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Youth Perception on Emergency Hotline Service 999 in Bangladesh: A study on the Students of University of Dhaka

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Abstract

Bangladesh's National Emergency Helpline Number 999, a toll-free number, has been functioning since December 12, 2017. It enables anyone in need to call the police, fire department, or ambulance service for help. Coming in 2024, it is critical to understand how our youth perceive 999. This survey aims to examine young people's perceptions of the national emergency hotline service. This study was conducted utilizing a quantitative research method. This study utilized a cross-sectional research approach as well as convenience sampling. This study's primary data was collected through a web survey. People's confidence in this service is continuously increasing. This study revealed a variety of barriers to the 999 service, including prank calls, a lack of competent staff in service delivery, non-cooperation from officials, a manpower shortage, and slow response times, among others. This study also provided significant recommendations for making this service more accessible and beneficial to the general population.

Keywords: 999, youth, perception, trust, awareness, service delivery, national helpline, emergency hotline, emergency services, police assistance

Introduction

An emergency can occur at any time. At this time, law enforcement agencies and doctors may not be able to assist the victims. That's why AT&T, which has been servicing Americans since 1968, devised the Universal Emergency Number "911". Because of its value, the Universal Emergency Number has gained recognition all around the world. It has gained huge popularity (Stone, 2014). Prior to 2017, such a concept was unknown in our country. In December 2017, the ICT division launched a pilot project for the introduction of an emergency number in our country. The government has established an emergency number "999" in collaboration with the Bangladesh Police, the Bangladesh Fire Service, the Civil Defense Headquarters, and the Department of Health (Redoy, 2017). It promises to be there for us in times of need. The number 999 is a toll-free hotline that enables anyone in hardship to contact and request assistance from law enforcement, fire service, or emergency medical service providers in the event of crimes, accidents, or other emergencies (Islam, 2022). Ever since its inception on December 12, 2017, the helpline has garnered widespread acclaim for its invaluable assistance in critical situations such as accidents, child marriage, fire incidents, trafficking, and violence. In addition, this service receives requests for assistance in locating misplaced belongings and providing aid to wildlife in need. Up until February of this year, a total of 27,409 child marriages have been successfully prevented (Khan, 2024). The best aspect of this service is that it is free of charge.

So, if a person believes he is in danger or that he or someone he knows, requires immediate medical assistance, he can dial this number even if his phone is out of credit. Depending on his preferences, the skilled professionals of 999 will direct him to either the police or an ambulance (Khan, 2019). This study aims to know the perception of youth toward the National Emergency Hotline Service, and to what extent it can provide services to people.

Research Question

Main Question

- ❖ What is the perception of youth on the Bangladesh Emergency Hotline 999?

Sub questions

- Are youth aware of Emergency Hotline 999?
- Is the National Emergency Service Center helping to reduce crime, save lives, and prevent violence against women?
- Are the youth of our country satisfied with the services provided by the National Emergency Service Center?
- Is the National Emergency Service Center able to provide Services as promised? If not, what are the difficulties it is confronted with?
- What initiatives should be taken to ensure the National Emergency Service Center's smooth operation?

Purpose of the Study

The main purposes of this study are-

- ❖ To provide a clear picture of the success of Bangladesh Emergency Hotline 999.
- ❖ To investigate youth's attitudes toward this hotline service.
- ❖ To determine whether or not people receive immediate assistance from the Bangladesh Emergency Hotline operators.
- ❖ To use the findings of this study to investigate the behavior of 999 operators.

The findings of this study will serve as a guide for policymakers and the government in overcoming the obstacles of the 999 service. We hope this work will pave the road for other researchers to conduct additional research in this area. We are conducting this study only on the youth, future studies on the National emergency Hotline can include people of all ages.

Scope of the Study

The study has been conducted on Dhaka University students between the ages of 19 and 27. According to the National Youth Policy-2017 of Bangladesh, youth refer to the persons between ages 18-35 years. Our research has included both male and female participants. Though the National Emergency Service includes every one of our country's citizens, this study has been conducted only on university students because they are the youth of our country and it is very essential to have their opinion on this. By conducting studies on them, their awareness and perception have been investigated. If our youth are aware of this, they may play an active role in informing the general population of our country about it.

