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# Socio-geographical Challenges of Migrants: Bangladeshi Students' Lived Spaces in Hungary

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to uncover the challenges faced by Bangladeshi student migrants in their everyday lives in Hungary. The research assessed students' (a) economic, (b) cultural, and (c) gender-related experiences through a questionnaire survey. The Ministry of Education in Bangladesh nominated 420 Bangladeshi students for the Stipendium Hungaricum (SH) scholarship in Hungary between 2019 and 2022. These students participated in an online questionnaire survey conducted via social media. The survey questions were inspired by political-economic approaches (World Systems Theory), as well as post-colonial and feminist perspectives, to investigate the underlying causes of the challenges faced by students. The study argues that these challenges can be better understood by contextualizing students' everyday lives across different geographical spaces and places. Participants were asked about their experiences in spaces shaped primarily by the state (e.g., universities, immigration offices, healthcare centres), businesses (e.g., firms, restaurants), and citizens (e.g., public places). The findings reveal that students encounter economic and cultural difficulties. However, they perceive gender relations in Hungary to be better than in their home country.

*Keywords: student migration, semi-periphery, discrimination, gender relations*

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## INTRODUCTION

International student migration has spread worldwide as more individuals seek educational opportunities abroad. In this context, it becomes increasingly evident that various factors, including economic, cultural, and gender challenges, significantly impact the experiences of migrant students, which are far from homogeneous. While the number of skilled migrants has grown globally, the most talented elite, such as students, have received less attention in scholarly works compared to labour migration. Furthermore, the challenges faced by students in new societies remain underexplored, highlighting the need for greater academic focus on this issue. According to estimates, the global population of migrant students has reached nearly 6.39 million (International Students, n.d.). Student migration is particularly prevalent in Europe.

Similar to other regions, Bangladesh struggles with unresolved issues like unemployment, inadequate quality education, and a lack of decent job opportunities. Each year, numerous Bangladeshis, including students, migrate abroad in search of better education and employment prospects. This trend is driven by the limited number of universities and job opportunities within the country, leading to an increasing outflow of students seeking better prospects abroad (Jannati, 2024).

Conversely, global patterns of international student mobility have evolved gradually over time. Hungary has become increasingly active in this domain, both as a source and destination for international student mobility. Since 2000, the proportion of international students in Hungarian higher education has steadily risen, bolstering the country's presence in the global education market (Kasza et al., 2021; M. Császár et al., 2021; M. Császár & Wusching, 2014; Béres et al., 2025). As a result, Hungary is emerging as a significant European study destination for Bangladeshi and other international students. Several studies have explored the difficulties migrants face. For instance, Jamil and Dutta (2021) highlighted systemic injustices, discrimination, and deliberate neglect experienced by Bangladeshi migrants. These migrants often find themselves on the social, economic, and cultural fringes of their communities, compounding the challenges they face.

Unfortunately, limited research exists on the specific issues confronting Bangladeshi student migrants, particularly the challenges they encounter across various geographical scales. These unresolved issues necessitate further investigation. This paper focuses on the challenges faced by student migrants in Hungary, as their difficulties often stem from marginalization and the need to adapt to conditions significantly different from those in Bangladesh. This research is relevant because most migration studies emphasize movement from the periphery to the core, with little attention paid to migration from the periphery to the semi-periphery. Additionally, studies on the challenges faced by migrants from developing countries like Bangladesh—especially Bangladeshi students in Hungary and Eastern Central Europe—remain scarce.

Geography offers a valuable lens for examining the challenges migrants face by emphasizing scales, public and private spaces, and the specific places where these difficulties manifest. In this paper, I argue that the challenges faced by Bangladeshi students in Hungary can be better understood by contextualizing their everyday lives and analysing their “lived spaces” (Lefebvre, 1991). To achieve this, the study focuses on students' economic, cultural, and gendered experiences, employing three

social theoretical approaches: world systems theory, post-colonial theory, and feminist theory. These approaches frame the examination of students' everyday experiences across different geographical scales.

A questionnaire survey was conducted to address the issues outlined above. Following a discussion of the advantages of these theoretical approaches, the next section reviews existing scholarly work on student migration, identifying gaps and limitations in the current research. The third section explains the methodology of the online survey conducted for this study. The fourth section presents an analysis of the survey results. Finally, the paper concludes by discussing the findings regarding the causes and challenges faced by student migrants.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The social-theoretical approaches emphasize how researchers conceptualize social changes (Cloke et al., 2006). Migration is regarded as an agent of social change (Castles, 2010). To investigate how students from Bangladesh, as agents of such change, navigate these transformations upon migration, this article applies world systems theory, post-colonial, and feminist approaches. Economic, cultural, and gender differences are identified as core themes derived from these theories to examine the experiences of Bangladeshi student migrants in Hungary and how they address the challenges associated with their migration decisions.

