

# Breaking Barriers: A Study of Women's Motorcycling Culture and Practices in Bangladesh

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the motivations, challenges, and policy implications for female motorcycle riders in Bangladesh. As more women take up motorcycle riding for independence, passion, and economic reasons, understanding their experiences is vital for effective policy-making. The research examines demographics, education, and occupations of female riders, highlighting benefits such as increased flexibility, empowerment, and access to opportunities. It addresses challenges like safety concerns, social stigma, limited maintenance services, and harassment, along with perceptions of safety in traffic-heavy areas and the availability of repair services. The study evaluates awareness and effectiveness of current government policies, recommending targeted measures to enhance the safety and welfare of female riders. Findings indicate that supportive infrastructure and inclusive policies can positively impact society, providing essential insights into the experiences of female motorcycle riders in Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** Women's Motorcycling, Societal Norms, Cultural Practices, Gender Stereotypes, Empowerment, Bangladesh

## INTRODUCTION

For a very long time, motorcycling has been linked to a society dominated by men. But there has been an increasing trend in recent years of women adopting motorbikes as a means of self-expression, leisure, and freedom of movement. Bangladesh presents a distinctive setting for examining women's experiences in motorcycle riding because of its rich cultural legacy and quickly changing social landscape. This study attempts to explore the complex world of women's motorcycling culture and practices in Bangladesh, looking at the obstacles they encounter, the chances they grab, and the ways they are dismantling social norms. Using participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, this study looks into the following important areas:

How cultural beliefs and preconceptions about women and motorcycles affect women's involvement. How women's motorcycle experiences are influenced by their cultural origins

and customs. The particular difficulties women ride motorcycles encounter as well as the opportunities this community offers them.

The ways that riding a motorcycle enhances women's sense of empowerment, community, and identity.

This research aims to contribute to a wider knowledge of women's experiences in this subculture and to support efforts to promote greater participation and gender equality in the motorcycling community by identifying the variables that influence women's involvement in riding motorcycles in Bangladesh.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Is Bangladesh witnessing a surge in female motorcycle users?

In Bangladesh, a quiet revolution is unfolding as more women embrace motorbike riding, challenging traditional gender norms and stereotypes. Personal narratives from women like Sadia Afrin and Alifa Kashem highlight the empowering journey of autonomy and independence through motorbike riding, despite initial skepticism and opposition. Female biking communities, such as the Yamaha Riders Club, provide support and camaraderie, fostering a sense of solidarity among female riders, corporate initiatives, exemplified by ACI Motors, recognize the importance of inclusivity and accessibility, contributing to the ongoing revolution of women's participation in bike riding in Bangladesh. These narratives and initiatives collectively underscore the transformative potential of motorbike riding in reshaping societal perceptions of female mobility in the country (Thompson et al., 2019).

**World Bank Gender Data Portal (2019):** To provide comprehensive data on gender disparities globally, including in transportation.

**UN Women Report on Bangladesh (2020):** To assess the status of gender equality in Bangladesh, including barriers to women's mobility.

Highlight entrenched gender norms and societal expectations as significant barriers to women's independent mobility.

**Khan, S. (2018), Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice:** To analyze gender dynamics in transportation in Bangladesh.

Demonstrates how men dominate public spaces and transportation infrastructure, constraining women's mobility.

**Begum et al. (2020), Journal of Transport Geography:** To explore gendered patterns of transportation in urban Bangladesh.

Highlights disparities in access to transportation resources between men and women.

**Rahman & Hossain (2021), Gender, Place & Culture:** To examine the role of bike riding in promoting women's empowerment.

Emphasizes how bicycles offer women a means of independent mobility, enhancing their access to education, employment, and healthcare services.

**United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG, 2024):** To outline strategies for achieving sustainable development goals, including gender equality in transportation. Provides insights into policy recommendations and best practices for promoting women's participation in bike riding and sustainable transportation.

**BRAC Report (2022):** To evaluate the impact of BRAC's initiatives on promoting women's participation in bike riding.

Highlights the effectiveness of subsidized bicycles and safety training programs in increasing women's mobility.

**Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh:** To document government efforts in promoting gender-inclusive transportation policies.

Provides insights into policy initiatives aimed at enhancing women's access to transportation resources

**Rahman & Akter (2022), Asian Development Bank:** To identify challenges and opportunities for promoting women's participation in bike riding.

Highlights safety concerns, inadequate infrastructure, and cultural barriers as major challenges.