Literature Review

Bangladesh police are responsible for maintaining peace and order, protecting people's lives and property, and detecting and preventing crime. It is our country's primary law enforcement agency. According to a study conducted by Islam., et al., (2020), Bangladesh police have a high level of inefficiency. It is regarded as one of Bangladesh's most corrupted government departments. As a result, the public's perception of Bangladesh police efficiency is low. As a result, the authors have advised policymakers to adopt democratic policing, which, if properly implemented, will result in good policing.

Hossain and Rahman (2017) investigated the elements that account for variances in citizens' faith in the police in Bangladesh. Several elements have been discovered that can influence the level of trust that citizens have in the police force in Bangladesh. There are several positive aspects of the police force. Firstly, they are more responsive compared to the past. Secondly,

they are able to attend crime scenes promptly. Thirdly, they have become more transparent in their actions. Fourthly, they are more visible in terms of patrols and traffic control. Lastly, their demeanor has become increasingly courteous and polite. However, there are a few negative features, such as police engaging in bribery, neglecting individuals without political connections, and abusing their authority.

The primary conclusions of Paul's (2023) research indicate that, although there were a few isolated instances where certain participants expressed dissatisfaction with the delivery of services and the authorities involved, the majority of respondents consider the 999 emergency services to be credible. Furthermore, this has somewhat altered the perception of police officials and citizens' attitudes towards them, as most individuals now believe they can rely on police officers to provide immediate assistance. The study identified several significant challenges in emergency service provision, including the lack of automated location identification equipment, insufficient manpower in police stations and call centers, inadequate logistic support, unprofessional behavior from police officers and call operators, illegal charging of extra fare by ambulance drivers, poor transportation in rural areas and traffic congestion in cities, prank calls, confusion among the public regarding emergency and non-emergency calls, insufficient media broadcasting or campaigns, and a lack of training for operators in providing emotional support to distressed callers.

There has not been any research conducted exclusively on the perception of young people on Bangladesh Emergency Hotline 999 till now. It is also worth considering whether people who call this number (999) receive immediate assistance. As not so much research conducted on this service, so we felt interested to work on it to look into people's perceptions of Bangladesh's Emergency Hotline 999, whether or not they receive immediate assistance, what are the challenges the National Emergency Service Center (NESC) are facing?

Methodology

Research Design and Approach: **Cross-sectional research design** has been used because it allows us to collect data from a large number of people at once. It is simple to carry out. **Quantitative research approach** has been followed because a large amount of data can be gathered and analyzed statistically through it. Apart from this, quantitative research approach has more creditability to the administrators, politicians, government and donors.

Sample Design: We've used **convenience sampling** to collect data to investigate public perception on Bangladesh Emergency Hotline 999 service. The most popular method of non-probability sampling is convenience sampling, which emphasizes on gathering information from individuals (the sample) who are 'convenient' for the researcher to reach. We've selected the students of Dhaka University as our population since it is convenient for us to collect data from them.

Sources of Data: The data of this study have been extracted from **primary sources**. Web-survey has been used to collect primary data.

Data Collection Method

Web Survey: To collect quantitative data, a web survey has been conducted in which a questionnaire has been sent via the internet to the students of Dhaka University and they have responded to this survey over the World Wide Web.

Data Collection Instrument

Questionnaire: For the web survey, a close-ended questionnaire has been used. To create the questionnaire, a 5-point Likert scale has been used, which is one of the most efficient ways to assess opinions, perceptions, and behaviors. Low values indicate negative attitudes, while high values indicate positive attitudes on a Likert scale. That is, negative attitudes are assigned lower values such as 1, 2, and so on, while positive attitudes are assigned higher values such as 5, 4, and so on. For instance, the lowest point (1) is strongly disagreed, and the highest (5) is strongly agree. We can gain extensive insights into the public perspective on Bangladesh

emergency Hotline 999 because Likert-scale questions are not binary (yes/no, true/false, etc.) At first a draft questionnaire was created, then a pilot study was conducted on 30 students. The pilot study was conducted to do a reliability test and to determine the internal accuracy of the questionnaire's questions.

Table: Data Collection Method, Sample Size and Data Collection Instrument

Data Collection Method	Sample Size	Data Collection Instrument
Web survey	259	Structured questionnaire

Data Analysis:

After the data gathered from the web survey, they were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 20. Pie charts, bar graphs, and tables have been used to present data.