World systems theory provides a framework for analysing the economic challenges faced by students migrating from a semi-peripheral to a peripheral region. Postulated by Immanuel Wallerstein in the 1970s (1974), this theory integrates ideas from dependency theories, the Annales School, and Marxism (Flint, 2009). It examines the unequal relationships among core, peripheral, and semi-peripheral regions within the global hierarchy. The theory elucidates how global power imbalances and economic inequities exacerbate the challenges faced by migrants and links these difficulties to broader socio-economic processes. This theoretical lens draws attention to the economic disparities between peripheral and semi-peripheral regions, which facilitate programs like the Stipendium Hungaricum fellowship, enabling Bangladeshi students to study in Hungary. However, it also highlights how students' economic challenges in Hungary—such as the cost of living—are shaped by their Bangladeshi families' financial circumstances at both the global and household scales. While world systems theory primarily focuses on global economic issues, this study considers the interplay between global, regional, and local factors, offering insights into how these scales influence migration decisions and experiences. Bangladeshi migrants often seek educational opportunities, employment, and income transfers to support their families, reflecting the interconnectedness of global and household economics.

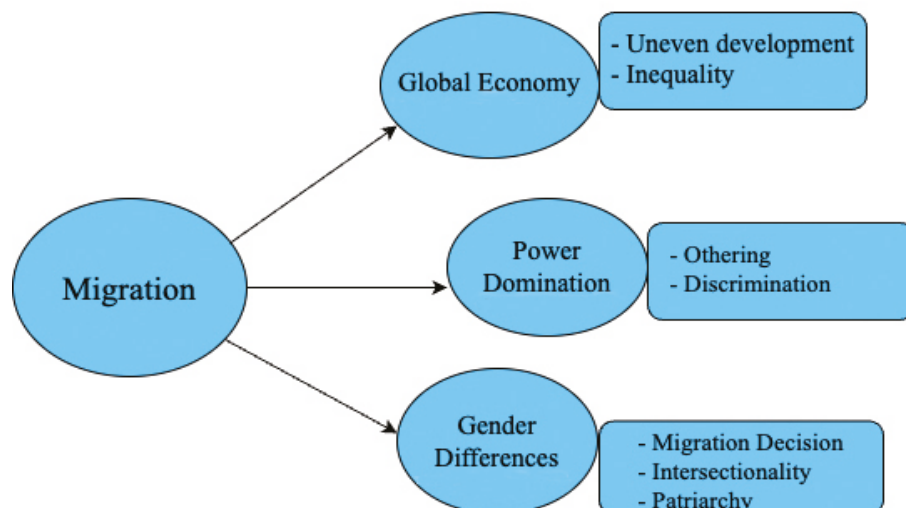
Post-colonial approaches address issues such as identity, race, ethnicity, and gender, alongside the complexities of forming postcolonial national identities and power-knowledge dynamics. These dynamics encompass both the ways colonial powers created and exploited knowledge about colonized peoples and the enduring inequalities stemming from these histories (Chakrabarty, 2007; Fanon, 2002;

López, 2001; McEwan, 2009). Post-colonial theory also dismantles assumptions embedded in cultural representations of “the Other” (Fechter & Walsh, 2010). Rather than marking a break from colonial histories, the post-colonial era reveals a reconfiguration of imperial relationships. Power relations are undergoing a process of “deconstruction-reconstruction” (Chambers & Curti, 2002, pp. 242–260). By examining language, religion, cultural habits, and state policies toward migrants, post-colonial approaches provide a lens for understanding the cultural challenges faced by Bangladeshi student migrants in Hungary. These challenges are analysed within the context of lived spaces, allowing for a comparison of students’ experiences in Hungary to their prior lives in Bangladesh and their expectations upon migration.

Feminist approaches have transformed the study of migration and mobility, particularly by addressing prevailing assumptions and emphasizing the importance of everyday life. Gender is a fundamental component of migration and spatial mobilities (Visic & Poleti-Cosic, 2018), and the challenges faced by female migrants are deeply interwoven with societal structures encountered daily. Feminist geographers were pioneers in highlighting the significance of the household and body scales in migration studies (Marston, 2000; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). This study employs feminist approaches to investigate gender inequalities and their influence on Bangladeshi student migrants in Hungary. Beyond examining the specific challenges faced by female students, the study explores the structural factors contributing to these inequalities. Inspired by the work of Bélanger and Rahman (2013) and Sondhi and King (2017), the research highlights how gender intersects with household dynamics, institutional settings, and cultural norms. Additionally, it draws on Timár and Velkey’s (2016) concept of gendered migration strategies to analyse students’ migration plans.

