

Amit, Sajid

Article

Transnational connections and religious change: How UK Bangladesh diaspora networks shape religious practices in Sylhet

Research in Globalization

Provided in Cooperation with:

Elsevier

Suggested Citation: Amit, Sajid (2025) : Transnational connections and religious change: How UK Bangladesh diaspora networks shape religious practices in Sylhet, Research in Globalization, ISSN 2590-051X, Elsevier, Amsterdam, Vol. 10, pp. 1-16,
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resglo.2025.100286>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/331209>

Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

Terms of use:

Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.

You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.

If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>



Transnational connections and religious change: How UK Bangladesh diaspora networks shape religious practices in Sylhet

Sajid Amit

Center for Enterprise and Society, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), Dhanmondi, Dhaka 1209, Bangladesh

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Transnational Religious Networks
Diaspora Influence
Remittances
Social Media
Religious Conservatism
UK-Bangladesh Connections
Mixed Methods Research

ABSTRACT

In an increasingly interconnected global landscape, diaspora communities maintain complex transnational ties with their homelands, influencing local religious practices and institutions. This study examines how UK-Bangladesh diaspora connections shape religious identity formation and social practices in Bangladesh's Sylhet region. Using a mixed-methods approach combining surveys ($n = 400$), focus group discussions ($n = 10$), and key informant interviews ($n = 17$) conducted from August 2018 to February 2020, the research investigated how transnational family relationships, remittances, and digital technologies influence religious development in the region. Findings reveal that global digital platforms have become primary drivers of religious change, with 68.5 % of respondents identifying social media as the main influence on local religious practices. Transnational family connections significantly shaped local religious perspectives, with 81.8 % of respondents reporting high trust in UK-residing relatives' religious knowledge. Global financial flows play a crucial role, with approximately 40 % of remittances supporting religious institutions, highlighting the economic dimensions of transnational religious ties. Statistical analysis demonstrated significant associations between UK family influence ($\beta = 0.28$), remittance reception ($\beta = 0.24$), and social media use ($\beta = 0.22$) with perceptions of increased religiosity. The study reveals how these transnational connections often promote more conservative religious interpretations rather than secular values, challenging linear narratives of globalization leading to secularization. These findings contribute to transnational migration scholarship by documenting the specific mechanisms through which diaspora communities influence religious practices in their regions of origin, offering important insights for understanding religious identity formation in an increasingly connected world.

1. Introduction

Transnational connections between diaspora communities and their homelands have profound impacts on social, cultural, and religious practices (Haider, 2015). These connections facilitate the flow of not only remittances but also ideas, values, and cultural norms across national boundaries (Gardner, 1995; Levitt, 1998). In the case of the Sylheti community in Bangladesh, which has significant diaspora populations in the United Kingdom (UK), these transnational connections have particularly influenced religious practices and identity formation (Kibria, 2011; Samuel, 2012). An estimated 90 to 95 percent of British Bangladeshis claim Sylheti heritage, creating strong and sustained links between the UK and the Sylhet region (Alexander & Lidher, 2024; Miah, 2021). These connections are maintained and strengthened through remittances, family visits, telecommunications, and increasingly, through social media and digital platforms (Bunt, 2018; Guglielmi et al., 2021; Mandaville, 2003).

In recent years, Bangladesh has experienced an increase in religious radicalization leading to terrorism (Hasan, 2020). This trend is particularly concerning given that Bangladesh was founded on principles of interreligious peace and ethnic and cultural diversity, distinguishing it from many other Muslim-majority nations. Transnational extremism has recently had a devastating impact on Bangladesh, permeating the very fabric of society. Violent extremism, resulting from Islamist radicalization, has become one of Bangladesh's primary challenges (Hasan & Macdonald, 2022). The extent of violent extremism in Bangladesh and the impact of radicals on society became starkly evident following the Holey Artisan Bakery attack in July 2016 (News, 2019). Young individuals from across Bangladesh have also committed random acts of terrorism. The terrorist threat in Bangladesh stems from both organizations heavily focused on jihad and those primarily concerned with evangelism (dawa), though these focuses may overlap for some groups. One such organization is Harakatul Jihad-i-Islami-Bangladesh (HuJI-B), whose founder, Fazlul Rahman, reportedly received initial funding from

E-mail addresses: sajid.amit@ulab.edu.bd, st122642@ait.asia.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resglo.2025.100286>

Received 25 February 2025; Received in revised form 9 May 2025; Accepted 9 May 2025

Available online 16 May 2025

2590-051X/© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

Osama bin Laden and supported his 1998 declaration of jihad. Other comparable organizations include Jamatul Mujahedeen Bangladesh (JMB), Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), and Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh (AHAB). While their memberships are somewhat ambiguous and often considered overlapping, it is believed that these organizations are part of Al Muhajedeen, the main umbrella organization. JMB and JMJB have been linked to numerous bombings, including Bangladesh's first suicide attacks and the simultaneous detonation of 400 bombs in 2005 (Ahmed & Ali, 2019; Fink, 2010; Samuel, 2012). Organizations such as JMB, JMJB, and HuJI-B express opposition to democratic political processes, question the legitimacy of the secular government, and advocate for the violent conversion of Bangladesh into an Islamic state (BEI, 2014; Harrigan, 2013).

The Sylhet division in Bangladesh stands out as a significant economic zone, renowned for its religious saints, foreign remittances, and thriving tea industry. A substantial number of Sylhetis reside abroad, primarily in France, the United States, the United Kingdom (UK), and Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (Hussain, 2014). Notably, approximately 450,000 Sylhetis live in the UK, contributing a significant portion of remittances to their home region. The UK's remittance flow to Sylhet is particularly substantial compared to other nations, as an estimated 90 to 95 percent of British Bangladeshis claim Sylheti heritage. Recent studies suggest that transnational networks, including diaspora communities and international religious organizations, play a significant role in shaping religious practices and institutions in Bangladesh (Ahmed & Ali, 2019). These external influences operate through various channels, including financial support, educational exchanges, and the transmission of religious ideas through both traditional and digital media. Radical organizations in Bangladesh often target youth to advance their political agendas. Young people, especially those unfamiliar with religious teachings against violence, are particularly vulnerable to recruitment. These organizations exploit this vulnerability by misrepresenting religious doctrines, deceiving young individuals into believing they are fighting for a noble cause with promises of success both in this life and the afterlife (Ahmed & Ali, 2019; Hasan & Macdonald, 2022). In addition to religious organizations, terrorist groups are actively recruiting at educational institutions, particularly universities and other higher learning centers. Air Cdr (Retd.) Ishfaq Elahi Chowdhury, a leading security expert in Bangladesh, has argued that exposure to Wahabi Majhab among migrant workers, especially those who traveled to the Middle East, has contributed to the Islamization of Bangladesh. He further asserts that the influx of money from the Middle East, often disguised as various forms of relief or charity, has significantly bolstered the support for various Islamic political parties already present in Bangladesh (BIPSS; Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies, 2017).

The field of radicalization studies has primarily focused on individual-level factors and local contexts, while the literature on remittances has largely examined their economic impacts. However, there is a significant gap in understanding how these two phenomena intersect, particularly in the context of transnational communities and their implications for sustainable development. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining the unique case of Sylheti communities in the UK and Bangladesh. The primary research question is: How do transnational connections between UK-residing Sylhetis and local Sylhetis—specifically through remittances, digital communications, and family networks—influence religious practices and institutions in the Sylhet region of Bangladesh? This question reflects the identified research gap by focusing on the interconnected dynamics of economic remittances, cultural exchange, and their effects on religious practices in a specific cross-cultural context. By addressing this question, the research contributes to understanding how transnational connections shape local religious landscapes in communities with strong diaspora ties. First, empirical evidence is provided on the potential links between remittances and radicalization, an area that has been understudied despite the growing importance of both phenomena in an increasingly

globalized world. Second, the role of transnational communities in shaping religious practices and potentially influencing radicalization trends is examined, offering insights into the complex interplay between global connections and local religious landscapes. Third, the implications of these dynamics for sustainable development are explored, bridging the gap between radicalization studies and sustainability research – two fields that have rarely been considered in conjunction.

This study is particularly timely and relevant given the increasing global concern over radicalization and the simultaneous recognition of remittances as a potential tool for development. By focusing on the Sylheti community, which has a significant presence both in the UK and Bangladesh, a unique perspective is offered on how transnational ties can influence local religious practices and potentially contribute to radicalization trends. Moreover, by examining these issues through the lens of sustainability, valuable insights are provided for policymakers and practitioners working towards sustainable development in communities with strong diaspora connections. The findings have the potential to inform more nuanced approaches to countering violent extremism, managing remittance flows, and promoting sustainable development in transnational contexts.

1.1. Theoretical and conceptual framework

For clarity and consistency throughout this paper, several key terms define as follows. Transnationalism refers to the processes by which immigrants create and maintain multi-stranded social relations that link their societies of origin and settlement (Vertovec, 2009). In this study, this primarily concerns the connections between UK-residing Sylhetis and their communities of origin in Bangladesh (Stark & Bloom, 1985). This research examines both their economic impact and their role in shaping religious institutions and practices. Religious conservatism in this paper refers to adherence to more orthodox interpretations of religious texts and practices, often characterized by stricter observance of religious laws and traditions. This is distinct from religious extremism or radicalization, which involve adopting views that justify violence. Social remittances, a concept developed by Levitt, 1998, refers to the ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving to sending communities. In this context, this includes religious ideas and practices transmitted from UK-residing Sylhetis to local Sylhetis. Digital connectivity encompasses the various technological means (particularly social media platforms) through which transnational communities maintain contact and share information, ideas, and values across geographical distances (Bunt, 2018). These concepts form the foundation of the analysis of how UK-Bangladesh diaspora networks influence religious practices in Sylhet. Throughout the paper, care is taken to distinguish between increased religiosity, which refers simply to greater adherence to religious practices, and religious conservatism, which entails adoption of more orthodox interpretations of religion.

To examine the relationship between transnational connections and religious practices in the Sylhet region, this study draws upon three complementary theoretical perspectives that together provide a comprehensive framework for analysis. First, the concept of transnationalism (Vertovec, 2009) offers a foundation for understanding how migrants maintain multi-stranded relationships that connect their societies of origin and settlement. This perspective is particularly relevant for analyzing the Sylheti community, which maintains strong ties between the UK and Bangladesh through various channels including family visits, telecommunications, and digital media. Transnationalism helps explain how cultural and religious practices flow between these connected communities, often leading to hybrid forms that reflect both local traditions and external influences. Second, the New Economics of Labor Migration (Stark & Bloom, 1985) provides insights into the economic dimensions of transnational connections, particularly regarding remittance behaviors. Unlike earlier economic models that viewed migration as purely individual decisions, this framework recognizes that remittances are often part of family strategies that serve multiple

purposes beyond immediate consumption. In the Sylheti context, this theory helps explain why significant portions of remittances are directed toward religious institutions and activities, representing both financial support and symbolic investments in community status and religious identity. Third, Social Remittances Theory (Levitt, 1998) extends the concept of remittances beyond monetary transfers to include the transmission of ideas, behaviors, and social capital between sending and receiving communities. This theoretical lens is crucial for understanding how religious ideas and practices are transferred from UK-residing Sylhetis to their communities of origin. It helps explain how changes in religious practices can occur through transnational connections even without direct financial support, through mechanisms such as social media communications, return visits, and family networks. Together, these theoretical perspectives create a framework that connects economic exchanges (remittances), social relationships (transnational family ties), and cultural practices (religious activities) in a coherent analytical approach. This integrated framework guides the analysis of how UK-Bangladesh diaspora networks influence religious practices in Sylhet, with particular attention to the pathways through which external influences are incorporated into local religious landscapes.