Findings

This study included 259 participants, with 60.6 percent of them being men and the rest being women. Around 49 percent of respondents were between the ages of 22 and 24, 31 percent were between the ages of 19 and 21, and the rest were aged 25 and up. 32.8% of respondents are in Honors 1st and 2nd year, 34.7% in Honors 3rd and 4th year, 16.6% in masters, and the remaining are postgraduates. The majority of participants (54.4 percent) are from the Faculty of Social Sciences, 24.7% from the Faculty of Business Studies, 11.2% from the Faculty of Arts, and the rest from other faculties such as the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Science, the Faculty of Education, and so on. (Table 1)

Table 1: Demographic Data

	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
19-21	78	31.0
22-24	127	49.0
25+	54	20.0
Gender		
Male	157	60.6
Female	102	39.4
Educational Level		
Honors 1 st year	63	24.3
Honors 2 nd year	22	8.5
Honors 3 rd year	47	18.1
Honors 4 th year	43	16.6
Masters	43	16.6
Post Graduated	41	15.8
Faculty		
Faculty of Social Sciences	141	54.4
Faculty of Business Studies	64	24.7
Faculty of Arts	29	11.2
Others	25	9.6

In an emergency, people can ask for assistance by dialing 999 from police, fire, and ambulance services. 95.10 percent of female participants are knowledgeable of the national emergency hotline service, while 4.90 percent are uninformed of it. In contrast, 97.50 percent of male respondents are informed of the 999 service, whereas 2.50 percent don't have any idea about it. Social media has informed approximately 79 male and 41 female respondents about the national helpline service. And 41 male and 32 female participants had heard about it from television. The remaining respondents learned about it through various sources such as billboards, newspapers, social media, and so on. As a result, it is clear that social media is now playing a significant role in raising public awareness of a variety of issues. The national emergency hotline service is known to 98.6 percent of students in the Faculty of Social Sciences and 93.8

percent of students in the Faculty of Business Studies. Students in the faculties of science, engineering, and technology are less knowledgeable about this. Perhaps the reason is that this issue did not arise throughout their study. (Figure 1)

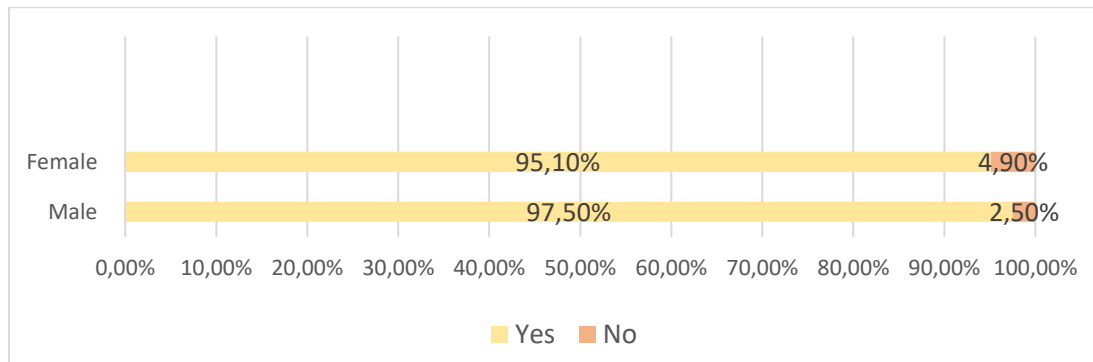


Figure 1: Knowing about the emergency hotline service.

Among 259 participants, 20.85% male respondents have contacted 999 for police, fire, and ambulance assistance, whereas 39.77% male respondents have never dialed this number. Again, 4.25% of female respondents dialed this number, while 35.14% of female participants did not. So, while the majority of respondents are aware of the national emergency hotline service, why most of them didn't dial it? Is it because they didn't require it, or because they lack faith in the service?

Gender and dialing the 999 number are statistically associated, according to the chi-square test, as the P value (0.000) is less than 0.05. That indicates the test is significant, and we may conclude that there is a significant relationship between these two variables. (Table 2) 26.0 percent of those who have contacted this number for assistance are between the ages of 22 and 24, 23.1 percent are between the ages of 19 and 21, and 25.9 percent are 25 and above. Respondents called 999 for domestic violence, medical emergencies, suspicious activity, and other reasons. (Figure 2)

Table 2: Gender and dialing 999 to seek assistance

Chi-Square Tests: Gender and Dialing 999 for seeking assistance					
	Value	Degrees of freedom	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.336 ^a	1	.000		
Continuity Correction	17.101	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	19.977	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	18.265	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	259				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 25.60.

