

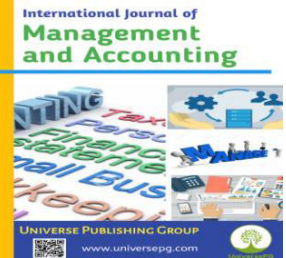


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## Role of Bangladesh National Museum in Public Education: A Study on Contributions, Opportunities and Challenges

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### ABSTRACT

Museums possess both the scope and resources to play a pivotal role in the public education sector in a diverse manner. Museums serve as invaluable resources in the public education sector by providing immersive and tangible learning experiences in a non-formal setting. Many museums across the world are now adopting their role as educator very seriously. Bangladesh National Museum is no different in that aspect. The Department of Public Education of Bangladesh National Museum is responsible for organizing various educational events such as seminars, workshops, lectures, film shows, cultural programs, and competitions. The study explores various aspects of Bangladesh National Museum's activities, including assessing the institution's role as an educational institution and examining its social impact. This study adopts a comprehensive analytical approach, employing both quantitative and qualitative research methods. It delves into the reader-friendliness of the museum's library and publications, and evaluates the audio-visual and photography activities conformance to contemporary standards. The study also assesses the contribution of the guide service to knowledge acquisition and evaluates the adequacy of the display section in expressing aesthetics. Furthermore, the study also investigates whether the auditoriums within the museum meet established standards. Aligning with both the survey outcomes and insights from FGD and KII sessions, this paper outline various recommendations with the aim to develop and expand the scope of the Department of Public Education's activities. However, the findings reveals that incorporating digital technology can enhance this educational role by offering dynamic and interactive tools such as virtual tours, virtual reality, and online resources.

**Keywords:** Public education, Artifacts, Exhibition, Mobile museum service, and Guide service.

### INTRODUCTION:

The Department of the Public Education has been carrying out the responsibility of providing unofficial education to people from every sphere of society. The department actively oversees a wide range of the educational initiatives taken by Bangladesh National Museum to facilitate the spread of education, the

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School Service Program, arranging seminars, symposiums, lectures and the children's competitions, and screening educational films for children to name a few. In recognition of Bangladesh National Museum's noteworthy contribution to the field of education, the organization has been conferred the prestigious 'Eku-shey Padak' award, the second highest civilian award

in Bangladesh, on February 20, 2023. To uphold the honor of the recognition, the Department of Public Education is committed to enhancing the scope and quality of its operations through research and reevaluation of its policies. The Department of Public Education comprises of seven different sections-Education, Display, Library, Photography, Audio-Visual, Publication, and Auditorium. Each of the section is tasked with the different responsibilities, making the Department of Public Education one of the most versatile departments with a broad range of activities.

The Department of Public Education is responsible for showcasing Bangladesh's history and culture through the acquisition, conservation, and research of priceless artifacts. The different sections of the department play distinct roles in disseminating the knowledge derived from these artifacts, ensuring that their historical and cultural significance is conveyed to the public in a meaningful and accessible manner. This responsibility is carried out in two ways. Firstly, in order to foster a sense of cultural appreciation and expand educational opportunities, the Bangladesh National Museum offers visit opportunities to students from schools, colleges, and universities completely free of cost. During these visits, expert guide lecturers provide them with a comprehensive overview of the museum, the guiding students through the galleries and elucidating the historical significance of the artifacts on display. And secondly, the museum has also pioneered a remarkable initiative known as the Mobile Museum Service. This visionary program sets forth a traveling exhibition that journeys across the country, bringing the wonders of the museum to even the most remote regions. This initiative ensures that no one is deprived of the opportunity to engage with the museum's vast knowledge base. With its origins dating back to 1913, Bangladesh National Museum begun its journey under the name "Dhaka Museum" (Dacca Museum). It was in 1976 that the museum took a significant step forward by introducing its own transportation services to bring students for a museum visit free of charge in consideration of their financial burden. The year 1983 marked the emergence of the Bangladesh National Museum, having assimilated with Dhaka Museum. Since its inception, the museum has not only increased in significance and stature but also developed into a multi-

dimensional organization. Recognizing its vital role in fostering intellectual growth, the organization has the expanded its range of the responsibilities, aiming to spread education and knowledge.

## **Review of Literature**

### ***Role of Museums in Public Education***

Museums are institutions that collect, preserve, and display objects of the cultural, historical, artistic, or scientific significance. "Whatever becomes suggestive to the mind is of educational value. That museums have from their very nature the very essence of this suggestiveness is patent" (Greenwood, 1983:246). As Thomas Greenwood's quote reveals, they also have an important role in the dissemination of knowledge to the public, as they provide opportunities for learning, communication, and dialogue. Furthermore, Museums and galleries, along with the artifacts they house, both shape & represent knowledge (Petrov, 2012). Candler, (1976) acknowledges the importance of a wellorganized & responsible museum education department equivalent to endeavors to the increase a museum's appeal. However, the dissemination of knowledge by museums is not a simple or straightforward process, as it involves various challenges and the complexities (Jahangeer *et al.*, 2021). Museums have long been recognized as dynamic and the evolving institutions situated at the intersection of culture, education, and community engagement (Falk and Dierking, 2016). As Maina, (2015) argues, the public displays & exhibitions are the museum's most effective means of the communication, and communication is the key to the knowledge dissemination. One of the main objectives of a museum is to provide education to the public through its exhibits, publications, programs, and the activities (Cameron, 1968). According to the Vakharia and Poole, (2023) although museums are a fertile ground for scientific research, artifact-based research often causes museums to be under growing pressure to enhance their organizational performance and showcase their public value to the community and society, which is why museums, as Earle, (2013) has pointed out, are the becoming more engaged with "cultural education" in order to the become more relevant in contemporary society. However, since the end of the 1980s, changes in the museum practices have been connected with the formation of the museum com-

munication model (Cameron, 1968). The transformations of museums connected with the redefinition/addition of traditional functions they performed in culture - collecting, storage, studying and representation of cultural and historical information - create conditions for search of new forms of interaction with the visitors (Ya. Murzina, 2020). According to V.V. Motina, the contemporary museum should transform into a space where cultural and historical dialogues take place. To achieve this, the museum should actively seek innovative methods of communication between the audience and cultural artifacts (cited in Ya. Murzina 2020). The development of museums in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be characterized by three main concepts: communication, interaction, & participation (Czachur *et al.* 2023). These concepts encapsulate the fundamental directions that museums are embracing to evolve & engage with their audiences more dynamically and inclusively. Brown, (1987:9) classifies museum's mode of education as "non-formal" as opposed to the hierarchically structured "formal" school education and "informal" education via social interactions. In other words, museum-based education is neither as strictly structured as school curriculum yet more structured with the greater autonomy than "information (or misinformation) and ideas (or prejudices) passed on at the bus-stop or in the pub" (Brown, 1987: 9). Taylor and Neill (2008) see non-formal education as something typically characterized as being responsive to local contexts, focusing on the present, adaptable, unconventional, and participatory. In this approach, learners often have some influence over the learning objectives and the methods used to achieve them. Millar, (1989:4) considers museums to be in the ideal position to "bridge the gap between school/college and the world outside the classroom - the essence of the prevocational education (Ssimbwa *et al.*, 2023; Millar, 1989: 4)."