1.2. Literature review

The literature on transnational connections, remittances, and religious practices has developed across several disciplines, providing valuable insights for understanding the Sylheti context. This review synthesizes key research in three interconnected areas central to this study.

1.2.1. Transnational religious ties and practices

Research on transnational religious ties has revealed how diaspora communities maintain, transform, and sometimes intensify religious practices across borders. Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2002 conducted extensive studies of transnational religious communities, demonstrating how immigrants use religious institutions to preserve cultural identity while adapting to new environments. Their work shows that rather than simply transplanting religious practices from the homeland, diaspora communities often develop distinctive forms of religiosity that reflect both origin and destination contexts. This insight helps explain the distinctive religious dynamics observed in Sylheti communities, where UK influences interact with local traditions.

Kibria, 2011 landmark study of Bangladeshi Muslim communities in the diaspora specifically examines how religious identity becomes a crucial anchor for maintaining connections to the homeland. Her research demonstrates that for many Bangladeshi migrants, Islamic practices become more formalized and textually-oriented in the diaspora context – a finding that helps explain why UK-residing Sylhetis might promote more orthodox interpretations when engaging with their communities of origin. This work is particularly relevant for understanding the religious influence that flows from the UK to Sylhet, as documented in the present study.

Mandaville, 2003 concept of “transnational Muslim politics” provides a framework for understanding how Islamic practices and identities are negotiated across borders. His work demonstrates how modern communications technologies enable new forms of religious authority and community that transcend national boundaries. This perspective is essential for understanding how UK-residing Sylhetis can influence religious practices in Bangladesh despite geographical distance, especially through digital platforms. Mandaville’s emphasis on the deterritorialization of religious authority helps explain the high level of trust in UK relatives’ religious knowledge reported in the present study.

Recent scholarship has further expanded our understanding of religious mobility in transnational contexts. Ullah, 2025 provides valuable insights into the historical dimensions of religious mobility, examining how empire and colonialism have shaped contemporary transnational religious networks. His work demonstrates how historical power

dynamics continue to influence religious flows between diaspora communities and their homelands, offering important historical context for understanding the Sylhet-UK religious connections examined in this study. Additionally, Ullah et al., 2022 explore how religion adapts and transforms in the age of migration, highlighting the complex interplay between religious practices, political ideologies, and migrant identities. Their framework helps explain how religious identities in both sending and receiving communities are negotiated within broader political and ideological contexts—a dynamic that is particularly relevant for understanding the UK-Bangladesh religious connections examined here.

Ahmed & Ali, 2019 research on the Fultoli tradition among British Bangladeshis offers particularly relevant insights into how specific Islamic practices from Sylhet are maintained and transformed in the UK context. Their work documents how religious leadership and authority are negotiated between homeland and diaspora, creating transnational religious networks that shape practices in both locations. This research provides context for understanding the complex religious exchanges between UK and Bangladesh documented in the present study.

1.2.2. Remittances and religious institutions

Research on remittances has increasingly recognized their significance beyond economic impacts, particularly their role in shaping social and religious institutions in sending communities. Gardner, 1995 seminal research on Bangladeshi migrants provides crucial insights into how remittances transform local power structures and physical landscapes in Sylhet. She demonstrates that remittance-funded mosques and madrasahs serve not only religious functions but also as symbols of family prestige and vehicles for maintaining transnational connections. This perspective helps explain the substantial proportion of remittances directed toward religious institutions documented in the present study, revealing that these financial flows have significance beyond their monetary value.

Stark and Bloom (1985), in developing the New Economics of Labor Migration, advanced the understanding of remittances as part of family strategies rather than merely individual decisions. Their work shows how remittances serve multiple purposes, including risk diversification and investments in status markers. When applied to religious institutions, this framework helps explain why UK-residing Sylhetis invest in mosques and madrasahs as strategic family decisions that enhance prestige while maintaining cultural connections. This theoretical perspective provides context for interpreting the patterns of remittance use documented in this study.

Farhad, 2022 a recent analysis of remittance flows to Sylhet, which documents that the region earns approximately 10 % of Bangladesh’s total remittance inflow, provides essential context for understanding the economic scale of transnational connections in the region. This significant economic relationship underpins many of the social and religious dynamics observed in Sylhet. Farhad’s analysis of the UK’s substantial contribution to these remittance flows (7.68 % in 2019, 7.58 % in 2020, and 8.54 % in 2021) helps explain the particular influence of UK-residing Sylhetis on local religious landscapes, as they control significant financial resources that can be directed toward religious institutions and activities.

1.2.3. Digital media and transnational religious influence

The role of digital media in shaping transnational religious connections has emerged as a critical area of study in recent years. Bunt, 2018 comprehensive work on “Hashtag Islam” provides essential insights into how digital environments are transforming religious authority and practice among Muslim communities worldwide. His research demonstrates how social media platforms create new spaces for religious discourse that can bypass traditional authorities, enabling diverse interpretations to circulate transnationally. This framework is crucial for understanding the finding in the present study that social media is identified by 68.5 % of respondents as a primary driver of religious change in Sylhet, offering a theoretical basis for interpreting this

significant empirical result.

Mandaville (2003), while examining broader transnational Muslim politics, pays particular attention to the role of new media technologies in creating “translocal” religious spaces. His work shows how these technologies enable diaspora communities to maintain religious connections to their homelands while simultaneously introducing new interpretations and practices. This perspective helps explain how UK-residing Sylhetis use digital platforms to influence religious practices in their communities of origin, creating hybrid religious forms that reflect both UK and Bangladeshi contexts.

Conway, 2016 research specifically examines how digital platforms enable the transmission of religious ideas across borders. Her work highlights the importance of considering not just the content shared but also the technological affordances that shape how religious messages are received and interpreted. This perspective is valuable for understanding the processes through which UK-residing Sylhetis influence local religious views through social media, as documented in this study.

(**Amit et al., 2020**) study of social media use among university students in Bangladesh provides locally-grounded insights into how young Bangladeshis engage with religious content online. Their research demonstrates that younger generations often turn to digital sources for religious guidance rather than traditional local authorities, which helps explain the generational differences in religious practice identified in the present study. Their work also shows how social media creates new forms of religious community that transcend geographical boundaries, providing context for understanding the influence of UK-residing Sylhetis on their counterparts in Bangladesh.

Together, this literature provides a robust foundation for analyzing how transnational connections between the UK and Bangladesh—through remittances, family networks, and digital platforms—influence religious practices in Sylhet. The present study builds upon these theoretical and empirical insights to document the specific mechanisms through which these influences operate and their effects on the religious landscape of the region.

1.2.4. Application of theoretical frameworks

The theoretical frameworks and literature discussed above provided specific analytical tools for interpreting the research findings. **Vertovec (2009)** concept of transnationalism directly informed the analysis of how UK-residing Sylhetis maintain influence in their communities of origin despite geographical distance. For example, when examining survey data showing respondents trust their UK-residing relatives’ religious knowledge, this was interpreted through Vertovec’s insight that transnational communities develop “bifocal” perspectives that simultaneously value both homeland and diaspora contexts. This theoretical lens helped explain why local Sylhetis might consider UK relatives as legitimate religious authorities, rather than viewing their interpretations as foreign impositions.

Levitt (1998) concept of social remittances provided a framework for analyzing how religious ideas travel between the UK and Bangladesh. When interview data revealed statements like “UK-residing Sylhetis encourage us towards more correct religious practices,” Levitt’s distinction between normative and practice-based social remittances helped differentiate between the transmission of abstract religious principles versus specific behaviors. This theoretical distinction was crucial for understanding that UK influence operates not just through funding religious institutions but through sharing specific interpretations of religious texts and practices.

The New Economics of Labor Migration framework (**Stark & Bloom, 1985**) informed the analysis of remittance patterns, particularly the finding of remittances support religious institutions. Rather than viewing this simply as charitable giving, this theoretical perspective enabled an interpretation of religious donations as strategic family investments that serve multiple functions, including status enhancement and risk diversification. This explains why survey data showed that donors often maintain control over the institutions they fund through

oversight committees and involvement in personnel decisions.

Bunt (2018) analysis of digital Islam provided specific analytical tools for interpreting the surprising finding of respondents identified social media as the primary driver of religious change. His concept of “cyber Islamic environments” helped explain how platforms like Facebook and YouTube have become spaces where religious authority is contested and negotiated, enabling new forms of religious influence that bypass traditional hierarchies. This theoretical lens was essential for understanding the mechanisms through which UK-residing Sylhetis influence local religious practices despite physical distance. Together, these theoretical frameworks provided complementary perspectives that enabled a comprehensive analysis of the complex transnational religious dynamics observed in Sylhet. Rather than applying a single theoretical lens, this integrated approach allowed for examination of economic, social, and technological dimensions of transnational religious influence.

2. Methods and materials

2.1. Study area

Sylhet, a northeastern division of Bangladesh, borders the Indian states of Meghalaya to the north, Assam to the east, and Tripura to the south. It is bounded by Bangladesh’s Dhaka and Mymensingh divisions to the west and Chittagong to the southwest. The division comprises four districts: Habiganj, Moulvibazar, Sunamganj, and Sylhet, with a total population of 12,102,325 and a literacy rate of 51 % (**BBS, 2002**). Religious demographics show that 80 % of Sylhet’s population follows Islam, 14 % Hinduism, 5.06 % Christianity, 0.04 % Buddhism, and 0.90 % other faiths (**BBS, 2002**). The majority of Muslims in Sylhet are Sunni, adhering to the Hanafi school of law, with some following Shafi’i and Hanbali madhhabs. Sufi traditions, influenced by Abdul Latif of Fultoli, are also prevalent (**Hossain, 2013**). The region hosts several important Islamic institutions, including the Deobandi-affiliated Jamia Luthfia Anwarul Uloom Hamidnagar. Economically, Sylhet relies heavily on its tea industry and remittances. For the 2012–2013 fiscal year, remittances were expected to reach \$10 billion. From 2019 to 2021, Sylhet earned 10 % (BDT 47,843 crore) of Bangladesh’s total remittance inflow (**Farhad, 2022**). The UK, home to many Sylheti migrants, is a significant source of these remittances. The UK’s contribution to Bangladesh’s total remittances was 7.68 % in 2019, 7.58 % in 2020, and 8.54 % in 2021 (**Farhad, 2022**). These remittances, sent through both formal and informal channels, have significantly contributed to urban and suburban development in the region.

2.2. Research design and data collection

The research design employed multiple complementary methods to examine transnational religious influences in Sylhet, as illustrated in **Fig. 1**. A mixed-methods approach was selected for its ability to capture both patterns and meanings in complex social phenomena (**Amit et al., 2024; Amit & Kafy, 2022; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Krueger, 2014; Sultana et al., 2025**). The quantitative survey documented broad trends across the Sylhet region, providing statistically representative data on religious practices and transnational connections. Meanwhile, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) offered contextual understanding and explanatory depth that numerical data alone could not provide. This methodological integration was particularly suited to studying transnational religious influences for several reasons. First, the quantitative survey (n = 400) identified patterns in remittance usage, perceptions of UK-residing Sylhetis, and changes in religious practices across the region. Second, the qualitative components explored the underlying processes through which these patterns emerge, capturing the lived experiences and perspectives of community members navigating transnational influences. This combination enabled a more comprehensive understanding than either approach could provide alone.



Fig. 1. Research design and data collection process.

(Amit & Kafy, 2024; Elo et al., 2014; Sultana et al., 2025).