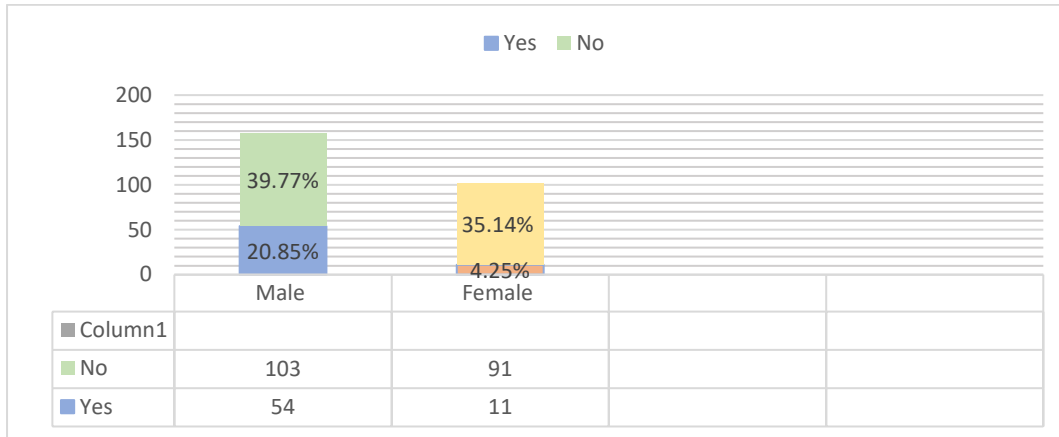


Figure 2: Dialing in 999 service

In our country, 999 is an emergency service that connects people within the country's borders directly with police, fire, and ambulance services. Anyone can call this number in an emergency at any time. About 54.4 percent of those questioned agree that the National Emergency Service Center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Whereas 14.6 percent of those surveyed disagreed with the assertion. Among the 259 respondents, 89% respondents agreed that they were satisfied with the services provided by NESC while 27% were dissatisfied. Approximately 47 percent of participants agreed that NESC (National Emergency Service Center) treats individuals fairly and justly. There is nothing about rich, poor, powerful, or influential people getting service from 999. Whoever calls 999, the service providers are obliged to provide service without the consideration of the social status of the caller. NESC is concerned about people, according to approximately 59 percent of participants. When they receive a call, they respond as soon as possible because they are concerned that someone requires immediate assistance. 9 percent of respondents disagree that NESC is concerned about people. NESC is helpful to 73 percent of respondents, but not to 5.1 percent of respondents. Approximately 60% of participants agreed that NESC does its best to assist persons in need, although 11.2 percent disagreed. (Table 7)

Table 7: Display of some main variables

Statement	Strongly Dissatisfied		Dissatisfied		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
National Emergency Service Center (NESC) is available 24/7	4	1.5	34	13.1	80	30.9	121	46.7	20	7.7
I am satisfied with the services provided by NESC	8	3.1	27	10.4	128	49.4	89	34.4	7	2.7
National emergency helpline 999 is useful	3	1.2	10	3.9	57	22.0	153	59.1	36	13.9
After dialing 999, one receives immediate assistance	8	3.1	36	13.9	110	42.5	95	36.7	10	3.9

The emergency helpline does not make the caller wait unnecessarily	8	3.1	33	12.7	123	47.5	89	34.4	6	2.3
NESC does not mislead people	3	1.2	27	10.4	90	34.7	127	49.0	12	4.6
NESC is concerned about people	8	3.1	18	6.9	78	30.1	142	54.8	13	5.0
NESC treats people fairly and justly	7	2.7	26	10.0	104	40.0	112	43.2	10	3.9
National Emergency Service Center is providing services as it promised	8	3.1	38	14.7	114	44.0	92	35.5	7	2.7
National Emergency Service Center is trying its best to assist people when they need	3	1.2	26	10.0	76	29.3	137	52.9	17	6.6
The National Emergency Service Center is doing all it can to ensure that people feel safe	6	2.3	29	11.2	73	28.2	136	52.5	15	5.8

999 is a service in our country that has become a reliable source of saving people's lives. When someone is in danger, they can call this number at any time. This is a toll-free number. Among the 259 responders, 66% of participants agreed with the statement that it is a revolution for our country, while the remaining 8.8% did not. (Figure 3) The emergency helpline service is critical in the fight against crime. For example, a reward was recently awarded to a rickshaw puller who contacted 999 after witnessing three guys pulling a woman off a rickshaw in Chattogram City. Within 15 minutes of his call, police arrived on the scene, rescued the women, and arrested the three young males. There are numerous incidents like this one. 51.3% of participants agreed that emergency helpline service plays an important role in combating crimes in our country. (Figure 4)