According to the Annechini *et al.* (2020) 'museum experience' plays a vital role in engendering learning outcome among its visitors. Therefore, the environment of the museum is a prerequisite for museum education. Museums play a crucial role in tackling widespread educational issues, and they can be especially impactful in community education initiatives (Akbar, 1994). Busse, (2010:16) in his review of the

Papua New Guinea's National Museum's role in public education, explains how the museum collaborates the closely with the primary and secondary schools while providing curriculum materials and guided tours while also focusing on exhibitions and publications. These methodologies are integral to a museum's role in the public education sector. However, some museums in the world have developed their own institutional setting dedicated for the educational purposes. For instance, Krapfel, (1998) points out that many of the US states have legislation which allows museums and similar institutions to create and operate a chartered public school. This is an interesting institutional policy which further heightens museum's educational role by bringing it closer to a formal setting.

### ***Bangladesh National Museum's Public Education Venture***

The Department of Public Education of Bangladesh National Museum is responsible for the organizing various educational events such as seminars, workshops, lectures, film shows, cultural programs, and competitions (Bangladesh National Museum 2023). Another objective of Bangladesh National Museum is to play a social role in terms of fostering national identity, cultural diversity, social inclusion, and civic engagement among its visitors and society at large. The museum showcases the history, culture, and the heritage of Bangladesh from prehistoric times to contemporary times, covering various aspects such as the archaeology, art, religion, politics, economy, society, and nature. The museum also reflects the diversity and pluralism of Bangladesh's people, regions, languages, religions, ethnicities, and cultures. Some studies have explored the social role of the Bangladesh National Museum from different angles. It acts as a cultural ambassador, fostering national identity and the pride (Rahman, 2017). Moreover, it offers spaces for social interaction and engagement, promoting a sense of community and cultural awareness (Siddiky, 2016). Mahatma Gandhi emphasized the significance of the cultural sharing by stating that no culture can thrive if it strives to be exclusive. The knowledge sharing facility can fruitfully be the provided by a museum library. Museums and libraries provide individuals of all ages, including adults and children, with valuable resources and collections and gives opportunities to

explore the past through texts. These resources offer authentic learning experiences that support lifelong learning, whether it's as individuals, in groups, or as families (Hedstrom and King, 2003). These institutions offer opportunities for the people to engage in immersive learning experiences or choose to engage in learning intermittently; both types of learning experiences are equally valued and respected (Innocent, 2009). Naturally, Bangladesh National Museum too has a resourceful library with over 36,000 rare books in its collection. The alignment of the audio-visual activities at the Bangladesh National Museum with contemporary standards is a topic of critical inquiry. In an age where technology and multimedia play a pivotal role in conveying information and engaging audiences, assessing the museum's audio-visual practices becomes essential (Luo 2020). Modernizing the audio-visual section can significantly enhance the visitor experience and knowledge dissemination. For instance, Geser and Niccolucci, (2013:13) contend that an eco-system of digital services, including e-science infrastructures, educational portals & digital reference collections can greatly enhance the capacity of the museums and modernize them in the process. Therefore, a comprehensive examination of the extent to which the audio-visual activities at the Bangladesh National Museum adhere to contemporary standards is crucial for ensuring the institution remains relevant and effective in its mission to educate and engage the public. Film, television, & computer-based electronic media are frequently employed as powerful tools for visual communication. The use of virtual reality can be a great boon, as a study by Gong *et al.* (2021) reveals, use of VR technology has proven to contribute to increased creativity. In contemporary times, educators and museum professionals have expanded the definition of visual communication to encompass not only the ability to comprehend and utilize these mediums but also to appreciate and engage with the fine arts (Ahmed T. 2023; Rice, 1988).

Most of the museum of the world provides guide service. Bangladesh National Museum is no stranger to this provision. It offers a guide service to visitors, especially students and teachers, who want to learn more about the museum collections and the themes (Bangladesh National Museum 2023). The museum

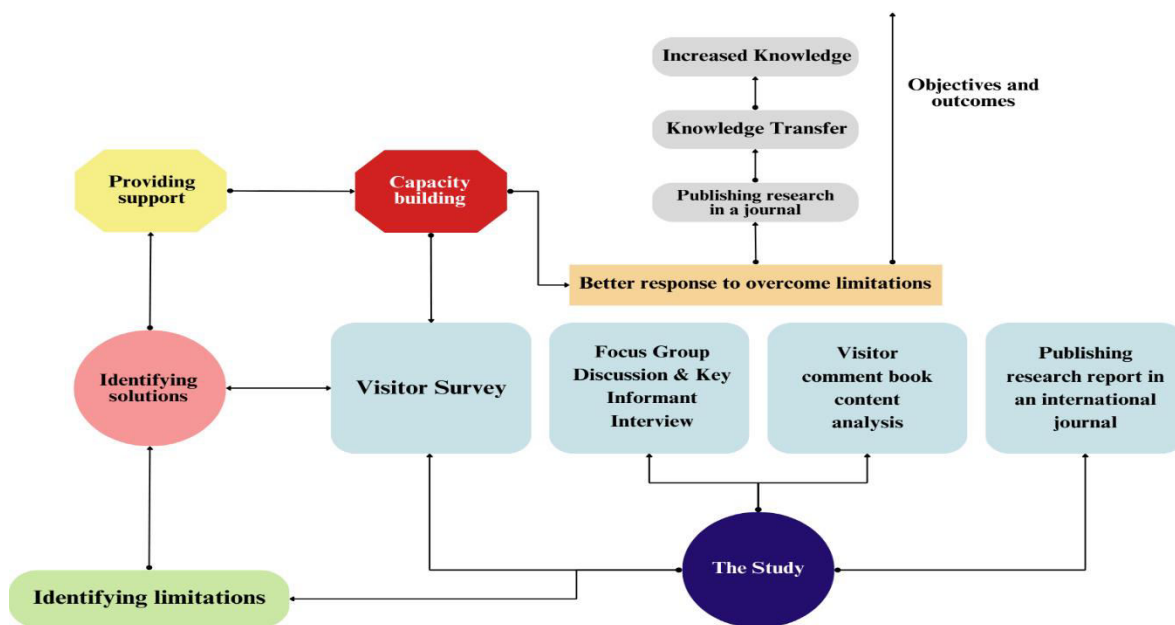
has developed several educational materials such as brochures, leaflets, posters, booklets, etc. that are available for visitors and researchers. The museum also collaborates with other educational institutions such as schools, colleges, universities, libraries, and cultural centers to promote museum education and outreach. The Bangladesh National Museum's guide lecture service plays a significant role in disseminating the details of an artifact which enhances the learning outcomes of visitors (Rabbi, 2023). However, there are also some challenges and the limitations such as language barrier, lack of proper knowledge, etc. in the guide service. Schaffer *et al.* (2018) provided an interesting recommendation to further enrich museum guide service through the use of chatbots, as classical audioguides may not always be up to the task of the addressing particularly specific questions about certain objects. Museum exhibitions primarily serve as a means of the visual communication, utilizing museum objects and artworks along with supporting graphics and written information such as text panels, captions, and object labels. The primary objective is the effectively conveys the message of the display or exhibition using a combination of clear and the precise visual elements and written language. According to Simon, (2010) museums employ labels to effectively guide visitors through exhibits, ensuring that the curator's intended lesson or meaning is conveyed. Labels play a crucial role in the providing contextual information, enhancing the visitor experience, and facilitating a deeper understanding of the displayed artifacts or artworks. Over the past twenty years, there has been a growing inclination among museums to make certain portions of their collections accessible for viewing through digital media (Din and Hecht, 2007). Enabling public access to collections is a core objective of the contemporary museums, and digitization provides solutions to the numerous practical obstacles related to collections preservation and the availability. The utilization of the digital media to engage visitors and broaden public access to collections takes various forms, reflecting the diverse strategies implemented by the museums (Sweetman and Hadfield, 2018). Museums nowadays seek to digitize their collections not only to preserve cultural heritage but also to present the information in an appealing way for the broader public (Styliani *et al.*, 2019). As per the

discussion, it is apparent that museums possess both the scope and resources to play a pivotal role in the public education sector in a diverse manner. Museums serve as invaluable resources in the public education sector by providing immersive and tangible learning experiences in a non-formal setting. Many museums across the world are now adopting their role as educator very seriously.