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to understand the experiences, challenges, and perceptions of female motorcycle riders in Bangladesh. The research design includes semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, pre-testing, and questionnaire surveys.

### Target Population and Sample Size

The target population comprises female motorcycle riders in Bangladesh, representing diverse backgrounds, regions, and socio-economic statuses. The sample sizes for each method are as follows:

**Semi-Structured Interviews:** 20-30 participants, ensuring in-depth exploration of individual experiences.

**Focus Group Discussions:** 2-3 groups, each with 6-8 participants, to facilitate diverse viewpoints and collective dialogue.

**Questionnaire Survey:** [70-80] respondents, providing broad representation for robust statistical analysis.

Semi-structured interviews provide in-depth insights into personal experiences with flexible, open-ended questions allowing for adaptation and exploration of new topics. Focus group discussions facilitate collective dialogue among female riders, focusing on community support, public perception, and safety concerns, moderated by trained facilitators.

Pre-testing ensures clarity and relevance of the interview and questionnaire tools, refining them based on feedback from a small subset of participants. The questionnaire survey collects quantitative data on demographics, riding habits, challenges, and perceptions from a larger sample, distributed online and in person for broad representation.

Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups is transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Quantitative data is analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with tools like SPSS.

Ethical considerations include informed consent, confidentiality. This mixed-methods approach combines qualitative depth with quantitative breadth, offering a comprehensive

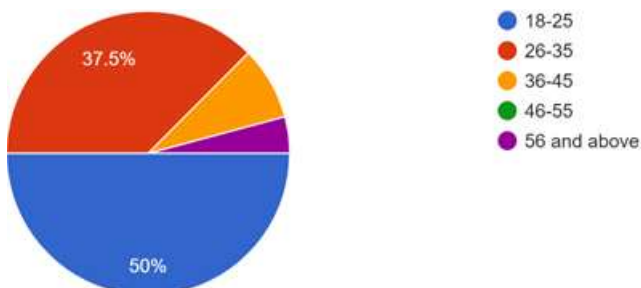
view of the experiences of female motorcycle riders in Bangladesh and identifying broader trends and individual stories.

## DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS

This section presents the analysis of data collected from a questionnaire survey conducted among lady bikers in Bangladesh. The survey aimed to understand their motivations, challenges, and views on existing policies. A total of 70-80 respondents participated in the survey, providing insights into their experiences and perspectives.

### DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

#### Age



The pie chart presents the age distribution of a particular population. Here's a breakdown:

**18-25:** This age group constitutes 50% of the population, making it the largest segment.

**26-35:** The second-largest segment, comprising 37.5% of the population.

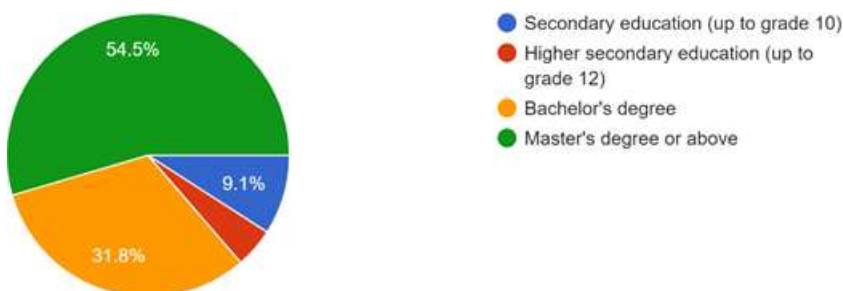
**36-45:** A smaller percentage, accounting for 18.25% of the population.

**46-55:** This group represents 10% of the population.

**56 and above:** The smallest group, comprising 5% of the population.

It does show that half of the respondents (50%) identified as being between 26 and 35 years old. There were also a significant number of respondents in the 18-25 year old age group (37.5%).

#### Education



The pie chart illustrates the educational levels of a particular population. Here's a breakdown:

**Secondary education (up to grade 10):** This is the most common level of education, comprising 54.5% of the population.

