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Exploring the determinants of voting behavior among young women: a study of Dhaka-17 and Dhaka-18 constituencies

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School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
Master's in Developmental Studies (MDS) Program

Exploring the Determinants of Voting Behavior Among Young Women: A Study of Dhaka-17 and Dhaka-18 Constituencies

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Abstract

Despite women's formal right to vote and increasing political participation, young women's voting behaviour is still influenced by concerns about personal safety, societal expectations, and political freedom. Limited research has been conducted focusing on how perceptions of safety and freedom influence the political choices of young women in Dhaka. This study examines how young women's perceptions of personal safety and freedom in Dhaka-17 and Dhaka-18 constituencies shape voting behaviour. The factors determining voting choices are also identified. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach combining data from a survey with key informant interviews. The findings were then interpreted using Feminist Political Theory (Bryson, 1992) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The findings indicate that safety and freedom influence political behaviour. Specifically, political participation, expression, and preferences. However, safety and freedom are not direct determinants of the final vote. Candidates' stance on women's issues, candidate reputation, and party ideology are the most important factors that determine the vote. Family and social expectations may affect a woman's ability to make autonomous political choices. The study concludes that political participation includes the act of voting, whether women can openly express their views, and make political choices freely.

Keywords: Voting Behaviour, Young Women, Political Participation, Personal Safety, Political Freedom

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Political participation is considered any activity that aims to influence the structure of the government (Kabir, 2015). This includes the appointment of leaders and the policies they execute that contribute to national development. In Bangladesh, women's participation in politics is complex and paradoxical. On the one hand, Bangladesh has experienced long-term female leadership and has implemented institutional mechanisms such as quota systems to increase women's representation (Ara & Northcote, 2020). On the other hand, these advancements did not lead to substantial participation, as women continue to face micro-level socio-cultural, structural, and institutional barriers, particularly among younger generations (Huq, 2025).

Young women, aged 18 to 35, represent an important part of the electorate in Bangladesh (Tipu & Bhattacharya, 2026). In the Thirteenth National Parliament Election, the total number of voters in Dhaka was 3,0,491,638 (Bangladesh Election Commission, 2025). The number of female voters was 14,966,988 (Bangladesh Election Commission, 2025). As first-time voters in the 2026 National Parliament Election, young women are forming political attitudes and behaviours (BIGDAdmin, 2026). This makes them especially sensitive to contextual influences. At the same time, young women hold central roles in households, local social networks, and communities. Women's participation is influenced by political awareness, ideological preferences, socio-cultural factors, institutional structures, and everyday experiences (BIGDAdmin, 2026). Among these factors, the perception of freedom and safety plays a crucial yet unexplored role.

The landscape in which a woman votes also influences their political decisions. In the 2026 National Elections, 59 political parties were registered, and 51 of them nominated candidates (Chughtai, 2026). One of the main candidates was from the National Citizen Party (NCP), formed by student leaders of the 2024 uprising. They focus on political reform and attracted attention from young voters. The next party, Jamaat-e-Islami, promotes politics based on Islamic principles. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), one of the two traditional parties, presents itself as a nationalist and conservative force. The other traditional party, Awami League, was suspended by the election board post-July movement (Chughtai, 2026).

In Bangladesh, political engagement involves voting, participating in rallies, grassroots campaigning, student politics, and online political discourse (Huq, 2025). However, these spaces are not always inclusive or safe for women. Public political gatherings expose women to physical risks such as intimidation, harassment, or violence. (Ferdous, 2025) Similarly, online platforms offer opportunities for expression but can lead to gender-based violence and surveillance (Kabir, 2015). In addition, safety concerns extend beyond physical threats as social and familial expectations influence women's political behavior. The ideological stance of political parties can also play a significant role in influencing young women's political choices. In contexts where certain political parties are perceived to promote more patriarchal, conservative, or restrictive gender norms, young women may experience increased fear (Ara & Northcote, 2020). This perceived threat of oppression can influence both participation and voting behavior.

In this study, the concept of 'freedom' is linked to the ability to make independent political choices without fear. With high safety concerns including physical, social, digital, or politically driven factors, freedom becomes limited. Existing literature on gender and political participation in Bangladesh mostly examines structural barriers such as education, institutional representation, and economic status. However, there is an increasing need to examine experiential aspects such as the relationship between political ideology and voting behaviour.

This study seeks to investigate the relationship between how the perception of safety and freedom shapes young women's political choices and voting behavior in Bangladesh. By examining different forms of safety concerns, this research aims to understand the factors that influence political decisions among young women.

1.2 Problem Statement

Women in Bangladesh have made significant progress in political representation and voter participation. However, many women still face challenges in exercising political autonomy or political freedom (Meena, 2019). In several cases, women's political choices are not only influenced by personal choice. It is shaped by fears of harassment, familial pressure, party ideology, social stigma, or digital intimidation (Ara & Northcote, 2020). These safety concerns

may discourage women from actively participating in politics and openly expressing themselves. As a result, their voting behaviour may reflect protective or adaptive measures rather than their own preference (Kabeer, 2011).

Little research has examined how perceptions of safety shape women's voting behaviour in urban Dhaka. Understanding this relationship in Dhaka-17 and Dhaka-18 constituencies, along with the factors determining votes, will help to identify the limitations to women's political freedom and personal safety.

1.3 Research Objectives

Objectives:

1. To examine how young women's perceptions of personal safety and freedom influence their voting behaviour in the Dhaka-17 and Dhaka-18 constituencies in Dhaka city
2. To identify the factors determining the voting behaviour of women residing in Dhaka-17 and Dhaka-18 constituencies

1.4 Research Questions

To achieve the objective of the research, the following questions will be addressed.

Research Questions

1. How do young women's perceptions of personal safety and freedom influence their voting behaviour in the Dhaka-17 and Dhaka-18 constituencies?
2. What factors determine the voting behaviour of young women in Dhaka-17 and Dhaka-18 constituencies?

1.5 Significance of the Study

By focusing on safety as a key factor, this study provides a deeper understanding of the relationship between political participation and freedom. Mostly class, religion, family, party identity, and media exposure are considered important factors (Paniamogan et al., 2025; Mercy, 2025). Studies in Ethiopia and India highlight factors other than safety influencing voting (Joshi & Joshi, 2025;

Dessie, 2023; Mercy, 2025). By focusing on safety and freedom, the study adds a gender-sensitive perspective to the analysis of electoral decisions in Bangladesh.

Additionally, the study highlights the lived experiences of women, particularly young women whose perspectives are often underrepresented in political research. As a woman living in Bangladesh, my own contextual experience directly affected my voting behaviour and political attitudes in terms of safety concerns. During the 2026 National Parliament Elections, issues such as fear of unrest and concerns about personal security significantly influenced my own perception of political choices. This personal insight increases the significance of examining a lived social reality, where political behaviour is shaped by perceived safety rather than ideology or party preference.

Lastly, as an exploratory study, this research looks into underrepresented areas rather than providing conclusive answers. There is scope to expand the study area to other constituencies of Dhaka. Further research into related themes, such as rural-urban differences in political participation and the impact of digital political spaces for women, can be conducted.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

This study focuses on young women living in Dhaka-17 and Dhaka-18 constituencies, and their perceptions of safety and freedom influencing their voting behaviour. The research looks specifically into how different forms of safety concerns, such as physical, social, familial, and digital, influence political choices. This includes independence in voting decisions, open expression of political views, and support for a political party or candidate. First-time voters are given particular attention as first experiences form political habits.

This study does not attempt to explain all factors influencing women's voting behaviour in Bangladesh. Political choices may also be shaped by ideology, religion, economic conditions, party loyalty, peer influence, and media exposure. While these factors are acknowledged where relevant, the primary focus remains on safety and freedom as explanatory variables.

Several limitations may affect the study. First, perceptions of safety are subjective and may vary between individuals, making them difficult to measure uniformly. Second, respondents may

hesitate to speak openly about political preferences, family pressure, or personal insecurity due to the sensitivity of the topic. This may affect the depth or honesty of responses. Third, the study is based on findings from 50 respondents and 8 key informant interviews collected through convenience and purposive sampling in two constituencies. As such, the findings can not be generalised to all young women in Dhaka or Bangladesh.

Despite these limitations, the study remains valuable because it addresses an important but underexplored dimension of women's political participation in Bangladesh. As an exploratory study, the study seeks to map out an understudied area rather than provide conclusive answers. By focusing on the relationship between fear, freedom, and political choice, it aims to provide meaningful insight into the circumstances under which young women engage in democratic processes.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the existing literature on the factors influencing voting behaviour among young women. It focuses on how perceptions of personal safety and freedom shape their political choices. This section begins by explaining the key concepts and major theories of voting behaviour. Then women's political participation in both global and Bangladeshi contexts is discussed. The main focus of this study, safety and freedom, is then examined by first exploring gender and women's access to public space. Then, the five important dimensions of safety: physical, social and cultural, familial, digital, and ideological. The chapter also explains how changing perceptions translate into solid political decisions, reviews the factors that affect women's voting behaviour, sets out the theoretical framework guiding this study, and finally identifies the research gap that this study aims to address.

2.2 Conceptualizing Voting Behaviour and Political Participation

Voting behaviour is traditionally understood as more than the simple act of casting a vote. According to Hazarika (2008), drawing on Eldersveld's classical definition, voting behaviour includes the individual psychological processes of emotion, perception, and motivation, and the way these are connected to political action. Voting is both an individual decision and a social activity through which citizens can freely express their opinions and choose their representatives (Islam, 2020). Understanding what influences this decision has always been a main concern of political science, leading to several well-known theories of voting behavior.

Kulachai et al. (2023), in their review, identified three main approaches that explain voting behavior. The sociological model, which was developed by Lazarsfeld, argues that a person's social group, such as their religion, class, or community, influences their voting behaviour. The psychosocial model, developed through the American Voter tradition, suggests that long-term party loyalty shaped by socialisation affects voting behaviour. The rational-choice model treats voters as individuals. The individuals compare the costs and benefits of different political options before making a rational decision. Kulachai et al. (2023) also explain that, in reality, voting behaviour is shaped by several sets of individual factors. Income and education are some of the

strongest predictors of voter turnout and political participation. Similarly, Salma et al. (2025) use these three major models in their study of women's voting behaviour. They identified seven socio-psychological factors that affect women, including cultural, social, and economic factors such as economic dependency. Hazarika (2008), studying the Indian context, adds factors such as caste, religion, the personal charisma of political leaders, and the influence of money that affect voting behaviour. This shows that the social conditions and what is happening in local politics also play a role in understanding voting behaviour along with basic models.

Another group of studies focuses on the way voters make decisions when they have limited political information, which are called shortcuts or heuristics. Bukhari and Shamas (2024) address the idea of issue ownership, where voters believe that certain political parties are more competent at dealing with specific issues. However, their study of female voters in Punjab found that many women did not even have basic information about the candidates in their constituency. This suggests that while rational-choice models assume voters have enough freedom and political information to make informed decisions, this is often not the case for many women.
This observation highlights a recurring limitation of the literature on voting behaviour. It is assumed that voters are informed, autonomous, and free to act according to their preference. As the following sections will show, many women first have to overcome issues related to freedom and safety before they are even able to develop and express their own political preferences.

Voting is only one form of political participation, and many scholars argue that voter turnout alone should not be used as a straightforward measure of political engagement or political agency. Pachi and Barrett (2012) distinguish between conventional political participation, such as voting, non-conventional participation, such as protests, and civic participation, such as community involvement. They argue that people are more likely to participate when they perceive that their actions can make a difference. Notably, their study found that young people in Bangladesh considered voting to be relatively ineffective because they had low external political efficacy, meaning they believed that the political system was not responsive to ordinary citizens. Similarly, Zani and Barrett (2012) argue that young people are not politically indifferent. Rather, the quality of participation is more important than the amount of participation. They suggest that meaningful opportunities for genuine action and reflection within supportive environments help strengthen

political efficacy and encourage future political engagement. Murshed (2025) also reinforces this caution, assuming that high voter turnout among women automatically reflects political independence. Instead, high participation may simply result from mobilisation by family or community members rather than women's autonomous choices. Together, these studies provide the conceptual foundation for the second research question of this study, while also highlighting that traditional theories of voting behaviour pay limited attention to the way gender and safety influence women's voting decisions. The next section examines women's political participation in greater detail.

2.3 Voter Turnout, Choice, and Autonomy

It is important to note that high voter turnout should not be automatically seen as evidence of political agency, and it directly affects how this research views Dhaka's voting behaviour. Murshed (2025), in his study from rural Bangladesh, finds that women are more likely to vote than men, especially younger and married women. Initially, this finding would contradict the picture of women being politically marginalised. However, Murshed argues that encouragement or pressure from families and communities, rather than women's autonomous political decisions, may be the cause of increased voter turnout. Therefore, distinguishing between the simple act of voting and exercising political agency.

A similar conclusion is reached by Islam (2020) in his research conducted in a rural upazila. He finds that most women do not vote based on their own opinions; instead, they follow the preferences of their husbands or other family members. This is described as "family doctrine," when women's voting decisions are mostly influenced by family preferences. Bukhari & Shamas (2024) report the same pattern in Punjab, where a large number of women cast votes under the influence of their families and were often unaware of the reason behind the voting choices they made. Together, these studies highlight an important point that for young women, factors influencing voter turnout and voting decisions are often different. In certain cases, factors such as familial involvement may increase a woman's chances of casting a vote while at the same time reducing her autonomy to choose whom to vote for.

2.4 Women's Voting Behaviour in Global and Bangladeshi Context

Around the world, women continue to be underrepresented in formal politics, and numerous studies have been conducted to explain this gender gap. Most studies indicate that women's lack of interest or ability is not the cause of this gap. Rather, it is mostly the outcome of cultural, social, and institutional contexts that surround women. Using cross-national data, Wood (2024) concludes that pre-election physical violence significantly reduces the representation of women in legislatures. Women are predicted to hold thirteen percent of parliamentary seats at average levels of pre-election violence. But when violence rises, this number declines. Based on data from Egypt, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Pakistan, Nazneen (2023) points out that male gatekeepers maintain deeply ingrained or "sticky" gender norms that prevent women from participating in formal politics. She adds that because these forms of participation entail less social risk, women commonly express their political agency through collective acts, which are usually related to motherhood or community concerns.

According to Apine & Dauda-Damisa (2025), in Nigeria, although most women are active voters, a small percentage of women run for office. They list religion, education, cultural norms, political violence, electoral violence, and domestic violence as significant indicators of women's political participation. In Indonesia, Hasna et al. (2025) identify social image, political knowledge and awareness, and empowerment as the primary factors influencing young women's political views. These three factors explain two-thirds of the differences in political preference among women. Similarly, Zani & Barrett (2012) conclude that women, migrants, and minorities are equally politically active as other groups, but they tend to concentrate on topics that directly impact their lives or rely significantly on the opportunities to participate. Nazneen (2023) also points out that successful female political leaders and mediators belong to privileged or educated backgrounds. This proves that socioeconomic class and education also have an impact on women's political participation in addition to gender.

A strong example of this global trend is Bangladesh. Although women have formal political rights, there are still few opportunities for them to actively participate in politics. According to Chowdhury (2009), historically women have held a small number of directly elected parliamentary seats. She argues that women in reserved seats are often viewed as "ornaments" or as a "vote bank"

with no actual power to influence policymaking. Panday (2008) further confirms this by concluding that while quota systems have increased the number of women in local and national government, their meaningful participation is not ensured. Only a relatively small proportion of general seats were won by women. Moreover, many female council members questioned were unaware of their formal responsibilities and lacked confidence in their ability to carry out their official duties.

Ara & Northcote (2020) refer to this situation as a "gender wall." The wall consists of socio-economic barriers including childcare responsibilities, safety concerns, and limited access to educational and financial resources. It also includes political and institutional barriers such as biased nomination procedures, male-dominated political culture, politics based on muscle power and wealth. In addition, women's political participation is still restricted by conservative cultural, social, and ideological standards. As such, while the gender wall has been lowered, it has not completely vanished yet. Prodip (2021), when comparing Bangladesh to India, its neighbouring country, discovers that patriarchal control is particularly strong in Bangladesh. Male family members frequently control key resources and dominate decisions. According to Ali et al. (2025), although Bangladeshi women believe they enjoy comparatively high levels of freedom in matters like media use, healthcare, and public mobility, their political participation is still rather low. The study also reports that many women have fewer opportunities and less freedom after being married.