Bangladesh National Museum is no different in that aspect. However, the discussion also reveals that incorporating digital technology can enhance this educational role by offering dynamic and interactive tools such as virtual tours, virtual reality, and online resources. Technological modernization will not only expand accessibility but also include diversity in learning. Digital platforms enable the museums to reach a broader audience, including those unable to visit physically.

**Research Objective**

The study explores various aspects of the Bangladesh National Museum’s activities, including assessing the institution’s role as an educational institution and the examining its social impact. It also delves into the reader-friendliness of the museum's library and publications, & evaluates the audio-visual and photography activities conformance to contemporary standards. The study also assesses the contribution of the guide service to knowledge acquisition and evaluates the adequacy of the display section in expressing aesthetics. Furthermore, the study also investigates whether the auditoriums within the museum meet established standards. The primary objective of this study is to provide the systematic answers to the aforementioned inquiries and the propose potential solutions. Additionally, this study aims to explore the future potential & opportunities for development within the department. The findings of this research will benefit general visitors, civil society, experts, and researchers alike.

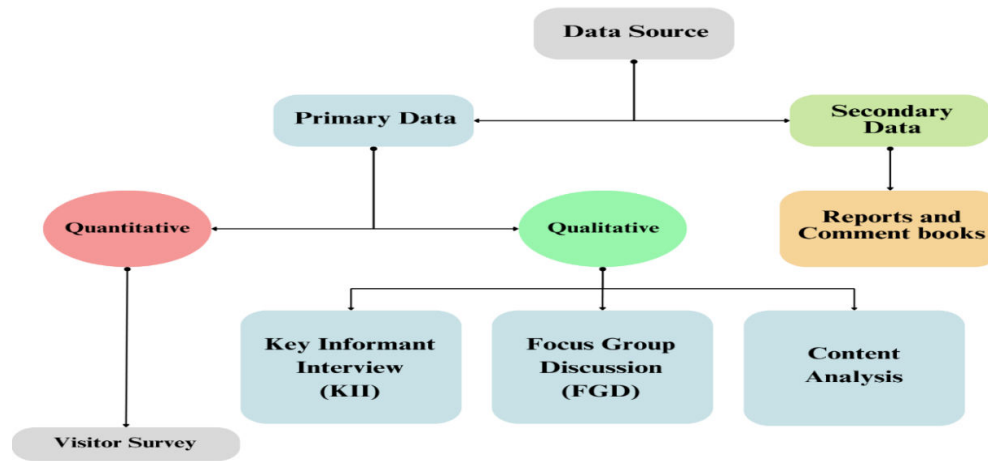


**Fig. 1:** Expected outcome of the study.

**METHODOLOGY:**

This study adopts a comprehensive analytical approach, employing both quantitative and the qualitative research methods to delve into the underlying meanings and concepts associated with the main issues. The primary data sources include interviews with museum visitors, focus group discussions involving visitors and stakeholders, and key informant interviews with the experts and specialists. Secondary data sources consist UniversePG | [www.universepg.com](http://www.universepg.com)

of museum visitors’ comment books, previous stakeholders’ opinions, and comment books from mobile exhibitions. An inductive thematic approach will be employed to analyze the data and the derive research outcomes. Additionally, quantitative data will be the analyzed using the statistics software SPSS. The data collection the methodology has been outlined in the following flow chart.



**Fig. 2:** Data Collection Methodologies.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

**Visiting Museum**

Upon being asked what inspired them to visit the Bangladesh National Museum on that particular day, a diverse set of responses were provided by the respondents to express their motivations. 39% of the respondents claimed to have visited with the purpose of the viewing the entirety of the museum. 24% of the respondents stated their intention to the view special exhibitions. On the other hand, 11% of the respondents intended to spend time with their family or friends.

10% of the respondents visited for personal reasons and research purposes respectively. In contrast, only 4% of the respondents visited to attend special events and only 2% visited to use the library. The statistics indicate that a significant number of visitors were motivated by the will to explore the entirety of the museum or to visit the special exhibitions frequently hosted in the museum. In contrast, very small number of respondents visited for the purpose of using the library.



**Fig. 3:** Purpose of Visiting Bangladesh National Museum.

The statistics provide a comprehensive overview of other museums in the Bangladesh frequented by the respondents. Among the museums listed thus far, the Ahsan Manjil, Museum of the Independence, and the Bangabandhu Military Museum appear to have the highest number of visitors, indicating these museums enjoy significant popularity. In contrast, less renowned museums like the Patuakhali Water Museum, Barendra UniversePG | [www.universepg.com](http://www.universepg.com)

Research Museum, Bangladesh Railway Museum and several others were frequented by a very small number of respondents. Aside from not being very well-known, being located outside the capital city may be considered as primary reason behind the low number of visits given that the majority of the respondents are from within Dhaka.

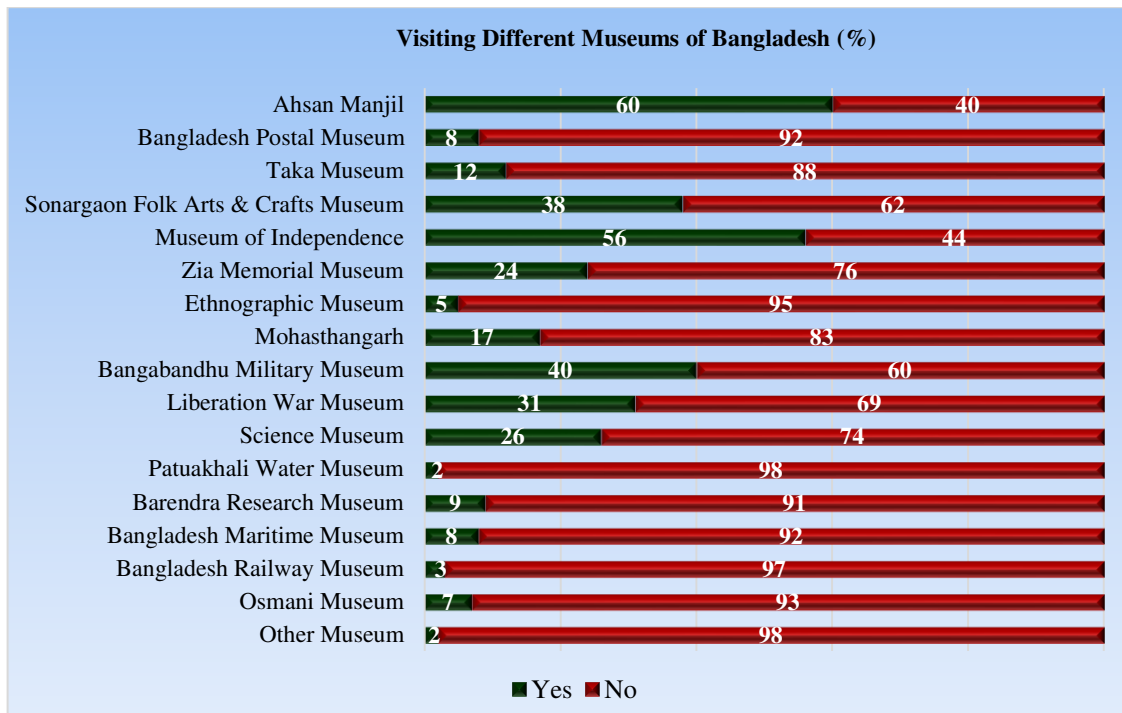


Fig. 4: Visiting Different Museums of Bangladesh.