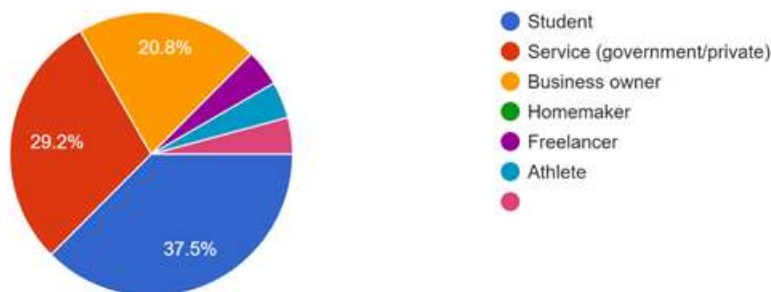
**Higher secondary education (up to grade 12):** A smaller proportion, accounting for 9.1% of the population.

**Bachelor's degree:** Approximately 31.8% of the population have completed a bachelor's degree.

**Master's degree or above:** Only 3.1% of the population have attained a master's degree or higher.

Overall, Most respondents (54.5%) have a secondary education (up to grade 10) while 31.8% have a higher secondary education (up to grade 12). Only 9.1% or fewer have a bachelor's degree or higher.

### Occupation



The pie chart presents the distribution of occupations within a particular population. Here's a breakdown:

**Service (government/private):** This is the most common occupation, comprising 37.5% of the population.

**Freelancer:** The second-most common occupation, accounting for 29.2% of the population.

**Student:** A significant portion, representing 20.8% of the population.

**Business owner:** A smaller percentage, accounting for 10.2% of the population.

**Homemaker:** A relatively small group, comprising 2.3% of the population.

**Athlete:** The smallest group, representing 0.3% of the population.

Overall, the pie chart shows the distribution of occupations among the respondents. The largest portion (37.5%) identified as homemakers. 29.2% of respondents are students. Following that are service workers (government/private) at 20.8%. The remaining categories, business owner, freelancer, and athlete, each account for less than 12.5% of respondents.

### Monthly Income (Bangladeshi Taka)

The chart illustrates the distribution of monthly income within a particular population, measured in Bangladeshi Taka (BDT). Here's a breakdown:

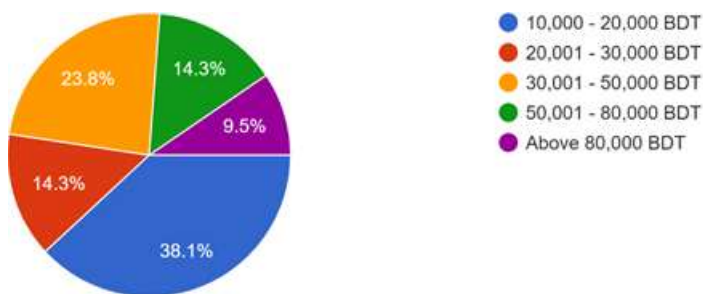
**10,000-20,000 BDT:** This is the most common income range, comprising 38.1% of the population.

**20,001-30,000 BDT:** The second-most common income range, accounting for 14.3% of the population.

**30,001-50,000 BDT:** Another significant portion, representing 23.8% of the population.

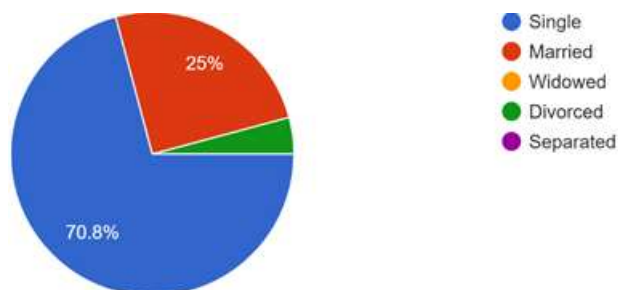
**50,001-80,000 BDT:** A smaller percentage, accounting for 14.3% of the population.

**Above 80,000 BDT:** The smallest group, comprising 9.5% of the population.



The largest portion of respondents (38.1%) said their monthly income falls between 30,001 and 50,000 Bangladeshi taka (BDT). Following that is the 20,001 to 30,000 BDT range (23.8%). Less than 15% of respondents reported income in either the 10,000 to 20,000 BDT or 50,001 to 80,000 BDT range. Only one respondent (4.8%) reported income exceeding 80,000 BDT.

#### Marital Status



The pie chart shows the marital status distribution of a population.