2.5 Determinants of Voting Behaviour Among Young Women

This section addresses the determinants that influence the voting behaviour of young women in Dhaka. The determinants are grouped into six broad categories: socio-demographic, economic, socio-cultural, familial, political and institutional, and digital determinants. These factors are closely connected and often influence one another in practice.

2.5.1 Socio-Demographic Determinants

Demographic factors such as age, education, area of residence, and marital status are frequently associated with voting behaviour. According to Kulachai et al. (2023), education is one of the best indicators of political participation and voter turnout. Apine & Dauda-Damisa (2025) also find that education is a significant indicator of women's electoral participation in Nigeria. Voting behaviour

is influenced by education in several ways. In addition to raising political awareness and knowledge, it boosts women's self-esteem and confidence in their capacity to make their own political decisions. Panday (2008) proves this by finding that many women councillors who lacked knowledge about their responsibilities often felt underconfident in their ability to carry out their political roles. For this study, age is an important socio-demographic factor. Murshed (2025) in his study finds that younger women are more likely to vote than older women in rural Bangladesh. However, according to Almanza Avendaño et al. (2022), women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine are more likely to be harassed and limit their own movements in order to protect themselves. Similarly, Koch et al. (2025) discover that the group most impacted by online harassment is young, aspirational women.

These findings demonstrate that young women have a distinct and often paradoxical position. While they are more likely to vote, educated, and engaged online, women are more likely to experience reputational policing and harassment. This limits their ability to make independent political decisions. Marital status of women is another factor to keep in mind. According to Ali et al. (2025), Bangladeshi women experience reduced freedom and fewer opportunities after being married. On the other hand, Murshed (2025) notes that married women are more likely to vote. These results imply that political autonomy and political participation do not necessarily rise together.

2.5.2 Economic Determinants

A womans economic situation affects both her capacity to engage in politics and her independence while casting a vote. Income is one of the most prominent individual-level indicators of voter turnout according to Kulachai et al. (2023). The literature focuses more on economic dependency as opposed to only income when studying women. Salma et al. (2025) identify economic dependency as one of the most prevalent factors influencing women's voting choices in Pakistan. They state that women are less likely to cast votes according to their own preferences if they are financially dependent on male family members.

This issue is examined by Bukhari and Shamas (2024) in their study of unemployed women in Punjab. They discover that women's voting behaviour is greatly influenced by their employment

status and the political knowledge they gain from their employment. Limited access to education and financial means is another significant socioeconomic barrier that reinforces the "gender wall," according to Ara and Northcote (2020). Similarly, Prodip (2021) points out that male family members frequently control household resources, thus increasing the financial dependency of women. The issue of economic dependency might present differently in Dhaka as young women have more access to education, have greater employment opportunities, and have independent income compared to women in rural areas. This study will explore whether these opportunities lead to more political independence in practice.

2.5.3 Socio-Cultural Determinants

Salma et al. (2025) discovered social and cultural factors as the most cited influencing women's voting behaviour. In a similar fashion, Apine and Dauda-Damisa (2025) find religion and cultural norms as significant determinants of Nigerian women's political engagement. According to Hasna et al. (2025), young women's political views in Indonesia were most strongly influenced by their social image. This implies that young women's political views can be influenced by how others perceive them, and not just their willingness to voice them.

In South Asia, expectations regarding women's respectability frequently serve to uphold these social norms. According to Prodip (2021), larger sociocultural practices that uphold male dominance in Bangladesh explain the political marginalization of women. Additionally, according to Bukhari and Shamas (2024), patriarchal and religious views limit or even completely forbid women from voting in some areas. In a study of female students at the University of Dhaka, Ferdous (2025) discovered that the social stigma associated with politics leads to families discouraging women from being involved in politics. Women who participate in politics are likewise subjected to character assaults and rumours about their character. Dahal (2025) found social stigma to be the most mentioned barrier to women's political participation in Nepal. According to Shobnam (2026), this stems from a long-held notion that it is immoral for women to be visible in public spaces. As the reputation of young and unmarried women is keenly monitored, the fear of being perceived as "too political" becomes a significant factor influencing their political behaviour.

2.5.4 Familial Determinants

Islam (2020) observed that women's voting decisions are mostly influenced by family values. Many women follow the advice of their husbands or other family members to prevent conflict and maintain peace at home. According to Bukhari and Shamas (2024), many women cast their votes based on familial pressure, without fully understanding the logic behind their vote. Additionally, they discovered that family-imposed restrictions are one of the primary barriers to independent political participation for women. Salma et al. (2025) also found a similar pattern throughout South Asia, recognizing husbands, fathers, and brothers as the main gatekeepers limiting women's autonomous voting.

According to Chowdhury (2009), family acts as a gatekeeper of women who control their access to political life. He makes a distinction between public patriarchy in society and private patriarchy in the family. Ara and Northcote (2020) also point out socioeconomic barriers such as childcare and other household responsibilities that hinder political participation. Murshed (2025) states that while support from the family and community might boost women's voter turnout, it can come at the expense of making independent political decisions. In Dhaka, many young women are still unmarried, living with their parents, or have moved out for education or work. As such, family influence is likely to vary.

2.5.5 Political and Institutional Determinants

According to Hazarika (2008), the influence of money, caste, religion, and the personal appeal of political leaders plays a significant role in South Asian elections. In addition to individual and socio-cultural factors, Kulachai et al. (2023) mention political factors like campaign contact and party identification as important components during elections.

Particularly for women, political awareness and access to information are crucial. Bukhari & Shamas (2024) identified that women's voting behaviour is significantly influenced by political awareness. However, they also discovered that a large number of women had little knowledge about the contestants running for elections. Similarly, Hasna et al. (2025) found that awareness and information had the second strongest impact on young women's political choices after candidates' social image.

Another closely connected factor that is highly relevant to young voters in Dhaka is political efficacy. People are more inclined to get involved in politics if they believe their actions have an impact, according to Pachi & Barrett (2012). They found that voting is viewed as having less effect by young women in Bangladesh because they thought that the political system did not react to regular people, a phenomenon known as low external political efficacy. Zani and Barrett (2012) state that positive experiences with political engagement can eventually increase political efficacy. According to Panday (2008) and Ara and Northcote (2020), institutional arrangements like quota systems, party structures, and nomination procedures affect the opportunities available to women. Moreover, Chowdhury (2009) characterizes a political culture overpowered by wealth and muscle power that shapes the environment of elections, particularly in Dhaka.

2.5.6 Media and Digital Determinants

According to Ali et al. (2025), women in Bangladesh believe that they have a fair amount of freedom in terms of accessing media, indicating that digital platforms act as one of the most accessible spaces for political discourse and information. Hasna et al. (2025) discovered that young women's political orientation is significantly influenced by information and awareness, most of which comes from media.

However, women face many challenges while navigating the digital environment. Al Zaman (2021) details the emergence of Islamic "diglantism," where male users online keep an eye on women's attire, religious practices, and online behaviour as well as criticizing their character in an effort to maintain social control. According to Shuchy & Uddin (2026), online abuse and harassment are made worse by spreading misinformation, deepfakes, and altered pictures. Regardless of the authenticity of the information, these types of abuse serve as tools of moral policing. The notion that online spaces are safe for women is challenged by Oden (2023), who argues that even "safe" spaces frequently expose women to hatred and hostility based on their gender when they address political concerns. After reviewing this evidence, Koch et al. (2025) concluded that online harassment hinders political expression, especially among younger women, and causes psychological distress. As a result, media serves two opposite roles. Media exposes women to harassment that restricts their political involvement while simultaneously providing political information that encourages informed voting. The balance between the positive and

negative impacts of media is expected to play a role in the political awareness and participation of young women in urban Dhaka.

2.6 Safety and Freedom as Determinants of Voting Behaviour

The factors influencing voting behaviour discussed in the previous section are often recognised. This section focuses on how the perception of safety and freedom determines voting behaviour. This research claims that safety is a key factor that directly influences political participation rather than being a background issue. In this study, freedom is understood as more than the ability to move freely. While the women in Bangladesh have the legal right to vote, their voting decisions are their decisions are affected by fear and the influence of others (Islam, 2020; Bukhari & Shamas, 2024). As such, freedom refers to the legal right to vote and the actual capacity to choose if, how, and for whom to vote without coercion or fear of consequences.

It is important to highlight that this study focuses on perceptions of safety and freedom rather than actual violent experiences faced by women. Even if a woman has never directly experienced violence during election times, Almanza Avendaño et al. (2022) discovered that fear affects how women use and act in public spaces. Moreover, Koch et al. (2025) noted that even in cases where women are not targeted, the possibility of online harassment deters them from participating in politics. These studies suggest that perceived risk has a greater impact on behaviour than actual incidence.

2.6.1 Physical Safety

Studies show that women are at a greater risk of experiencing violence, harassment, and physical harm than men in political settings. Wood (2024) discovered that women's political representation is significantly diminished by physical electoral violence as opposed to overall political instability, thus implying that there are gender-related repercussions of violence. According to Bjarnegård (2021), while offensive remarks were made about both male and female electoral candidates in the Maldives, women candidates were far more likely to be threatened and subjected to sexual rumors. Similarly, Collignon & Rüdig (2021) observed that harassment of political candidates rose dramatically between elections in the United Kingdom, with women candidates experiencing greater levels of abuse, particularly online harassment and sexual attacks. Talukdar et al. (2020)

discovered that women working in Union Parishads in Bangladesh experienced significantly more workplace harassment than their male counterparts.

Findings about female electoral candidates also help to understand ordinary female voters. According to Chowdhury (2009), women are discouraged from participating in politics due to fear of sexual harassment, election violence, muscle power, and illegal weapons. Similarly, Ara and Northcote (2020) also identified some major barriers to women's political participation, including harassment, violence, and lack of safety. Almanza Avendaño et al. (2022) found that many women, particularly between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine, avoid secluded areas, certain streets, and traveling alone out of fear of harassment. This "geography of fear" can have a direct influence on voter turnout during election day, especially in densely populated cities like Dhaka, as female voters will need to travel to voting stations and wait in crowded, politically charged areas. Since the July Revolution in 2024, Das (2025) reports a rise in gender-based violence in Bangladesh. She further notes symbolic assaults such as the vandalism of feminist symbols and public images of Begum Rokeya as attacks on women's status in public life.

2.6.2 Social and Reputational Safety

Young women face threats to their reputation and social status in addition to physical concerns, which can affect their political behaviour. According to Krook (2017), psychological and symbolic violence are distinct types of political violence. In traditional and conservative societies, where a woman's reputation has serious social ramifications for herself and her family, these types of violence are particularly significant.

Ferdous (2025) discovered that politically active students at the University of Dhaka frequently experienced verbal and physical abuse in addition to rumours about their character. This led to families discouraging their children from engaging in politics due to fear of social stigma. Additionally, Dahal (2025) discovered that in Nepal, social stigma was the most commonly mentioned barrier to women's political participation. The damage to a womans reputation is portrayed as a moral issue. Al Zaman (2021) discovered that while women are frequently targeted online with insults about their character, men portray themselves as moral protectors. Similarly, Shuchy & Uddin (2026) reported that women's involvement in politics is frequently depicted as

improper behavior or sexual impropriety. Concerns about reputation might affect young women's political behaviour even if they did not directly experience harassment, as they fear these consequences.

2.6.3 Familial Safety and Control

Familial safety is referred to as the likelihood of criticism, conflict, or punishment inside the family due to a young woman's political choices. As discussed in Section 2.5.4, in terms of safety, the influence of family regarding political choices encompasses more than just advice or guidance; it includes the fear of negative consequences in the event that the women disagree. Husbands, fathers, and brothers often act as gatekeepers, especially in South Asia, and restrict women's political independence (Salma et al. 2025). Moreover, in Bangladesh, male family members frequently challenge the authority of women (Prodip 2021). As a result, one of the closest and most powerful factors that influence women's voting autonomy is family safety and control. Even if a young woman in Dhaka may feel physically safe to travel to the voting station, she might be unable to vote according to her own preference once she is in the voting booth.

2.6.4 Digital Safety

Digital safety has become a significant factor influencing women's political behaviour as politics increasingly takes place online, particularly for urban and digitally connected women. In their systematic analysis of gender-based violence against politically engaged women enabled by technology, Koch et al. (2025) found that a large number of studies reported psychological discomfort, worry, and terror. Numerous studies revealed that online abuse discouraged political engagement, especially among younger women concerned about their personal safety and those seeking to pursue a career in politics. Some women even stopped participating in politics or turned to unhealthy coping mechanisms.

According to Al Zaman (2021), women in Bangladesh are the primary targets of online moral policing over their personal character, religious convictions, and clothing. In addition, Shuchy & Uddin (2026) explain that deepfakes and altered photos are frequently used to propagate this harassment, which creates a powerful kind of social control. Oden (2023) discovered that women are not always protected while discussing politics on online platforms despite being deemed as

"safe." The fear of online harassment may make young women in Dhaka, who rely to a great extent on social media for political information, less inclined to voice their ideas as well as form their own political opinions.

2.6.5 Ideological and Political Safety

Shobnam (2026) found that in the 2026 National Parliament Election, a major conservative party did not nominate any female candidate and publicly supported male dominance over women. In one instance described women's public participation as immoral. She contends that this stems from long-standing views of women's immorality in being visible in public life. Additionally, Das (2025) connects a rise in gender-based violence post-July movement in 2024 to the expanding influence of religious fundamentalism. Al Zaman (2021) also showed that common moral principles are frequently used to control women's behaviour online.

In terms of creating direct political pressure, Krook (2017) mentions the use of intimidation to discourage political participation among women. Dahal (2025) found that women, particularly students and those working in the informal sector, in Nepal are afraid of party politics. This finding is closely related to the young women studied in this research. According to Bjarnegård (2021), violence against women in politics frequently takes a sexual turn. Additionally, Apine & Dauda-Damisa (2025) identified violence caused by extremist groups as an important factor affecting political participation. Therefore, ideological and political safety influence young women's voting behavior and their perception of political freedom.

2.7 From Perceptions of Freedom and Safety to the Voting Decision

To understand how perceptions influence voting behaviour, the process that connects freedom and safety to the voting decision needs to be investigated. The first course is the chilling or deterrent effect on political participation. According to Krook (2017), violence against women occurs with the intention of pushing them out of public life. Similarly, Koch et al. (2025) found that women respond to this by withdrawing from political activities or through self-censorship. Fear leads to a decrease in political participation among women (Dahal, 2025). Lower voter turnout is anticipated when there are physical and ideological safety concerns, as young women may decide to opt out of voting.

The second course looks into the autonomy of the vote rather than voter turnout. According to Islam (2020), women vote in accordance with their family preference to avoid safety concerns or strain family relationships. Similar findings were reported by Bukhari & Shamas (2024), who mention that many women vote without comprehending their choice. This difference in voting and political agency is described by Murshed (2025). High voter turnout can coexist with low political autonomy. Therefore, the main concern is not the voter turnout but whether the vote accurately represents women's preferences. Especially where family and social concerns are prevalent.

The third course refers to political choice, as in a woman's choice to express political opinions. Oden (2023) found that women are more likely to discuss political issues when they perceive their surroundings as safe. Koch et al. (2025) established that women are discouraged from expressing political views online due to harassment. Social image is the most influential on young women's political stance (Hasna et al., 2025). This implies that social judgement influences political voice as well as political beliefs.

Altogether, these three routes explain the first research question and answer how voter turnout alone does not depict women's voting behaviour. Women's vote might be influenced by others, or even hide their true political opinions. Although previous studies provided useful context for these pathways, none were conducted in Dhaka. As such, whether young women in Dhaka experience the same processes will be investigated in this study.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

This study requires two explanations. Firstly, the reason behind the problems faced by young women is gendered rather than faced by every voter. Secondly, how these problems affect women's voting decisions. This chapter uses two theories to address the situation as shown in Figure 2.1.