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) integrates world systems theory, post-colonial approaches, and feminist perspectives to analyse the challenges faced by Bangladeshi students in Hungary. This framework provides a holistic understanding of students’ experiences across various geographical scales and socio-cultural contexts. The following section applies this theoretical framework as a foundation for the empirical methods used to achieve the study’s objectives.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework



## METHODS

This section delves into the quantitative (descriptive) analysis method, specifically focusing on how I structured an online questionnaire survey. Three approaches helped me manage the questions in my questionnaire effectively. For instance, to uncover students' economic problems when moving from a peripheral area to a semi-peripheral region, I asked questions about their economic background based on the economic differences described in world systems theory. The survey posed a series of questions to participants, seeking information regarding their current status in both Bangladesh and Hungary, their methods for managing travel expenses, their primary sources of income in Hungary, their perspectives on economic disparities between the two countries, and any challenges they encountered in securing employment. Moreover, I included questions about the students' background history and financial or cost-related matters to elicit their previous experiences in Bangladesh. This enabled me to discern disparities in the responses based on the different socially constructed spaces.

Post-colonial approaches helped reveal cultural differences and difficulties. Under this approach, I included questions about spaces produced by institutions, firms, and national and local governments that cause problems in students' everyday lives. For example, questions were asked about the challenges or difficulties faced at immigration offices, universities, healthcare centres, restaurants, and bars, as well as in securing and using accommodations in Hungary. By incorporating such inquiries, the study aimed to comprehend the students' lived experiences in various government-operated or autonomous settings, as these serve as valuable sources of othering and inequality stemming from cultural differences.

Feminist perspectives clarify unequal social relations (Massey, 1994). Based on these views, I included questions about places and spaces shaped by gender relations in the questionnaire. This illustrates how students' social ties can influence their networks in both present and future spaces, leading them to encounter issues related to race, gender, and religion. Additionally, the questionnaire included questions about gender, year of birth, birthplace, last residence before relocating to Hungary, educational attainment, the current city of residence in Hungary, and the type of accommodation used. The aim was to compare and analyse participants' past and present circumstances, financial conditions, motivations for migrating to Hungary, and the skills they possessed, as well as to identify and compare the challenges they faced and their underlying causes. Society continuously produces all spaces and places (Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1994). In some cases, the state is the primary actor in creating spaces, as seen in immigration offices, healthcare centres, and universities. Conversely, citizens, particularly students, play a significant role in producing other settings, such as accommodations, restaurants, bars, and public spaces. These spaces allow for examining the experiences and challenges students face in Hungary.

The population/sample of this study was derived from scholarship nominations by the Ministry of Education of Bangladesh. Data was collected through an online questionnaire survey administered to Bangladeshi students studying in Hungary under the Stipendium Hungaricum (SH) scholarship, which was advantageous for exploring students' opinions. Flowerdew and Martin (2005) described web surveys as advantageous because they grant access to unique populations. In line with the

extant literature, this study employed an online survey, a research method that facilitates question formulation and the categorisation of responses (Bryman & Bell, 2019). Additionally, internet access is increasing daily (Babbie, 2010). Therefore, administering the questionnaire via Microsoft (MS) Forms was deemed more convenient. The survey was distributed through various channels, including Bangladeshi student associations in different cities in Hungary, personal networks, and snowball sampling via Facebook, WhatsApp, Email, Viber, and Instagram. Formal consent was obtained from participants before data collection, ensuring anonymity. The study adhered to academic ethics, offering no incentives to respondents, and data was processed in compliance with institutional data protection laws.

The Stipendium Hungaricum (SH) scholarship began in Bangladesh in 2019. For the main data sources, I focused on the final nomination lists provided by the Ministry of Education (MOE) Bangladesh for student migrants from 2019 to 2022. These lists indicated that 100 students were enrolled in 2019 and 120 in 2022. Over four years, 420 candidates were selected, of which more than 71% were male students.

Following the first and second phases of distributing the MS Forms, 240 responses were received. After data cleaning, 231 respondents were included in the sample. Descriptive and explanatory approaches were used to analyse the data.

This survey also had some limitations. For instance, it was not possible to collect data from everyone on the list provided by the Bangladesh Ministry of Education. Despite its drawbacks, social media proved to be the only viable way to collect data for this research.

In the following section, I will summarise the main findings of the survey, focusing on the students' experiences of inequality, discrimination, othering, and gender relations. Emphasis will be placed on economic differences, power dynamics, and gender relations in different spaces, as these are central to the analytical framework of this study. Space-making is an integral part of students' everyday lives and can provide insights into the challenges they face in their temporary migration destination country.