The statistics indicate that a small number of the respondents have had the opportunity to visit museums abroad. According to the percentage, among the foreign museums listed thus far, Victoria Memorial Museum in Calcutta is the one most frequented by the respondents, owing to being located in West Bengal

and thus, easily accessible from the Bangladesh. The remaining museums were not visited often, some of them being not visited at all owing to the high expenses of visiting their respective countries.

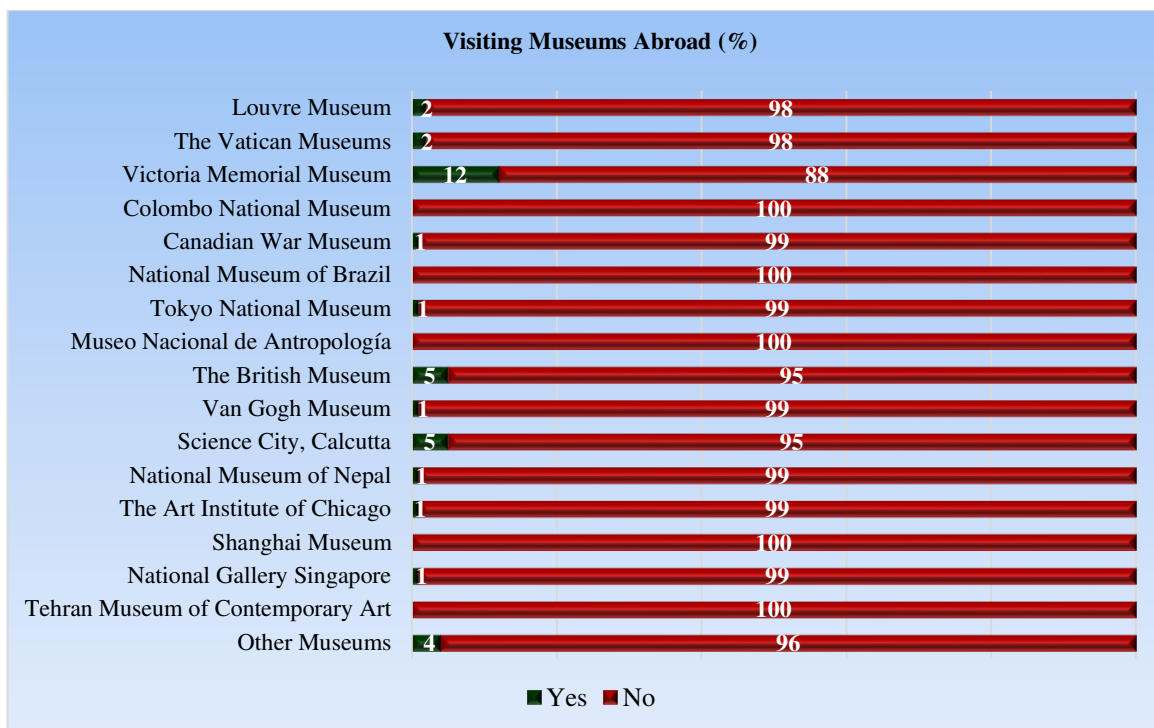
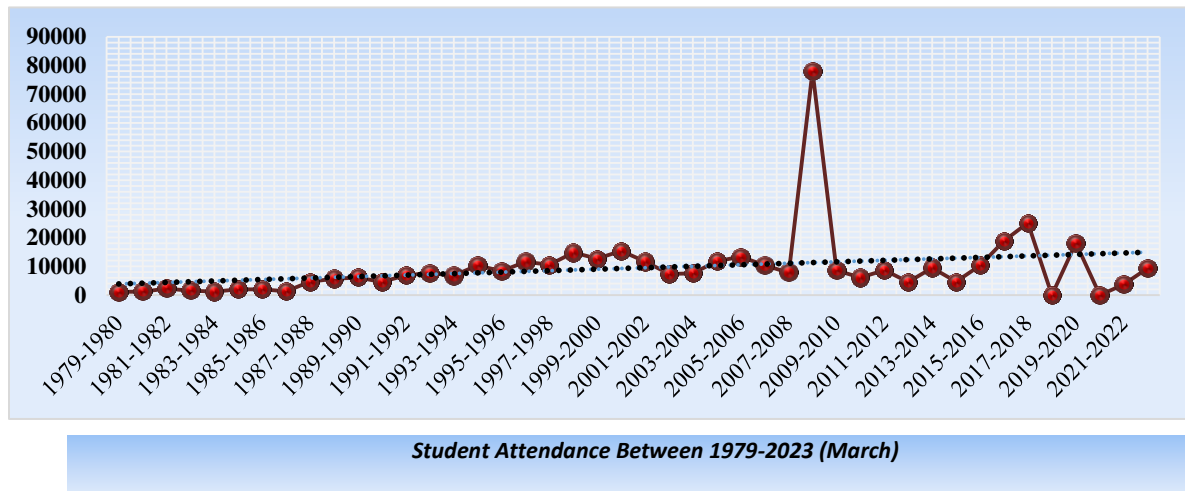


Fig. 5: Visiting Different Museums of Abroad.



**Fig. 6:** Number of Students Visited Bangladesh National Museum.

Therefore, this programme serves as a vital catalyst in the spread of education, befitting the museum’s epithet ‘University of the People’. The participants emphasized how these visits to Bangladesh National Museum supplement textbook knowledge by immersing the children in a rich and engaging environment of artifacts and displays. A statistical overview has been compiled, spanning from 1979 to 2023, documenting the number of students who have visited Bangladesh National Museum. The figures have been provided below for the convenience of understanding. Over the course of its history, the museum has witnessed a steady influx of student visitors, as revealed from the data. The number of student visitors was unprecedentedly high during the fiscal year 2008-2009. In contrast, the fiscal year 2018-2019 recorded the lowest number of student visitors, with the exception of the year of coronavirus pandemic. Since the pandemic subsided, a resurgence of student attendance is apparent, signaling a revitalization of interest. For distinct contribution in the field of education, Bangladesh National Museum received the honor of being conferred the Ekushey Padak 2023 as an organization. The survey responses reveal that all of the respondents found the award to be the well-deserved. The statistics indicate the unanimous acceptance of Bangladesh National Museum’s achievement among the visitors and the acknowledgement of the institution’s role in developing the field of the education as the bearer of history and the culture. Functioning as an unofficial university, Bangladesh National Museum can be considered instrumental in molding the young generation