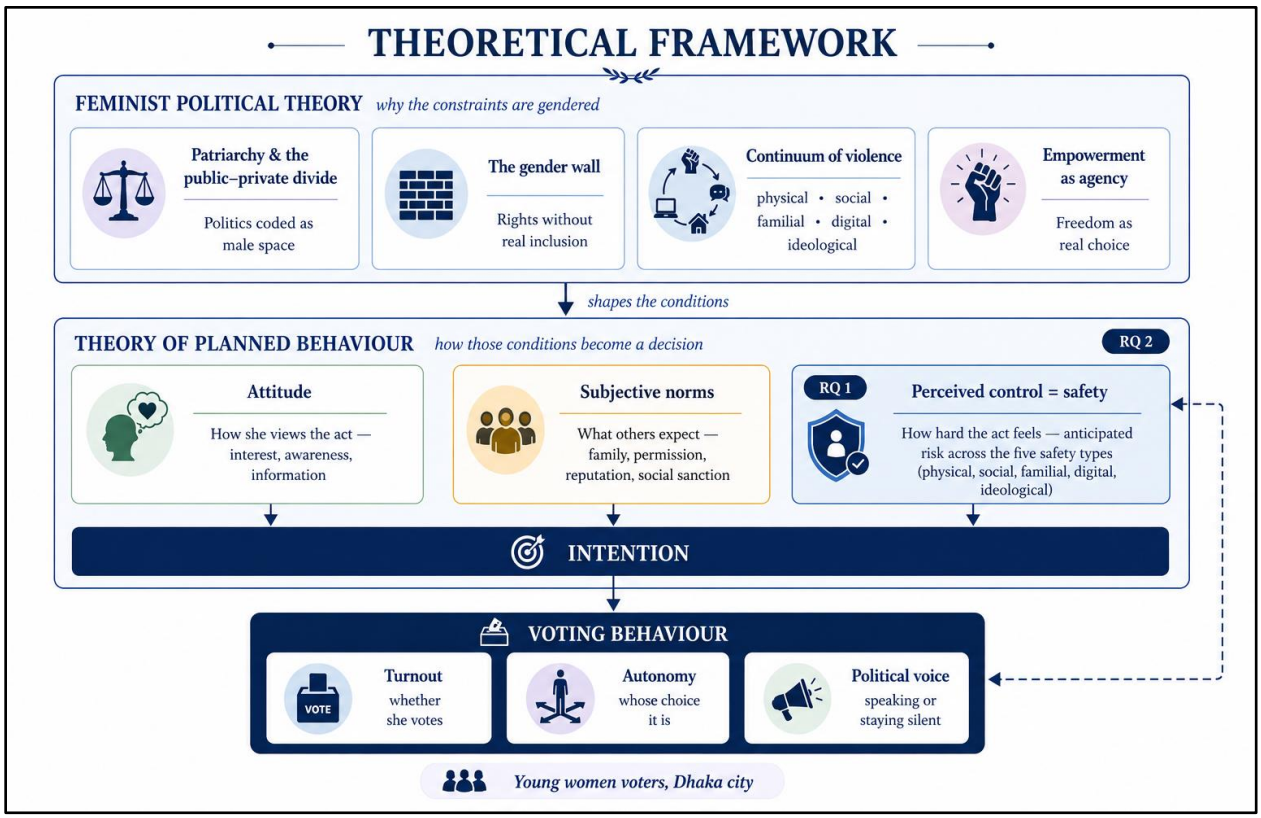


Figure 2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.8.1 Feminist Political Theory

According to feminist theory, the political inequality between men and women is created by society, and political systems keep power in the hands of men (Ferdous, 2025). This is useful to understand the political context in Bangladesh. Politics is considered a male space, while the home is a female space (Chowdhury, 2009; Krook, 2017). As such, a woman entering the male space in politics is viewed as stepping out of line. This is due to patriarchy and the divide in public and private space. Moreover, the gender wall described by Ara and Northcote (2020) explains these limitations despite reserved seats and legal rights. This idea supports the claim of this study that the right to vote and freedom to vote are not the same.

Feminist theory also helps to understand safety. Physical, psychological, sexual, and symbolic harm are considered as parts of the continuum of violence rather than separate issues Krook, 2017;

Collignon & Rüdig, 2021; Bjarnegård, 2023). Therefore, physical, social, familial, digital, and ideological concerns are treated as five parts of safety concerns in this study. Almanza Avendaño et al. (2022) add to this through the geography of fear. Women avoid public places due to fear of harm. Muscle politics and the fear of harassment also keep women away from politics, according to Chowdhury (2009). Das (2025) records an increase in violence against women since 2024.

2.8.2 The Theory of Planned Behaviour

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) states that a person's action is first shaped by intention Ajzen (1991). Three factors influence intention: attitude, expectations of others, and perceived control. The last notion is useful because, according to the theory, behaviour is shaped when control is limited.

Expectations of others most commonly influence women's voting. According to Salma et al. (2025), social and cultural factors are the most cited influence. Islam (2020) found family members making the choice for women. Ferdous (2025) mentions family restricting political activity due to fear of shame and gossip. Safety fits within the third factor of perceived control. In this context, control refers to how safe a woman feels. The greatest fear is anticipating what issues might arise (Chowdhury, 2009; Almanza Avendaño et al., 2022; Koch et al., 2025; Das, 2025). This is where safety and freedom are perceived rather than the actual risk. Perceived control also covers the choice to express political views.

2.9 Summary and Research Gap

The literature reviewed highlights four main findings.

First, traditional models of voting behaviour are developed by Western democracies that do not fully capture the South Asian context. Concepts like gender, safety and freedom concerns, and influences on voting behaviour are not explained. Traditional models assume voters are informed, autonomous, and have freedom to make political decisions. However, literature suggests this assumption does not apply to all women, especially in South Asia (Kulachai et al., 2023; Hazarika, 2008; Salma et al., 2025; Bukhari & Shamas, 2024). Second, voting behaviour cannot be measured by voter turnout alone. There might be high rates of female participation with little independence

in deciding on a preferred candidate. As such, factors influencing voting independently and voter turnout should be studied individually (Murshed, 2025; Islam, 2020).

Third, the majority of studies conducted on women and politics in Bangladesh focused on women as candidates and the institutional barriers faced Ara & Northcote, 2020; Chowdhury, 2009; Panday, 2008; Prodip, 2021; Talukdar et al., 2020). However, research on female voters has only been conducted in rural areas (Islam, 2020; Murshed, 2025). Fourth, there has been little research combining traditional voting determinants with safety concerns.

These findings identify a clear research gap that aligns with the objective of this study. This study explores the voting behaviour of young women in Dhaka. Young women's perception of personal safety and freedom influencing their voting behaviour are examined. Combined with the factors that shape this behaviour address the gaps in existing literature.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the methodology adopted to identify the determinants of voting behaviour among young women in Dhaka city. The study is guided by two objectives: to examine how young women's perception of personal safety and freedom influence their voting behaviour. And to identify the factors that determine the voting behaviour of young women living in Dhaka. These objectives lead to two research questions: how safety and freedom influence voting behaviour, and the broader range of factors that shape it. The chapter explains how the research was designed to achieve these objectives. It describes the study area, the population, the sampling method, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, ethical considerations, and the methodological framework used throughout the research process.

3.2 Selection of Study Area and Description

The study was conducted in Dhaka City, Bangladesh. As the capital city, Dhaka has people from different socioeconomic, educational, and cultural backgrounds (Roy et al., 2019). Dhaka is a suitable location for analyzing women's political and voting behaviours. It is the center of political activities, including campaigns, protests, elections, and civic movements (VB Desk, 2026).

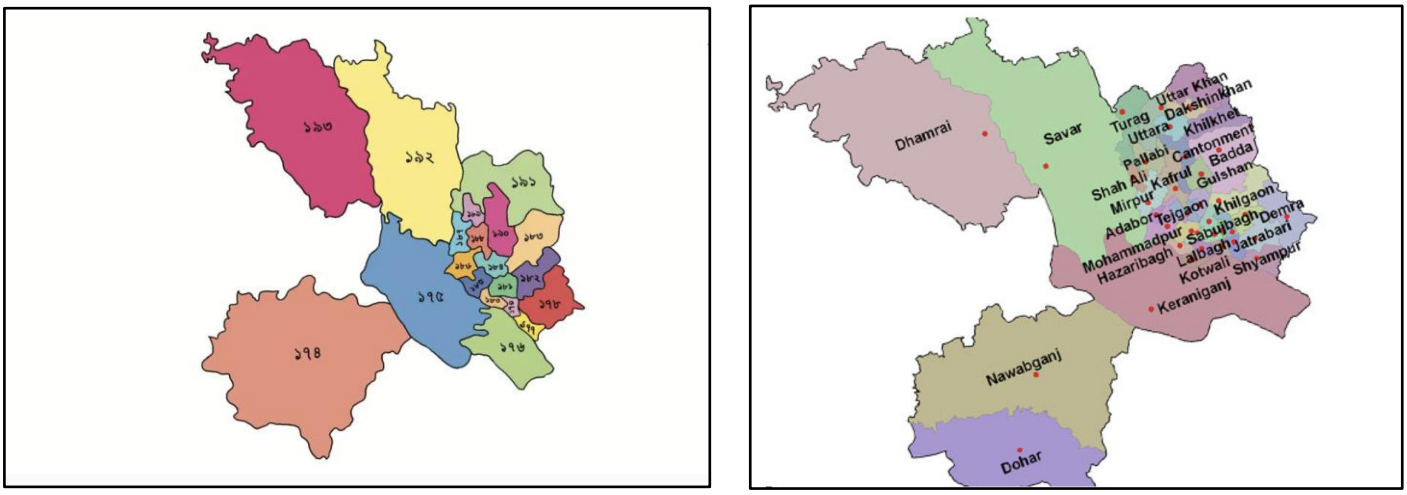


Figure 3.1 (VB Desk, 2026; BanglaPost, 2026)

Dhaka district has 20 parliamentary constituencies, ranging from Dhaka 1 to Dhaka 20 (BanglaPost, 2026). As seen in Figure 3.1, these constituencies cover Dhaka North and South City Corporations and surrounding upazilas. Due to time and resource constraints, it was not possible to cover all the constituencies. Dhaka-17 and Dhaka-18 were purposively selected as the study area due to accessibility. Both seats are in Dhaka North City Corporation and are adjacent to each other. Dhaka-17 covers Gulshan 1&2, Banani, Baridhara, Mohakhali, Niketan, and Korail, to name a few. Dhaka-18 comprises Uttara, Khilkhet, Nikunja 1&2, Kuril, and Bashundhara, to name a few.

Voters in the capital are relatively more educated and politically aware compared to the rest of the country (VB Desk, 2026). Despite better opportunities like greater access to education, employment opportunities, digital platforms, and political knowledge, Dhaka has its own challenges for young women (Rafsanul Hoque and Sumaiya Tasnim, 2026). Urban women experience challenges related to their personal safety, social expectations, mobility limitations, harassment in public places, and concerns about open political expression (Rahman et al., 2022; Berik et al., 2024). Over the years, political participation of Bangladeshi women has increased; however, women voters are still influenced by external barriers like cultural, social, and institutional factors (Ara & Northcote, 2020). As such, Dhaka offers crucial context to understand young women's political experiences.

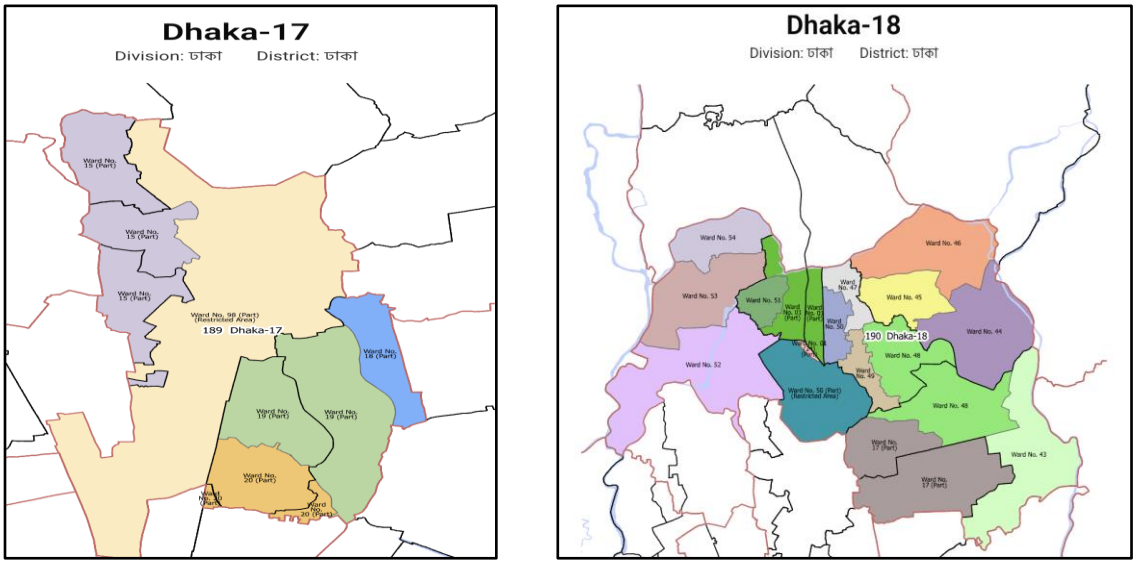


Figure 3.2 (Bangladesh Election Commission, 2025)

Dhaka-17 and Dhaka-18 constituencies were selected as the study area as it offers a suitable environment to explore the relationship between safety, freedom, and voting behaviour. Women from diverse educational, professional, and social backgrounds live in Dhaka, which will allow the research to capture a range of perspectives regarding political participation (Begum et al., 2021).

3.3 Research Design

A mixed-methods research design was employed for this study. A quantitative questionnaire survey and qualitative key informant interviews were combined to explore the determinants of voting behaviour among young women in Dhaka. Quantitative data were used to identify patterns and relations between variables. Qualitative data offer insights into the reasons and experiences of those patterns. This helps to gain a comprehensive understanding of the determinants influencing young women's voting behaviour in Dhaka.

The quantitative study for the research was conducted through a structured questionnaire shared using Google Forms. The questionnaire gathered standardized information from young women in Dhaka. It covers demographics, political participation, perceptions of personal safety and freedom, and familial and social influences that might affect their voting decisions. Voting behaviour is also influenced by individual experiences, gender relations, and cultural norms. This information cannot be addressed using closed-ended survey questions. The study used Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) to provide qualitative data. Academicians, NGO experts working in relevant fields, and urban young women were interviewed. The narratives from the qualitative interviews offer deeper contextual understanding to help explain the patterns identified from the quantitative survey.

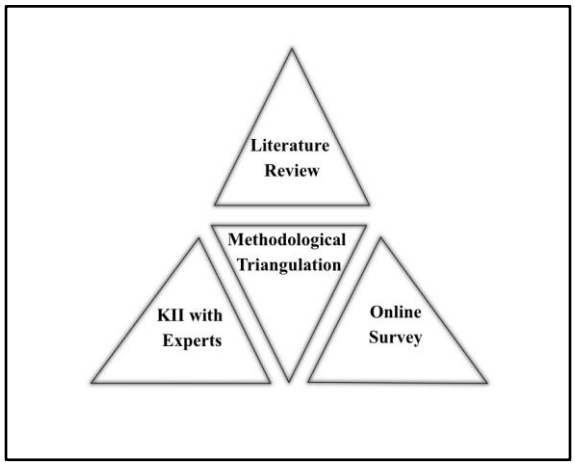


Figure 3.3 Methodological Triangulation

The study used a convergent mixed-methods design, where quantitative and qualitative data are gathered and evaluated separately. The data are then combined during the interpretation of findings. This design allows for analyzing information, finding convergence or divergence, and providing a more thorough explanation. Using methodological triangulation as shown in Figure 3.3, by combining literature, survey responses, and expert opinions, increases credibility. The likelihood of bias is also reduced as multiple methods of data collection are used.