**Single:** 70.8% of the population is single.

**Married:** 25% of the population is married.

**Widowed, Divorced, and Separated:** These categories account for less than 5% of the population combined.

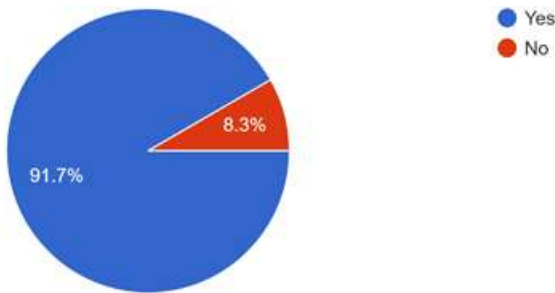
The slices are labeled: single, married, widowed, divorced, and separated. The largest slice, labeled "married," is 70.8%. The second largest slice, labeled "single," is 25%. The remaining slices, labeled "widowed," "divorced," and "separated," are too small to read their exact percentages.

#### Do you currently own or have access to a motorcycle?

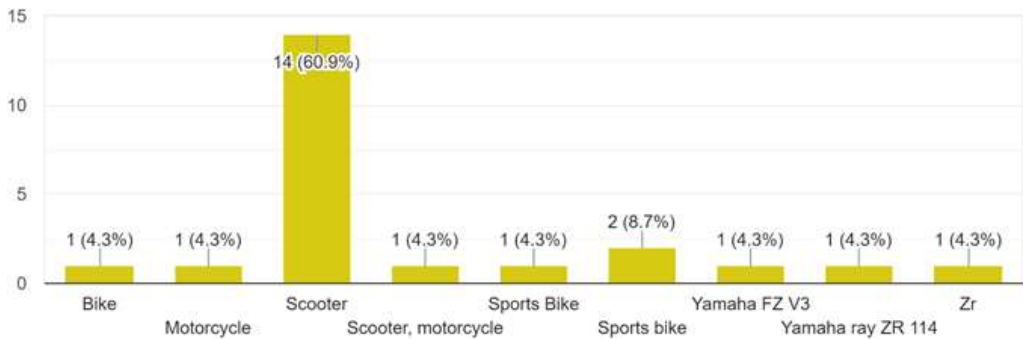
**Yes:** 91.7% of respondents answered "Yes."

**No:** 8.3% of respondents answered "No."

This indicates that the overwhelming majority of respondents agreed with the statement or option presented in the question. The survey results show that 91.7% of the respondents answered yes, while answered no 8.3%

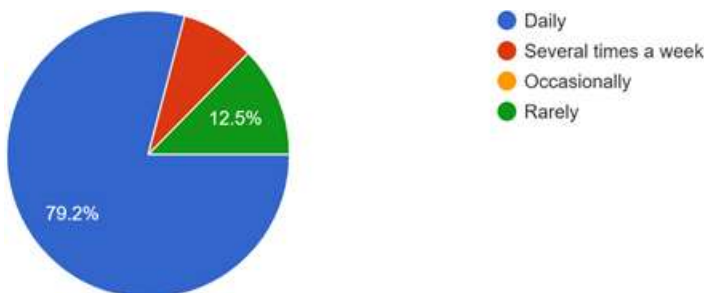


**If yes, what type of motorcycle do you own/access? (e.g., scooter, motorcycle, sports bike, etc.)**



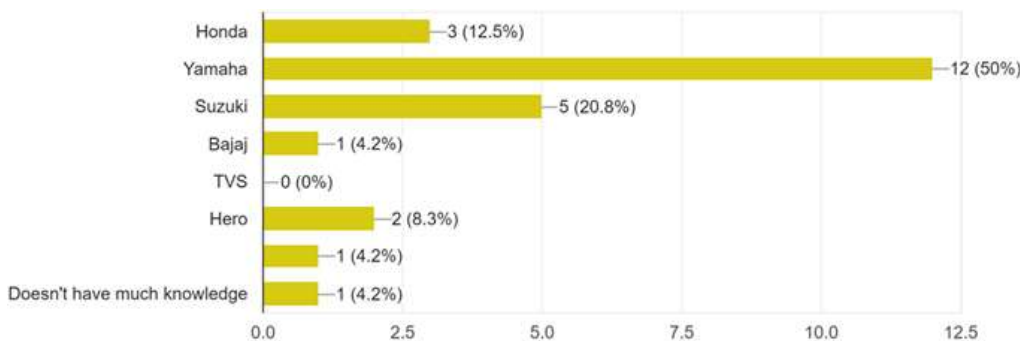
The question asks: "If yes, what type of motorcycle do you own/access? (e.g., scooter, motorcycle, sports bike, etc.)" Scooter is the most popular choice with (60.9%). Motorcycle is the second most popular choice with (17.4%). Sports bike is the least popular choice with (4.3%). There are also four categories that have each (4.3%): Yamaha FZ, Other, Zr, and Scooter, Motorcycle