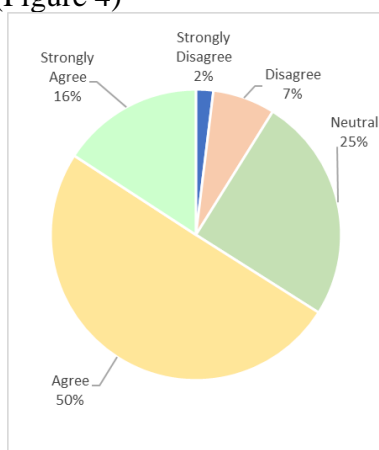


Figure 3: 999 is a revolution for Bangladesh

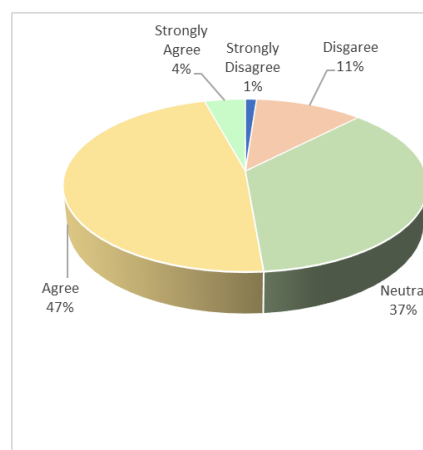


Figure 4: 999 is actively involved in combating crime

It is essential to understand when to dial 999 and when not to. If there is a medical emergency, domestic violence, a house fire, a heart attack or stroke, suspicious activity, or anything else that appears to be an emergency, dial 999. Calling 999 for information, load shedding, a ride to a doctor's appointment, or a prank is not a good idea. Because calling 999 in these ridiculous

scenarios wastes the time of the personnel to respond to those calls who need emergency help. 68.4 percent of respondents agreed that they know when to call 999 and when not to, while 11.2% of respondents were unsure. Approximately 72 percent of respondents agree that many people make unnecessary phone calls, keeping the number busy without recognizing it, diverting 999 officials from offering aid to those who need it, while approximately 5 percent disagree. Almost 33% of participants believed that the average response time (21 minutes) was satisfactory, while around 40% disagreed. Violence against women is on the rise in our society. 999 is a way to prevent violence against women. When there is violence against women, anyone can call 999 and police will arrive as soon as possible. Police have received numerous complaints of domestic abuse against women up to this point. If a girl feels unsafe or anything horrible is about to happen to her, she can call 999 immediately. 68.7 percent of respondents agreed that 999 plays an important role in preventing violence against women, while 6.6% disagreed. (Figure 5) It surely plays a crucial role in protecting people's lives by providing ambulance service, fire services, and preventing violence against women. 68.7% of respondents believe that emergency hotline services play an important role in saving people's lives, whereas 5% of respondents disagree. (Figure 6)

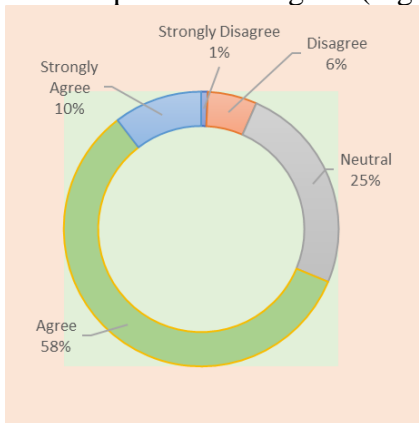


Figure 5: 999 plays a key role in preventing violence against women

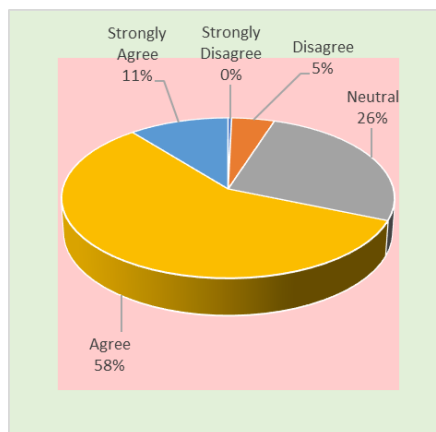


Figure 6: 999 plays a significant role in saving lives

Table 3 shows that faculty and NESC treat people fairly and justly are significantly related. The null hypothesis (there is no association between faculty and NESC treating people fairly and justly) is rejected since the P-value (.036) is smaller than 0.05. There were 141 participants from the Faculty of Social Science, with 46 percent agreeing that NESC serves individuals fairly and justly and roughly 16 percent disagreeing. There were 64 participants from the Faculty of Business Studies, with 37% agreeing and 8% disagreeing with this statement.