3.4 Population and Sample Selection

3.4.1 Target Population

Target population refers to the total group of individuals who have the relevant characteristics to the research topic (Barnsbee, 2018). The target population for this study comprises young women aged between 18 and 30. The constitutional voting age to vote in Bangladesh is 18 (The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2025. Young adults, as they are just forming political attitudes and behaviours, are especially sensitive to contextual influences (BIGDAdmin, 2026). The population is further divided into women who are eligible to vote and living within the Dhaka metropolitan area. The urban focus sets the study apart from existing literature, which mostly emphasizes women's political participation in rural areas.

3.4.2 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

For the survey, respondents were selected through convenience sampling. The participants were young women living in Dhaka city who willingly took part. They were reached out to through social networks by sharing the Google Form questionnaire link. Because of the sensitivity of the study topic and questions, convenience sampling was the most appropriate choice. Moreover, given limited time and resources, this was a practical way to reach the target population. A total of 50 valid responses were obtained through the quantitative survey.

For the qualitative section, key informants were selected through purposive sampling, where participants were chosen based on their knowledge and perspective, which help to address the research questions (Bullard, 2024). Different categories of key informants were interviewed. Academician with expertise in Bangladeshi politics, experts working in development organisations, campaign leader, and young women living in Dhaka who speak from lived experience. A total of 8 key informant interviews were conducted across these categories. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was conducted through Google Meet or through phone calls depending on the preference of the participants.

3.4.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to the respondents and key informants to ensure they meet the objectives of the study.

Survey Respondents

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
● Woman ● Aged between 18 and 30+ ● Eligible to vote ● Residing in Dhaka-17 or haka-18 ● First-time voter ● Previously voted	● Male or Third gender ● Aged below 18 or above 34 ● Not eligible to vote ● Declined to give voluntary informed consent

• Provided voluntary informed consent	

Table 3.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria of Survey Respondents

Key Informants

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
• Expertise or lived experience about women's political participation in Bangladesh • Expertise or lived experience about women's voting behaviour in Bangladesh • Provided voluntary informed consent	• No relevant expertise or experience regarding research topic • Unwilling to give informed consent • Unavailable to participate during the data collection period

Table 3.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria of Key Informants

3.4.4 Case Study Selection

This study included case studies, which allow the topic to be examined through real-life scenarios (Yin, 2018). The cases are of young women who are first-time voters and their experiences. These women are aged 18 to 20 and are just starting to form their own political opinions. The women live in Dhaka-17 and Dhaka-18, which are the selected study areas. The cases are selected purposively, which would allow their insights to add value to the objective of the research.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Two instruments were used to collect data for this study. A structured questionnaire was distributed as an online survey and a structured guide for key informant interviews. Table 3.3 shows an overview of data collection methods, instruments, sources of data, and sample size.

Data Collection Methods	Instruments	Sources of Data	Sample Size
Key Informant Interview (KII)	Structured questionnaire, following a guide	Academicians, NGO Experts, Young Women in Dhaka, First-time voters, campaign leaders	8 informants
Online Questionnaire	Structured questionnaire	Young Women in Dhaka	50 respondents

Table 3.3 Data Collection Methods

The primary source of quantitative data was a structured questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. To gather information from young women in Dhaka-17 and Dhaka-18, an online form was used. Furthermore, given the sensitivity of questions regarding political choice and safety, the online form allowed respondents to answer privately. Before accessing the survey, participants received information about the survey and were informed that their participation was voluntary and confidential.

The questionnaire was divided into six sections. The first section of the questionnaire collected demographic information, such as their age, area of residence, highest level of education, and current occupation. The second section focused on respondents' political participation, covering their participation in previous elections and their level of interest in politics. Section four examined external influences affecting voting behaviour, including household and family influence, social networks and NGO affiliations, and social media exposure. The remaining sections focused on perceptions of safety and freedom. Concerns related to physical safety, social safety, familial safety, digital safety, and candidate attributes were also examined. The survey questions used closed-ended response formats such as multiple-choice questions and Likert scale statements. Likert scale questions allowed respondents to express the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements related to political participation, safety, and freedom.

The qualitative data were collected through key informant interviews (KIIs) to gather detailed information from individuals with specialized knowledge or with direct experience. A semi-structured interview guide was developed consisting of open-ended questions that cover the core themes of the research. As stated above, the key informants were chosen from different groups. Academicians with expertise in gender studies, governance, development studies, or political science were chosen to understand women's political participation. Development sector professionals working in areas involving women's empowerment, gender analysts, and social development were selected to gather insights from practical experience working with women. Young women living in urban areas were interviewed to collect first-hand information about their perception of safety, freedom, and voting. First-time voters were interviewed to gather their perceptions and influences on voting. The KIIs were conducted online using Google Meet and calls depending on participants' availability. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes, with participants' consent obtained beforehand. They were also informed about the purpose of the research in a concept note shared via Gmail.

Combining quantitative data and qualitative insights allowed this research to provide a thorough and in-depth picture of how safety, freedom, and other determinants affect young women's political choices in Dhaka.

As there was no specific sample size for the survey and KII, the data collection was stopped after theoretical saturation was reached (Anjum et al., 2024). According to Rahimi & Khatooni (2024), data saturation is reached when further interviews do not produce new themes or insights.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis refers to the systematic process of cleaning, examining, categorizing, and modeling data to gain insights and make meaningful conclusions (Seufert, 2014). Both qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques were used to validate the findings of the other.

Quantitative data were entered and analysed using Microsoft Excel. The raw data were cleaned and organised to generate frequency tables and percentages. Descriptive statistics were presented

in the form of cross-tabulation, and frequency tables were used to display the collected information to show the relationship between two different variables. Excel was also used to generate charts and graphs to interpret the results. Qualitative data were analysed to identify themes, which gave a systematic method for organising and interpreting patterns. Recurring themes were arranged to highlight similarities and differences across participants.

After data analysis, findings from both qualitative and quantitative research were compared and combined. This was done to develop a comprehensive understanding of young women's voting behaviour. The two data sources allowed for the examination of voting behaviour from both statistical and experiential perspectives.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

As the study involved human participation and covered politically sensitive issues, ethical considerations were given great significance. The research was conducted as part of a master's thesis and followed the ethical standards of the university and the department.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before their involvement to ensure that they were fully informed about the purpose of the study. Participants were informed about their rights, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Participant confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process. No personally identifiable information was collected.

3.7 Methodological Framework

Figure 3.4 shows the methodological framework of the study. The framework summarises the methods used to conduct the study. It links the research objectives to the findings using a convergent mixed-methods design. The qualitative and quantitative findings are triangulated with literature to find convergence or divergence. The analysis helps to understand how perception of safety and freedom influences young women's voting behaviour.

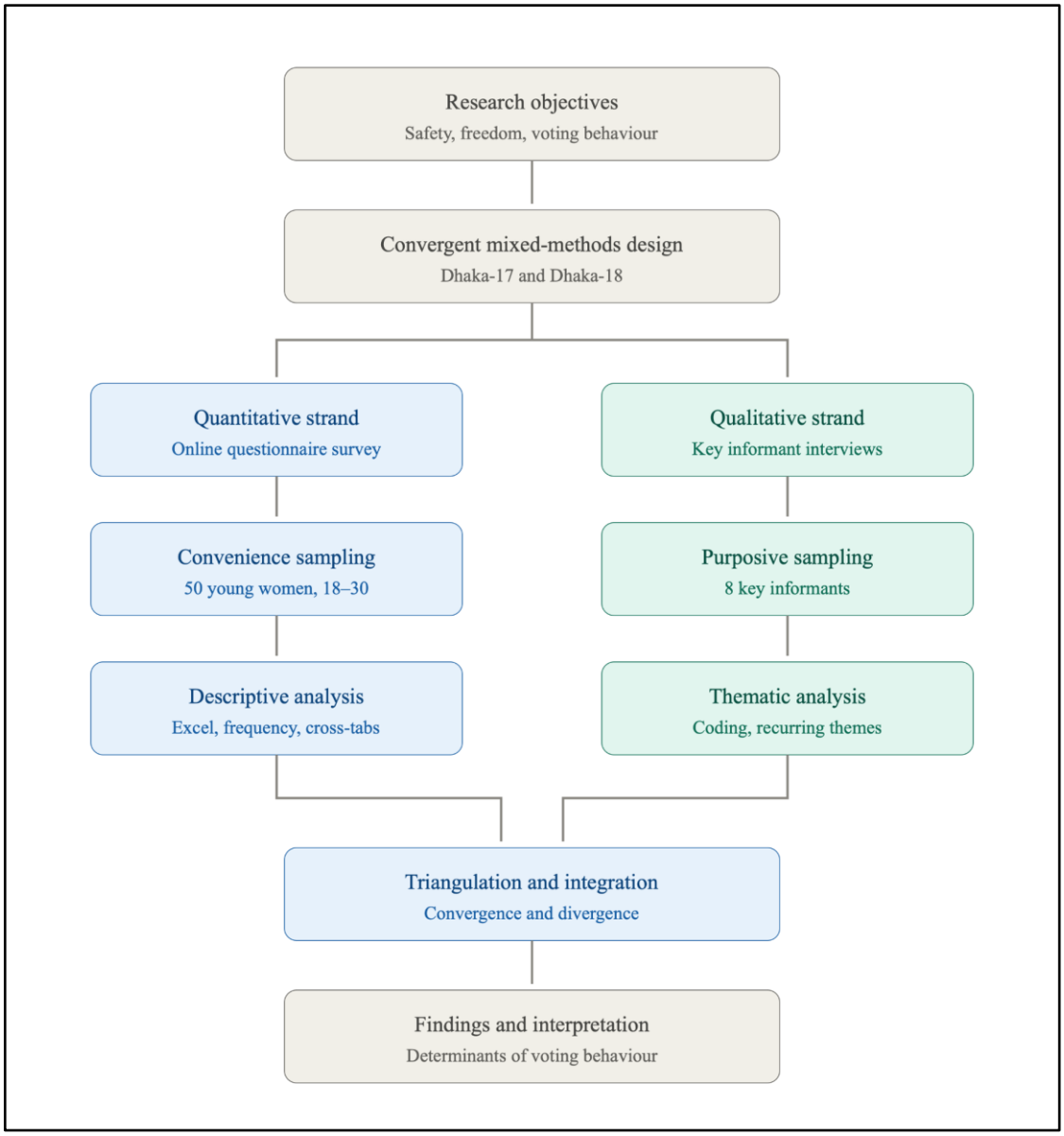


Figure 3.4 Methodological Framework

Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. It is organised around the two research questions: how young women's perceptions of personal safety and freedom influence their voting behaviour in Dhaka city, and what factors determine the voting behaviour of young women in Dhaka. The study used descriptive statistics to summarize and interpret the information collected. The findings are presented using frequency tables, bar graphs, and pictures where applicable. The findings are derived from a survey of 50 young women living in urban Dhaka. It is complemented by Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted with relevant stakeholders. The chapter is organised as follows: each objective is addressed by integrating quantitative survey findings, qualitative insights, and relevant literature.

4.2 Profile of the Survey Respondents

Table 4.1 shows the socio-demographic profile of the fifty respondents. The sample comprises young, highly educated, urban women whose profiles shape the interpretation of this study's findings. Understanding the socio-demographics of the respondents is important because characteristics such as age, highest level of education, occupation, and area of residence might influence their political awareness, voting behaviour, and perception of safety as consistently identified in literature (Dessie, 2023; Apine & Dauda-Damisa, 2025; Bukhari & Shamas, 2024). Moreover, previous research on female voting in Bangladesh was largely conducted in rural areas where there are tighter constraints on independent choice (Islam, 2020; Murshed, 2025).

Age group		
Characteristics	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
18 to 24	16	32%
25 to 34	32	64%

35 to 44	1	2%
45 to 54	1	2%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Highest level of education		
Characteristics	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Secondary (SSC/ O Level or below)	1	2%
Higher secondary (HSC/ A level)	7	14%
Diploma	1	2%
Undergraduate (Public University)	3	6%
Undergraduate (Private University)	20	40%
Postgraduate (Master's or above)	18	36%

Occupation		
Characteristics	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Employed (Formal/ Private Sector)	28	56%

Employed (Government Sector)	1	2%
Self-employed/ Business	1	2%
Student	14	28%
Homemaker	2	4%
Unemployed	4	8%

Area of residence		
Characteristics	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Uttara	19	38%
Gulshan	4	8%
Banani	4	8%
Bashundhara	4	8%
Khilkhet	3	6%
Nikunja	3	6%
Bhatara	3	6%
Baridhara	2	4%
Other areas of Dhaka (Cantonment, Korail, Badda, Khilgao)	6	12%
Outside Dhaka	2	4%

Table 4.1 Profile of the Survey Respondents (n=50)

Table 4.1 shows that 96 percent, or forty-eight out of the fifty respondents, can be categorized within the age range of eighteen to thirty-four. This indicates that the data primarily represent young women, the age group targeted for the study. Out of the fifty respondents, two reported ages above thirty-five. 82 percent, or forty-one respondents, hold a university degree, with eighteen holding a master's degree or above. 60 percent, or thirty respondents, are employed, while fourteen are students, with only two homemakers.

Two of the respondents are older than thirty-five, and two reside outside of Dhaka, specifically in Chittagong and abroad. However, all findings are presented for the entire fifty, even with these characteristics, as four instances out of fifty cannot change any percentage reported in this chapter more than two points.

4.3 Profile of the Key Informants

Five key informants were interviewed for this study. The informants were selected purposely to provide an expert perspective that the survey could not supply. Table 4.2 shows the profile of the key informants, including academic experts, direct experience from the 2026 campaign, NGO and gender specialists, the account of a young woman, and first-time voters.

Code	Role and Background	Contribution to the study
KI-1	Former United Nations officer with sixteen years in the governance sector. Currently leading a national development organisation.	The role of family and NGOs in shaping the vote. Women's safety as a governance question.
KI-2	Young woman, university student, and first-time voter.	First-person account of safety concerns.

	Observed the July 2024 period from abroad.	
KI-3	Political campaign professional. Directly involved and worked closely in a Dhaka constituency campaign in 2026.	Observed voting behaviour at constituency and voting center level. Candidate selection and voting behaviour.
KI-4	Gender specialist working with young women in rural and agricultural settings aged eighteen to thirty-five.	Family and religious influence, media exposure, online harassment, and the indirect role of NGOs.
KI-5	Academic specialising in political participation in Bangladesh and governance.	Comparative assessment of women's participation across elections.
KI-6	Young man residing in Uttara in the Dhaka-18 constituency. First-time voter.	Male perspective on barriers faced by women. Generational difference in party loyalty.
KI-7	19-year old student and first-time voter living in Dhaka. Took part in July 2024 protests.	First-hand account of voting experience, and selective political expression.

KI-8	27-year-old woman living in Uttara and first-time voter. Three years of experience working in a local NGO.	Online harassment of women expressing political views. Comparison of rural areas with urban informal settlements.

Table 4.2 Profile of the Key Informants

The five key informant accounts are complementary rather than being interchangeable. KI-1 and KI-4 speak from extensive involvement with women's development. KI-2 represents a small portion of the population of the survey. KI-3 and KI-5 speak from professional observation of election behaviour. KI-6, KI-7, and KI-8 share their experience as first-time voters. It is important to recognize the limitations of the key informant interviews. Due to time constraints, only eight informants were interviewed. The eight informants are primarily based in Dhaka and educated, and as such cannot represent the full spectrum of expert opinion.

4.4 Voting Participation and Decisional Autonomy

In the Literature Review section, it was stated that counting the number of women who vote is inadequate. This is because several studies have found that a woman may cast a vote based on others' preferences. Therefore, political participation and decisional autonomy are analyzed together. Figure 4.1 shows the participation of women in the 2026 National Parliament Election.