Data were collected from August 2018 to February 2020, a period particularly relevant for studying transnational connections in Sylhet. During this timeframe, Sylhet was experiencing significant economic development through remittances, with the region earning approximately 10 % of Bangladesh’s total remittance inflow (Farhad, 2022). This period also saw increased digital connectivity in rural Bangladesh, making it an opportune time to examine how social media facilitated transnational religious exchanges (Bunt, 2018). Additionally, this timeframe allowed sufficient distance from earlier political events for participants to reflect thoughtfully on changing religious practices without immediate concerns about security or political sensitivity.

The research employed triangulation at multiple levels: methodological triangulation (using complementary quantitative and qualitative approaches), data source triangulation (surveying different stakeholders across four districts), and investigator triangulation (involving multiple researchers in data collection and analysis). This comprehensive approach strengthened the credibility of findings by enabling cross-verification between different data sources and analytical perspectives (Nowell et al., 2017; Sultana et al., 2025).

The study acknowledges several methodological limitations. This study importantly acknowledges that its findings are specifically situated within the Sylhet region’s unique socio-cultural context and its particular relationship with the UK diaspora. While the research provides robust insights into transnational religious dynamics in this specific region, we recognize that these findings cannot be generalized to other regions in Bangladesh or to other diaspora-homeland relationships. The Sylhet-UK migration corridor has distinctive historical roots, economic patterns, and cultural connections that may not be replicated elsewhere. Future comparative research across multiple regions with different diaspora connections would be valuable for identifying which patterns observed in this study might represent broader trends in transnational religious influence and which are unique to the Sylhet context.

2.2.1. Quantitative survey

A quantitative survey was conducted with 400 respondents from the Sylhet Division of Bangladesh. The sample size was determined using Cochran’s formula with a 95 % confidence level and a 5 % margin of error, considering the total population of Sylhet Division (approximately 12 million) (Guglielmi et al., 2021). A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation from all four districts in the Sylhet Division: Habiganj, Moulvibazar, Sunamganj, and Sylhet. This sampling strategy allowed for capturing potential variations across different geographical areas within the division. The survey instrument was developed based on the research questions and theoretical framework. It included questions on demographic characteristics, remittance

patterns, religious practices, perceptions of radicalization, and views on sustainable development (Table 1). To ensure cultural appropriateness and clarity, the questionnaire was initially developed in English and then translated into Bengali by professional translators. A back-translation process was used to verify the accuracy of the translation (Brislin, 1970).

The survey instrument underwent rigorous development and testing to ensure its validity and cultural appropriateness. The initial questionnaire was developed based on the research questions and theoretical framework, with particular attention to measuring transnational connections, remittance patterns, and religious practices. To ensure cultural and linguistic validity, the questionnaire was first developed in English and then translated into Bengali by professional translators, followed by back-translation to verify accuracy (Potvin et al., 2023). The questionnaire was then pilot-tested with 20 respondents from different demographic backgrounds within the Sylhet region. This pilot process yielded several important improvements to the final instrument. First, questions about religious practices were refined to use locally relevant terminology and avoid inadvertently imposing external religious categories. Second, the sequence of questions was adjusted to establish rapport before addressing more sensitive topics related to religious beliefs and transnational influences. Third, several questions were reformulated to avoid leading language, particularly regarding perceptions of UK-residing Sylhetis. Finally, the pilot confirmed that the survey could be completed within a reasonable timeframe (approximately 30–40 min), preventing respondent fatigue. These refinements enhanced both the technical quality and cultural sensitivity of the survey instrument, increasing the validity of the data collected. The final survey was administered face-to-face by trained local interviewers to account for

Table 1
Demographic profile of survey respondents.

Characteristic	Percentage
Gender	
Male	52 %
Female	48 %
Age Group	
18–35	45 %
36–50	35 %
51+	20 %
Education	
Primary	15 %
Secondary	30 %
Higher	55 %
Occupation	
Agriculture	25 %
Business	30 %
Service	35 %
Others	10 %
Remittance receivers	68 %

varying literacy levels and to ensure a high response rate across all demographic groups.

2.2.2. FGDs

Ten FGDs were conducted to gather in-depth qualitative data. One of these FGDs took place at the British High Commission in Dhaka, involving stakeholders engaged in countering violent extremism (CVE). This particular FGD offered valuable insights from policymakers and practitioners who are directly addressing issues related to radicalization. The remaining nine FGDs were conducted across the four districts of the Sylhet Division. Participants included remittance receivers, remittance senders, local government officials, community leaders, and university students. This diverse range of participants allowed to capture various perspectives on the research topics. Each FGD consisted of 6–8 participants and lasted approximately 90 min.

The FGDs were moderated by trained facilitators who were native to the Sylhet region and fluent in both standard Bengali and the Sylheti dialect. This linguistic competence was essential for creating an environment where participants could express themselves naturally and without communication barriers. To ensure open and honest discussions, particularly on sensitive topics like radicalization, several strategies were employed. These included creating a non-judgmental atmosphere, using indirect questioning techniques, and ensuring gender-segregated groups where culturally appropriate (Krueger, 2014). During the FGDs, facilitators primarily used the Sylheti dialect when communicating with participants, as this is the everyday language of most residents in the region. However, they were able to shift between Sylheti and standard Bengali as needed, particularly when discussing more formal religious or educational concepts that are often expressed in standard Bengali. The facilitators underwent specialized training in qualitative research methods with a specific focus on discussing potentially sensitive topics related to religion and transnational connections. This training included techniques for encouraging participation without leading responses, managing group dynamics to prevent domination by vocal individuals, and probing for deeper insights while maintaining respect for participants' beliefs and perspectives. All facilitators were familiar with local religious terminology and practices, enabling them to accurately understand references to specific religious concepts, institutions, and traditions mentioned by participants. Each FGD was conducted using a semi-structured discussion guide that outlined key topics while allowing flexibility to explore emergent themes. Sessions typically lasted 90 min and were audio-recorded with participants' consent, then later transcribed and translated for analysis. This approach balanced methodological rigor with cultural sensitivity, creating conditions conducive to open and authentic dialogue about transnational religious influences.

2.2.3. KIIs

The study conducted 17 KIIs with strategically selected participants representing diverse perspectives on transnational religious connections. The KIIs were distributed across multiple stakeholder groups to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant viewpoints. Five Imams from different parts of the Sylhet Division provided insights into changing religious practices and the influence of transnational connections on local religious interpretation. These religious leaders offered valuable perspectives on how UK-funded mosques operate and how religious discourse has evolved in communities with strong UK ties. Three madrasah teachers from different educational institutions across the region shared insights into religious education and the influence of external funding and ideas. These educators offered particularly relevant perspectives on how religious curriculum and teaching approaches may be influenced by transnational connections and funding sources. Three community leaders from different districts in Sylhet provided broader contextual understanding of local dynamics and community

responses to transnational religious influences. These leaders often played mediating roles between UK donors and local religious institutions, offering unique insights into these relationships. Three national government representatives in Dhaka shared policy perspectives on transnational connections and religious institutions. These interviews provided important context on how these relationships are understood and managed at the national level. Three British nationals or residents of Sylheti heritage were interviewed either in London or during their visits to Sylhet. These participants offered direct perspectives from the diaspora community on their motivations for maintaining transnational religious connections and their perceptions of their influence on local practices. While the number of direct interviews with UK-residing Sylhetis was limited to three, transnational connections were explored throughout all interview categories. Imams, madrasah teachers, and community leaders frequently discussed their interactions with UK-residing Sylhetis who fund religious institutions, their experiences with returning migrants, and the religious ideas flowing between the UK and Bangladesh. This integrated approach meant that transnational dimensions were explored in 14 of the 17 interviews, providing multiple perspectives on these connections.

All KIIs employed a semi-structured interview format using an interview guide that ensured consistent coverage of key topics while allowing flexibility to explore emerging themes (Krueger, 2014). The interview guide was tailored for each stakeholder category while maintaining core questions about transnational connections and religious practices. Interviews typically lasted 60–90 min, providing sufficient time for in-depth exploration of complex topics.

In addition to these 17 formal KIIs, the study benefited from the FGD conducted at the British High Commission in Dhaka with stakeholders involved in UK-Bangladesh relations, and from survey data from the 68.3 % of respondents who reported having family members in the UK. These multiple data sources enabled triangulation of perspectives on transnational religious connections, strengthening the validity of the findings (Amit et al., 2024; Amit & Kafy, 2024; Nowell et al., 2017; Sultana et al., 2025).

2.3. Data analysis

The data analysis process was designed to integrate the quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. Quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using SPSS software (v.26). Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample and key variables. Chi-square tests were used to examine associations between categorical variables, such as remittance reception and perceptions of religious change. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to explore the factors influencing perceptions of radicalization, with predictors including demographic variables, remittance patterns, and religious practices.

In addition to descriptive statistics, more advanced statistical techniques were employed to analyze quantitative data. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted to identify the main drivers of changes in the religious landscape. PCA is a dimension-reduction technique that helps to identify patterns in data with high dimensionality (Jolliffe, 2002). Twelve variables related to religious practices, external influences, local institutions, and economic factors were included in PCA. The analysis was performed using the 'prcomp' function in R (version 4.0.3), with variables standardized prior to analysis. Components with eigenvalues greater than 1 were retained, following Kaiser's criterion (Jolliffe, 2002).

To examine the factors influencing perceptions of increased religiosity, multiple regression analysis was conducted. This technique allows for the assessment of the relationship between a dependent variable and multiple independent variables simultaneously (Osborne & Waters, 2002). The dependent variable was a composite measure of perceived increased religiosity, created by averaging responses to several Likert-scale items (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$). Independent variables included

demographic factors (age, education level), economic indicators (remittance reception), and measures of external influence (UK family influence, social media use). Before conducting the regression, multicollinearity was checked using Variance Inflation Factors (VIF), ensuring all VIF values were below 5. Residual plots were examined to check for homoscedasticity and normality of residuals. The regression analysis was performed using the 'lm' function in R. Standardized beta coefficients were calculated to allow for comparison of the relative importance of predictors. For both PCA and regression analyses, listwise deletion was used to handle missing data, resulting in a final sample size of 389 for these analyses. Sensitivity analyses using multiple imputation for missing data yielded similar results, suggesting that findings are robust to different approaches to handling missing data.

Qualitative data from FGDs and KIIs were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using NVivo software (version 12). Thematic analysis was employed, following the six-step process outlined by [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#): familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report ([Braun & Clarke, 2006](#)). This iterative process allowed us to identify recurring patterns and themes across the qualitative data.

To enhance the rigor of the qualitative analysis, several strategies were employed. These included peer debriefing, where researchers not directly involved in data collection reviewed the coding and themes, and member checking, where preliminary findings were shared with a subset of participants to ensure the accuracy of interpretation ([Elo et al., 2014](#); [Nowell et al., 2017](#)). The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings occurred at multiple stages of the analysis. Preliminary quantitative results informed the focus of qualitative inquiries, while qualitative insights helped explain and contextualize quantitative findings. This integrative approach allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between remittances, religious practices, and potential radicalization.

2.4. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process, given the sensitive nature of some of the topics explored. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Ethics Committee (Reference number 2018/003) of the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209, Bangladesh. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. For the survey, verbal consent was obtained and recorded by the interviewers. Written consent forms were used for FGDs and KIIs. All consent procedures were conducted in Bengali to ensure full understanding. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. No personally identifiable information was collected in the survey, and pseudonyms were used in the transcription of FGDs and KIIs. Data were stored securely, with access restricted to the research team. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. For FGDs and KIIs, participants were also given the option to review and amend their contributions after the session. Given the potential for discussions about religious practices and transnational influences to touch on sensitive personal and community matters, a protocol was established for addressing any discomfort or concerns that might arise during interviews or focus groups. This included options for pausing or redirecting discussions when needed and ensuring participants had access to research team contacts after the sessions. After data analysis, participants were individually informed about the aggregated results of the study, fulfilling the commitment to transparency and reciprocity in the research process. These comprehensive ethical procedures ensured that the research adhered to the highest standards of ethical practice in social science research ([Israel & Hay, 2006](#)).