Table 3: Test statistics of Faculty and NESC treat people fairly and justly.

	P-value (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	0.036

On December 12, 2017, a national emergency hotline service was inaugurated. The officials in charge of delivering this service are doing everything they can to serve people as quickly as possible. Many people have received assistance by dialing this number. There may have been some instances when people did not receive immediate assistance. However, it should be noted that many people's lives have been saved as a result of this service. It is assisting in the prevention of violence against women. It is assisting in the fight against crime. As a result, people's trust in this national emergency hotline service will grow over time. Among the 259 participants, 59.5% of participants agreed that public trust in the NESC is increasing day by day, with 94 men and 60 women participating. On the other hand, 11% of respondents disagreed with this assertion, 19 of whom were men and 9 were women. (Figure 7)

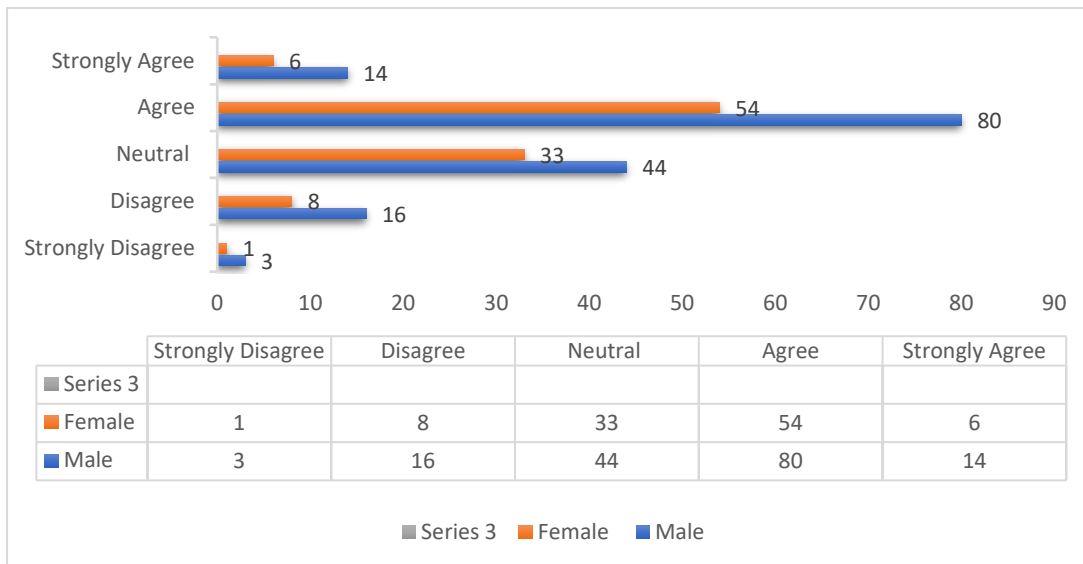


Figure 7: The public trust in NESC is growing day by day.

The average response time for 999 is 21 minutes. Every day, 30000 calls are received by the emergency hotline unit. It is the officials' responsibility to respond to the calls as soon as possible. However, when people call for information, load shedding, a trip to a doctor's appointment, a prank, and so on, it wastes the time of officials who should be responding to emergency calls. 113 respondents (55 from the Faculty of Social Sciences, 28 from the Faculty of Business Studies, 15 from the Faculty of Arts, and the remainder from other faculties) agree that the authorities assigned to the 999 service respond to the call immediately. However, 33 respondents disagree. (Figure 8).