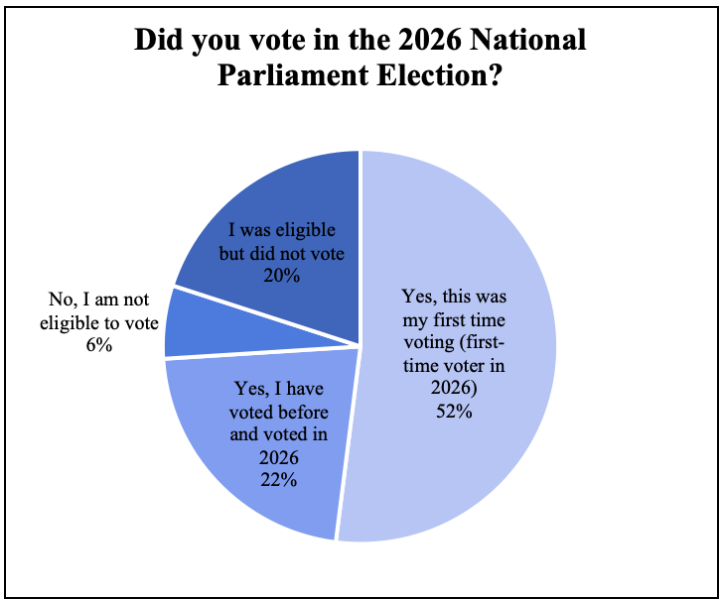


Figure 4.1 Participation in the 2026 National Parliament Election (n=50)

Among the respondents who were eligible to vote, thirty-seven out of the forty-seven participated in the election, with a turnout of 78.7 percent. Ten eligible respondents did not vote, which indicates that eligibility does not translate into electoral participation. More than half of the respondents were voting for the first time in the 2026 election, which was the first national election held since the July 2024 uprising. This provides an opportunity to investigate whether women made autonomous decisions. Table 4.3 addresses the independence of voting decisions.

How the voting decision is made	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Completely independently	31	62%
Mostly independently, with some family or peer influence	16	32%
Mostly follow family or husband's preference	2	4%

Decided jointly with family members	1	2%

How much family preference influenced the vote	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not influenced at all	28	56%
Somewhat influenced	15	30%
Significantly influenced	2	4%
Completely determined the vote	5	10%

Who has the final say in the household	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Myself	32	64%
We decide collectively	17	34%
My husband	1	2%

Table 4.3 Independence of the Voting Decision (n=50)

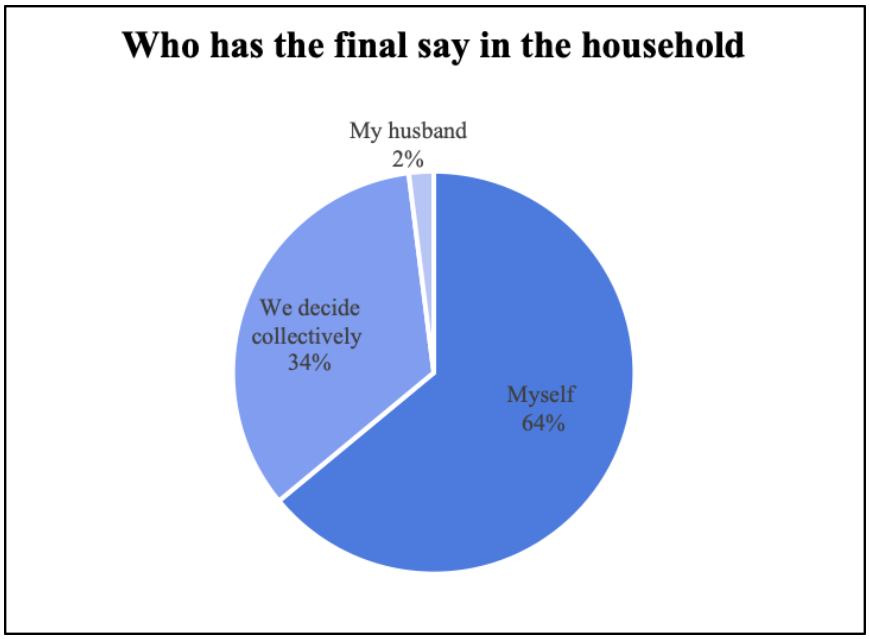


Figure 4.2 Who has the final say in the household on which candidate to vote for (n=50)

According to Table 4.3, thirty-one, or 62 percent, of respondents described the voting decision as being made completely independently. Thirty-two, or 64 percent, reported having the final say in the household, and only one respondent identified their husband as the main decision-holder. However, the picture is not as uniform as these figures suggest. Twenty-two respondents, or 44 percent, acknowledge some family influence on their vote. Five respondents reported family preference determined their vote entirely.

Additionally, there are internal inconsistencies across three items. Thirty-one women said they voted completely independently, but only twenty-eight reported no family influence at all. Five women who said they were completely independent simultaneously reported family influencing their vote. The most likely explanation is that habitual influence, such as conversations about elections at home, is not acknowledged as an influence.

KI-1 noted that younger women are engaging in elections in higher numbers compared to previous cycles. This is attributed to the lack of legitimate elections over the past fifteen years and the

significance of female students in the 2024 July movement. KI-3, who worked on voter campaigns around Dhaka, also reported an increase in female participation.

The survey findings depicting widespread independence were opposed by the key informants. KI-1 strongly believes that family shapes the vote. KI-4 mentioned an extreme case where a marriage ended over a dispute between supporting the Bangladesh Nationalist Party or Jamaat-e-Islami. KI-2 denied that her parents' party preference would determine her vote.

To explain the survey's discrepancies, KI-3 explained why influence goes unrecognised:

> *"It's not just that a spouse or parent is 'pressuring' them, but there is a Hegemony at work. When I am with the Awami League, I can't see anything wrong with them; my brain is washed in a way that I don't see the negative."*

KI-5 stated that while family may still influence rural young women, urban educated women were less influenced in this election. This was observed during the July movement, where young women and students left home to protest for the first time.

KI-6 shares that the age and generation of the parents determine familial pressure. Parents older than fifty or sixty are loyal to political parties, whereas younger generations are more flexible. This makes influencing the youth more difficult.

> *"Party loyalty plays a bigger part, especially if your parents are older than 50 or 60… But our generation, we have a broader horizon. That's why it's difficult for parents to meddle in their women's or, in general, anyone's ideological choices."*

Altogether, the findings support existing literature which states that while there might be high participation rates, the independence of choice is limited (Murshed, 2025; Islam, 2020). A turnout of 78.7 percent includes thirty-seven women, yet five report having their vote determined by someone else. Rather than a contradiction, KI–5's difference between rural and urban educated groups also points to a gradient (Dessie, 2023; Bukhari & Shamas, 2024; Ali et al., 2025).

4.5 Perceptions of Safety and Their Influence on Political Decisions

The first research question seeks to understand how perceptions of personal safety influence voting behaviour. Table 4.4 shows the influence of each type of safety concern on political decisions. The respondents rated the five types of safety on a scale from 1 (no influence) to 5 (very strong influence).

Type of safety concern	1	2	3	4	5	Rated 4 or 5
Physical	3 (6%)	4 (8%)	3 (6%)	14 (28%)	26 (52%)	40 (80%)
Social	6 (12%)	5 (10%)	7 (14%)	15 (30%)	17 (34%)	32 (64%)
Digital	9 (18%)	2 (4%)	8 (16%)	16 (32%)	15 (30%)	31 (62%)
Political/ Ideological	2 (4%)	6 (12%)	12 (24%)	13 (26%)	17 (34%)	30 (60%)
Familial	10 (20%)	8 (16%)	7 (14%)	13 (26%)	12 (24%)	25 (50%)

Table 4.4 Influence of Each Type of Safety Concern on Political Decisions (n= 50)

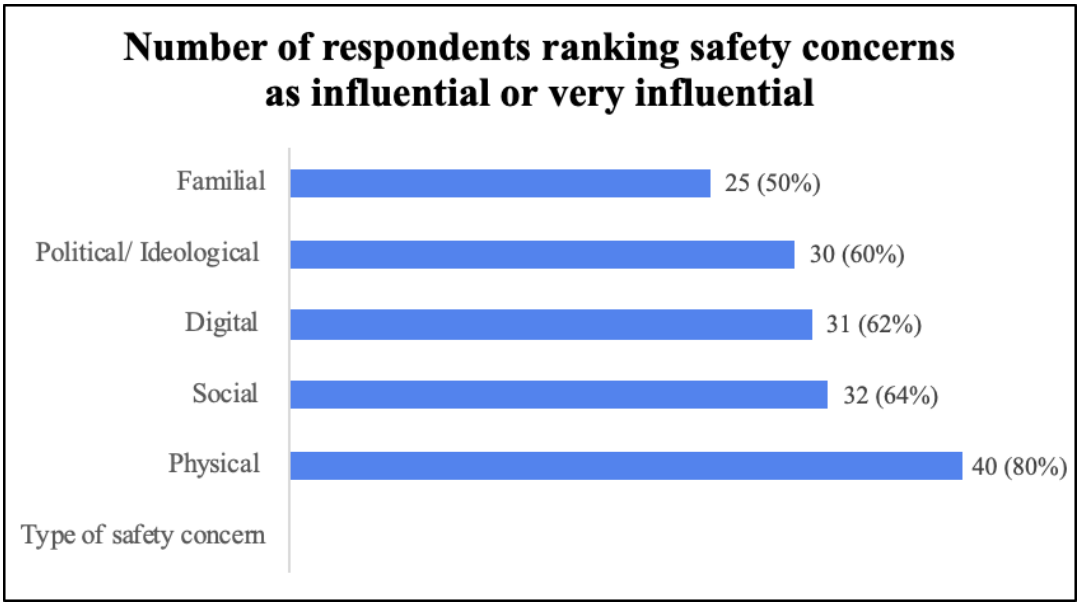


Figure 4.3 Number and percentage of respondents rating safety concerns as influential or very influential (n= 50)

More than half of the sample size rated each type of safety concern as influential. This suggests that safety is a crucial factor in how these women approach political decisions. Physical safety concerns are ranked the highest, with forty respondents or 80 percent rating it 4 or 5. Thirty-two or 64 percent rated social safety concerns 4 or 5, followed by digital safety concerns with thirty-one or 62 percent. Political safety and familial safety concerns are 60 percent and 50 percent, respectively.

Figure 4.4 Ratings for each type of safety concern (n= 50)

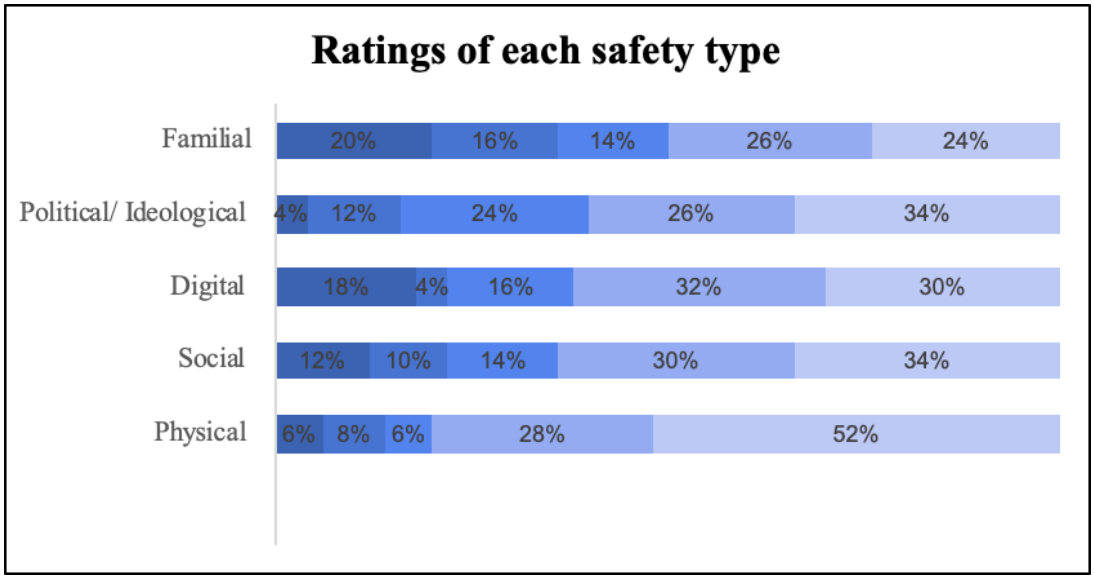


Figure 4.4 shows the ratings for each type of safety concern in percentages. The figure helps to identify the ranking of each safety concern. Familial safety concern is ranked low because the sample is divided, with 26 percent rating it influential and 20 percent rating it not influential at all. Digital safety concerns are similarly rated. Meanwhile, physical safety concerns are ranked high, as more than fifty percent rate it as very influential.

All the informants agreed that physical safety concerns are a major determinant. KI-1 shares:

> *"I'm educated. I've come from a good family. I have good people around me. But I would still feel scared … going out in the dark at night going for [a] walk."*

This is supported by research which mentions that young women change their use of public space in expectation of harassment, even before incidents occur (Almanza Avendaño et al., 2022). The danger of violence against women in politics is considered a permanent condition of participation in literature (Krook, 2017; Bjarnegård, 2023).

KI-2 shared similar risks such as being followed, harassment, and judgement regarding clothing. KI-5 noted that active political participation is a full-time occupation that requires late-night presence. This is difficult for young women and causes anxiety for their families. KI-7 reported not feeling safe alone after dark. KI-6 described the same as an observer. He mentioned his sister being fearful of coming home late at night, especially since the July Revolution.

In terms of digital safety, KI-4 described online harassment and misinformation as a major hindrance. KI-4 claimed to have been bullied for being a feminist throughout her life and has seen other women being mistreated online, especially on Facebook. KI-2 summarized her decision to "lurk" online, consuming political content instead of contributing to it as:

> *"Once you have like a very strong political opinion, you're going to be considered as disrespectful or aggressive or too political."*

KI-6 mentions that online harassment is a deep-rooted cultural disposition. KI-8 describes how this mechanism works. Women who publicly express their opinions attract replies:

> *"If I say that one political leader who is a woman and I want to support her, then few men, particularly, will come into my comments section and say that you don't know anything about politics."*

Research from Bangladesh documents the online policing of women's speech (Al Zaman, 2021; Shuchy & Uddin, 2026; Oden, 2023). Koch et al. (2025) provide evidence that gender-based violence facilitated by technology results in political withdrawal. Instead of being disengaged, KI-2 is well-informed but does not contribute online. This withdrawal is from openly expressing themselves rather than participating.

As for social safety, KI-5 confirmed that unnecessary labelling and gossip stop women from speaking publicly. Moreover, female electoral candidates were easy targets for derogatory comments. KI-2 mentioned avoiding electoral campaigns as she would stand out more. While only half of the survey respondents rated familial safety as influential, KI-1, KI-4, and KI-5 view it as a significant limitation. However, KI-5 mentioned that young women in rural areas are more influenced by family compared to educated urban women. Literature suggests that employed and educated women in urban areas experience less familial pressure compared to rural women (Chowdhury, 2009; Ara & Northcote, 2020; Islam, 2020).

KI-7 highlights a point not captured by the survey. Considering women face judgement or harassment for voicing their opinions, she feels comfortable discussing politics with friends and family. This explains why respondents describe themselves as free but consider social safety as influential.

Case Study 4.1 Mariya: Safety Without Comfort

Mariya is a twenty year old, first-time voter living in Uttara. She takes a two-minute walk almost daily to her grandmother's house. Even in the short distance, she counts being stared at five or six times. Sometimes even catcalled.

"I do feel safe most of the time going out alone, but feeling safe and feeling comfortable are two different things"

Mariya would only use the word unsafe in situations where something will actually happen to her. Regular harassment are considered as discomfort and not a safety concern.

4.6 Perceptions of Freedom to Make Political Choices

Safety and freedom are paired in the first research question. In chapter two, freedom is defined as a woman's ability to exercise her own political will despite perceived threat. Whereas safety refers to the perceived threats to a woman.

