025). To prevent any conflicts and guarantee peaceful integration with the current society, a thorough social impact assessment (SIA) is required prior to the establishment of Dhaka Central University. This evaluation has to dive thoroughly into possible sites of friction and go beyond standard economic and educational studies. Potential conflicts resulting from greater demand on current resources should be avoided by carefully assessing the effect on local housing, transportation, and infrastructure, especially in the densely populated surroundings of Dhaka.

Table 1: Recent clashes between community people and university students

University	Date	Parties Involved	Injuries/ Damages
Dhaka University	January 27, 2025	Du vs 7 colleges	50 injured
Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur	October 16, 2024	Students vs Local residents	At least 7 students injured
Chittagong University	March 16, 2024	Students vs Local attackers	At least 5 students injured
Shahjalal University of Science and Technology	June 16, 2023	Students vs Local inhabitants	At least 50 people hurt, stores vandalized
Daffodil University	March 13, 2023	Students vs Residents of Ashulia Union	At least 5 people injured, 100+ stores looted
Rajshahi University	March 11, 2023	Students vs Members of surrounding community	Over 200 people injured, including school journalists
Jahangirnagar University	February 19, 2021	BCL leaders, Students and Community people	35 students injured, property damage
Gopalganj Science and Technology University (Ex-BSMRSTU)	July 6, 2018	Students vs Local villagers	At least 30 persons injured

Source: Compiled by the authors from various Bangladeshi newspapers

Table 1 summarizes recent university-community conflicts in Bangladesh. As observed, clashes often arise due to issues such as land disputes, extortion, and lack of community engagement. Such incidents highlight the urgent need for Social Impact Assessments (SIA) before establishing universities. In order to establish a beautiful new society built on mutual

understanding, impact on society evaluation has been extremely beneficial. Planners gain a thorough understanding of the community's needs and resources by conducting assessments and analyzing its surroundings and unique characteristics (Wilson, 2009). When the community members see that they have been engaged in a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) process and that their requirements have been duly considered, their inclination to endorse the construction of a novel institution of higher education is heightened. Securing finance and guaranteeing the institution's long-term viability are crucial. The establishment of a new university without prior Social Impact Assessment (SIA) with local communities may potentially give rise to conflicts. This phenomenon may be attributed to apprehensions over land use, the repercussions on traffic and the environment, or the accessibility of resources. Engaging in (SIA) with community people makes it possible to identify and handle potential disputes at an early stage proactively. Increased community engagement and support for the university are seen when community inhabitants perceive themselves as having a vested interest in the institution. Establishing a feeling of community and pride may provide advantageous outcomes for the institution and the broader region.

Declarations

Author Contributions

MNH: Conceptualization and design, acquisition of data, analysis and interpretation of data, drafting the manuscript, revising the manuscript critically for important intellectual content, and approval of the version of the manuscript to be published. MRS: Acquisition of data, analysis and interpretation of data, drafting the manuscript, approval of the version of the manuscript to be published.

Funding

No funding was received for this research.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their gratitude to their respective institutions for providing access to resources and academic support during the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study.

References

- Ahmed, M. (2013). Higher Education in Public Universities in Bangladesh. *Journal of Management and Science*, 1(2), 182–190. <https://doi.org/10.26524/jms.2013.24>
- Chen, C., & Vanclay, F. (2021). Transnational universities, host communities and local residents: Social impacts, university social responsibility and campus sustainability. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 22(8), 88–107. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-10-2020-0397>
- Chen, C., Vanclay, F., & Zhang, Y. (2019). The social impacts of a stop-start transnational university campus: How the impact history and changing plans of projects affect local communities. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 77, 105–113. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eiar.2019.04.004>
- Dhaka Tribune. (2025, March 15). 7 colleges no longer to be affiliated with DU after night of clashes. *Dhaka Tribune*. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/dhaka/372060/7-colleges-no-longer-to-be-affiliated-with-du>
- Dhaka Tribune. (2024, October 16). Begum Rokeya University students clash with outsiders, 7 injured. *Dhaka Tribune*. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/362067/begum-rokeya-university-students-clash-with>
- Dhaka Tribune. (2023, March 11). Over 200 injured as RU students clash with locals. *Dhaka Tribune*. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/306622/over-200-injured-as-ru-students-clash-with-locals>
- Liu, M. (2012). Investigating the web-based courses of newly established universities. *International Journal of Continuing Engineering Education and Life-Long Learning*, 22(1/2), 14. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJCEELL.2012.047045>