into exemplary citizens of the nation. By exhibiting historical artifacts & implementing a range of educational endeavors led by the Department of Public Education, Bangladesh National Museum has duly earned its rights to the prestigious Ekushey Padak Award. The achievement is further substantiated by a series of commendable educational initiatives undertaken by Bangladesh National Museum, as pointed out by the experts. Since its inception, the Bangladesh National Museum has been providing students with complimentary access to the museum, thus offering them invaluable learning opportunities. In commemoration of the important national events, educative competitions like drawing, handwriting, extempore speech and similar contests are arranged to foster the intellectual growth of young students. Additionally, Bangladesh National Museum proactively publishes informative research journals and quarterly publications, aiming to cultivate heightened cultural and historical awareness among readers and scholars. Many researchers have also pursued their doctoral studies based on extensive investigations into the artifact collection housed within Bangladesh National Museum. The Seminars, symposiums, meetings and discussions are held frequently as part of the museum’s knowledge dissemination program. The museum also houses an enriched library with a vast collection of the literature. Through these initiatives, Bangladesh National Museum has been actively promoting public education alongside formalized educational institutions, which makes the institution more than eligible of the award.



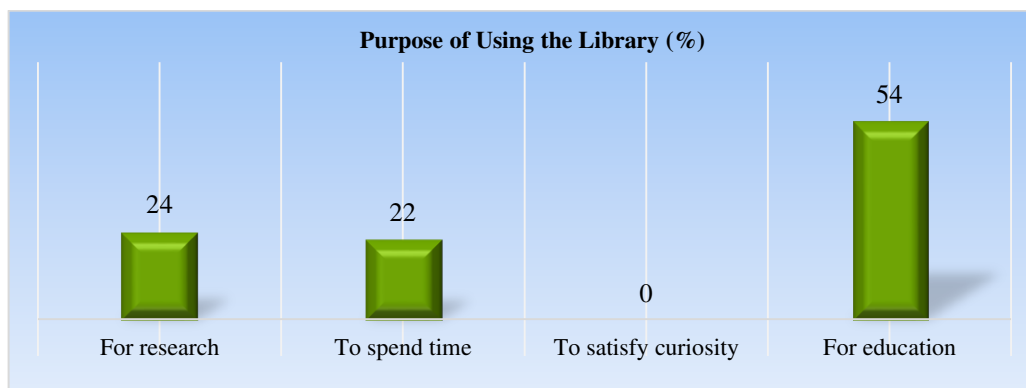


**Fig. 7:** Acknowledgement of Visitors in Receiving Ekushey Padak by Bangladesh National Museum.

**Contribution in the Field of Research**

The participants of the Key Informant Interview expressed varied perspectives regarding the researcher-friendliness of Bangladesh National Museum. One participant commented on the need for the institution to enhance its researcher-friendly environment, despite acknowledging its status as a research-based institution. The participant recommends a thorough evaluation of the regulations concerning access to the information, data, and other essential resources for the researchers. By doing so, it would create a more streamlined process for the students to conduct their research & create a more favorable research environment. Bangladesh National Museum boasts a vast collection of artifacts, a significant portion of which remains inaccessible to the public due to the limited gallery space. As pointed out by another participant, the stored artifacts pose challenges for inspection and are unsuitable for conducting research. Furthermore, many researchers are unaware of the existence of these stored artifacts. Therefore, Bangladesh National Museum must develop a virtual inventory of its artifacts specifically designed for the research purposes. This virtual inventory should be regularly updated on an annual basis, facilitating easier access and exploration of artifacts for research. One participant in the interview expressed deep admiration for the first curator of Bangladesh National Museum (then known as Dhaka Museum), Nalini Kanta Bhattasali, who had the proactively conducted research into many precious artifacts housed in the museum. However, the participant raised concerns about the evident decline of the rigor of research since the founding years of the museum. This decline was attributed to a shortage of experienced and enthusiastic researchers, as well as

inadequate initiatives to promote research. The participant recommended the recruitment of highly qualified and knowledgeable curators who can take the lead in initiating research projects. Additionally, it was suggested that age restrictions for important positions such as deputy curator, keeper, and deputy keeper be reconsidered, as the participant believed that experience plays a vital role in contributing to research. Among the respondents who have made use of the library, 54% had done so for education purposes. In contrast, only the 24% used the library for research purposes & the 22% visited to spend time. The participants of the Key Informant Interview greatly praised the library facility provided by the Bangladesh National Museum. One informant specifically acknowledged the library as a remarkably valuable resource for researchers. Moreover, she recommended that the privilege of accessing this specialized library be extended to the university students, which would result in greater contribution towards knowledge development. Another informant provided the further details regarding the extensive resources of the library, highlighting its impressive collection of over 36,000 rare books. To facilitate ease of use, separate catalogues and lists are available for efficient browsing. Some of these books are even the showcased to the public during special exhibitions, allowing for a broader audience to appreciate their significance. Furthermore, the website of Bangladesh National Museum features a digital catalogue, providing convenient access to its contents. Additionally, the library offers the air-conditioned reading rooms, ensuring a comfortable environment. These invaluable facilities serve as priceless resources for the acquisition and development of knowledge.



**Fig. 8:** Purpose of Using the Library Bangladesh National Museum.

While acknowledging the library to be a top-tier the facility for researchers, one of the experts have to expressed concerns about the insufficient publicity of the facility. The informant recommended increased promotion of the library facility to ensure its proper utilization. Additionally, she emphasized on the importance of the library staff to be more mindful of the providing the best, reader-friendly services. Another informant has recommended organizing reading and study circles in collaboration with other institutions of higher studies, which would provide greater momentum to the development of knowledge. One of the experts have pointed out that existing restrictions on the usage of the library have led to a limited number of visitors among readers and researchers. Attracting a larger audience to this library would significantly contribute to the development of knowledge. Another participant in the interview shared their personal experience of greatly benefitting from the use of this library, expressing high praise for its resources and extensive collection of rare literature. Despite being unaware of the exact number of individuals utilizing the library, the participant maintains an optimistic outlook regarding its crucial role in fostering knowledge development. The survey responses reveal that among the visitors who have had experiences of perusing the museum’s publications, only 29% have utilized the resource for research purposes. In contrast, the remaining 71%, comprising the majority, did not use Bangladesh National Museum’s publications for research purposes. Upon being inquired about the quality of Bangladesh National Museum’s journal, a vast majority of the responses proved affirmative, with only 12% respondents deeming the quality to be average. The participants of the Key Informant Inter-

view have highly praised the publications produced by Bangladesh National Museum, the recognizing their significant value. One participant remarked that these research-based publications are useful in developing the civil society and inspiring our patriotic sentiments. Another participant provided informative insights into the range of publications offered by the museum. Formerly known as “Lalit kala”, the museum’s journal publication is now known as ‘The Journal of Bangladesh the National Museum’. Additionally, there is a research-based journal publication in Bangla titled “Bangladesh Jatiyo Jadughor Potrika”, featuring write-ups of many renowned researchers. The Bangladesh National Museum also produces a well-known quarterly publication known as “Troimashik Shomachar”, which provides detailed reports on various topics, including daily activities, special events, and exhibitions. These publications serve as invaluable sources of the museum’s extensive knowledge base, which contributes to progressive societal development. All the participants of the Key Informant Interview unanimously agreed that it is imperative to adapt to the demands of the digital age by making the Journal of Bangladesh National Museum available online. One expert emphasized that in this era of digitization, it is not only necessary for the Journal of Bangladesh National Museum but also for all other publications of the museum, including the Bangla publications, to be accessible online. This viewpoint was further supported by two other experts who highlighted the Journal of Bangladesh National Museum as a highly informative resource for researchers both domestically and internationally, which is why having an online publication of the journal is essential.