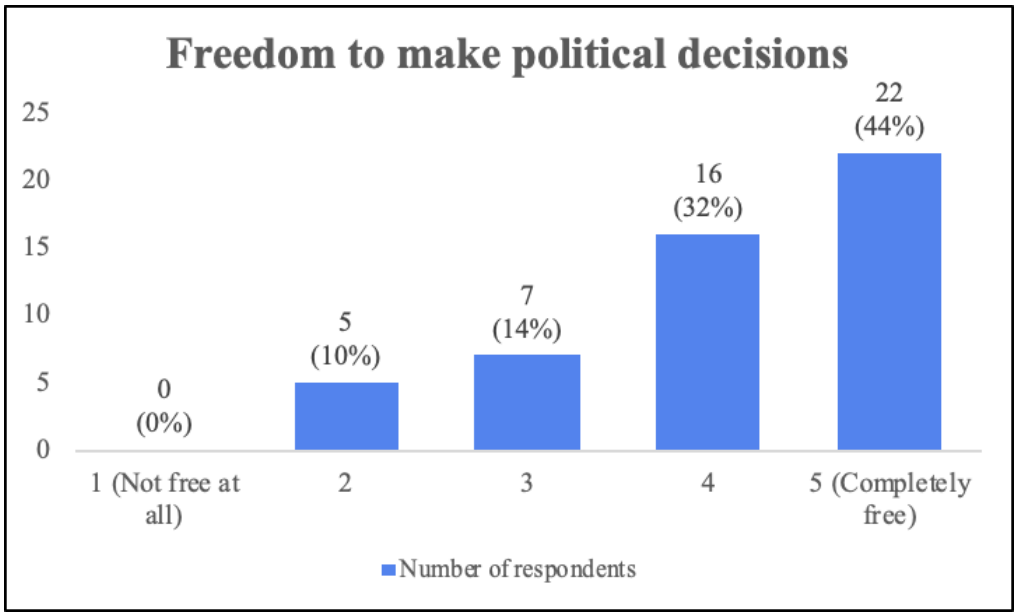


Figure 4.5 Perceived freedom to make political choices without fear (n= 50)

Figure 4.5 shows how free respondents feel to make their own political choices without fear. A total of thirty-eight respondents, or 76 percent, rated their freedom as free or completely free. However, twelve respondents, or 24 percent, did not describe themselves as free. This is a considerable number in a group of urban, educated, and employed women.

Independence of the decision	Free (4-5)	Neutral (3)	Not free (1-2)	Total
Completely independently	27 (87%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)	31 (100%)
Some family or peer influence	11 (58%)	3 (16%)	5 (26%)	19 (100%)
All respondents	38 (76%)	7 (14%)	5 (10%)	50 (100%)

Table 4.5 Perceived Freedom by Independence of the Voting Decision (n= 50)

Table 4.5 shows how the respondents feel based on how independently they make their voting decision. Out of the thirty-one respondents, twenty-seven or 87 percent feel free to make their own decisions. None of the respondents felt unfree. Out of the nineteen respondents who reported some family or peer influence, only eleven, or 58 percent, described themselves as free. The group feeling unfree entirely comprises the five respondents who reported some family or peer influence. This implies that respondents' perception of political freedom is more strongly linked to the decision-maker than to the degree of environmental threat. As seen in Section 4.5, respondents reported both high levels of freedom as well as high levels of safety concerns. Even if a woman is aware that engaging in politics involves physical, familial, social, or digital risks, she may still regard herself as free as long as the final decision is made by her.

In terms of the coexistence of fear and freedom, KI-2 described safety as playing "a big bold red role" in women's political choices. She went into great length about the safeguards that govern what she posts, but framed this as her own decision rather than limitations imposed upon her. KI-

5 identified the source of this agency, noting that urban university students are less influenced by parents or neighbours. He linked this independence to the July movement, where many women took to the streets to protest for the first time.

Regarding the improvement of freedom, informants' opinions differ significantly. According to KI-2, there has been a clear improvement in the freedom of political speech since 2024. KI-8 mentions avoiding public spaces and carrying protective tools as policing had decreased. KI-5 evaluated the trajectory in the other way, stating that women's safety and security have declined since the July movement:

> *"While 'women's empowerment' is visible in various indices, it doesn't always reflect the reality on the ground."*

KI-5 identified patriarchy as primarily constraining freedom. It is found in households that support higher education but then press for early marriage. According to KI-1, change must begin with the mindset and through policies promoting equal treatment and opportunity.

There is methodological relevance to KI-5's caution regarding the discrepancy between indices and lived reality. Since the same respondents indicate serious concerns and extensive adaptation, high reported freedom cannot be interpreted as safety concerns being unimportant. Therefore, it is important to understand the influence of safety on reported behaviour. This aligns with literature that states that the adaptation to risk is frequently invisible to the woman adapting (Krook, 2017; Collignon & Rüdig, 2021; Ferdous, 2025).

Case Study 4.2 Zarin: Pressure despite Freedom

Zarin is nineteen, student of a well-known school in Uttara, and a first-time voter. Her narrative separates the choice from its surrounding. She had complete freedom to vote. Her mother had reassured her that her vote was her own. She had autonomy over her own decisions. However, the scene was different outside the booth. She reported feeling pressured when she went to collect registration slips from party-run stalls.

> *"The presence there is intimidating; they immediately say things like, 'Okay, you know what to do,' which creates a subtle pressure."*

Zarin is part of a generation who were taught to remain silent about their political views in person. Only appear to support the one who holds power. Yet she posts online, using the barrier to conceal herself. To her, freedom is

4.7 Safety Concerns and the Alteration of the Vote

Respondents were asked whether safety concerns led them to change their vote from their actual preference.

Response	Frequency	% of all respondents	% of those who have voted
Has changed vote because of safety concerns	6	12%	15%
Has considered changing vote but did not	5	10%	12.5%
Has always voted	29	58%	72.5%

according to own preference			
Has not voted yet	10	20%	—
Total	**50**	**100**%	**100%**

Table 4.6 Effect of Safety Concerns on the Voting Decision

Out of the forty respondents who have voted, eleven, or 27.5 percent, reported that safety concerns have affected their vote. Five of the respondents considered changing their vote due to safety concerns but did not. While six have changed their votes to a different candidate. Twenty-nine respondents reported always voting according to their own preferences.

Group	Free (4-5)	Neutral (3)	Not free (1-2)	Total
Safety concerns affected the vote	8 (73%)	1 (9%)	2 (18%)	11 (100%)
Safety concerns never affected the vote	24 (83%)	4 (14%)	1 (3%)	29 (100%)

Table 4.7 Perceived Freedom by Whether Safety Concerns Affected the Vote (n=40)

Table 4.7 shows how free the respondents feel by whether safety concerns affected their votes. 73 percent of the women whose vote was affected by safety concerns felt less free than 83 percent whose vote was not affected. Eight out of the eleven respondents still identified as politically free, which supports the observation that women's perception of freedom and restrictions regarding the vote are different.

KI-2 detailed the measures she took anticipating any incident, like avoiding areas where campaigning takes place, not posting political content, and only observing online. Her adaptation takes place in advance of the election. The clearest explanation of how safety influences voting decisions was provided by KI-3, which deviates from the survey's presumption. Women, especially older and lower-income women, vote for the candidate who is least likely to disturb the local order:

> *"For the elderly, they look for assurance and safety. When they see that 'this person probably won't cause trouble in the area,' they lean toward them and trust them."*

Therefore, safety concerns do not cause a woman to abandon their preferred candidate under pressure. Rather, it changes her preferences to the well-known and locally present candidate over the unfamiliar one.

KI-4 emphasized that, in what she called a deeply ingrained culture of intimidation, the respondent's family is also affected by the terror associated with visible political alignment. According to KI-5, security issues also affect families just as much as women themselves.

KI-8 confirmed the mechanism behind alteration of the vote. When asked whether young women choose a candidate or party for safety reasons, she answered yes. The reason for support is fear rather than pressure.

> *"So, to reduce the fear or not to have the fear at all, they actually change their voting preferences, and that does not determine what the other representatives are doing, but the fear empowers more on their preference."*

On the other hand, KI-7 reported observing a peaceful campaign in her area, describing it as ordinary. She shared feeling nervous to vote for the first time at the polling station, rather than being frightened. Her narrative aligns with the 72 percent of respondents who voted according to their preference.

Out of the eleven respondents who reported safety concerns affecting their vote, only six changed their votes. Research on political engagement in Bangladesh has consistently noted this difference between formal and meaningful participation in the context of representation (Ara & Northcote, 2020; Chowdhury, 2009; Prodip, 2021). Additionally, the findings align

with existing literature on violence against women in politics. Intimidation has an anticipatory effect where behavior is changed in expectation of harm rather than in response to it (Krook, 2017; Collignon & Rüdig, 2021; Bjarnegård, 2023). In this case, five respondents considered changing their votes, but did not, exactly describing the anticipatory calculation described. Whether these women's votes ultimately changed or not is secondary to the fact that they weighed the safety consequences of their vote is a type of constraint.

4.8 Gendered Considerations in Party Preference

Another set of questions examined whether respondents evaluate political parties based on their views on women's rights and safety.

Statement	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Agree)	Agree (4 or 5)
I would avoid voting for a party that promotes restrictive norms for women	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	3 (6%)	10 (20%)	34 (68%)	44 (88%)
I consider a party's stance on women's rights and freedom	3 (6%)	0 (0%)	5 (10%)	10 (20%)	32 (64%)	42 (84%)
My safety and rights would be better protected under certain parties	3 (6%)	5 (10%)	16 (32%)	12 (24%)	14 (28%)	26 (52%)

Table 4.8 Gendered Considerations in Party Preference (n=50)

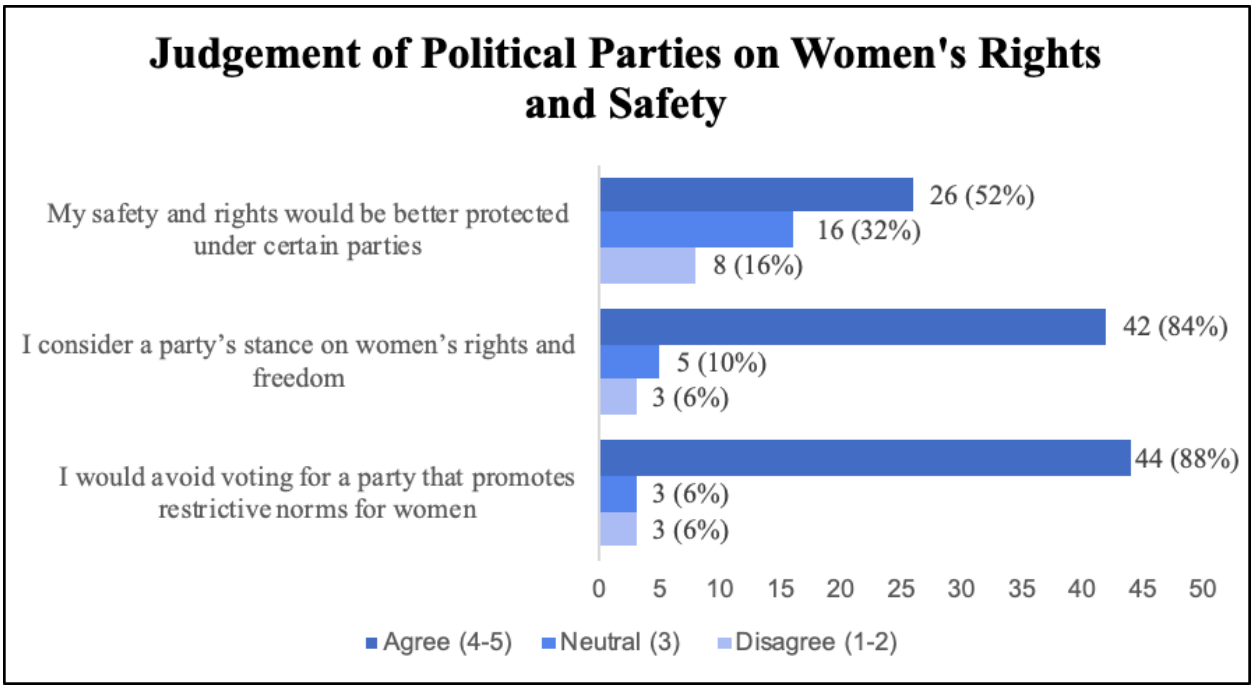


Figure 4.6 Agreement about political parties and women's rights (n= 50)

Nearly all respondents agree with the first two statements. Forty-four respondents, or 88 percent, agree that they would avoid a party that promotes restrictive norms for women. Forty-two, or 84 percent, would consider a party's stance on women's rights and freedom before voting. However, in terms of their safety and rights being protected under certain parties, only twenty-six, or 52 percent, agree. Sixteen respondents, or 32 percent, have a neutral standpoint about this matter. This asymmetry is the main conclusion of this section. Based on women's rights, women are certain which parties they would reject. However, they are far less certain whether any party will stand up for their rights and freedom. Therefore, women's safety becomes a basis to exclude parties rather than selecting one.

In terms of the rejection of parties viewed as restrictive, KI-5 identified how this operated in 2026. For educated young women, Jamaat-e-Islami's statements on women's limited role clarified this decision. He distinguished between committed supporters versus floating voters, whose choices were influenced by remarks about women:

> *"A leader from Jamaat-e-Islami mentioned wanting to reduce office hours for women. Many women were scared that such a party would interfere with their freedom and mobility, which influenced their voting decisions."*

KI-6 described the situation from the perspective of a voter. He stated that his generation, particularly young women, voted for a relatively liberal party due to safety and security rather than their manifesto.

> *"I feel like our generation and the younger generation of women did definitely vote towards BNP or NCP instead of Jamaat because of their safety and security."*

KI-8 supplied that women were afraid one group would restrict their freedom of speech, ability to wear what they want, and mobility.

On the lack of a credible protector for women, KI-3's campaign experience provides insights into the third statement. He played an active role in the campaign of a female candidate whose manifesto mostly covered addressing women's concerns such as surveillance and street lighting, and maternal health provision. Yet the outcome of the campaign was not anticipated:

> *"Jara didn't win in a single female-led booth, forget the centers. She led or won in some male or mixed centers, but not the female ones."*

KI-3 stated that this was a significant issue for the team and admitted they were unable to determine the cause. Despite having a substantial female following on social media, he explained the candidate's campaign style and physical visibility played a role more than the manifesto. KI-8 offered a possible explanation for this outcome. She mentioned that voters were hesitant to vote, doubting the female candidate would not be able to perform well. The reservation comes from perceived capability rather than the manifesto. This is consistent with KI-3's observation of the importance of campaign style and physical visibility. The need for a credible protector cannot be solved by fielding a female candidate.

According to research (Hasna et al., 2025; Paniamogan et al., 2025), young voters view political parties through a gendered lens rather than inheriting party loyalties. In the post-2024 context, Das (2025) mentions the political landscape has become more insecure, and Shobnam (2026) notes similar worries about women's position in the new political settlement.

4.9 Determinants of Voting Behavior

The second research question inquires which factors influence the voting behavior of young women in Dhaka. This is addressed by two items: the factors identified as important when choosing a candidate to vote for, and the rated importance of these determinants.