3. Results

3.1. Changes in the religious landscape

Survey results reveal a significant trend toward increased religiosity in the Sylhet region. As shown in [Fig. 2](#), male respondents reported becoming "Significantly More Religious" (12 %) and "Slightly More Religious" (9 %), while female respondents reported similar changes with 9 % becoming "Significantly More Religious" and 17 % becoming "Slightly More Religious." Notably, more males (43 %) than females (23 %) reported that religiosity "Stayed the Same," suggesting that women may be experiencing or perceiving more religious change in their daily lives. The geographical distribution of these perceptions showed that respondents from Sunamganj district were most likely to perceive increased religiosity, followed by those from Sylhet district. Age was also a significant factor, with younger respondents more likely than older ones to report significant increases in religiosity. Qualitative data from KIIs provide important context for these patterns. An overwhelming majority of interviewees described a bi-directional change in the religious-cultural landscape, where both Western influences and Islamic practices have simultaneously intensified. As a madrasah teacher from Sunamganj explained:

"The last five years have seen both increasing Western and Islamic influence. While the youth have sometimes taken to modern trends and clothes, activities of Salafist groups, La-madhafi, and Jamaat e Islami have increased."

This simultaneous strengthening of seemingly contradictory influences suggests that increasing religiosity may partly represent a response to perceived threats from modernization. As a community leader in Habiganj noted:

"There have been significant changes in the last five years. People have generally become more religious. The younger generation is also drawn to Western culture and increasingly, after completing HSC, and appearing for IELTS, they try for admission to foreign universities. Western culture, education, and modernisation have enabled conservative Islamic practices to thrive."

These qualitative insights help explain the quantitative findings, suggesting that globalization has facilitated increased religiosity through both greater access to non-local Islamic practices and as a

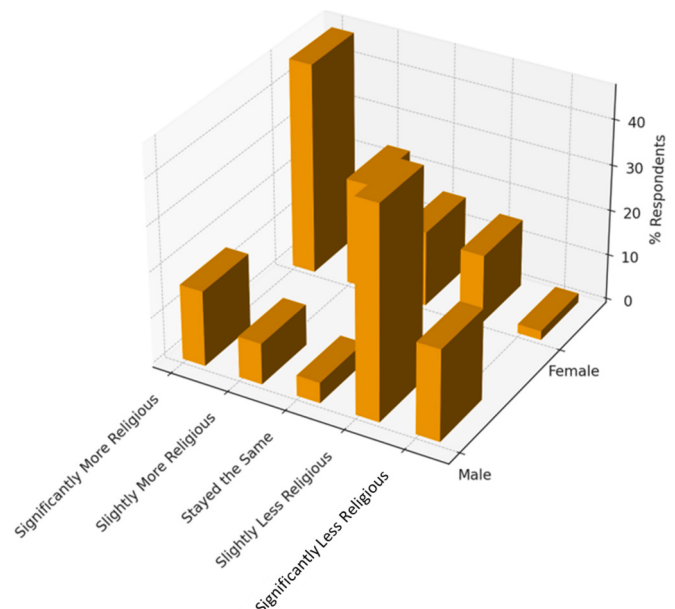


Fig. 2. Religiosity changes segmented by gender.

reaction to perceived cultural threats.

3.2. Drivers of changes in the religious landscape

To identify the factors driving religious change in Sylhet, respondents were asked about various potential influences. As shown in Fig. 3, social media emerged as the most significant driver at 68.5 %, followed by the influence of TV (31.5 %), UK family influence (13.5 %), influence of local family (11.5 %), and increasing economic/socio mobility (10.8 %). World events (7.8 %), madrasahs (5.3 %), and increasing liberal influences (4.3 %) were reported as less significant factors. The prominence of social media as the primary driver of religious change represents a significant finding, highlighting how digital connectivity has transformed pathways of religious influence. KIIs contextualized this statistical finding, with religious leaders expressing both opportunities and concerns about social media’s influence. One madrasah teacher from Sunamganj stated:

“Social media has become a primary source of religious information for many, but it often lacks the nuance and depth provided by traditional Islamic education.”

The high influence of social media aligns with global trends in religious communication but takes on particular significance in the Bangladeshi context, where mobile phone adoption and social media penetration have rapidly increased among youth populations.

3.3. Indigenous practices of Islam

Despite Sylhet’s rich historical tradition of Islamic mysticism and Sufism (often referred to as the “land of 360 saints”), survey results indicate a potential disconnection with these indigenous religious practices. As shown in Fig. 4, approximately 55 % of respondents reported awareness of local indigenous practices, while a substantial 45 % were unaware of these traditions, suggesting a generational or cultural shift away from historical religious forms.

Furthermore, Fig. 5 indicates that respondents vary broadly in their knowledge and perception of tension between indigenous practices and contemporary religious trends. Knowledge levels typically range between 40 % and 60 %, while tension levels are perceived between 30 % and 50 %. This finding suggests ongoing negotiation between local Sufi traditions and more text-focused interpretations of Islam that often characterize transnational religious influences.

FGD with community elders revealed a sense of loss regarding local

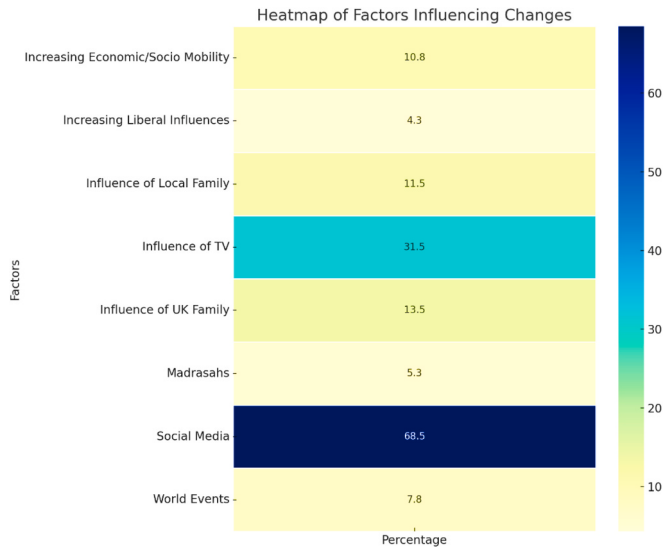


Fig. 3. Drivers of changes in religious landscape in Sylhet division.

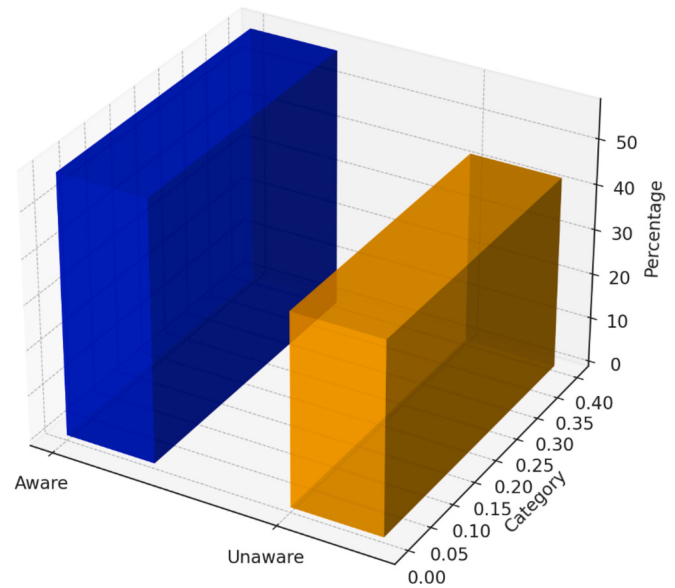


Fig. 4. Awareness vs. non-awareness of indigenous practices.

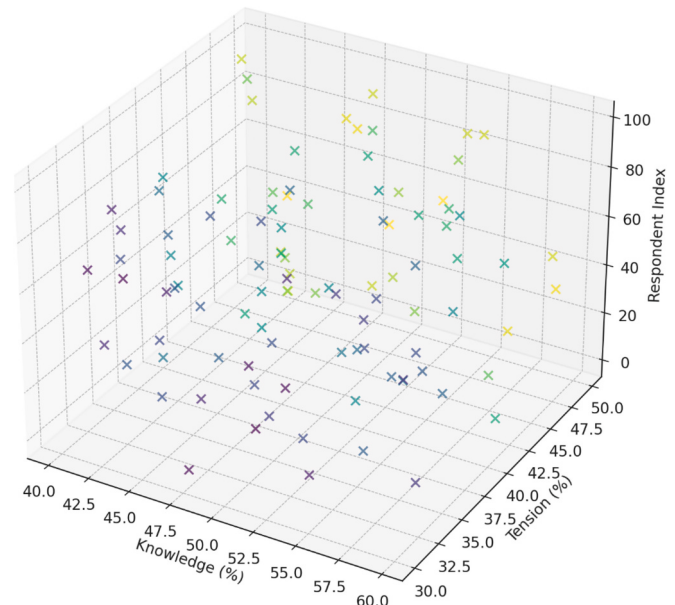


Fig. 5. Knowledge vs. tension on indigenous practices.

Sufi traditions. One elder from Moulvibazar lamented:

“Our rich heritage of Sufi practices is being forgotten as younger generations turn to more orthodox interpretations of Islam, often influenced by ideas from abroad.”

This tension between indigenous and imported religious practices provides important context for understanding how transnational connections are reshaping Sylhet’s religious landscape.

It is important to recognize that the apparent shift toward more conservative religious interpretations is not monolithic or uniform across the population. Our findings reveal significant diversity in how individuals and communities respond to transnational religious influences. While the overall trend indicates increasing religious conservatism, individual responses vary considerably based on factors including age, gender, education, and local context.

For example, the varying levels of knowledge and tension regarding indigenous practices (Fig. 5) demonstrate that communities are not

passive recipients of transnational religious ideas but active negotiators who selectively adopt, adapt, or resist external influences. The comment from an FGD participant that 'We respect our UK relatives, but their religious ideas can sometimes conflict with our local practices' illustrates this active negotiation process. This diversity of responses challenges simplistic narratives of religious change and highlights the agency of local actors in shaping their religious landscapes.

3.4. Perception towards the UK and UK-residing Sylhetis

To understand the relationship between local Sylhetis and their UK-based counterparts, the survey examined perceptions toward both the UK as a country and UK-residing Sylhetis specifically. As shown in Fig. 6, attitudes toward the UK were predominantly positive, with 56.0 % reporting somewhat favorable and 26.3 % very favorable perceptions. Only 4.3 % held unfavorable views (3.0 % somewhat unfavorable and 1.3 % very unfavorable), while 13.4 % expressed neutral opinions. This positive perception provides important context for understanding transnational religious influence, as it suggests openness to ideas and practices from the UK. It is notable that a significant proportion of respondents reported having family members living in London, with Sylhet district respondents most likely to have such connections, followed by those from Moulvibazar and Habiganj.

Fig. 7 shows that perceptions toward UK-residing Sylhetis were even more positive, with approximately 49 % reporting that they "somewhat admire" and 28 % that they "greatly admire" their UK-based counterparts. Approximately 16 % were indifferent, while only 7 % reported not admiring UK-residing Sylhetis. This high level of admiration creates fertile ground for the transmission of religious ideas and practices from the UK to Sylhet.

While these quantitative findings show predominantly positive perceptions, qualitative data revealed some complexities in these relationships. In an FGD with remittance-receiving families, one participant noted:

"We respect our UK relatives, but their religious ideas can sometimes conflict with our local practices. It's a delicate balance."

This comment highlights the nuanced nature of transnational relationships, where admiration coexists with negotiation of differing religious perspectives.