- Momtaz, S. (2006). Public Participation and Community Involvement in Environmental and Social Impact Assessment in Developing Countries: An Application of the Vroom-Yetton Model Using Bangladesh as a Case Study. *The International Journal of Environmental, Cultural, Economic, and Social Sustainability: Annual Review*, 2(4), 89–98. <https://doi.org/10.18848/1832-2077/CGP/v02i04/54233>
- New Age. (2023, June 16). 50 hurt as SUST students clash with locals. *New Age*. <https://www.newagebd.net/article/204409/50-hurt-as-sust-students-clash-with-locals>
- Nkoana, E. M., & Dichaba, M. M. (2017). Development and application of conceptual and analytic frameworks for community engagement at a South African higher education institution. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 31(6). <https://doi.org/10.20853/31-6-1574>
- Ofek, Y. (2017). Evaluating social exclusion interventions in university-community partnerships. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 60, 46–55. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2016.09.004>
- Prothom Alo. (2025, March 16). Dhaka Central University to form with 7 colleges. *Prothom Alo*. <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/education/xyz123>
- Prothom Alo English. (2023, March 13). Over 200 injured as RU students clash with locals. *Prothom Alo English*. <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/local-news/c6vhuy2gi4>
- Prothom Alo English. (2025, March 20). 'Extortion' behind JU students' clash with villagers. *Prothom Alo English*. <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime-and-law/bcl-extortion-behind-ju-students-clash-with-villagers>
- The Business Standard. (2025, January 27). Explainer: How violence unfolded between students of DU, 7 affiliated colleges. *The Business Standard*. <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/explainer-how-violence-unfolded-between-students-du-7-affiliated-colleges-1053721>
- The Daily Star. (2025, January 28). Affiliated 7 colleges removed from Dhaka University: DU, 7 colleges part ways at last. *The Daily Star*. <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/education/news/du-7-colleges-part-ways-last-3809646>
- The Daily Star. (2024, November 15). DU affiliated 7 colleges: A rocky relationship heading for separation. *The Daily Star*. <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/du-affiliated-7-colleges-rocky-relationship-heading-separation-3753176>
- Thompson, G., & Cook, I. (2019). The Lack of Work and the Contemporary University. In M. A. Peters, P. Jandrić, & A. J. Means (Eds.), *Education and Technological Unemployment* (pp. 29–44). Springer Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-6225-5_3
- Wilson, Paul N. (2009). Impact Assessment as Shared Learning. *AgEcon Search*. <https://doi.org/10.22004/ag.econ.50739>
- Zahid, S.H, (2018). 30 get hurt as BSMRSTU students, villagers clash. *The Financial Express*, [Finance News: Latest Financial News, Finance News today in Bangladesh](https://www.finance247.com/news/30-get-hurt-as-bsmrstu-students-villagers-clash)

Md. Nakib Hossain ^{1*}, **Md. Rafiuzzaman Shorker** ²

¹Department of Sociology, Gopalganj Science and Technology University, Gopalganj-8100, Bangladesh.

²Faculty of Social Science and Education, University of Cyprus, Nicosia-1678, Cyprus.

*Email: nakib.17soc105@gstu.edu.bd

Received: February 10, 2025

Accepted: April 9, 2025

Published: April 13, 2025

Copyright © 2025 The Author (s). Published by Scholar Cave.

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



Citation: Hossain, M. N., & Shorker, M. R. (2025). The Importance of Social Impact Assessment Research with the Community People Before Establishing New Universities in Bangladesh: An Issue of Concern". *International Social Research Nexus (ISRNX)*, 1(1), 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.63539/isrn.2025002>