**How often do you use a motorcycle for transportation purposes?**



The image is a pie chart that shows the results of a survey question: "How often do you use a motorcycle for transportation purposes?" The survey results show the percentage of people who use a motorcycle for transportation purposes in Bangladesh. Here's a breakdown of the results: Daily: 79.2% Several times a week: 8.3%, occasionally: 12.5% rarely: 0%

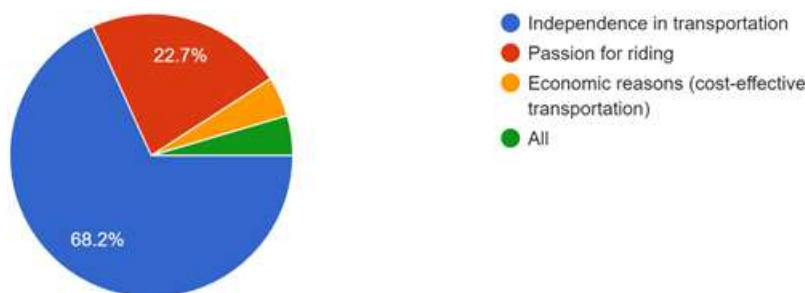
### Which motorcycle brand do you prefer or currently own? (Select all that apply)



The question asks: "Which motorcycle brand do you prefer or currently own? (Select all that apply)" Yamaha is the most popular choice with (50%). Honda is the second most popular choice with (12.5%). Suzuki is the third most popular choice with (20.8%). Other brands mentioned include Bajaj, Hero, TVS, and others.

### ANALYSIS OF MOTIVATIONS

#### What motivated you to become a motorcycle rider?



The pie chart shows the reasons why people choose to ride a motorcycle.

**Independence in transportation:** This is the most popular reason, with 68.2% of respondents citing it.

**Passion for riding:** 22.7% of respondents enjoy the thrill and freedom of riding a motorcycle.

**Economic reasons (cost-effective transportation):** 7.1% of respondents choose motorcycles as a more affordable transportation option.

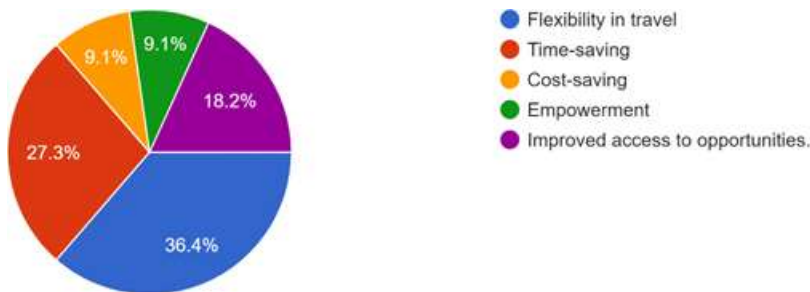
**All:** 2% of respondents selected "All" as their reason, suggesting that they consider all three factors to be important.

People in Bangladesh become motorcycle riders. Independence in transportation: 22.7% Passion for riding: 68.2% Economic reasons (cost-effective transportation): 8.3% All of the above: 0.8%.

#### What benefits do you perceive from being a lady biker in Bangladesh?

The pie chart titled "Perceived benefits of being a lady biker in Bangladesh". It shows the results of a survey question that asks Here is a breakdown of the benefits: Flexibility in travel: 9.1% Time-saving: 9.1% Cost-saving: 18.2% Empowerment: 27.3% Improved access to opportunities: 36.4%.