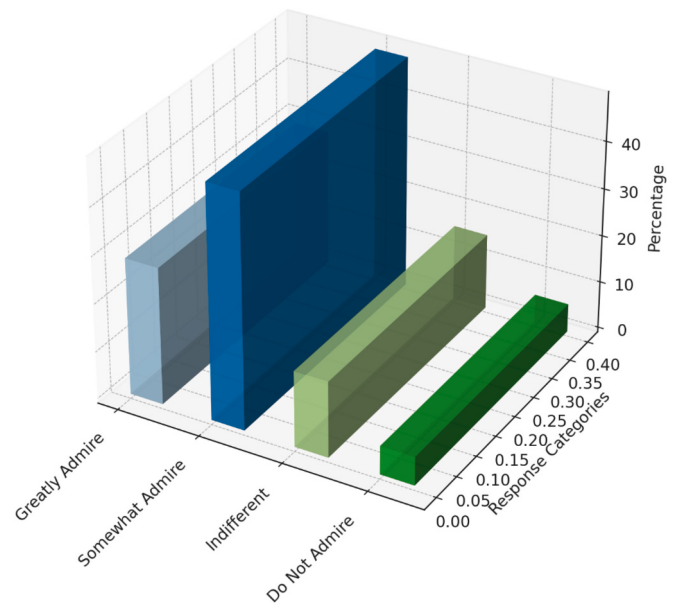


Fig. 7. Admiration levels towards UK-residing sylhetis.

3.5. Influence of UK-residing Sylhetis on local Sylhetis

The survey examined specific ways that UK-residing Sylhetis influence their local counterparts. As shown in Fig. 8, influence patterns vary significantly across regions and demographics. In Sylhet, influence is highest among elders (71 %) and men (68 %), while youth (43 %) and women (30 %) report lower levels of influence. Moulvibazar shows more balanced influence patterns across demographics, with men (59 %), women (57 %), and elders (55 %) reporting similar levels, while youth (27 %) report significantly less influence. In Habiganj, women report the highest influence (67 %), followed by elders (54 %), men (44 %), and youth (39 %). Sunamganj shows a different pattern, with youth reporting the highest influence (54 %), followed by women (48 %), elders (44 %), and men (37 %). These varied patterns suggest that transnational religious influence operates differently across localities and demographic groups, with age and gender playing important roles in mediating this influence.

When asked about mechanisms of religious influence, multiple

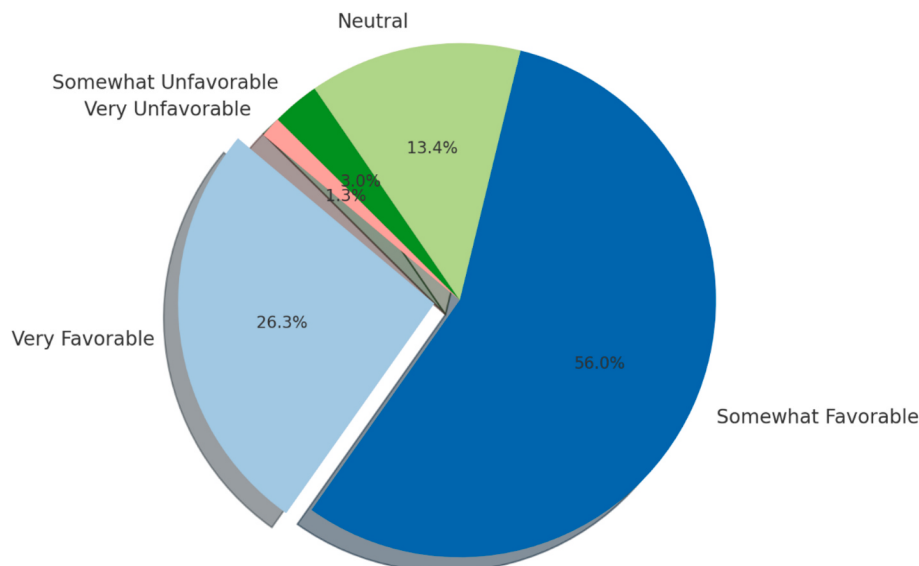


Fig. 6. Favorable vs. unfavorable perceptions of the UK.

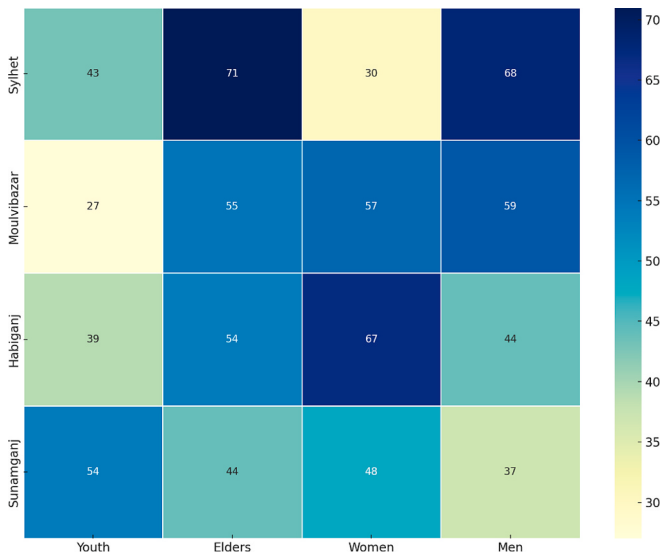


Fig. 8. Influence intensity across districts and demographics.

channels were identified, as shown in Fig. 9. Religious talks (approximately 39.5 %) were the most common mode, followed by remittances (approximately 29.5 %), community leadership (approximately 19.5 %), and media influence (approximately 9.5 %). This finding highlights the multi-faceted nature of transnational religious influence, combining personal communication, financial support, community structures, and media channels.

A particularly significant finding is that a large majority of respondents considered their UK-based family members trustworthy regarding Islamic knowledge. This high level of trust creates a strong foundation for religious influence across transnational networks.

KIIs provided additional insights into these influence patterns. A local government official in Sylhet observed:

“The impact of UK-residing Sylhetis goes beyond remittances. They’re shaping religious discourse here, sometimes promoting more conservative views than we traditionally held.”

This comment highlights how transnational connections create

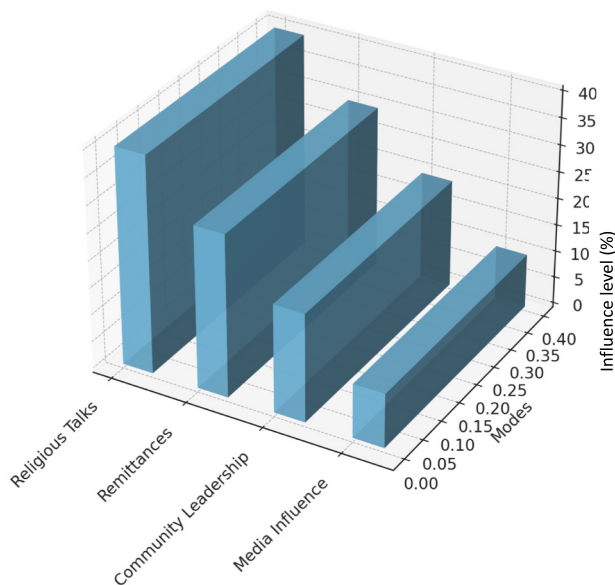


Fig. 9. Modes of generating influence.

pathways for religious influence that extend beyond financial support to include ideological and practical dimensions.

3.6. Remittances and religious institutions

The study explored how remittances from UK-residing Sylhetis are utilized locally, with particular attention to religious purposes. As shown in Fig. 10, while non-religious purposes declined from approximately 70 % in 2016 to 55 % in 2020, religious purposes remained relatively stable around 40 % throughout this period. This pattern suggests increasing proportional allocation toward religious purposes over time.

The allocation of financial resources, as shown in Fig. 11, reveals that while household expenses (approximately 70 %) and education (approximately 50 %) are the primary uses of remittances, religious establishments receive a substantial portion (approximately 40 %). This significant allocation of remittances to religious institutions highlights the economic dimension of transnational religious influence. Qualitative data from FGDs provided additional context for understanding remittance usage. In an FGD in Habiganj, participants discussed how UK-residing Sylhetis often maintain oversight of religious institutions they fund:

“When they send money for mosques or madrasahs, they usually want to be involved in decisions about who teaches there and what is taught. It’s their way of maintaining connection with home while promoting the religious practices they believe are correct.”

This comment illustrates how remittances serve not only as financial support but as vehicles for maintaining transnational connections and influencing religious practices.

3.7. Religious institutions established by UK-residing Sylhetis

The survey examined perceptions of religious institutions established by UK-residing Sylhetis compared to locally-funded ones. As shown in Fig. 12, the 3D network diagram demonstrates varying levels of influence (low, medium, high) across different institution types and geographical locations. Institution types span indices approximately from 0.1 to 0.8, while geographical distribution indices span

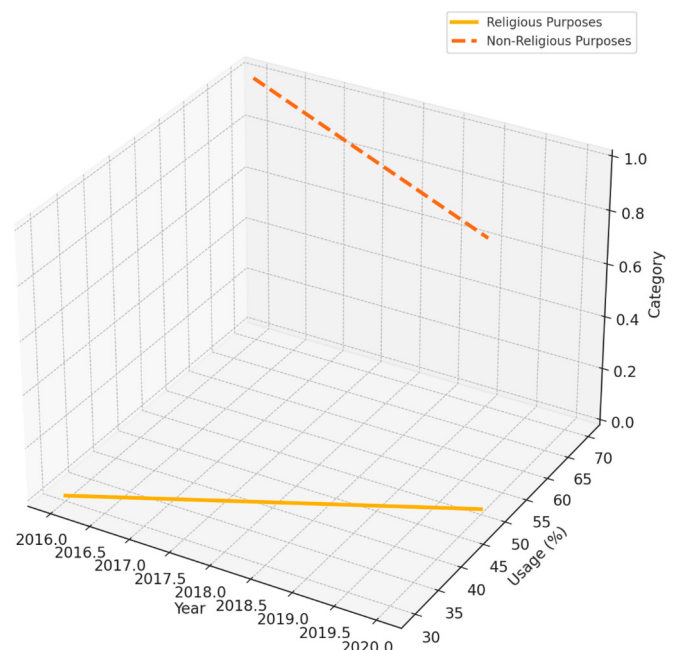


Fig. 10. Trends in remittance usage.

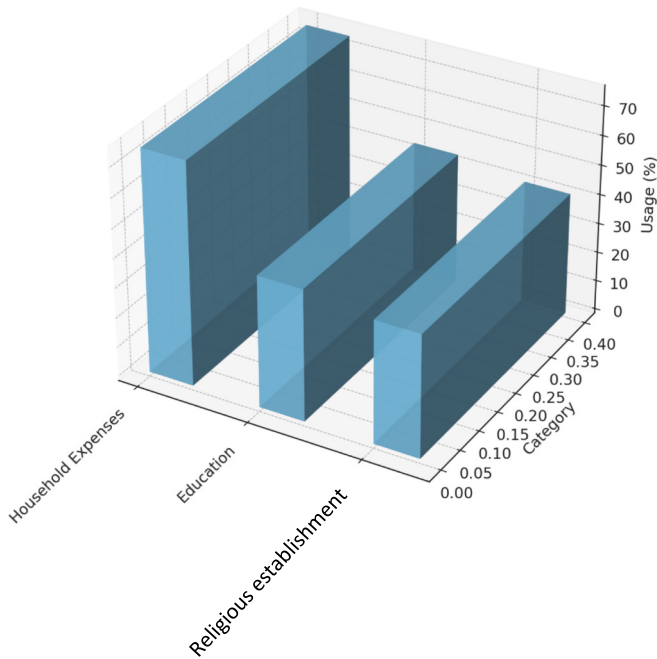


Fig. 11. Remittance usage through allocation of financial resources (%).