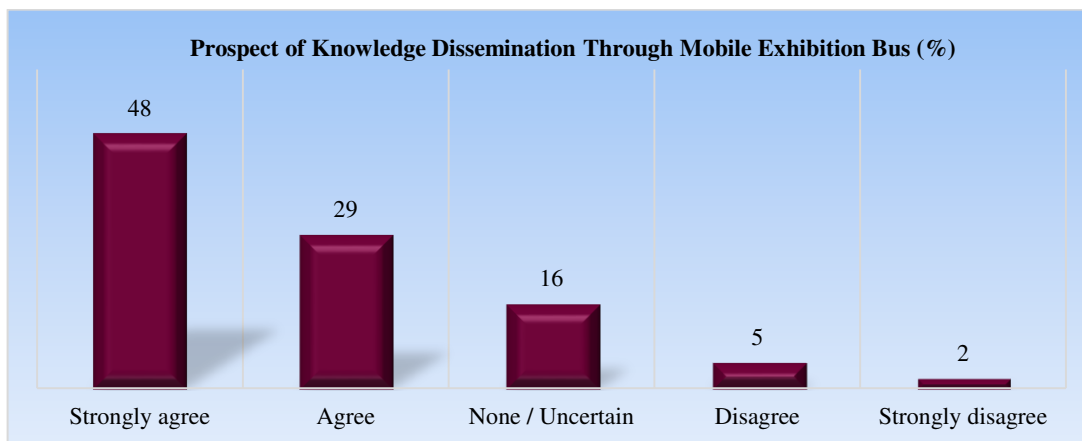


**Fig. 9:** Quality of Journal of Bangladesh National Museum.

It would not only allow greater promotion of the museum abroad, it would also broaden the scope of the research due to easier accessibility. Another participant strongly emphasized the importance of ensuring the regularity of the publication while establishing an online presence for the journal. Maintaining a consistent publication schedule is crucial to upholding the reputation of the journal within the research community. Furthermore, the participant stressed that the ensuring online publication is a necessary response to the demands of the digital era. Failing to adapt to this technological shift could potentially tarnish the journal’s standing and hinder its accessibility to a wider audience.

**Dissemination of Knowledge Through Mobile Exhibition Bus**

Bangladesh National Museum has attempted a new method of overcoming the problem of transportation & distance in order to allow people across the country to be able to familiarize themselves with the artifacts and exhibitions in the museum in the form of a Mobile Exhibition Bus. In response to this prospect, 48% of the respondents strongly expressed their support for this new concept, whereas 29% of the respondents agreed that it would aid in further dissemination of knowledge. 16% of the respondents were uncertain of its efficacy. In contrast, only 7% of the respondents were not very optimistic about the method’s success.



**Fig. 10:** Prospect of Knowledge Dissemination Through Mobile Exhibition Bus.

The statistics indicate that the majority of the respondents are very optimistic about the potential of dispatching a Mobile Exhibition Bus and its ability to disseminate knowledge across the country. As earlier results suggested, the many aspiring visitors living in remote divisions often lack the opportunity or the capability to make a trip to the museum in the capital. A Mobile Exhibition Bus would prove to be an excellent mode of providing such individuals with the experience of visiting the museum on a limited scale and satisfying their curiosity, while at the same time, the familiarizing more people with the enriched history

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preserved in the museum and dissemination knowledge on a larger scale. The mobile exhibition organized by Bangladesh National Museum has been highly beneficial for students, exposing them to numerous artifacts and natural heritage they were previously unfamiliar with. The initiative has garnered significant interest from individuals keen on archaeological and natural history across the different eras. With the authority's unwavering dedication, this mobile exhibition is the fostering awareness about culture, civilization, & heritage among people from all walks of life. The mobile exhibition is very popular as many people enthusiastically came to visit even without adequate publicity. The exhibition has successfully to the unraveled a new dimension of education in the remote regions of the country. The mobile exhibition of Bangladesh National Museum is deeply centered on our heritage and carries the weight of our past, culture and tradition. Students were beyond delighted to be able to see the mobile exhibition. The project is particularly praiseworthy for reaching out to rural communities, igniting interest in learning about their nation's history and culture. It has evoked responses among the people of our rural region and stroked their interest in getting to know more about the nation as well as enlightening them.

### ***Fostering Societal Change***

The Key Informant Interview has generated a favorable perception among the experts regarding the Bangladesh National Museum's pivotal contribution to fostering transformative the social development. One expert aptly remarked that the institution holds paramount importance in shaping a broader, inclusive the society that transcends communal divisions. This profound role of the museum is further elucidated by another informant who emphasizes that the ancient artifacts showcased within its walls provide a tangible glimpse into the lifestyle of our ancestors.

These arti-facts not only offer insights into the harmonious co-existence of diverse communities across different regions but also highlight their distinctiveness and the cultural amalgamation that has the endured through the ages. The museum also stirs our nationalistic sentiment through the glorious depiction of our struggle for liberation. As such, Bangladesh National Museum plays a crucial role in shaping the foundation of our society.

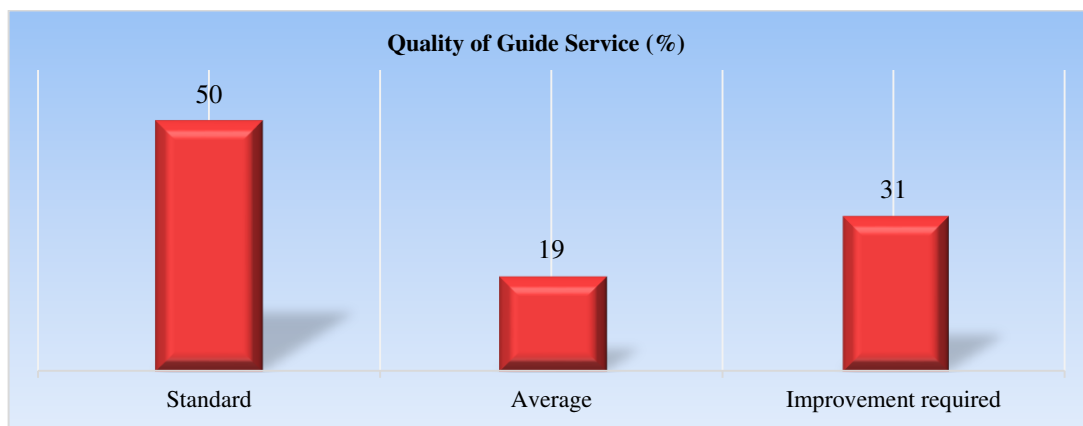
Similar sentiments were echoed by two other experts who proclaimed that the museum teaches everyone to coexist irrespective of caste and creed. It also connects the people to their culture, which in turn shapes the society. Preservation of ancient artifacts allows for people to perpetually remain connected to their roots, and the learnings from the past follows into the present society. The importance of cherishing the past in shaping the future was again emphasized by another expert, who remarked that only a nation that values the past can value the future of our society. Bangladesh National Museum, among its multifaceted initiatives, also has arrangements in place to screen films specifically tailored for children and teenagers. However, most participants of the Focus Group Discussion were unaware of this arrangement. Nevertheless, the participants have acknowledged the positive impact of the children's films on the cognitive development of the young audience and emphasized the importance of raising awareness about this facility. The participants of the Focus Group Discussion unanimously agreed that there are areas for improvement in the initiatives undertaken by Bangladesh National Museum for the cognitive development of underprivileged children and children with special needs. The experts expressed considerable approval for the "Oral History Project" initiated by Bangladesh National Museum. One of the participants emphasized the significance of this project in preserving contemporary social, political & cultural information. Another expert pointed out the challenges faced by experts in leaving behind written documents during their visits to the museum, emphasizing the need to preserve their invaluable historical knowledge through the "Oral History Project." This initiative is essential in capturing and preserving significant historical insights that might otherwise be lost due to time constraints and other circumstances. One of the experts has provided a detailed overview of the nature of the project, highlighting its comprehensive nature. The project involves conducting interviews with freedom fighters, artists, and other esteemed individuals from society, capturing their invaluable insights & experiences. These interviews are then preserved as audio-visual records. Additionally, the project plays a vital role in preserving the cultural traditions of various ethnic groups. As the primary authority and custodian serving as the bridge between the realms of civilization