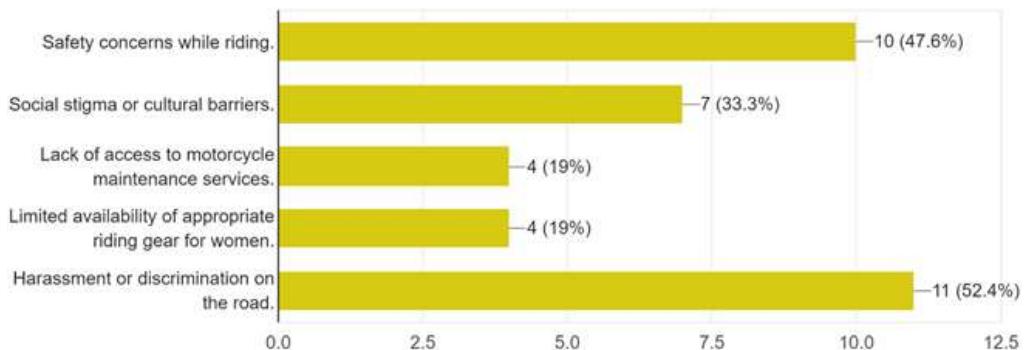


**Have you experienced any positive changes in your life as a result of being a lady biker? If yes, please describe.**

The responses from lady bikers in Bangladesh reveal a range of positive experiences resulting from their passion for riding. Many express a sense of empowerment and freedom, challenging societal stereotypes about women's abilities. They appreciate the efficiency of travel and the independence it brings, allowing them to navigate both urban and rural areas with ease. Some highlight the emotional support provided by their bikes during difficult times, while others note increased respect and confidence gained through their journey as lady bikers. Despite facing occasional negative comments and challenges, such as safety concerns and societal judgment, they find fulfillment in pursuing their passion and enhancing their concentration levels through riding. Overall, these responses underscore the transformative impact of embracing a traditionally male-dominated activity, contributing to greater gender equality and empowerment in Bangladeshi society.

### ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES

**What are the primary challenges you encounter as a female motorcycle rider in Bangladesh? (Select all that apply)**



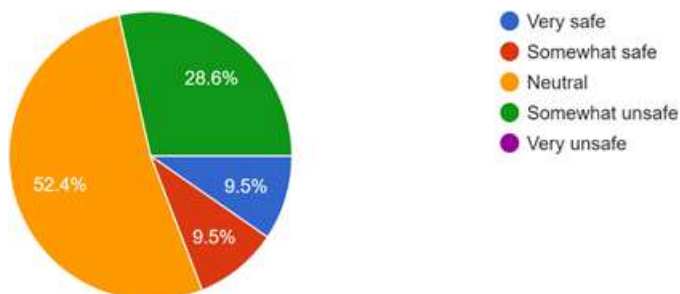
The image is a bar chart that shows the primary challenges faced by female motorcycle riders in Bangladesh. Safety concerns while riding: 47.6% Harassment or discrimination: 52.4% Social stigma or cultural barriers: 33.3% Lack of access to motorcycles: 19% Limited availability of a helmet: 19%

**Have you ever faced any specific safety concerns or incidents while riding a motorcycle in Bangladesh? If yes, please describe.**

The responses from participants regarding safety concerns while riding motorcycles in Bangladesh reveal a mix of experiences. Several respondents indicated that they have not

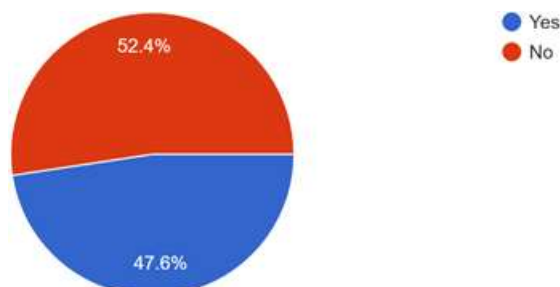
faced specific incidents, but acknowledge the general difficulties and hazards of riding in the country. Challenges mentioned include navigating new road rules and general safety concerns. Specific incidents reported include accidents due to road conditions, such as encountering unexpected holes at night, resulting in injuries. Additionally, issues of discomfort and perceived safety risks were highlighted, particularly when male riders are present. These responses underscore the varied nature of safety experiences among female motorcyclists in Bangladesh, reflecting both individual incidents and broader systemic challenges.

### How do you perceive the safety of female motorcycle riders in traffic-heavy areas of Bangladesh?



The pie chart that shows how safe people perceive female motorcycle riders to be in traffic-heavy areas of Bangladesh. Very safe: 0%, somewhat safe: 9.5% Neutral: 28.6%, somewhat unsafe: 52.4% Very unsafe: 9.5%

### Have you ever experienced any limitations in accessing motorcycle repair shops or mechanics who are willing to assist female riders?