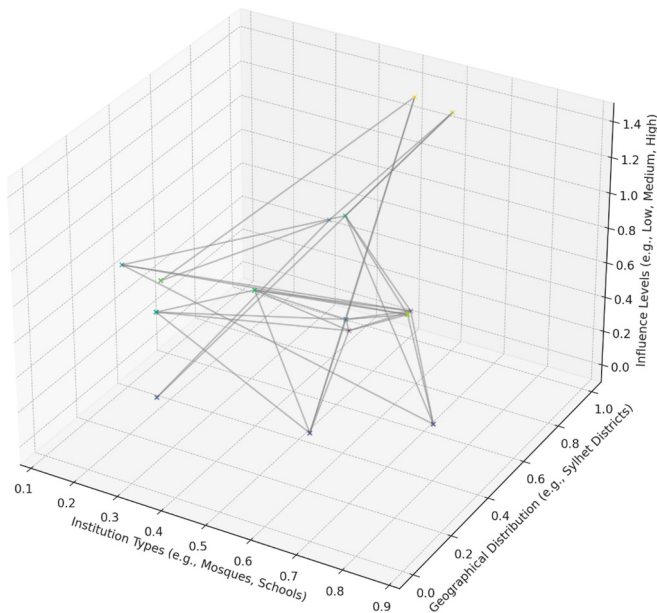


Fig. 12. Religious institutions and UK-residing Sylhetis influence.

approximately from 0 to 1. This complex pattern of influence suggests that UK-funded religious institutions have differential impacts across the region. Qualitative interviews provided additional insights into these institutions. An Imam in Sylhet district observed:

“They [UK-residing Sylhetis] believe that their institution strictly follows the Al-Quran and Hadis, but they do not have accurate knowledge about Holy Books. The teacher teaches students about conservative things and ignores liberal knowledge. That’s why they want their institution free from politics and control religious establishments by themselves.”

The Imam further explained that these institutions follow educational processes such as Nurani (primary education), Hizkhana, Jamat, and Mufti, which often differ from government-regulated religious education. These qualitative insights suggest that UK-funded religious

institutions may promote particular interpretations of Islam that sometimes diverge from local traditions or government-regulated approaches.

Furthermore, the differential impacts of UK-funded religious institutions across different regions (Fig. 12) indicate that local contexts significantly mediate transnational religious influences. Religious conservatism itself is not a homogeneous phenomenon but encompasses various interpretations and practices that are adapted to local circumstances. This heterogeneity of religious responses to transnational influences represents an important counterpoint to assumptions about homogenizing effects of globalization on religious practices.

3.8. Role of UK-residing Sylhetis in promoting religious conservatism

The survey directly examined perceptions about whether UK-residing Sylhetis influence local religious practices toward greater conservatism. As shown in Fig. 13, perception intensities vary across low, medium, and high levels. Low perception levels show a median intensity around 3.0 (ranging from 2.0 to 4.0), medium perception levels show median intensity around 5.0 (ranging from 4.0 to 6.0), and high perception levels show median intensity around 6.5 (ranging from 5.5 to 8.0). This distribution indicates varying strengths of perceived influence across the respondent population. It is important to clarify that these findings refer specifically to increasing religious conservatism—meaning adherence to more orthodox interpretations of religious texts and practices—rather than extremism. The data demonstrate influence toward greater orthodoxy in religious practice but do not suggest the promotion of extremist views.

FGDs provided context for understanding this trend. One university student from Sylhet city observed:

“Some of our peers have adopted more conservative religious views after connecting with relatives in the UK through social media. They’ve become more strict about prayer times and dress codes. It’s a subtle but noticeable change.”

This quote illustrates how transnational influence typically manifests in greater adherence to orthodox religious practices rather than in extremist ideology.

3.9. Advanced statistical analysis of factors influencing religious change

To further understand the dynamics of religious change in Sylhet, additional statistical analyses were conducted. Fig. 14 shows a surface plot indicating intensity variations over 10 years (time index 0–10) across 10 regions (region index 0–10). Intensity varies significantly, peaking near +15 and dipping below –15, showing cyclic fluctuations. This pattern suggests that religious influence is not uniform but fluctuates over time and varies significantly by region.

Table 2 presents the results of PCA identifying the main drivers of changes in the religious landscape. The analysis revealed three primary components that collectively explain 81.5 % of the total variance in religious changes. The first component, labeled “External influence,” accounts for the largest proportion of variance (35.50 %) with an eigenvalue of 2.84. This component is primarily characterized by social media influence (factor loading 0.82) and UK family influence (factor loading 0.78), indicating that transnational connections and digital media play the most significant role in shaping local religious practices. The second component, “Local institutions,” explains 27 % of the variance (eigenvalue 2.16) and is predominantly associated with mosques (factor loading 0.75) and madrasahs (factor loading 0.71). The third component, “Economic factors,” accounts for 19 % of the variance (eigenvalue 1.52) and is primarily characterized by remittances (factor loading 0.68) and local economy (factor loading 0.65). This analysis demonstrates that while local religious institutions remain important, external influences through transnational connections and digital media have become the primary drivers of religious change in Sylhet.

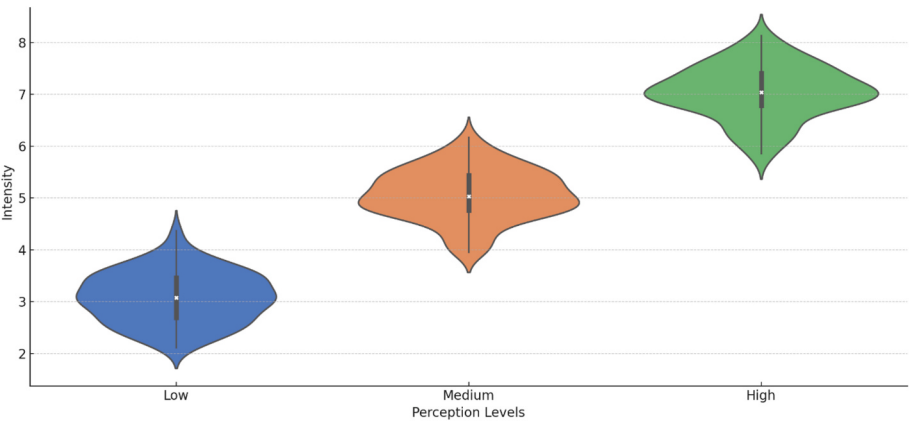


Fig. 13. Role in radicalizing local Sylhetis through intensity of perception levels.

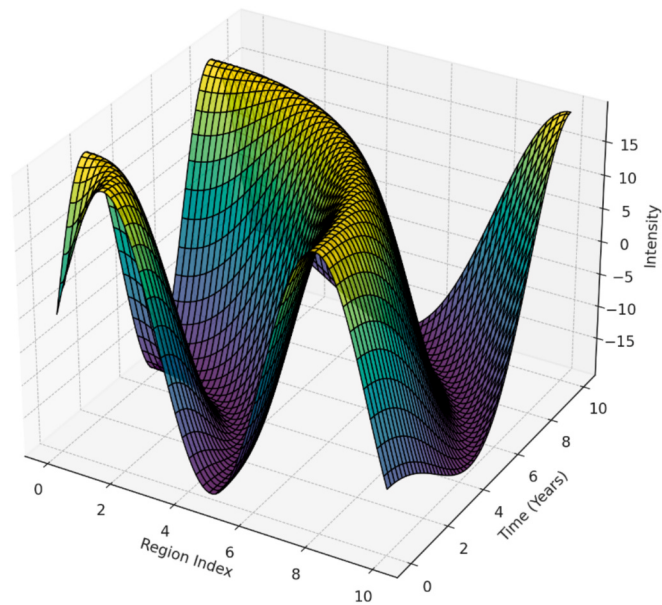


Fig. 14. Extremist activity intensity across regions over time.

Table 2
Principal components of religious landscape changes.

Component	Eigenvalue	Variance explained	Top contributing factors
External influence	2.84	35.50 %	Social media influence (0.82) and UK family influence (0.78)
Local institutions	2.16	27 %	Mosques (0.75) and Madrasahs (0.71)
Economic factors	1.52	19 %	Remittances (0.68) and Local economy (0.65)

Table 3 presents the results of multiple regression analysis examining factors associated with perceptions of increased religiosity in Sylhet. The regression model explains a significant proportion of the variance ($R^2 = 0.37$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.35$, F -statistic: 45.2, $p < 0.001$). UK Family Influence emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$), with a coefficient of 0.32 ($SE = 0.06$), indicating that connections with UK-residing relatives significantly predict perceptions of increased religiosity. Remittance Reception was the second strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.001$), with a coefficient of 0.28 ($SE = 0.07$), demonstrating the important role of economic connections in religious change. Social Media Use was also significantly associated with perceptions of

Table 3
Regression results – Factors influencing perceptions of increased religiosity.

Variable	Coefficient	Standard error	p-value	Standardized β
UK family influence	0.32	0.06	<0.001	0.28
Remittance reception	0.28	0.07	<0.001	0.24
Social media use	0.25	0.05	<0.001	0.22
Age	-0.15	0.04	<0.01	-0.13
Education level	-0.1	0.05	0.05	-0.09
Constant	2.14	0.22	<0.001	–
R^2 : 0.37, Adjusted R^2 : 0.35, F -statistic: 45.2 ($p < 0.001$)				

increased religiosity ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$), with a coefficient of 0.25 ($SE = 0.05$). Age showed a negative association ($\beta = -0.13$, $p < 0.01$), with a coefficient of -0.15 ($SE = 0.04$), suggesting that younger respondents were more likely to perceive religious changes. Education Level showed a marginal negative association ($\beta = -0.09$, $p = 0.05$), with a coefficient of -0.10 ($SE = 0.05$). These findings indicate significant associations between UK family influence, receiving remittances, and social media use with perceptions of increased religiosity. Age was negatively associated with perceiving increased religiosity, suggesting that younger respondents were more likely to perceive religious changes. These statistical findings provide strong evidence for the study’s central finding: transnational connections between UK-residing Sylhetis and local Sylhetis significantly influence religious practices in the Sylhet region, often contributing to more conservative religious interpretations. The analysis demonstrates that this influence operates through multiple channels—family networks, economic remittances, and digital media—creating a complex ecosystem of transnational religious influence.

3.10. Transnational connections and religious change over time

The study also examined perceptions of how religious influence has evolved over time. As shown in Fig. 15 conservatism remained relatively stable around 50–55 % from 2016 to 2020, while secular views gradually decreased from approximately 75 % in 2016 to 60 % in 2020. This pattern suggests a gradual shift in the balance between religious and secular perspectives in Sylhet society, with secular views declining while conservative religious views maintain a stable presence.