4.9.1 Factors Identified as Important

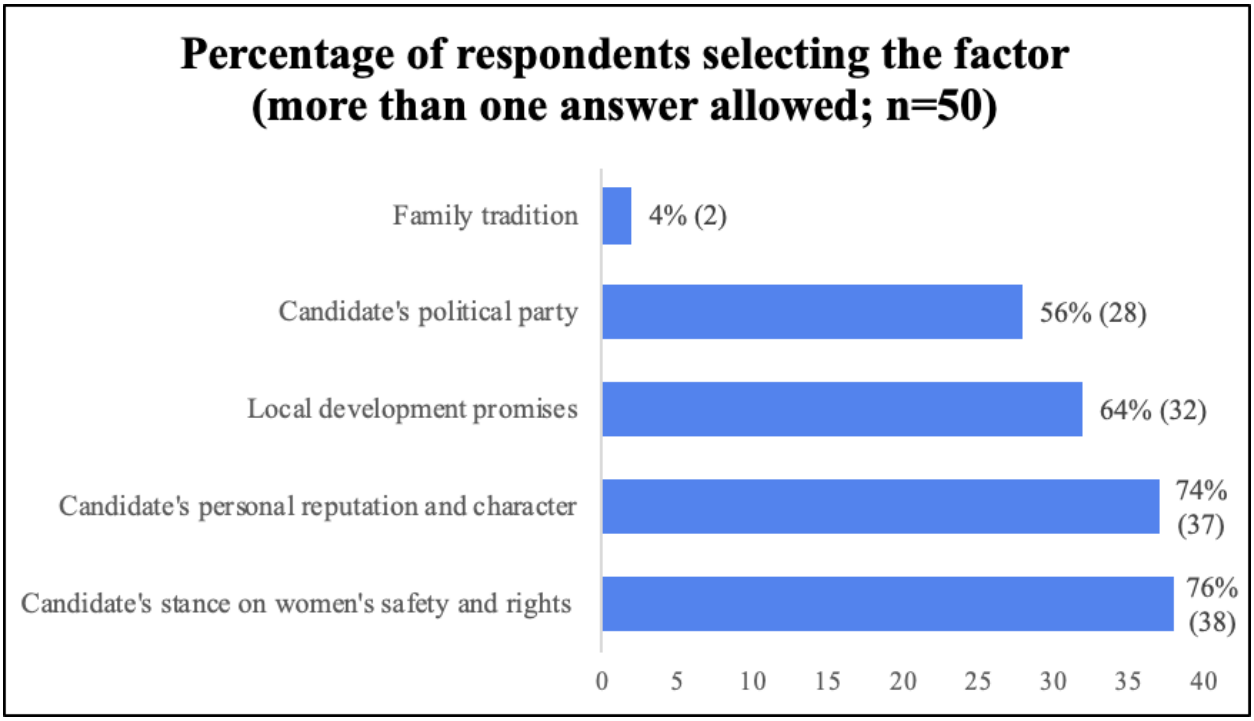


Figure 4.7 Factors identified as important in choosing a candidate (n= 50; multiple responses were allowed)

Factor	Frequency	Percentage of respondents
Family tradition	2	4%

Candidate's political party	28	56%
Local development promises	32	64%
Candidate's personal reputation and character	37	74%
Candidate's stance on women's safety and rights	38	76%

Table 4.9 Factors identified as important in choosing a candidate (n=50; multiple responses permitted)

A candidate's stance on women's safety and rights was identified as the most important by thirty-eight, or 76 percent of the respondents. Closely followed was a candidate's personal reputation and character by thirty-seven respondents. Local development promises and the candidate's political party were selected by thirty-two and twenty-eight respondents, respectively. Family tradition was identified by two respondents, 4 percent of the sample. Most respondents selected more than two factors.

4.9.2 Rated Importance of Determinants

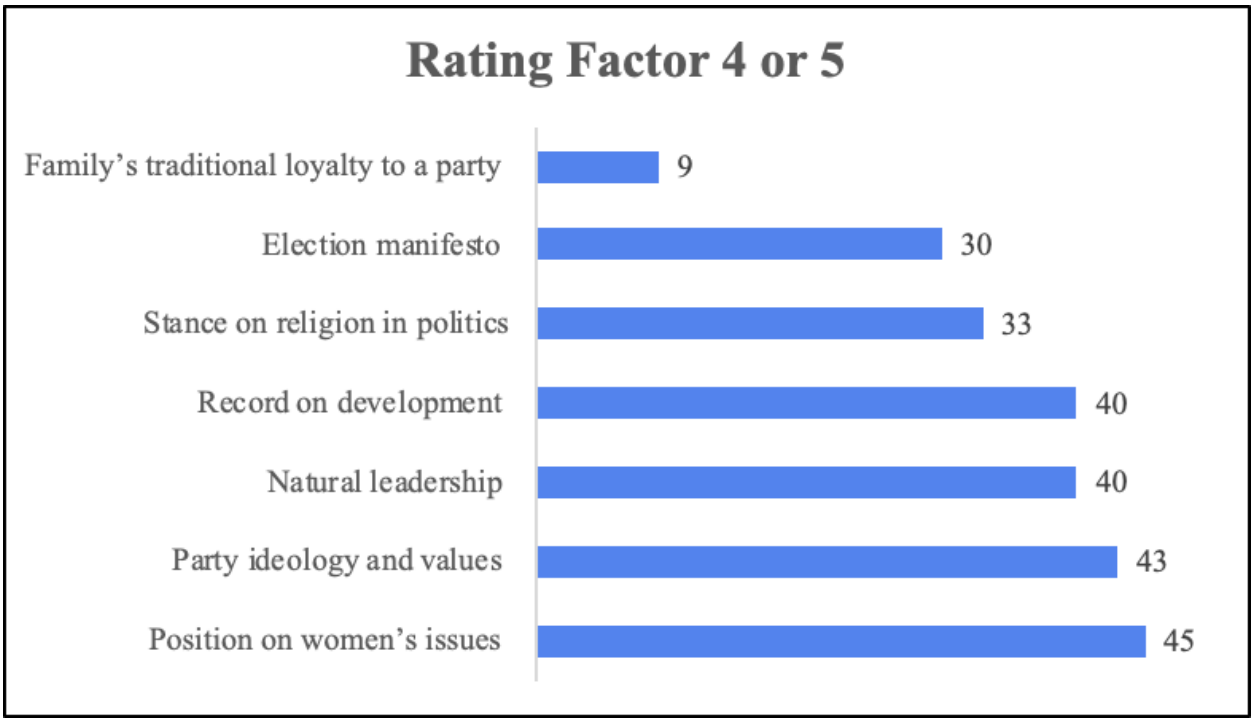


Figure 4.8 Rating of each determinant important or extremely important

Factor	n	1	2	3	4	5	Rated 4 or 5
Position on women's issues	50	0	2	3	20	25	45 (90%)
Party ideology and values	48	0	3	2	16	27	43 (90%)
Natural leadership	48	0	3	5	25	15	40 (83%)
Record on development	50	1	3	6	27	13	40 (80%)

Stance on religion in politics	45	3	5	4	17	16	33 (73%)
Election manifesto	47	1	3	13	20	10	30 (64%)
Family's traditional loyalty to a party	49	23	8	9	9	0	9 (18%)

Table 4.10 Rated importance of Determinants of Candidate Choice.

Position on women's issues and party ideology score highest by forty-five of fifty and forty-three out of forty-eight, respectively. Followed by leadership, development record, religious stance, and election manifesto. Nine respondents out of forty-nine rated family's traditional loyalty as important. This clashes with some family influence affecting the vote mentioned in Section 4.4. However, the items measure different things. While family influence refers to the respondent's experience, family tradition is what they endorse. As a result, family influence still exists but has lost its legitimacy.

In terms of what actually determines the vote, KI-3, who has experience in constituency-level campaign work, disapproved of the candidate-centered perception:

> *"Personally, I think in Bangladesh, voting still doesn't happen based on the candidate ... In Bangladesh, people still vote for the Party."*

He explained this is because voters choose the "winning horse." This is because voters are hesitant to support a minor party representative who cannot enter government and deliver legislative changes. KI-5 supports this, describing voting choice as the selection of the perceived lesser evil. KI-7 shares the reasoning behind her own decision. She voted for the candidate based on their campaign and observed the support already received by the candidate. She inferred that there must be a reason behind the support, which describes the tendency KI-3 shared.

According to KI-3, safety concerns do not rank high among determinants, unlike the survey's ranking:

> *"Safety, freedom, and health are 'wants,' but they aren't the 'deciding factors' for the vote yet."*

KI-8 disagrees with this ranking and shared a list close to the survey's. She named women's empowerment, job creation, enforcement of women's rights, reduction of corruption, and public safety. From a male voter's perspective, stability, leadership, and advocacy for ordinary people were named in addition to safety as determinants.

> *"For guys, safety and security comes automatically only because you're a guy. But for women, safety and security is one of their biggest concerns."*

KI-4 maintains that political preferences are passed down within families and that party choice is influenced by religious practice, cultural conservatism, and family influence. KI-1 confirmed that family does play a role without qualification, while KI-5 claims this is limited to people outside the urban educated circle. Additionally, KI-4 reported a shift in political information from newspapers and state television to Facebook and Instagram. This is confirmed by KI-7 and KI-8, who used social media to understand political issues. KI-3 disagreed with the emphasis on income and education, and argued that area of residence is more important:

"Personally, I don't think those work much… In Dhaka, it depends on the area… In Dhaka-17, even though it's a wealthy area, the vote is decided by the people in the Korail slum or the lower-middle class… the wealthy people in Gulshan or Banani have a low tendency actually to go and vote."

One Dhaka constituency is decided mainly from the votes of lower-income residents of an informal settlement rather than wealthy residents in adjacent areas. This is because the former turnout is in greater proportion.

Across existing literature, socio-economic status, political attachment, family socialization, and candidate characteristics are identified as the main determinants (Hazarika, 2008; Kulachai et al., 2023; Joshi & Joshi, 2025). In South Asian contexts, family socialisation is very significant. However, these respondents reject that mechanism; instead, a candidate-centered and issue-centered pattern emerges.

4.10 The Post-July Revolution Political Environment

The February 2026 election was the first national election held since the July 2024 uprising. Respondents' perception of this context is examined below.

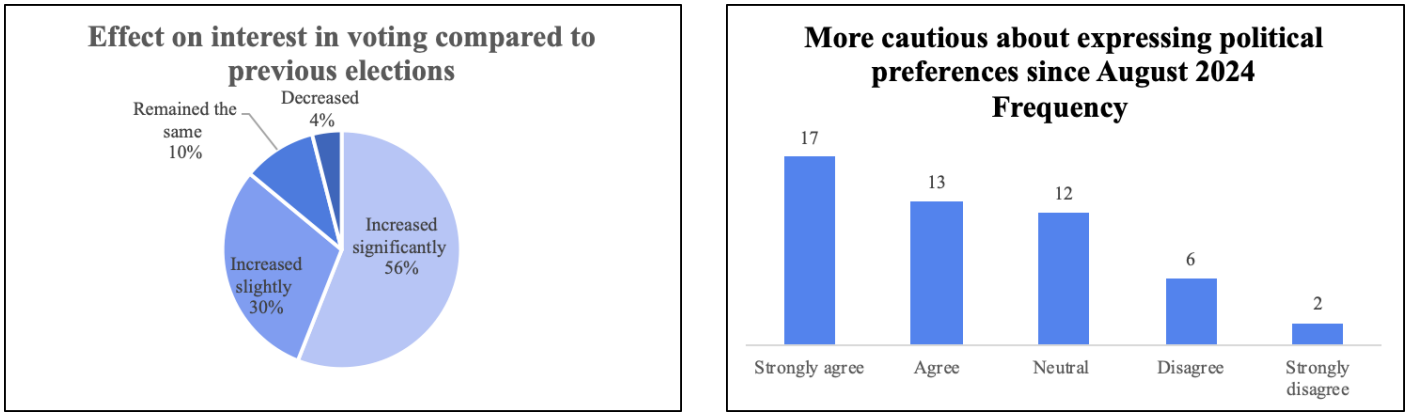


Figure 4.9 Perceived Effect of July Revolution on Voting (n=50)

Effect on interest in voting compared to previous elections		
Item	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Increased significantly	28	56%
Increased slightly	15	30%
Remained the same	5	10%
Decreased	2	4%

More cautious about expressing political preferences since August 2024		
Item	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Strongly agree	17	34%
Agree	13	26%
Neutral	12	24%
Disagree	6	12%
Strongly disagree	2	4%

Table 4.11 The Political Environment After the July Revolution (n=50)

Forty-three respondents, or 86 percent, reported increased interest in voting post-July Revolution. The interest of twenty-eight respondents has increased significantly. Thirty, or 60 percent, agreed to becoming more cautious about expressing political preferences since August 2024. While twelve were neutral, and eight disagreed. The findings suggest that while the post-uprising environment has increased the perceived importance of the vote, space for political expression has narrowed. This indicates withdrawal from open political expression.

KI-5 assessed the participation of young women as considerably higher this election compared to previous cycles. KI-3 confirmed this pattern from campaign fieldwork. KI-4 shared that more young women participated in the February 2026 election as they wanted their votes to be counted. KI-3 described how in earlier elections voters were told their votes had already been cast. In terms of withdrawal of open political expression, KI-2 identifies:

> *"Being politically aware doesn't always mean you have to be politically active … as a woman, you would prefer to vote privately than being out loud and expressive about it."*

KI-2 distinguished her generation as being more politically informed than the older generation primarily through social media. She described the decision to not contribute to political discussion as deliberate in the same public spaces.

The procedural change reported by KI-3 and KI-4 is described by the first-time voters. KI-8 stated that this election was the first instance where each person's vote was cast by themselves. Compared to an earlier system where your vote would be cast on your behalf without your knowledge. KI-7 shared hearing incidents of previous elections being rigged and largely boycotted. In comparison, the 2026 elections were a smooth process. KI-6 mentioned the process was thorough and clearly explained.

The findings support the expectation that a transitional election after a large turnout increases electoral salience (BSS, 2026). KI-4's observation that young women voted so that their votes can be counted implied a response. The response could be to restore electoral credibility rather than political enthusiasm. The cautionary conclusion is found across existing literature. According to Das (2025), women's safety since 2024 has worsened, and Shobnam (2026) documents similar worries. Ferdous (2025) discovered that Dhaka University students described the environment as unsafe.

According to turnout figures alone, young women in Dhaka did participate enthusiastically. However, a cohort that votes in large numbers but declines to openly express themselves has not been directly included in political life. Turnout and voice are two different dimensions of participation that might move in opposite directions (Krook, 2017; Koch et al., 2025).

4.11 Integration of the Survey and Key Informant Findings

The convergent design requires the two types of data to be analyzed separately and compared. This is done to identify the convergence, complementarity, and divergence. Table 4.12 shows the comparison across the seven main themes of this chapter.

Theme	Survey finding	Key informant finding	Assessment
Turnout and autonomy	78.7% of eligible respondents voted. 62% report the decision was their own, 44% report some family influence, and 10% report family influence.	Young women's participation is higher than in previous cycles (KI-3, KI-5). Family influence is present, but operates as inherited perception, not instruction (KI-3). Rural women are more constrained than educated urban women (KI-4). KI-6 insists family influence matters more by the age of parents. KI-8 reports in informal settlements, the household and community determine the vote.	Convergence on turnout. Complementary on autonomy. Interviews explain the internal inconsistencies in the survey.

Type of safety concern	Physical safety rated influential by 80%, familial safety by 50%. 36% rate familial safety with little or no influence.	Physical safety is foundational for all eight informants. Digital abuse is widespread (KI-2, KI-4). Family is treated as a significant constraint by KI-1, KI-4, and KI-5. KI-7 limits her movement alone after dark. KI-8 reports targeted online harassment.	Convergent on physical and digital safety. Divergent on familial safety, solved by KI-5's rural and urban educated distinction.
Safety and freedom	76% feel free despite reporting safety concerns. Family or peer influence over decision reported as cause to not feel free.	KI-2 describes precautionary adaptation while presenting it as her own choice. KI-5 cautions that empowerment indices misrepresent lived reality; it connects urban students to their involvement in the July movement.	Convergent and explanatory. KI-2 demonstrates the mechanism where high perceived freedom and safety concern coexist.
Alteration of the vote	27.5% of voters report safety concerns affecting their vote. 15% voted for	KI-2 describes withdrawal before elections. KI-3 reports women,	Complementary, with an important qualification. KI-3 indicates safety

	someone other than their personal preference. Most felt free.	especially older and lower-income, vote for the candidate least likely to disturb local order. KI-8 reports fear changes voting behaviour.	influences preference formation, so 27.5% underestimates the effect.
Gendered party evaluation	88% would reject a party if perceived as restrictive towards women. Only 52% believe any party would protect them better, with 32% neutral.	KI-5 identified discussion about limiting women's roles influencing floating voters. KI-3 reports a female candidate losing in a female-only booth. KI-8 reports hesitancy to vote for female candidates due to capability.	Strongly convergent on rejection. KI-3 provides electoral evidence for the lack of positive trust. Results support the asymmetry.
Determinants of candidate choice	Women's issues (90%) and party ideology (90%) rated most important. Family tradition rated least important at 18% despite 44% reporting family influence.	KI-3 states that voting in Bangladesh is determined by the party, not the candidate. Safety and freedom are considered as "wants" rather than deciding factors. KI-5 mentions voting for	Divergent. Priorities are measured by the survey, and revealed behaviour is observed by KI-3.

		the “winning horse.” KI-7 made candidate choice based on observed support.	
Post-July Revolution environment	86% report increased interest in voting. 60% report increased caution about expressing political views.	KI-2: political awareness does not mean political activity; women prefer voting privately to speaking publicly. KI-4: women voted to have their votes be counted. KI-2 and KI-5 disagree on whether conditions have improved. KI-6, KI-7, and KI-8 confirm procedural improvement.	Strongly convergent. Disagreement over improvement across different sources. No improvement in social and online risks.