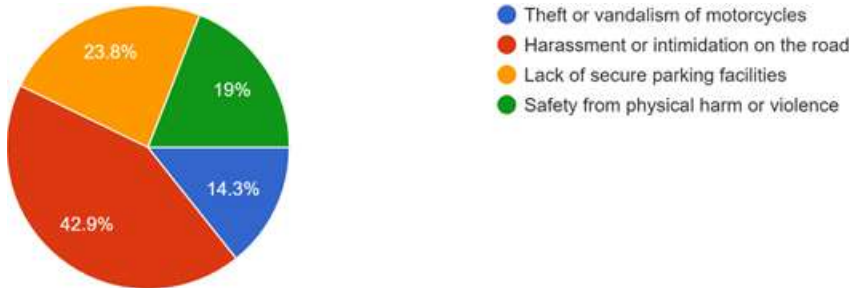
The pie chart that shows the percentage of people who have experienced any limitations in accessing motorcycle repair shops or mechanics who are willing to assist female riders. The pie chart is divided into two parts: Red: Represents the percentage of people who have experienced limitations (52.4%). Blue: Represents the percentage of people who have not experienced limitations (47.6)

### How do you cope with or overcome the challenges you face as a lady biker in Bangladesh?

The responses from lady bikers in Bangladesh highlight a range of strategies for coping with societal challenges. Many emphasize the importance of confidence and courage, with some explicitly stating that they rely on their bravery and intelligence to navigate societal perceptions. The ability to ignore negative attitudes is another common approach. Some responses note that dealing with these challenges depends on the specific situation. Experience plays a significant

role, as seasoned riders feel more adept at handling societal views over time. Overall, the coping mechanisms reflect a combination of personal resilience, situational adaptability, and a focus on inner strength to counter societal biases against female bikers

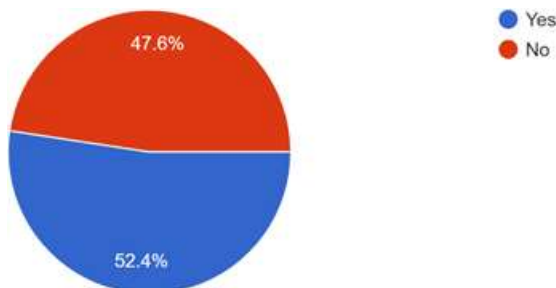
**In your experience as a female biker in Bangladesh, which security concern do you find most pressing?**



The pie chart that shows the most pressing security concern for female bikers in Bangladesh, according to the survey respondents. Theft or vandalism of motorcycles: 23.8% Harassment or intimidation on the road: 42.9% Lack of secure parking facilities: 19% Safety from physical harm or violence: 14.3%

## ANALYSIS OF POLICIES

**Are you aware of any government policies or regulations specifically addressing the needs or concerns of female motorcycle riders in Bangladesh?**

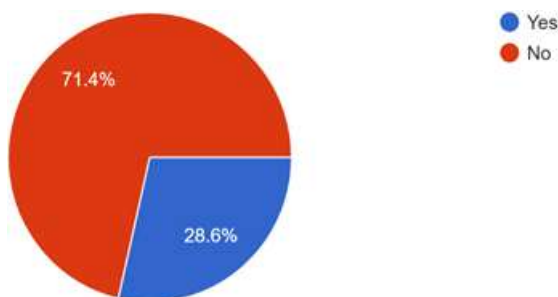


The pie chart titled "Awareness of government policies on female motorcycle riders". Here is a breakdown of the responses: Yes: 47.6% No: 52.4%

**If yes, please specify any policies or initiatives you are aware of: In your opinion, what areas should government policies focus on to better support and empower female motorcycle riders in Bangladesh?**

The responses indicate a strong emphasis on safety as the primary concern for female motorcycle riders in Bangladesh. Many respondents believe the government is making positive strides in empowering women, yet they feel there is still a need for improved safety measures. Specifically, the focus should be on ensuring road safety and protecting female riders from harassment and discrimination. Some suggest that police presence and attention should be heightened at key points in Dhaka, such as Mohakhali and Abdullahpur, to enhance security. Overall, the consensus is that policies should prioritize the safety and protection of female bikers to foster a more supportive environment.