Fig. 16 further illustrates how influence varies by age, with a 3D scatter plot showing age demographics ranging approximately from 20 to 60 years and influence levels ranging from 0 to 10. The bubble sizes (indicating the magnitude of influence) range from very small (approximately 10) to large (approximately 100), with larger bubbles concentrated at higher influence levels and younger demographics. This

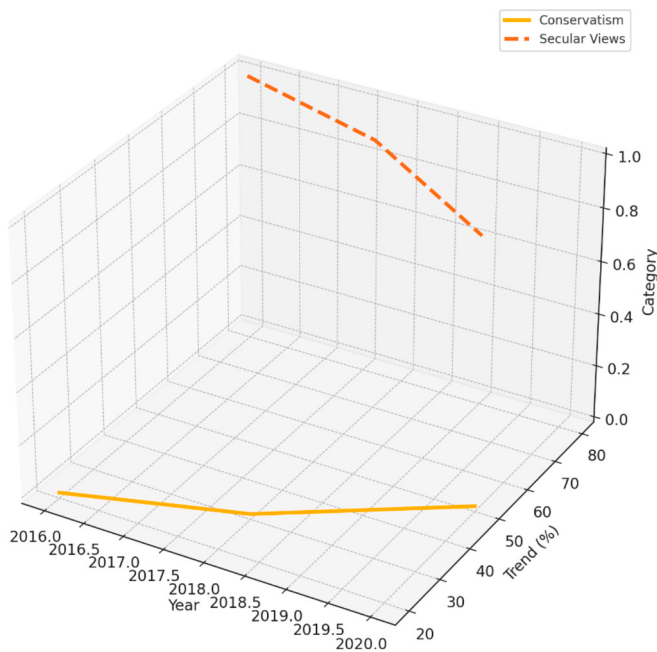


Fig. 15. Conservatism vs. secular views over time.

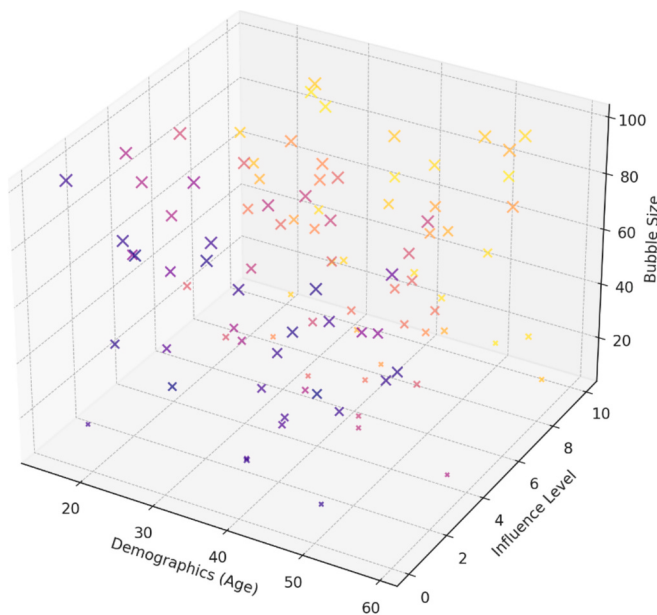


Fig. 16. Social media's influence on religious identity.

visualization supports the finding that younger individuals are more susceptible to transnational religious influence, particularly through digital media. FGDs with community members who have observed these changes over time provided context for understanding this trend. One elder from Sylhet city reflected:

"Twenty years ago, when someone returned from London, they brought Western clothes and ideas. Now, many come back with stronger religious views than they had when they left. The nature of the connection has changed—it's now often about reinforcing religious identity rather than just economic opportunity."

This observation highlights how the nature of transnational connections has evolved over time, with religious identity becoming increasingly central to these relationships in recent years.

These findings collectively demonstrate how transnational connections between UK-residing Sylhetis and their communities of origin influence religious practices in the Sylhet region through multiple pathways: remittances that fund religious institutions, digital communications that transmit religious ideas, and family networks that promote particular religious interpretations. The following discussion section explores the implications of these findings in greater depth.

4. Discussion

The findings reveal complex dynamics between transnational connections, remittances, and religious practices in the Sylhet region. This discussion interprets these findings within the broader theoretical frameworks of transnationalism and social remittances, offering insights that both align with and extend existing literature.

4.1. Remittances and religious conservatism

The substantial proportion of remittances directed toward religious establishments (Fig. 11) confirms that transnational economic connections play a significant role in shaping local religious landscapes. This finding aligns with previous research by Ebaugh and Chafetz (2002) and Kibria (2011) on transnational religious ties, but extends their work by documenting a specific link between remittance-funded religious activities and the promotion of more conservative religious practices in Sylhet. The statistical evidence from the regression analysis (Table 3) provides robust support for this connection, with remittance reception emerging as a significant predictor of increased religiosity. This relationship is further contextualized by the finding that remittance usage for religious purposes has remained stable around 40 % while non-religious usage has declined (Fig. 10), suggesting an increasing proportional emphasis on religious investments over time. This apparent contradiction between remittances and conservatism can be understood through Appadurai, 1996 concept of 'cultural heterogenization,' where global flows produce diverse local responses, including both modernization and retrenchment of traditional or conservative values. In the Sylheti context, exposure to global ideas through transnational connections has paradoxically led to more conservative local practices, rather than simply producing secularization or westernization as might be expected in linear modernization theories.

The finding that UK-residing Sylhetis maintain significant control over the religious institutions they fund supports Gardner (1995) analysis of how remittance-funded structures serve as extensions of transnational family influence. As the Imam quoted in Section 3.7 explained, UK donors often want their institutions "free from politics" and "control religious establishments by themselves," indicating that these institutions become vehicles for promoting particular religious interpretations aligned with donors' perspectives. The present research expands our understanding of remittances beyond their economic dimensions by demonstrating their role not just as economic transfers but also as vehicles for religious influence. While economists have typically focused on remittances' development impacts (Stark & Bloom, 1985), our research shows how they simultaneously function as conduits for cultural and religious change, often in directions that reinforce rather than diminish traditional religious identities.

4.2. Social media and religious influence

The finding that social media is the most significant driver of religious change (Fig. 3) adds a crucial dimension to the existing literature on transnational religious influence. While previous studies have established that diaspora communities influence religious practices in their homelands (Mandaville, 2003; Kibria, 2011), this research highlights the increasingly central role of digital platforms in facilitating these influences. The PCA (Table 2) provides strong evidence for this relationship, with social media having the highest factor loading (0.82)

in the “external influence” component that accounts for the largest proportion of variance (35.5 %) in religious change. This prominence of social media aligns with Bunt (2018) concept of “Hashtag Islam,” which demonstrates how digital environments are transforming religious authority by enabling new voices to participate in religious discourse.

What is particularly notable is how social media has partially displaced traditional religious authorities. While the influence of religious leaders/Imams was reported by only 5.3 % of respondents, social media’s influence was reported by 68.5 %. This finding supports Mandaville (2003) observation that new communication technologies are creating “translocal” religious spaces where authority is increasingly deterritorialized. In the Sylheti context, this means that UK-residing family members can directly influence local religious views through platforms like Facebook and YouTube, bypassing traditional local religious authorities. The visual representation in Fig. 16 further illustrates this trend, showing how social media influence is particularly strong among younger demographics. This aligns with Amit et al. (2020) finding that younger Bangladeshis are particularly active consumers of religious content on social media platforms. The negative association between age and perceptions of increased religiosity (Table 3) further supports this interpretation, suggesting that younger respondents are more receptive to the religious influences circulating through transnational digital networks. The madrasah teacher’s observation that social media has become “a primary source of religious information for many” while lacking “nuance and depth” reflects broader tensions about religious authority in digital spaces, where traditional barriers to participation in religious discourse are lowered but quality control mechanisms may be weakened (Bunt, 2018). These findings advance scholarly knowledge on digital religion by demonstrating how social media facilitates transnational religious influence in specific cultural contexts. While most studies of digital religion have focused on Western contexts or global platforms (Conway, 2016), this research provides valuable insights into how these dynamics unfold in a South Asian context with strong diaspora connections.

4.3. UK family influence and religious authority

The high level of admiration for UK-residing Sylhetis (Fig. 7) provides crucial context for understanding their influence on local religious practices. With 49 % of respondents “somewhat admiring” and 28 % “greatly admiring” their UK-based counterparts, there exists a strong foundation of respect that enables transnational religious influence. The regional and demographic variations in UK family influence (Fig. 8) reveal a complex pattern of receptivity to transnational religious influence. The finding that influence is highest among elders (71 %) and men (68 %) in Sylhet district, while youth (54 %) are most influenced in Sunamganj, suggests that local contexts significantly mediate transnational processes. This supports Vertovec (2009) emphasis on the importance of local reception contexts in shaping transnational dynamics. The regression analysis (Table 3) confirms UK family influence as the strongest predictor of increased religiosity ($\beta = 0.28$), surpassing both remittances and social media. This finding aligns with Samuel (2012) research on Islam and family in Bangladesh and the UK, which demonstrates how religious practices are negotiated within transnational family networks. However, this study extends Samuel’s work by documenting the directionality of influence—from UK to Bangladesh—and quantifying its significance relative to other factors. The multiple channels through which UK-residing Sylhetis exert religious influence (Fig. 9) demonstrate the multifaceted nature of transnational religious influence. Religious talks (39.5 %) and remittances (29.5 %) represent the primary mechanisms, suggesting that both discursive and economic dimensions are important. This supports Levitt (1998) concept of social remittances as operating through multiple channels, including both interpersonal relationships and institutional structures.

The FGD participant’s observation that “We respect our UK relatives, but their religious ideas can sometimes conflict with our local practices”

reveals the negotiated nature of this influence, where admiration co-exists with instances of resistance. This nuanced understanding aligns with recent transnationalism scholarship that emphasizes agency in receiving communities rather than assuming passive acceptance of external influences. This study thus contributes to the literature on transnational religious authority by documenting how family connections create channels for religious influence across national boundaries. While much research on religious authority focuses on formal religious institutions or leaders (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2002), this study highlights the importance of family networks as conduits for religious influence in transnational contexts.

4.4. Indigenous practices versus transnational interpretations

The substantial proportion of respondents (45 %) who reported being unaware of indigenous religious practices (Fig. 4) suggests a potential disconnection from local religious heritage, particularly among younger generations. This finding supports Ahmed and Ali (2019) observation that transnational religious connections can sometimes displace local traditions as communities seek to align with what they perceive as more “authentic” global practices. The varying levels of knowledge and tension regarding indigenous practices (Fig. 5) highlight the ongoing negotiation between local Sufi traditions and more text-focused interpretations of Islam. This tension aligns with broader global patterns documented by scholars like Mandaville (2003), where transnational connections often promote more standardized forms of religious practice.

The qualitative data provide poignant illustrations of this tension, as in the comment from a Moulvibazar elder lamenting that “our rich heritage of Sufi practices is being forgotten as younger generations turn to more orthodox interpretations of Islam, often influenced by ideas from abroad”. This sentiment reflects broader concerns about cultural heritage in the context of globalization, where local traditions may be marginalized as communities engage with global religious currents. The trend showing conservatism remaining stable around 50–55 % from 2016 to 2020, while secular views decreased from approximately 75 % to 60 % (Fig. 15), suggests a shifting balance in the religious landscape. This pattern indicates not a wholesale replacement of local traditions but rather a complex renegotiation of religious identity in response to transnational influences.

It is important to note that these changes represent increased religiosity and conservatism, not extremism or radicalization. The data demonstrate shifts toward more orthodox interpretations of religious texts and practices but do not indicate support for extremist ideologies. This distinction is crucial for accurately interpreting the findings and their implications. This investigation enriches the discourse on religious globalization by providing empirical evidence of religious globalization by documenting specific ways that transnational connections influence local religious landscapes. While scholars like Appadurai (1996) have theorized the complex interactions between local and global cultural forms, this research provides empirical evidence of how these processes unfold in a specific context with strong diaspora connections.