and the ever-evolving landscape of modernity, coupled with the acquisition and dissemination of the research-based knowledge, Bangladesh National Museum’s influence in instigating social change is undeniable. Within the ever-changing whirlwind of the societal dynamics, through showcasing its invaluable artifacts, Bangladesh National Museum serves as a guiding beacon, ensuring that individuals within such a society remain connected to their roots and never succumb to being adrift amidst the relentless tides of change. Bangladesh National Museum frequently the organize seminars, workshops, meetings and discussions in a bid to promote societal development, an initiative greatly praised by the participants. As such, Bangladesh National Museum holds a paramount position in shaping and defining the social context.

**Quality of Guide service to Provide Information on Artifacts**

Among those who have received the guide service, 50% of the respondents considered the service to be of standard quality. In contrast, however, 19% found the service to be average, whereas a significant number of respondents, comprising 31%, expressed the necessity of improvement. The statistics indicate the necessity of reevaluating the guide service quality given that nearly half of the respondents found the service to be less

than satisfactory. During the Key Informant Interview, the experts expressed their unanimous appreciation for the guide service provided by the Bangladesh National Museum. They acknowledged the important role of guide lecturers in offering detailed information about specific artifacts and enriching the visitor experience. However, the experts also provided valuable feedback to improve this service further. One of the experts addressed the emphasized the need for the competent guide lecturers who possess a wide range of skills. The expert recommended that guide lecturers undergo training programs to become proficient in foreign languages, enabling them to effectively communicate with international visitors. Additionally, the expert suggested that guide lecturers should continually cultivate their knowledge on Bangladesh’s history and culture to provide accurate and comprehensive information to visitors. To facilitate the professional growth of guide lecturers, the expert proposed collaborative programs with foreign museums. By organizing joint training initiatives, Bangladesh National Museum can leverage the expertise of international institutions and create opportunities for guide lecturers to gain valuable insights and learn best practices from around the world, and thereby improve the overall quality of their service.



**Fig. 11:** Quality of Guide Service of Bangladesh National Museum.

Similar opinion was repeated by another participant, who also recommended that the museum authority introduce performance-based accolades for the guide lecturers. By recognizing and rewarding exceptional performance, the museum can create a culture of excellence & inspire guide lecturers to strive for continuous improvement. It would not only create a sense of the UniversePG | [www.universepg.com](http://www.universepg.com)

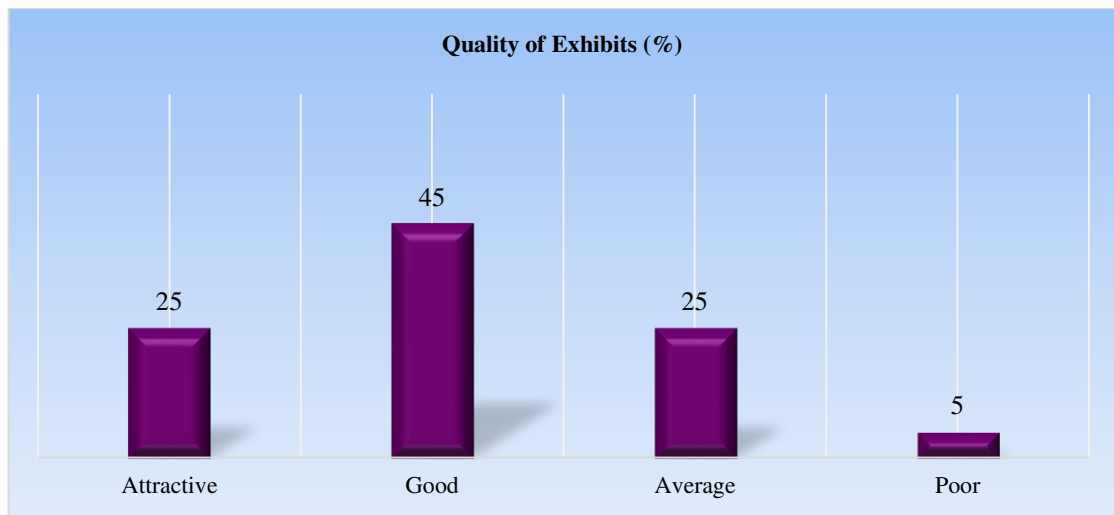
healthy competition among the guide lecturers, but also motivate them to deliver high-quality tours and provide visitors with an exceptional experience. The need for guide lecturers to be multilingual was reiterated by another expert, who recommended initiating collaborative training programs with reputable language institutes or language learning centers. Through

these collaborations, guide lecturers can receive specialized training in foreign languages commonly spoken by visitors, such as French, Spanish, or other relevant languages based on the museum’s visitor demographics. One of the participants has highlighted the necessity of guide lecturers to engage more with the study of museology in order to improve themselves. Another participant remarked that although the service is helpful, it requires improvement. The expert highlighted the need for the service to go beyond providing information and strive to foster greater curiosity and attraction among visitors. In contrast, two other participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the quality of the guide service. They believed that the service was lacking and in need of improvement. One participant recommended that the museum should invest more in research to enhance the guide service.

**Quality of Exhibits and Display System**

According to the survey, 25% respondents found the quality of exhibits in Bangladesh National Museum attractive compared to other galleries from around the world. Moreover, 45% of the respondents considered the quality to be good, whereas 25% found the quality to be average. Only 5% considered the quality to be poor. The participants have provided astute observa-

tions on the outdated display system at Bangladesh National Museum. As an individual with the experience of visiting several museums abroad, one of the experts noted that while the display system at the museum is acceptable by the Asian standards, there is room for improvement, particularly in terms of labeling, which should be more informative. The expert suggested that the curatorial department should actively engage in research to ensure the labels are informative and up-to-date. Another participant raised an important point that the ‘development of the artifacts’ principle had not been consistently followed in most of the displays. As an example, the expert mentioned the gallery of weapons, where artifacts should ideally be arranged chronologically according to the time period of their evolution. By organizing the display in this manner, visitors can better understand the progression and the development of weapons throughout history. Additionally, the expert suggested incorporating digital videos alongside certain artifacts to depict the process of creation and evolution. This multimedia approach can provide a more engaging and the informative experience for visitors. The participant also mentions the lack of informative labeling, which is a notable point of concern.