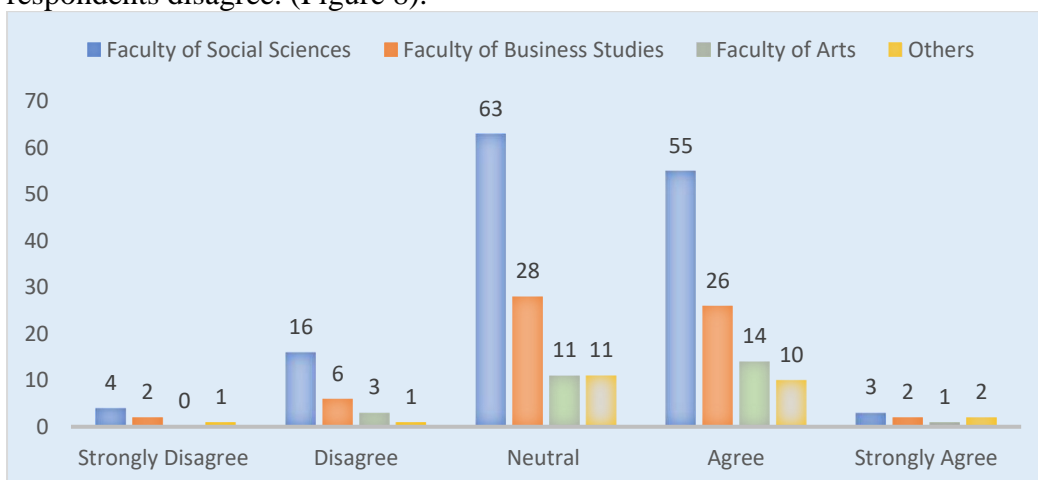


Figure 8: The officials assigned to the 999 service respond to the call immediately.

According to 108 people, the behavior of the officials is satisfactory, whereas 27 persons disagree. According to the preceding chi-square test table, gender and officials' behavior are significantly associated. Because the P value (.004) is smaller than 0.05, the null hypothesis (no significant association between gender and officials' behavior) is rejected. About 51 percent of male participants believed that the officials' behavior was satisfactory, whereas about 28 percent of female participants concurred. On the other hand, around 10% of male and 12% of female individuals disagree. (Table 4)

Table 4: Test statistic of Gender and the behavior of the officials is satisfactory

	P-value (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	0.004

The bulk of the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) enabled vehicles were discovered to be inactive. The vehicles' non-tacking status implies they will be unable to respond swiftly if an incident occurs in those areas. It completely contradicts the aim of the national emergency hotline service. The challenges of 999 service include police officers' lack of technological competence and the issue of charging devices. Aside from that, a lack of manpower is another issue. It has also been discovered that officials are not encouraged to assist people immediately because there is no opportunity for bribes. As a result, they demonstrate non-cooperation. 129 respondents agreed that 999 service officials were conversant with the system, while 103 respondents were unaware. Even though 128 respondents have no view on this, officials are discouraged from assisting people on their own because there is no opportunity for bribery and extra cash. An intriguing finding is that 220 respondents believe that authorities need to be trained. 37 of the 41 postgraduate participants believed that officials required additional training. Among the 43 honors 4th-year participants, 33 felt that authorities required necessary training. More officials are needed, according to 199 participants, for the 999 service to function properly. (Figures 9 and 10)