## RESULTS

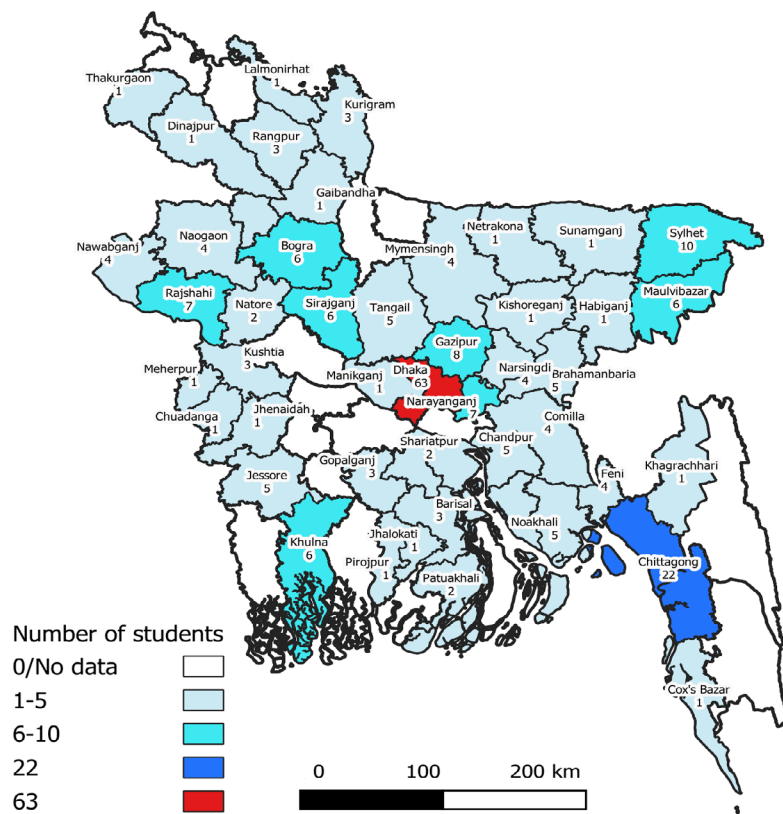
### Students' lived spaces in Bangladesh

This subsection explores aspects of the economic situations and social relations in students' everyday lives in Bangladesh, offering a basis for comparison and insights into the challenges faced by migrants in various Hungarian cities. It highlights the complexities of inequality, social and class differences, and class structure within their former and current lived spaces and places across diverse geographical scales. To understand the students' prior experiences in Bangladesh, the questionnaire included demographic information and financial or cost-related questions. This approach provided valuable insights into the male-female structure and representation of the data, the social and economic

situations of the students compared to those in Hungary, and their former lives across a range of levels—from the global to the regional, national, household, and even body scale.

According to the sample, 94 students were enrolled in bachelor's programmes, 53 in master's programmes, and 39 in PhD programmes at various Hungarian universities. In Bangladesh, the limited opportunities for undergraduate admission to desired universities after completing the secondary school certificate examination often lead students to pursue higher education abroad. Consequently, the opportunity to access higher education abroad increases the interdependence of Bangladeshi students in Hungary. Baláž et al. (2018) note that highly reputed and well-established universities in developed Western countries attract students seeking to achieve higher educational standards in those regions. This situation can create a dependency between countries, as highlighted by Raghuram (2013).

Figure 2. The number of Bangladeshi students who migrated to Hungary by district



Source: Own work based on data from the questionnaire survey, 2023

Bangladesh is administratively divided into eight divisional cities and 64 districts (BBS, 2024). A significant proportion of the surveyed students (nearly half) originated from major cities in Bangladesh before relocating to Hungary. Figure 2 illustrates that 63 students hailed from the capital city, Dhaka. Additionally, 22 students were from the second-largest divisional city, Chittagong. The third category (6–10 students per location) primarily represents other divisional cities, whereas the fourth category (1–5 students per location) reflects students coming from various other districts. These districts include both urban and rural areas.

Furthermore, the rural-urban inequalities prevalent in Bangladesh contribute to increasing in-migration into metropolitan areas, a trend observed daily (Khan, 1982). This pattern was evident in my survey results, which revealed that while 72 students were born in rural areas, only 14 students reported their last living place as rural (Table 1).

Table 1. Rural-urban scenario based on students' birth and last living place in Bangladesh

		Male	Female	Total number of students	Percent
Birthplace	Rural	58	14	72	31.20%
	Urban	104	55	159	68.80%
Last living place	Rural	12	2	14	6.10%
	Urban	105	67	217	93.90%

Source: Own work based on the questionnaire survey, 2023

It can also be inferred that a minimum of 25.1% of students have migrated from rural to urban areas. Consequently, despite their ability to manage their travel expenses and their geographical origins, these students may encounter challenges and inequalities in host societies in diverse ways. This is due to differences in Hungarian religious and cultural views, as well as more sophisticated transportation, education, and economic systems compared to those of Bangladesh. Students strongly agreed that public transportation in Hungary is superior to that in Bangladesh and somewhat agreed on the quality of education and the challenges associated with practicing religious services. However, they also noted that family relations and social ties are stronger in Bangladesh.

On the other hand, 75.7% of the students ultimately settled in Budapest, Debrecen, and Pécs in Hungary. The remaining 24.3% proceeded to other prominent university cities, such as Szeged, Miskolc, and Győr (Table 2). A notable observation is the overrepresentation of female students in Budapest and Debrecen relative to their representation in the overall sample.