4.5. Implications for understanding transnational religious identity

The findings present several important implications for scholarly understandings of how transnational connections shape religious identity. First, they challenge linear narratives of globalization leading to secularization, instead demonstrating how transnational connections can reinforce and sometimes intensify religious commitments. The paradoxical finding that exposure to global flows has strengthened rather than weakened religious identity in Sylhet supports what Vertovec (2009) describes as the “revitalization” effect of transnationalism on religious practices. Second, the results reveal the multi-directional nature of transnational religious influence. While much research focuses on how migrants adapt their religious practices in destination countries

(Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2002), this study highlights the reverse flow—how diaspora communities influence religious practices in their communities of origin. The patterns of influence intensity across different regions and demographics (Fig. 8) demonstrate how these reverse flows operate across diverse local contexts. Third, the findings highlight how economic, social, and digital factors interact to create multiple pathways of transnational religious influence. The principal component analysis identifying “external influence,” “local institutions,” and “economic factors” as three key components driving religious change demonstrates the multifaceted nature of these processes. This supports theoretical approaches that emphasize the interconnection between different forms of transnational exchange rather than treating them as separate domains. Fourth, the study provides evidence for what might be called “transnational religious conservatism”—where diasporic populations promote more conservative religious interpretations in their communities of origin rather than more liberal ones. The 3D network diagram (Fig. 12) showing varying levels of influence across different institution types and geographical locations illustrates how UK-funded religious institutions can have differential impacts across the region, often promoting more conservative interpretations. This finding nuances assumptions that exposure to Western contexts necessarily leads to more liberal religious attitudes, suggesting instead that religious conservatism may sometimes function as a strategy for maintaining cultural identity in diaspora contexts (Kibria, 2011). These implications extend current theoretical understandings of transnationalism and religion by demonstrating the complex, multi-directional, and sometimes counterintuitive ways that cross-border connections shape religious identity and practice. Rather than producing homogenization or secularization, the transnational connections observed in this study have contributed to religious distinctiveness and in some cases conservatism.

4.6. Policy implications and future research directions

The findings suggest several important implications for policy and practice. First, they highlight the need for approaches to diaspora engagement that recognize the significant religious dimensions of transnational connections. Policies focused solely on economic aspects of migration may overlook the important cultural and religious exchanges that shape communities with strong diaspora ties. Second, the central role of digital platforms in facilitating transnational religious influence suggests the importance of digital literacy initiatives that help users critically evaluate religious content encountered online. The finding that social media is identified as a primary driver of religious change indicates that digital platforms have become essential spaces for religious discourse and influence. Third, the documented tensions between indigenous religious practices and transnational interpretations suggest the value of cultural heritage initiatives that preserve local religious traditions while engaging with global religious currents. The finding of indigenous religious practices indicates potential opportunities for educational initiatives that reconnect communities with their religious heritage.

Several directions for future research emerge from this study. Most critically, longitudinal research could track patterns of transnational religious influence over time, providing deeper insights into how these processes evolve and strengthening causal inferences that are limited in the current cross-sectional design. The intensity fluctuations over time illustrated in Fig. 14 suggest dynamic patterns that merit longer-term investigation through panel studies that follow the same individuals and communities over multiple years. Such longitudinal approaches would help clarify the causal relationships between transnational connections and religious change, which can only be inferred with caution from the current data. Additionally, comparative studies examining these dynamics in other regions with strong diaspora connections would help determine which patterns are specific to the Sylheti context and which represent broader trends in transnational religious influence. The regional variations documented suggest that local contexts significantly

mediate transnational processes. More detailed ethnographic research could explore how individuals and communities navigate and negotiate transnational religious influences in their daily lives. The varied perception intensities suggest nuanced responses to transnational religious influence that warrant closer investigation.

4. Conclusion

This study has documented how transnational connections between UK-residing Sylhetis and their communities of origin shape religious practices in the Sylhet region of Bangladesh. The research has identified three key mechanisms through which transnational religious influence operates: remittances that fund religious institutions, digital communications that transmit religious ideas, and family networks that promote particular religious interpretations. The findings demonstrate that transnational connections significantly influence religious practices in Sylhet, often promoting more conservative interpretations of Islam. Social media emerged as the most significant driver of religious change (68.5 %), highlighting how digital platforms have transformed pathways of religious influence. UK family connections showed the strongest association with increased religiosity ($\beta = 0.28$), underscoring the importance of transnational family networks in shaping religious views. Remittances play a crucial role in this process, with approximately 40 % supporting religious institutions, providing the economic foundation for transnational religious influence. PCA revealed that “external influence” (primarily social media and UK family influence) accounts for the largest proportion of variance (35.5 %) in religious change, followed by “local institutions” (27 %) and “economic factors” (19 %). This statistical evidence, combined with rich qualitative insights, demonstrates how transnational connections create multiple pathways for religious influence across national boundaries.

These findings challenge simplistic narratives about globalization leading to secularization, instead revealing how transnational connections can facilitate religious conservatism through economic, social, and digital channels. The research shows that rather than producing homogenization or westernization, globalization can generate complex patterns of religious change that reflect both global influences and local responses to those influences. By focusing specifically on transnational religious connections, remittances, and social media—rather than broader concepts like radicalization or sustainable development—this study provides a focused analysis of how diaspora communities influence religious practices in their regions of origin. This targeted approach reveals the nuanced dynamics of transnational religious influence, contributing to a more refined understanding of how globalization shapes religious identity and practice in communities with strong diaspora connections. Future research should examine these dynamics longitudinally, explore comparative cases in other regions with significant diaspora connections, and investigate how local communities actively negotiate these transnational religious influences. By continuing to examine these complex relationships between migration, remittances, and religious practice, scholars can develop increasingly nuanced understandings of religious identity formation in our interconnected world.

Consent to participate

The study was performed in accordance with relevant guidelines and regulations including the Declaration of Helsinki for research with human participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Sajid Amit: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition,

Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Funding

No funding was received for this study.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are not publicly available due to privacy or confidentiality restrictions. However, data will be made available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

References

- Ahmed, A.-A., & Ali, M. (2019). In search of sylhet? The fultoli tradition in Britain. *Religions*, 10, 572.
- Ullah, A. K. M. A., Huque, A. S., & Kathy, A. A. (2022). Religion in the age of migration. *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 23(1), 62–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2022.2057476>
- Alexander, C., & Lidher, S. (2024). British Bangladeshis. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.651>.
- Amit, S., & Kafy, A.-A. (2022). A content-based analysis to identify the influence of COVID-19 on sharing economy activities. *Spatial Information Research*, 30(2), 321–333.
- Amit, S., & Kafy, A.-A. (2024). Addressing the dollar crisis by investigating underlying causes, effects, and strategic solutions in emerging economies. *Research in Globalization*, 8, Article 100187. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resglo.2023.100187>
- Amit, S., Levermore, R., & Kafy, A. A. (2024). Reimagining entrepreneurship by utilizing venture dynamics in sharing economy: Evaluating the symbiosis of macro and micro factors for sustainable capital flows in developing markets. *Business Strategy & Development*, 7(3). <https://doi.org/10.1002/bsd2.417>
- Amit, S., Rahman, I., & Mannan, S. (2020). Social media and radicalisation of university students in Bangladesh. *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, 15(3), 228–243. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18335330.2020.1820070>
- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization* (Vol. 1). U of Minnesota Press.
- BBS. (2002). Statistical Pocketbook Bangladesh, 2015. *Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)*.
- BEL. (2014). Report on ?The Role of Media in Countering Radicalization in Bangladesh? by Bangladesh Enterprise Institute. P. 7, 39.
- BIPSS; Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies. (2017). *Local Drivers and Dynamics of Youth Radicalization in Bangladesh*. Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies. Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- Bunt, G. R. (2018). *Hashtag Islam: How cyber-Islamic environments are transforming religious authority*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Conway, M. (2016). Determining the role of the Internet in violent extremism and terrorism. In *Violent Extremism Online* (pp. 123–148). Routledge.
- Ebaugh, H. R. F., & Chafetz, J. S. (2002). *Religion across borders: Transnational immigrant networks*. Rowman Altamira (H. R. F. Ebaugh & J. S. Chafetz, Eds.).
- Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngäs, H. (2014). Qualitative content analysis. *SAGE Open*, 4(1), Article 215824401452263. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014522633>
- Farhad, T. (2022). *Sylhet division earns 10*.
- Fink, N. C. (2010). *Bombs and Ballots: Terrorism, Political Violence, and Governance in Bangladesh*. s.l.: International Peace Institute.
- Gardner, K. (1995). *Global migrants, local lives: Travel and transformation in rural Bangladesh: Travel and transformation in rural Bangladesh*. Clarendon Press.
- Guglielmi, S., Seager, J., Sultan, M., Alam, F., Baird, S., Jones, N., Asaduzzaman, T. M., Ramachandran, D., & Sabarwal, S. (2021). *Adolescent experiences in Chittagong and Sylhet divisions, Bangladesh*. London: Gender and Adolescence.
- Haider, H. (2015). *Radicalisation of diaspora communities?* Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.
- Harrigan, J. (2013). The Rise of Religious Based Radicalism and the De-radicalization Program in Bangladesh. *Deradicalizing Violent Extremists*. Ed. El-Said, H., Harrigan, J. London.
- Hasan, M. (2020). *Islam and Politics in Bangladesh: The Followers of Ummah*. s.l.: Palgrave Macmillan Singapore.
- Hasan, M., & Macdonald, G. (2022). *The Persistent Challenge of Extremism in Bangladesh*. United States Institute of Peace.
- Hossain, A. (2013). The making and unmaking of Assam-Bengal borders and the sylhet referendum. *Modern Asian Studies*, 47(1), 261. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X1200056X>
- Hussain, M. S. (2014). Jalalabad Thana. *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh* (Second Ed.). Asiatic Society of Bangladesh.
- Israel, M., & Hay, I. (2006). Research ethics for social scientists: Between ethical conduct and regulatory compliance. In *Research ethics for social scientists: Between ethical conduct and regulatory compliance*. Sage Publications Ltd.
- Jolliffe, I. T. (2002). *Principal component analysis for special types of data*. Springer.
- Kibria, N. (2011). *Muslims in motion: Islam and national identity in the Bangladeshi diaspora*. Rutgers University Press.
- Krueger, R. A. (2014). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. Sage publications.
- Levitt, P. (1998). Social remittances: migration driven local-level forms of cultural diffusion. *The International Migration Review*, 32(4), 926–948. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2547666>
- Mandaville, P. G. (2003). *Transnational Muslim politics: Reimagining the umma*. Routledge.
- Miah, M. F. (2021). Transnational land and property disputes: The British-Bangladeshi experience. *Contemporary South Asia*, 29(3), 330–342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2021.1886249>
- News, B. B. C. (2019). *Holey Artisan cafe: Bangladesh Islamists sentenced to death for 2016 attack*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-50570243>.
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), Article 160940691773384. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Osborne, J., & Waters, E. (2002). Four assumptions of multiple regression that researchers should always test. *Practical Assessment Research & Evaluation*, 8.
- Potvin, P., Ayotte-Beaudet, J.-P., Hasni, A., Smith, J., Giamellaro, M., Lin, T.-J., & Tsai, C.-C. (2023). Development and validation of a questionnaire to assess situational interest in a science period: A study in three cultural/linguistic contexts. *Research in Science Education*, 53(1), 99–120. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-022-10050-0>
- Samuel, G. (2012). Islam and the family in Bangladesh and the UK: The background to our study. *Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 13(2), 141–158.
- Stark, O., & Bloom, D. E. (1985). The new economics of labor migration. *The American Economic Review*, 75(2), 173–178. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1805591>.
- Sultana, R., Chowdhury, M. A. H., Chowdhury, T. A., Tazminur, S., Ahmed, I., Ahmed, N., Baky, A. A., Shahriar, A., & Kafy, A. A. (2025). Bridging business strategy and educational development: private sector engagement and value creation framework for sustainable E-learning models in emerging markets. *Business Strategy & Development*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/bsd2.70098>
- Ullah, A. A. (2025). Empire, Colonialism, and religious mobility in transnational history. *Religions*, 16(4), 403. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16040403>
- Vertovec, S. (2009). In *Transnationalism*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203927083>.