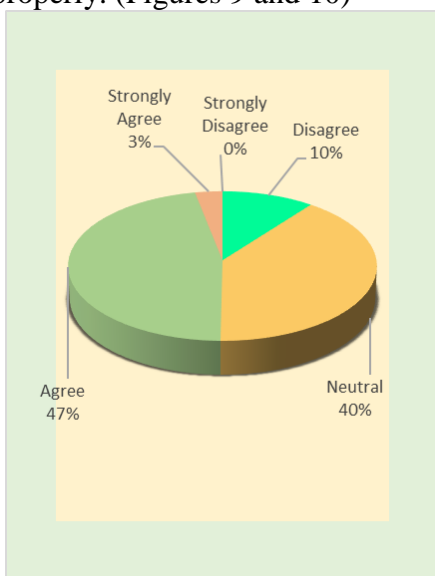


Figure 9: Officials are familiar with the system

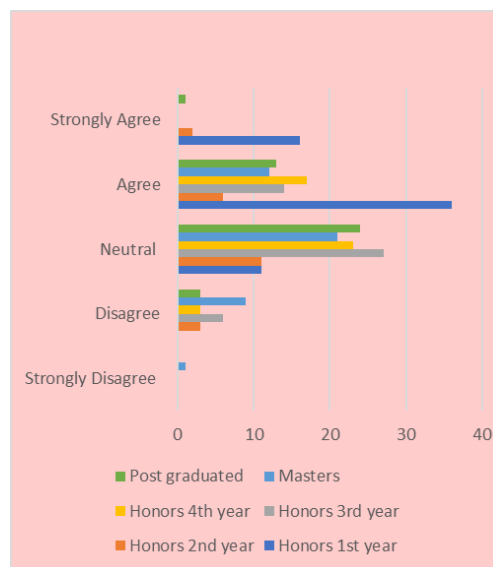


Figure 10: Officials need required training

The chi-square table demonstrates that the educational level and More officials required for the smooth operation of the 999 services are significantly related. Because the P value (.004) is smaller than 05, the null hypothesis (no association between educational level and the requirement for more officials to ensure the smooth operation of the 999 service) is rejected. This survey included 63 honors first-year students. 53 students agreed that additional officials are required. Again, 41 of the 47 honors 3rd year participants felt that more officials are required. (Table 5)

Table 5: Test statistics of Educational Level and more officials are needed for the smooth functioning of 999 service

	P-value (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	0.004

Table 6 depicts youth perceptions of the national emergency hotline service. There were 39% participants, with 59 men and 42 women having an average opinion of this service. Only 7 participants (6 men and 1 woman) stated that their perception of this service is excellent. Among

the 141 participants of the Faculty of Social Science, 59 participants expressed that their perception is average while 47 participants expressed that their perception is good. Unfortunately, the number of participants who have an excellent perception is relatively low. So clearly expresses that the emergency hotline service has a long way to go. Their service system needs to be improved so that people can claim they have an excellent opinion of this service.

Table 6: Youth Perception on the National Emergency Hotline Service

	Frequency	Percentage
Not so good	20	7.7
Average	101	39.0
Good	98	37.8
Very good	33	12.7
Excellent	7	2.7

A female respondent has a good opinion of this service because she has recently heard so many stories about officials responding quickly in moments of emergency. A male respondent who is pursuing a master's degree in the Faculty of Business Studies claimed that his opinion of the 999 service is average, citing the following reasons: *“response time is lengthy, and officials sometimes do not cooperate with victims. Sometimes police do not offer victims with a fair resolution”*.

A female respondent from the Faculty of Social Science responded that her view of the 999 service is average. When asked why, she stated, *“Officials do not spontaneously attend the calls. They do not behave well with the public when they call”*.

Initiatives the government can take to increase people’s awareness regarding national emergency hotline service:

Still, so many people are not conversant with the national emergency hotline service. So, if they don’t know about it, they won’t dial this number at the time of emergency. As a result, the purpose of this service will not be met. So, the youth of our country think it is high time the government needed to take some measures to raise people’s awareness regarding the national emergency hotline service.

- More promotional actions should be carried out. Television, billboards, and newspapers can all play a significant role in this.
- Teaching about it in schools, colleges, and universities. As a result, the students will also inform their family members about this crucial service.
- Social media platforms can be used extensively to enhance public awareness.
- Religious institutions can also play an essential role in promoting public awareness about this.
- Messages can be sent to people by the government on this service.

Conclusion

The number 999 is a toll-free hotline. People can call this number in an emergency at any time. The number of people dialing this number is growing by the day. That implies that this service is steadily acquiring people's trust and confidence. This is a true revolution in Bangladesh. However, there are some drawbacks, such as a higher average response time, a lack of qualified staff, a lack of manpower, non-cooperation from officials, failure to prosecute prank callers, and so on. If these constraints are removed, individuals may have a favorable opinion of this service. It takes time to adapt to anything new. This service was launched in 2017. We can only hope that this service will gradually overcome its constraints. For this, promotional activities must be carried out to raise public awareness of the service. □ The average response time

for calls should be lowered from 21 minutes. The average response time in the United States and Japan is 7 minutes. More officials should be appointed to provide this service. Necessary training should be provided to the officials. The authorities should enact tough laws to prevent fraudulent calls and penalize those who make them.

Future Research

This research has only found out the overall perception of the youth towards emergency hotline service. So future research can be conducted including people of all ages and sections so that public perception can be investigated.

Authors Contribution

Nishat Tabassum confirms responsibility for the following: conceptualization, methodology, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results and manuscript preparation. On the other hand, Md. Golam Rabbani confirms responsibility for the following: writing- reviewing and editing and supervision.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Fund

The authors declare that no funding was received for this study.

Ethical Approval Statement

All participants provided informed consent prior to participation, and the study adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki.

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