Table 2. Number of students living in the different cities in Hungary

Cities	Male	Female	Total number of students	Percent
Budapest	73	37	110	47.6%
Debrecen	45	22	67	29.0%
Pécs	13	08	21	9.1%
Other	31	02	33	24.3%
Total	162	69	231	100.0%

Source: Own work based on the questionnaire survey, 2023

In a peripheral country like Bangladesh, managing travel expenses to a faraway country is a significant economic issue, especially for students. Since the scholarship does not cover plane fares, 65% of students reported that their family members contributed to their travel expenses. Many students whose families lack the financial means may find it impossible to travel to Hungary despite receiving scholarship offers for their studies. This issue is closely related to class positions in Bangladesh, which can determine whether students can afford to travel for higher education.

The findings indicate that while utilizing the advantages of the world system theory and considering the disparities in economic performance between Bangladesh and Hungary are beneficial, it is also imperative to study the household scale. For instance, as Bilecen and Van Mol (2017) argued, students' socio-economic backgrounds can significantly impact their higher studies in host countries. My survey indicates that the scholarship amount they receive is insufficient to support their living expenses in Hungary. While 35.9% of students live on scholarships, due to the high cost of living and rising commodity prices, 40.7% of students reported taking additional student jobs. This suggests that students require supplementary income to support their living expenses beyond the scholarships they receive in Hungary. (It should be noted that it is not only Bangladeshi students who must work alongside their studies to cover their living costs. Because of their class position, some Hungarians face similar challenges.) This also indicates that students from a developing country, moving from a peripheral to a semi-peripheral area, must balance their studies with work to cover their expenses. Their socio-economic backgrounds in Bangladesh often prevent them from seeking extra financial support from their families for expenses in Hungary. This limitation can hinder their ability to gain proper expertise and skills, creating additional inequalities in future job markets, which in turn may cause stress.

The research outcomes of Bernard et al. (2022) align with these results, demonstrating that part-time work—often in unstable academic and non-academic occupations—primarily contributes to students' income, causing stress and ambivalence.

Therefore, the socio-economic background of Bangladeshi students suggests a connection between local, regional, and global scales and the economic challenges they encounter in Hungary. They face disparities between rural and urban areas in their access to higher education in Bangladesh, forcing them to endure hardships with limited scholarships in Hungary and even cover their travel expenses. Moreover, many migrants rely solely on information from electronic media, exacerbating their challenges in unfamiliar places.

The following sub-sections relate to the everyday lives of students in Hungary, focusing on their experiences with cultural, economic, and gendered differences.

### **Places produced by national and local governments and by institutions and firms**

In their everyday lives in the host country and city, migrant students must use certain places infrequently or daily, even though they may encounter othering, racism, class, and gender discrimination. These places are mainly produced by national or local governments, private companies, and other institutions. The aim of this subsection is to study students' experiences in such places, including immigration offices, healthcare centres, universities, restaurants, and accommodations.

Every foreign student needs to visit immigration offices. The survey found that the most common difficulty encountered in these institutions is language problems. Specifically, 27.8% of respondents reported a lack of information in English, 17.2% required more available official documents in English, and 17.5% complained about insufficient communication with clients. Notably, while 16%

of respondents indicated that they did not experience discrimination in immigration offices, 19 individuals reported direct experiences of racism, and two individuals reported gender discrimination.

Spending three to four years in a country far from home makes it almost certain that students will visit doctors at least once. When ill, students may be particularly sensitive to how they are treated. Many students expressed problems with state institutions, citing communication difficulties, partly due to language barriers and partly due to attitudes towards migrants. A significant proportion of students (30.2%) experienced problems finding an English-speaking doctor, while a similar number (25.3%) were unable to secure emergency doctor appointments. Survey results indicate additional challenges beyond language barriers, such as lengthy waiting periods, placing foreign students in an even more unequal position. For instance, Blommaert (2001) illustrates how such situations in other countries can create social stratification and (re)produce inequalities.

Unsurprisingly, students in smaller cities like Debrecen reported more significant challenges in securing emergency medical appointments (48%) than their counterparts in Budapest (42.1%). Additionally, 40 students experienced problems managing treatment costs and insurance. Sixteen female students reported difficulties finding female doctors or nurses, reflecting gendered expectations among migrant students. Furthermore, 29 respondents reported poor treatment from doctors, nurses, or staff, indicating othering and racism. This phenomenon is particularly concerning in state institutions, given that these students are scholarship holders (guests) of the Hungarian state.

Universities are where students spend most of their time. However, according to my 2023 questionnaire survey, just over a third of students (35.4%) felt a lack of welcoming and professional events. Institutions were also noted to lack subject-related courses in English (24.9%), and students faced communication issues with administrative officers (19.7%) and professors (17%). Financial constraints were another challenge, as 17.9% of students reported difficulty attending conferences, and 14.4% faced obstacles conducting empirical studies.