**Have you ever faced any difficulties or challenges related to existing traffic laws or regulations while riding a motorcycle as a female in Bangladesh?**

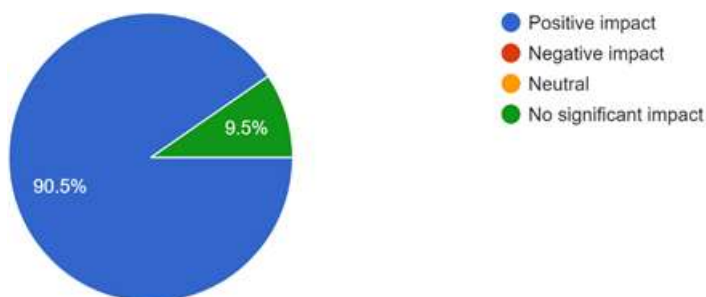


The pie chart that shows the results of a survey question about the difficulties faced by women while riding a motorcycle in Bangladesh. Yes: 71.4% No: 28.6%

**Do you believe there should be specific policy measures aimed at improving the safety and welfare of female motorcycle riders in Bangladesh? If yes, what measures would you suggest?**

The responses indicate a diverse range of opinions on whether specific policy measures are needed to improve the safety and welfare of female motorcycle riders in Bangladesh. A notable perspective is that no special policies are required, as men and women should be treated equally. However, the majority believe that specific measures are necessary. Suggested actions include implementing policies to prevent the harassment of female riders during paperwork checks and ensuring that proper documentation is maintained. Additionally, there is a call for increased CCTV surveillance in local areas to monitor incidents and enhance safety. While some respondents support the idea of specific policies without detailing them, the overall sentiment underscores the need for targeted interventions to support female motorcycle riders.

**Overall, in your opinion, how do you think the increasing involvement of women in bike riding will influence society in Bangladesh?**



The chart that shows the influence that people believe increasing female involvement in bike riding will have on Bangladeshi society. Here's a breakdown of the responses: Positive impact: 90.5% Negative impact: 9.5% Neutral: 0% No significant impact: 0.

## SUGGESTIONS FROM THE RESPONDENTS

Female bikers in Bangladesh should be respected for their skills and contributions, not just for their social media presence. There are calls for improving infrastructure to facilitate easier and

safer road navigation for female bikers. It is emphasized that all bikers should maintain updated vehicle documents and prioritize safety measures like wearing helmets. Social attitudes towards female bikers need to evolve, promoting a positive and supportive environment. Additionally, female bikers can significantly benefit ride-sharing services by offering comfort to female passengers and contributing to time and cost savings. Overall, female bikers should be viewed with pride and equality as integral members of the biking community.

## DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The survey of lady bikers in Bangladesh reveals a dynamic interplay of motivations, challenges, and views on existing policies. Most respondents are young (18-35 years) and well-educated, with secondary or higher education. Many are homemakers or students with moderate incomes. A significant 91.7% own or have access to motorcycles, predominantly scooters, and use them daily, highlighting a strong passion for riding driven by independence and cost-effectiveness. However, they face notable challenges, including harassment, safety concerns, and social stigma. Despite these hurdles, they report positive changes like empowerment and improved access to opportunities. Awareness of government policies is limited, and there is a call for targeted safety measures and anti-harassment policies. The consensus is that increasing female involvement in biking positively influences society by promoting gender equality and empowerment. The findings underscore the need for improved safety infrastructure and societal support to foster a more inclusive environment for female bikers in Bangladesh.

### Motivation

Lady bikers in Bangladesh are primarily motivated by a passion for riding and the independence it offers. Many find motorcycling to be a cost-effective mode of transportation, enhancing their flexibility and time management. The ability to travel freely and efficiently empowers them, providing a sense of liberation and increased access to opportunities.

### Challenges

Female motorcyclists face significant challenges, including harassment, safety concerns, and social stigma. Navigating through traffic-heavy areas poses safety risks, and there is a frequent lack of secure parking and accessible repair services. These challenges require them to rely on personal resilience and coping strategies to maintain their confidence and continue riding.

### Policies

Awareness of specific government policies addressing female motorcyclists' needs is limited. Many riders believe more focused measures are necessary, such as improved road safety, enhanced police presence in key areas, and stricter enforcement against harassment. While some advocate for equal treatment without special policies, the majority support targeted interventions to ensure a safer and more supportive environment for female riders.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the experiences, motivations, and challenges of female motorcycle riders in Bangladesh, revealing a complex interplay of empowerment and adversity. Female riders are primarily driven by a passion for riding and the independence it provides. They benefit from increased flexibility and access to opportunities, yet face significant challenges

such as harassment, safety concerns, and social stigma. Awareness of government policies addressing their needs is limited, with many riders calling for targeted measures to enhance their safety and welfare. Overall, the increasing involvement of women in motorcycle riding positively impacts society by promoting gender equality and empowerment, underscoring the need for supportive infrastructure and inclusive policies to foster a more inclusive environment for female bikers in Bangladesh.

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