Table 4.12 Integration of Survey and Key Informant Findings

Three observations can be deduced from the integration.

First, convergence is strongest where the measured perception in the survey and interviews described similar experiences. Physical and digital safety, the rejection of parties deemed restrictive, and the coexistence of a low willingness to speak and high participation support each other. Second, divergences concern the relationship between what respondents say and their actions. On familial safety, respondents report low influence, but three informants describe it as

significantly influential. On the determinants of the vote, respondents rank women's issues first while an informant reports voting proceeds by party. Third, compared to the assumption, interviews place the influence of safety earlier in the decision process. The questionnaire inquired whether safety concerns altered their votes. The informant described safety shaping political actions like the places she visits, whether she speaks, and which candidate she favors.

4.12 Summary of Findings

This chapter presents the survey findings, key informant accounts, and reads both against the reviewed literature in Chapter Two.

Research question one asks how young women's perception of personal safety and freedom influence their voting behaviour in Dhaka city. The influence of safety concerns is addressed by both groups. All eight informants considered physical safety as foundational. In comparison, half the respondents rated every type of concern as influential. Despite this, perceived freedom is at 76 percent. Every respondent who reports not feeling free cites family or peer pressure. More than a quarter of voters said safety influenced their vote. This demonstrates the significance of safety on behaviour rather than self-assessment. Party preference is asymmetrical. 88 percent state that they will reject any party deemed as restrictive towards women.

Research question two asks what factors determine the voting behaviour of young women in Dhaka city. Respondents rated a candidate's position on women's issues, followed by party ideology, and personal reputation highly. Despite 44 percent reporting family influence, family tradition was rejected as a determinant. According to an informant with campaign experience, safety and freedom are still not deciding factors, but "wants." This can be interpreted as the interviews documenting the limitations under which women execute their priorities. Whereas the survey records the priorities these women hold. KI-8's list of determinants closely resembles the survey's. This is reflected in the post-July uprising context where 86 percent report increased interest in voting, but 60 percent report increased caution about expressing political views.

There are certain limitations to these findings. The sample size of fifty is limited and cannot be taken as a representative of young women in Dhaka. The findings of the survey report patterns

instead of the cause. Moreover, the questionnaire assumed that voting preference is formed independently from safety concerns and then overridden. However, the interviews indicate that safety is already included during the process of forming preference. This creates scope for future studies to measure anticipatory effects during the electoral process.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the determinants of voting behavior among young women in Dhaka-17 and Dhaka-18 constituencies. It focused on how perceptions of personal safety and freedom influenced political choices. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach combining data from a survey (50 respondents) with key informant interviews (8 informants). The findings were then interpreted and triangulated with existing literature and the theoretical framework.

The study highlights a key difference between electoral participation and political autonomy. Despite being interested in voting, young women remain cautious about openly expressing their political views. This indicates that voting participation does not indicate total political freedom. Physical, social, familial, digital, and ideological safety concerns influence political behavior. The influence includes voting, comfort to express political opinions freely, and supporting a specific party or candidate. Political freedom is considered more than the legal right to vote. Respondents who did not have the freedom identified family or peer pressure as a cause. This suggests that women's ability to independently make political decisions is sometimes influenced by social expectations, fear of family conflict, and judgement. Voting behavior can also be indirectly influenced by safety. Perceptions of safety may influence political choices that women find acceptable from the start. Therefore, safety can be considered an underlying factor that shapes young women's political preferences.

The most important determinant of voting behavior was candidates' stance on women's issues, personal reputation, and party ideology. Family influence does not determine candidate choice. Findings also suggest women reject parties that are perceived to be restrictive towards women. However, women are uncertain whether existing political parties will proactively protect women's interests. Collectively, young women are politically aware and want to be involved. But they also

encounter social and political circumstances that limit their political expression. Thus, safety and freedom are determinants of voting and shape political participation and preferences.

The findings support both Feminist Political Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior. According to Feminist Political Theory, women's political participation is shaped by gendered power dynamics, social judgement, family expectations, and safety concerns. And so, political choices made by young women are not made in a socially balanced environment. The Theory of Planned Behavior describes how attitudes, perceived control, and family and societal expectations affect individual choice. When women feel political expression might have negative consequences, their perceived ability to freely participate may decrease.

The study only included young women in Dhaka-17 and Dhaka-18 constituencies. However, due to the sensitive nature of the topic, despite seeking over 200 people, there were only 50 respondents. As such, the findings cannot be generalised to all young women. Moreover, perceptions of safety and freedom are subjective and differ according to several factors. This may lead to response bias. Finally, the study only identifies patterns and relationships rather than drawing conclusions. As such, the findings cannot conclusively prove that safety concerns directly influence political preferences.

Future research scopes include using a larger sample and study area to compare whether the patterns identified in Dhaka-17 and Dhaka-18 are present across Dhaka. Differences across constituencies, rural-urban settings, and socioeconomic groups can also be examined in a comparative study. How perceptions of safety influence political behavior over time can also be examined.

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Appendix A

Ethical Consideration Form

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Date: 24 June 2026

Subject: Ethical Considerations for Thesis Research

This study, titled **"Exploring How the Safety Concerns Influence the Political Choices of Young Women in Dhaka,"** aims to examine how perceptions of safety and freedom shape young women's political participation and voting decisions in Bangladesh.

The research seeks to explore young women's experiences and perceptions regarding safety in political and public spaces, identify the forms of safety concerns that influence their political engagement, and understand how these concerns affect their voting behaviour and broader political choices. The findings are expected to contribute to academic knowledge and provide insights for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders interested in promoting women's political participation and empowerment in Bangladesh.

Participants will include women aged 18 years and above residing in Bangladesh, selected through purposive and/or convenience sampling. The study will employ qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews and/or online questionnaires. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants prior to their involvement, ensuring that they are fully informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and their rights as research participants, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

Participant confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained throughout the research process. No personally identifiable information will be disclosed in any reports, publications, or presentations resulting from this study. All collected data will be securely stored and accessed only by the researcher and the research supervisor. Data will be used solely for academic purposes and will be properly disposed of upon completion of the research.

Although the study poses minimal risk, some participants may experience slight discomfort when discussing personal experiences related to safety, freedom, politics, or voting. Participants will have the option to decline answering any question they find uncomfortable and may discontinue participation at any stage of the research without penalty.

The findings of this study may contribute to a better understanding of the barriers and concerns affecting women's political participation in Bangladesh and may inform future policies, programs, and initiatives aimed at creating safer and more inclusive political environments for women.

Ethical approval has been obtained from the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities at Independent University, Bangladesh. Data will be collected in accordance with established ethical guidelines and principles of voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent.

I am committed to adhering to all ethical guidelines throughout this research. You are requested to contact me if you have any questions or require further information.

Thank You

Appendix B

Survey Form

Voting Determinants of Urban Women in Dhaka

Research Participant Information & Consent

This survey is conducted as part of a master's thesis research at Independent University, Bangladesh, under the supervision of Dr Kazi Mahmudur Rahman, PhD, Professor, Dept. of Social Sciences and Humanities. The study examines how women in Dhaka city make their voting decisions and, in particular, how their sense of personal safety shapes their political participation and voting behaviour.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without any consequence. There are no right or wrong answers; your honest personal experience is what matters most.

Confidentiality notice: No personally identifiable information will be collected, stored, or shared at any stage of this research. Your responses will be used solely for academic analysis and may be referenced in the final thesis or related academic publications in aggregate, anonymised form only. Individual responses will never be attributed to any person.

Data protection: All data collected through this form is stored securely and accessible only to the researcher.

* Indicates required question

Skip to question 1Skip to question 1

Demographic Information

These questions help us understand the background of respondents. All information is kept confidential.

1. What is your age? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ 18 to 24
- ◯ 25 to 34
- ◯ 35 to 44
- ◯ 45 to 54
- ◯ 55 to 64
- ◯ 65 or over

2. What is your current area of residence? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Urban (city/municipality)
- ◯ Semi-urban (district town)
- ◯ Rural (village/union)

3. What is your current area of residence? *

Mark only one oval.

- Nawabganj
- Keraniganj
- Savar
- Jatrabari
- Demra
- Old Dhaka
- Motijheel
- Shahbagh
- Khilgaon
- Hatirjheel
- Dhanmondi
- Mohammadpur
- Badda
- Tejgaon
- Mirpur
- Gulshan
- Banani
- Uttara
- Other: _____

4. What is your highest level of education? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Secondary (SSC / O-Level or below)
- ◯ Higher secondary (HSC / A-Level)
- ◯ Undergraduate (Bachelor's- Public University)
- ◯ Undergraduate (Bachelor's- Private University)
- ◯ Postgraduate (Masters or above)
- ◯ Madrasa
- ◯ Other: _____

5. What is your current occupation? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Student
- ◯ Employed (formal/private sector)
- ◯ Employed (government sector)
- ◯ Self-employed / business
- ◯ Homemaker
- ◯ Unemployed

Skip to question 6

Political Participation

These questions look at your general history and habits as a voter.

6. Did you vote in the 2026 National Parliament Election? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes, I have voted before and voted in 2026
- ◯ Yes, this was my first time voting (first-time voter in 2026)
- ◯ I was eligible but did not vote
- ◯ No, I am not eligible to vote

7. How independently do you make your voting decisions? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Completely independently
- ◯ Mostly independently, but somewhat influenced by family or peers
- ◯ Jointly with family members
- ◯ Mostly follow family or spouse's preference

Skip to question 8

Household and Family Influence

These questions look at how your family and household shape the choices you make as a voter.

8. To what extent did your family's preference influence your decision in the last Dhaka city election? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Completely determined my vote
- ◯ Significantly influenced
- ◯ Somewhat influenced
- ◯ Not influenced at all

9. In your household, who typically has the final say in deciding which political party or candidate to vote for? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Myself
- ◯ My parents or in laws
- ◯ My husband
- ◯ Other family members
- ◯ We decide collectively

Skip to question 10

Social Networks & NGO Affiliation

These questions examine how community groups, NGOs, and the people around you influence your political choices.

10. Are you currently or have you been a member of any community organization, such as an NGO, cooperative, or women's group (e.g., BRAC, ASA, Grameen Bank)? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

11. If yes, did your affiliation with the NGO or group encourage you to vote for a specific candidate or party, or did it make you more independent in your choice?

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ It encouraged me to follow the group's recommendation
- ◯ It gave me confidence to decide independently
- ◯ It had no impact on my choice

Skip to question 12

Safety Concerns & Voting Behaviour

These questions examine how your perceived safety concerns influence your voting preferences.

12. How much does each of the following safety concerns influence your political decisions? *(1 = No influence 5 = Very strong influence)* *

Mark only one oval per row.

	1	2	3	4	5
Physical safety (violence, harassment at events or polling station)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Social safety (fear of stigma, judgment, or community reprisal)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Familial safety (fear of family conflict or pressure)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Digital safety (fear of online harassment or surveillance)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

13. How much does each of the following political party ideologies and personal safety concerns influence your voting preference? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Neutral)	4 (Agree)	5 (Strongly Agree)
I consider a party's stance on women's rights and freedoms when deciding who to vote for.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I would avoid voting for a party that I believe promotes restrictive norms for women.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I feel that my safety and rights as a woman would be better protected under certain political parties.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

August 2024 has made me more cautious about expressing my political preferences.

14. Have safety concerns ever led you to change your voting decision, for example, voting differently from your actual preference to avoid conflict or risk? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes, I have changed my vote because of safety concerns
- Yes, I have considered changing my vote but did not
- No, I have always voted freely according to my own preference
- I have not yet voted

15. Overall, how free do you feel to make your own political choices without fear? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
1 (N	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	5 (Completely free)

Skip to question 16

Attributes and Issues

These questions explore which qualities in a candidate and which issues matter most when you decide your vote.

16. Which of the following are important factors for you when choosing a candidate in the Dhaka city election? *

Check all that apply.

- [ ] Candidate's political party
- [ ] Candidate's personal reputation/character
- [ ] Candidate's stance on women's safety/rights
- [ ] Local development promises (roads, water, waste management)
- [ ] Family tradition

17. Rate the importance of each *

Check all that apply.

	1. Not at all	2. Somewhat important	3. Neutral	4. Important	5. Extremely important
The party's ideology and values	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Election manifesto / programme	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Natural leadership	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My family's traditional loyalty to a party	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Record on development	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Position on women's issues	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Stance on religion in politics	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

18. Compared to previous elections, has the political environment following the July Revolution affected your interest in voting? *

Mark only one oval.

- Increased significantly
- Increased slightly
- Remained the same
- Decreased

Appendix C

Key Informant Interview Questionnaire

Section A: Background and Experience

1. Can you briefly tell me about your role and your experience working with or observing young women's political participation in Bangladesh?

2. From your experience, how would you describe young women's general level of involvement in politics today?

3. In your view, do young women take part differently from older women, or from young men? How so?

Section B: Perceptions of Safety and Freedom

4. What kinds of risks or threats do young women face when they try to participate in politics? (physical, social, family-related, digital, or ideological)

5. How significant is family pressure in limiting young women's political participation in Dhaka? Can you give examples?

6. Have you seen cases where young women faced online harassment or threats because of their political views or activities?

7. Are there certain political beliefs or affiliations that put young women at greater risk of being targeted or harassed?

8. In your experience, does social judgment such as gossip or being labelled stop young women from participating in politics?

9. What role do NGOs, cooperatives, or women's groups play in shaping women's political awareness and voting choices?

10. Overall, how big a role do you think concerns about personal safety and freedom play in young women's political choices in Dhaka?

Section C: Impact on Political Decision-Making

11. When women weigh candidates, which factors do you see mattering most to them?

12. In your observation, do safety concerns affect whether young women choose to vote or stay away from voting?

13. Do you think young women make different political choices, for example, supporting certain parties or candidates because of safety concerns rather than genuine preference?

14. Safety aside, what would you say are the main factors that determine how young women in Dhaka vote?

Section D: Recommendations and Closing

15. What factors do you think most need to change for young women to feel genuinely free to participate in politics in Bangladesh?

16. Is there anything important about young women's voting, safety, and freedom in Dhaka that we have not covered?

Appendix D

Profile of Key Informants

KII Code	Profile / Role	Key Area of Expertise
KI-1	Former United Nations officer with 16 years of experience in the governance sector; currently leads a national development organisation.	Governance, women's political participation, family and NGO influence, women's safety
KI-2	Young woman, university student, and first-time voter who observed the July 2024 period from abroad.	Young women's voting experiences, safety concerns, first-time voting
KI-3	Political campaign professional directly involved in a Dhaka constituency campaign in 2026.	Campaigns, voter behaviour, candidate selection, constituency-level voting
KI-4	Gender specialist working with young women aged 18–35 in rural and agricultural settings.	Gender and political participation, family and religious influence, media exposure, online harassment
KI-5	Academic specialising in political participation in Bangladesh and governance.	Women's political participation, electoral behaviour, governance, comparative electoral analysis
KI-6	Young man residing in Uttara	Male perspectives on

	within the Dhaka-18 constituency; first-time voter.	women's political participation, barriers to participation, generational differences
KI-7	19-year-old student and first-time voter living in Dhaka who participated in the July 2024 protests.	Youth political participation, first-time voting, political expression
KI-8	27-year-old woman living in Uttara and first-time voter; has three years of experience working with a local NGO.	Women's political participation, online harassment, NGO experience, urban and informal-settlement perspectives