To assess whether these disadvantages stem from periphery–semi-periphery or class inequalities, a comparison between Bangladeshi and Hungarian students is necessary. Further challenges include difficulties due to diverse educational backgrounds (16.6%) and cultural differences (14.4%) with peers, compounded by institutional attitudes failing to adequately address student needs. Unfortunately, some students reported instances of bullying (1.3%) and abusive behaviour (1.7%) at the university.

Given that 88.7% of students identified as Muslim, it is unsurprising that they faced challenges adhering to dietary and religious requirements in a predominantly Christian country like Hungary. Over one-third of students who had dined out reported difficulties, although 37.7% of respondents, including 18.7% who had never visited restaurants or bars, reported no such challenges. Among those who dined out, some faced issues following special diets, while 18 students reported instances of verbal aggression from locals, and 10 students experienced sexist comments from other customers.

Students also face challenges in private places, particularly accommodations. Only 13% of respondents reported never feeling stressed about accommodation, while nearly half faced difficulties paying rent. The Hungarian state provides inadequate assistance, as 38.5% of students struggled to secure dormitory allocations. Privately owned housing presented financial and communication challenges, with a quarter to a third of students encountering difficulties recovering deposits or

contacting landlords and rental agencies. Around 10% of respondents reported problems with neighbours or prejudice. Regarding housemates or flatmates, 19% of respondents faced challenges finding individuals of the same cultural background, 14.3% encountered difficulties finding individuals of the same religious background, and 6.5% reported problems finding flatmates of the same gender.

As indicated by the findings, students face various cultural challenges in prominent state-run institutions, including immigration offices, healthcare centres, and universities. These challenges encompass linguistic barriers and a lack of welcoming, professional events. Moreover, private institutions, such as those in the accommodation sector, present economic challenges and inadequate provisions for special diets in restaurants and bars (Table 3). The respondents' answers indicate that not only state institutions but also certain private establishments allow degrading behaviour and unequal treatment toward Bangladeshi students as their customers.

Table 3. The most significant challenges faced by respondents in some state and private institutions in Hungary

Name of places	Challenges selected by the highest percentage of respondents	Percent
Immigration offices	Lack of information available in English	27.9%
Healthcare centres	Getting English speaking doctor	30.4%
Universities	Lack of welcoming and professional events	31.6%
Restaurants and bars	Following special diet	26.3%
Accommodation	Maintaining rental price	19.2%

Source: Own work based on the questionnaire survey, 2023

### **Places and spaces produced mainly by different social relations of citizens**

As discussed in the preceding subsections, some state-run and privately operated places, including healthcare centres, universities, and restaurants, facilitate interactions with locals and citizens. Additionally, the experiences of individuals in relation to public spaces and local citizens are recurring aspects of their everyday lives. Consequently, this subsection examines students' lived experiences in various public spaces.

A lack of language proficiency and inability to communicate can marginalize migrant workers (Jamil & Dutta, 2021). The results of my survey indicate that 81.8% of respondents encountered communication difficulties with local people due to the language barrier. This issue significantly impacts students' daily lives in numerous settings. Only 15.6% of respondents reported no problems communicating with locals, while a similar number (17.3%) unfortunately experienced racial discrimination. Additionally, 4.3% mentioned religious discrimination, and 1.3% reported gender discrimination.

Public spaces are primarily shaped by the locals and citizens. Migrant students in Hungary also utilize these spaces, making them important sites where the attitudes of locals toward migrants become visible and directly influence students' everyday experiences. These interactions can often be gendered, as is common across various cultures, countries, and cities (Sági, 2022).

A significant proportion of respondents agreed that women are more likely to feel like strangers in public spaces (39% strongly agree), partly because they wear distinctively patterned dresses. This underscores the importance of considering the body scale when studying migrants' experiences. The findings also suggest that Bangladeshi students perceive women in Hungary to be in a more favourable position compared to their counterparts in Bangladesh. Most respondents (65.6%) believe that women do not encounter significant issues in public spaces in Hungary.

There is a general consensus that women in Hungary are safer when using public spaces alone than women in Bangladesh. This phenomenon may be attributed to the patriarchal power relations prevalent in Bangladesh and cultural differences between the two countries. Notably, women in Hungary may experience a greater sense of freedom in public spaces. This observation aligns with Fenster's (2005) findings regarding Bangladeshi women in London.

### **Students' recent and future lived spaces and challenges**

The student population represents the primary agents in creating their lived spaces. They build connections and form their own spaces partly as a reaction to their relationships and behaviour with their friends and families, relatives, peers, administrations, supervisors, flatmates, neighbours, etc. Moreover, they not only create their present lived spaces based on those relationships and networks but, in a sense, can also prepare the production of their future lived spaces. This subsection analyses the Bangladeshi migrant students' formation of present lived spaces and also their future lived spaces.