**Fig. 12:** Quality of Exhibits of Bangladesh National Museum.

Experts provided insightful feedback regarding the display system at the Bangladesh National Museum, highlighting the system’s lacking in both informative and artistic aspects. The participants first addressed the issue of lighting, specifically the use of highly bright colored lights the inside and outside the showcases. UniversePG | [www.universepg.com](http://www.universepg.com)

According to the experts, this lighting choice tends to draw attention away from the artifacts themselves, as the focus shifts to the lighting instead. The expert recommended a more balanced approach, where the lighting enhances the visibility of the artifacts without overpowering them. Furthermore, the experts empha-

sized the importance of the background and lighting in creating an optimal viewing experience. The background color should be lighter than that of the artifacts on display, allowing them to stand out and be easily discernible. By employing this technique, the participant suggested that the artifacts would become the central focus of attention. In addition to the issues related to lighting and background, the expert pointed out mistakes in labeling. As an example, the participant mentioned a coin that had been labeled as ‘Qutb-ud-din Aibak’s coin,’ despite there being no recorded instances of any coins being attributed to him. Instead, the coin depicted in the image was more accurately attributed to ‘Ghiyas-ud-din Balban.’ This discrepancy signifies the importance of the accurate and reliable labeling, as it ensures that visitors receive correct information about the artifacts they are observing. One of the experts has recommended taking into account contemporary systems followed by the developed the countries’ museums and gradually incorporate them to further develop the existing the display system. The sentiment is shared by the another participant, who acknowledged that although sufficient, Bangladesh National Museum’s display system falls short of the international standard.

He specifically recommended the Louvre Museum in France and the Osaka Museum in Japan as benchmarks to emulate and the strive to meet the international standard. Another participant noted that some of the displays from the 80’s have yet to be upgraded. It is imperative to update the outdated show-cases and the galleries to make the system more standardized. One of the experts raised concerns about the weak display system and introduction panels for the artifacts. To

address this issue, the participant recommended using larger fonts for introductory notes, making them more visible and readable from a distance. Additionally, the participant suggested incorporating audiovisual technologies alongside the arti-facts to enhance the overall visitor the experience. By the integrating multimedia elements, such as the videos or interactive displays, the museum can provide more dynamic and immersive information to visitors.

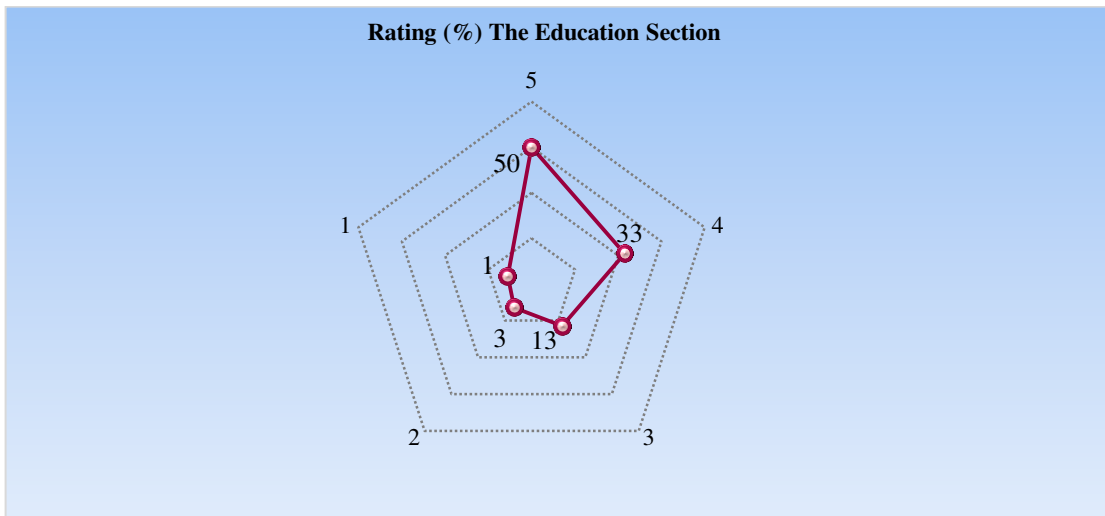
**Rating the Service Quality**

The survey includes a segment dedicated to evaluating the visitors’ opinions on each of the sections under the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Education. The ratings reflect the general perception of the visitors regarding the department’s overall activities and contributions of each individual section. The ratings have been provided in the form of a Likert scale consisting of 5 grades; 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neither/uncertain), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree). The scale indicates the overall level of satisfaction of the visitors.

A comprehensive summary of the ratings provided by the participants of the survey has been presented below. Based on a weighted average calculation of the ratings for each section, the Display Section has the highest weighted average, indicating a high degree of satisfaction with their service among the respondents. The Auditorium Section received the next highest rating, which also indicates the acknowledge-ment of their services from the respondents. In contrast, the Library Section appears to be the least popular among the sections under the Department of Public Education, with the lowest weighted average rating.

**Table 1:** Rating Different Section of Public Education Department of Bangladesh National Museum.

Section Information		Rating (Rounded %)					
SL.	Name of Sections	5	4	3	2	1	Weighted Avg.
1	The Education Section	50	33	13	3	1	4.13
2	The Library Section	10	9	60	21	-	2.97
3	The Publication Section	10	52	28	10	-	3.98
4	The Photography Section	15	59	19	4	3	3.81
5	The Display Section	43	46	10	1	-	4.41
6	The Audio-Visual Section	18	47	31	4	-	3.92
7	The Auditorium Section	25	55	19	1	-	4.19
8	Nalini Kanta Bhattachali Exhibition Hall	34	45	20	1	-	4.07



**Fig. 13:** Rating Education Section of Public Education Department of Bangladesh National Museum.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Going forward, aligning with both the survey outcomes and insights from FGD and KII sessions, this paper outline various recommendations with the aim to develop and expand the scope of the Department of Public Education’s activities. Keeping future development in mind, the following proposals can be taken into consideration for the Department of Public Education to reach greater heights in its educational role. These recommendations offer avenues for the museum to further excel and contribute in the field of education. Firstly, use of the library should be brought into focus. As a valuable resource with an extensive collection of over 36,000 rare books, the facility can greatly contribute to research endeavors, which is a prerequisite to knowledge production and dissemination. As many responses from the FGD sessions and KII report pointed out, it is evident that the current complexities surrounding library access have dissuaded potential readers and the researchers from engaging further. Secondly, publications should be made available online. Bangladesh National Museum frequently publishes research-based catalogues, folders, magazines and other informative publications. However, these publications have yet not been made available online or regularized. Given the museum’s foundational commitment to the research, it is imperative that these publications be digitized, which would not only boost the museum’s reputation on an international scale, but also attract researchers and unravel new avenues of study. In the same vein, Bangladesh National Museum

must also emphasize training its officers and engage them actively in research. Next, the curation and the display of the museum must be taken into the consideration. Additionally, the guide service of Bangladesh National Museum is indispensable for the providing a better experience to visitors. Aside from the findings pertinent to the research questions, some additional measures can be taken to better accommodate children with special needs or the visitors with disabilities. Moreover, the branch museums under the jurisdiction of Bangladesh National Museum require the adequate attention.

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**CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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