The decision regarding migration plays a crucial role in shaping the lived experiences of students both in the present and in the future. Many individual factors, including psychological distress, perceived urgency, and the need for certainty regarding employment prospects, frequently influence the decision-making process concerning migration. The dissemination of information through media and the Internet exerts a significant influence on these decisions, akin to the impact of self-determination and self-efficacy (Czaika et al., 2021).

Regarding pre-migration history, 59.8% of the respondents have a family migration history. Among them, 37.3% mentioned that their family members still live in another country, which might be linked to their decision to migrate to Hungary. There are several reasons to study abroad. According to recent research on Bangladesh, getting a standard education is one of the most essential aspirations for international migrants like students (Kabir, 2021). Migrants consider several criteria when making their decision to relocate. The survey results indicate that neither teachers nor families constituted the primary source of information regarding the possibility of pursuing further studies in Hungary. It is noteworthy to observe the impact of virtual spaces, particularly in the context of mass media, and it was revealed that 55.8% of respondents indicated that mass media played a role in their decision-making processes, which is substantial compared to the perceived importance of everyday connections with personal relationships. This is particularly salient in the Bangladeshi context, where personal connections, particularly within familial relationships, are important. The survey revealed that friends were considered more important than family members, with 28.1% of respondents citing friends as a

primary source of information, in contrast to the 7.8% who selected family members. These findings underscore the growing influence of virtual spaces, particularly mass media, in shaping individuals' decisions regarding further education in Hungary. It is noteworthy that the internet has emerged as a more influential source of information compared to traditional forms of communication, even within a developing nation like Bangladesh. However, within gender, females demonstrated a greater reliance on family members (11.6%) compared to males (6.2%), thereby underscoring the influence of a patriarchal society in Bangladesh.

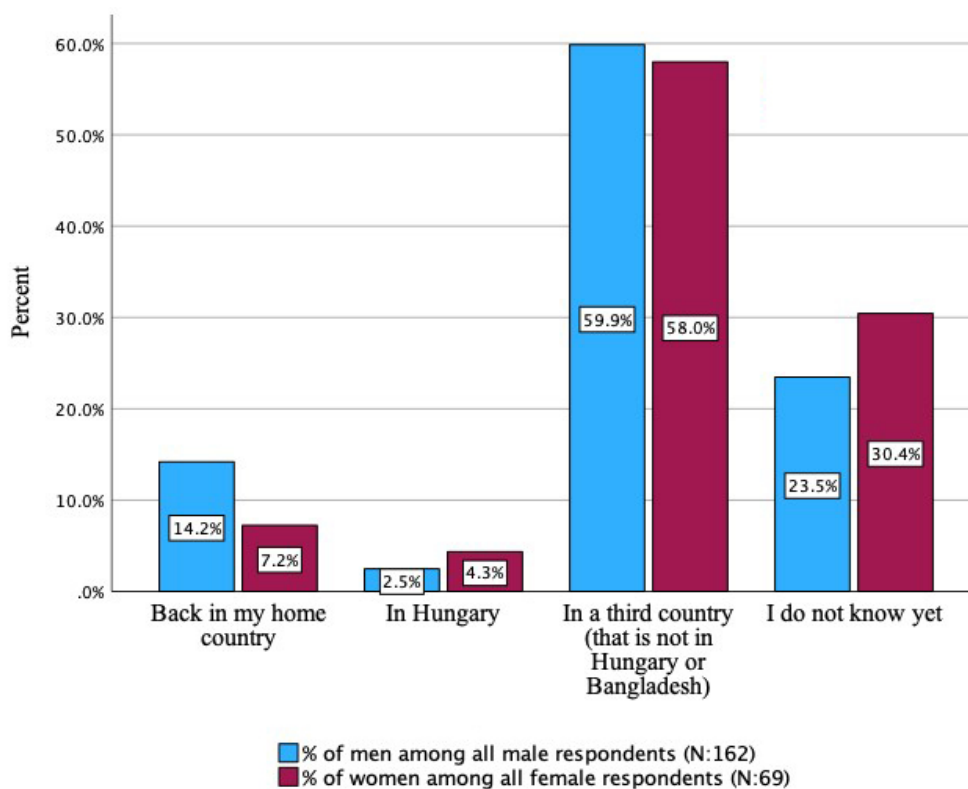
Moreover, the decision to migrate is contingent upon the policies and interests of the countries of origin and destination (Oishi, 2005). As demonstrated by the literature of Alpek B. et al. (2022), the Hungarian government had planned to enrol 40,000 international students in various Hungarian universities by 2023. The Bangladeshi student migrants can be considered a response to the Hungarian government's policies. The survey results indicate that scholarship opportunities (73.2%) and diverse study programmes (26.8%) were key motivators for migration to Hungary, which is also similar to the findings of Rédei (2007). However, it is noteworthy that over one-third of respondents (38.1%) reported making independent migration decisions. Moreover, family influence was a significant factor, with fathers (21.2%) and mothers (15.2%) playing a pivotal role in the decision-making process. Furthermore, the data indicates a notable dependency on family members among female migrants, with 11.6% relying on family for information, compared to 6.2% of male migrants. This finding suggests a potential influence of gendered power dynamics within Bangladeshi families on migration decisions, where females (24.6%) appear to place greater reliance on their fathers compared to males (19.8%).

Furthermore, previous studies have highlighted the necessity of contextualising migration decisions within the framework of historical linkages, social networks, and the degree of success transnational communities have been established in host countries (Nagy, 2018). The migration networks play a significant role in the migration process (Haug, 2008). Substantial expenses and risks are associated with international migration. People's aspirations usually rise with access to education and information. Forming connections and building relationships with friends and global communities can facilitate the expansion of the networks (Gold & Nawyn, 2019), which can help establish a sense of belonging in one's present and future lived spaces. Connections and relationships with friends and global communities are key to expanding networks (Gold & Nawyn, 2019). These relationships help establish a sense of belonging in present and future living spaces. Students who fail to maintain these networks and relationships will struggle to settle in. As shown above, Bangladeshi students in the information age are largely informed through mass media and the internet, which is suitable for building virtual networks. However, friends also helped them get information about migrating to Hungary. Social integration can help evaluate the depth and nature of the problem in the host country. If a student is alone, without any social network, or without sharing issues, they will feel worse. An understanding of their social network can facilitate the assessment of their experiences and challenges (Nagy, 2018). This can be achieved by examining whether they engage with the Hungarian or Bangladeshi community during their stay in Hungary and by evaluating the presence

of robust network patterns in Hungary. Here, it is evident that 44.4% of the respondents maintained a communication network with Bangladeshi people in Hungary and other foreign friends (37.7%), which is more characteristic than the attachment to Hungarian friends (12.1%). This means that it is not just language problems, especially in a social environment of highly educated people, which can make network-building in a host country difficult.

Therefore, the majority of students make their own migration decisions when they arrive in Hungary and, after encountering challenges, decide to relocate to another country or a third location, which is neither Bangladesh nor Hungary (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Students' migration plan in five years by gender



Source: Own work based on data from the questionnaire survey, 2023

The findings demonstrate that 50 out of 85 respondents, whose family members reside in other countries, expressed intentions to relocate to a third country. Of a total of 108 respondents who faced difficulties maintaining the rental price of accommodation, 64 expressed a willingness to move to a third country. Nevertheless, these are not solely economic disparities; cultural differences that lead to unfavourable experiences can also influence students' decisions regarding their future plans. Of the 67 respondents who faced challenges practicing religious activities, 40 expressed plans to move to a third country. Similarly, of the 67 respondents who mentioned dealing with special dietary requirements, 43 expressed plans to relocate to other countries. Of 10 respondents who experienced sexist comments in restaurants and bars, 7 mentioned their intention to move. In comparison, 11 out of 19 respondents who experienced racism in immigration offices expressed a willingness to move to another country.

This suggests that the problems students face in Hungary may intensify their desire to relocate to other countries for their future “lived spaces.”

## CONCLUSIONS

The present study set out to demonstrate the challenges faced by Bangladeshi students in Hungary through the contextualisation of their everyday lives, specifically by examining their lived spaces using various social theoretical approaches. While extensive literature documents the challenges faced by migrants in host countries worldwide, it can be assumed that the social group examined here, i.e., students receiving scholarships from the Hungarian government, is somewhat protected.

The questionnaire survey presented here also allowed students to assess the economic, cultural, and gender differences between the two countries. Respondents strongly agreed that Hungary has better gender relations, while they somewhat agreed that Hungary has more favourable economic and cultural relations. This may be due to the fact that Bangladeshi female migration policy, like that of some other countries, is shaped by social ideals and the social construction of gender embedded in patriarchal global and local gender hierarchies (Bélanger & Rahman, 2013). In contrast, Bangladeshi female students in Hungary enjoy economic and social freedom through scholarships and a social security system.

However, better gender conditions alone are not enough to encourage students to imagine their future in Hungary. The multi-faceted social theoretical approach also highlights that one of the main difficulties migrant students face while residing in Hungary is that the scholarships they receive are inadequate to support themselves, compelling many to seek part-time employment. Nevertheless, compared to their situation in Bangladesh, they have a better chance of earning an income while studying and later moving to a new country.

It is clear that Hungary acts as a transit place in their lives. This may be a consequence of the problems they experience in their lived spaces in this country. At the same time, through their migration decisions, they themselves contribute to the reproduction of the periphery–semi-periphery–centre relations.

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