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To cite this article: Md Mizanur Rahman (28 Aug 2023): The emergence of new immigrant organisations in the USA: collective engagement, South Asian Diaspora, DOI: [10.1080/19438192.2023.2241282](https://doi.org/10.1080/19438192.2023.2241282)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19438192.2023.2241282>



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Published online: 28 Aug 2023.



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The emergence of new immigrant organisations in the USA: collective engagement

Md Mizanur Rahman 

Gulf Studies Program and Center, College of Arts and Sciences, Qatar University, Doha, Qatar

ABSTRACT

Immigrant organisations tend to engage with immigrant communities within a host country and their country of origin through various transnational activities. This study explores the emergence of immigrant organisations among new immigrant groups in the United States by shedding light on opportunity structure, group characteristics, and collective engagement. Empirically, this paper draws upon interviews of 33 Bangladeshi immigrant organisations in the United States. This paper reports that the intersection of opportunity structure and group characteristics creates a favourable environment for the emergence of immigrant organisations within a new immigrant group. This research suggests that local engagement is a process of adapting to a new environment while still holding onto the cultural norms and values of one's home country, and transnational engagement improves the lives of the marginalised people in their country of origin.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 28 June 2023

Accepted 24 July 2023

KEYWORDS

Immigrant organisation; collective engagement; local engagement; transnational engagement; Bangladeshi diaspora

Introduction

Robert Ezra Park, one of the founders of the Chicago School of sociology, observed that immigrants form ethnic organisations to adjust to a modern society and thus recognised the importance of ethnic organisations for immigrant adaptation in the early 1900s (Park 1920). Sociologist Raymond Breton notes that ethnic communities inherently seek to meet their own needs through ethnic institutions (Breton 1964, 194). The observations of two noted sociologists remain still valid globally (Caglar 2006). New immigrants confront numerous challenges in a host country in the immigration and settlement process and immigrants tend to form various types of organisations to overcome these challenges collectively (Basch 1987; Hung 2007; Layton-Henry 1990; Moya 2005). Thus, immigrant organisations surface to serve migrants' religious, social, and cultural needs, connect individual immigrants to the network of organisations who would have otherwise remained isolated, and thus to stand for and maintain the collective identity. Deby Babis identifies three main factors that contribute to the emergence of the entire

CONTACT Md Mizanur Rahman  mizanur.rm@gmail.com  Gulf Studies Program and Center, College of Arts and Sciences, Qatar University, P.O. Box: 2713, Doha, Qatar

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phenomenon of immigrant organisations such as response to special needs, representing the community, and collective identify (Babis 2016b, 359–361).

Individual immigrants tend to join different organisations depending on their needs and interests. Over time, immigrants also develop varied interests and responsibilities that may transcend the country of settlement to the country of origin and organisations become more dynamic to accommodate the new reality by extending their focus on the origin country or other third countries of importance (Portes, Escobar, and Radford 2007). Along with the focus on the host countries, thus some immigrant organisations also serve the origin, or third country, and such organisations are called transnational immigrant organisations (Faist 2008; Portes, Escobar, and Radford 2005). Existing literature has increasingly reported the significance of immigrant organisations for the host and home countries, and for the immigrant communities themselves (Faist, Fauser, and Kivisto 2011; Halm and Sezgin 2013; Moya 2005; Portes, Escobar, and Radford 2005; Pries and Sezgin 2012; Rahman and Ranjan 2020; Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008; Rex, Joly, and Wilpert 1987). Studying immigrant organisations, therefore, enables us to better understand the complex and dynamic developments that take place within the immigrant communities in a host country.

The emergence of immigrant organisations in the United States is a case in point. Since the major immigration reform acts that came into being between 1960s and early 1990s, there has been an exponential growth of immigrant populations in the United States. The 1965 Hart-Celler Act is often considered a pivotal act in US immigration policy that transformed US immigration landscape overtime (Alba and Nee 2003; White 2018; Zolberg 2006). The most significant of the other legislative changes that were made following the passage of the Hart-Celler Act are the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (i.e. the IRCA Act) and the Immigration Act of 1990. The IRCA Act provided amnesty for many undocumented immigrants and the Immigration Act of 1990 increased the annual number of immigrant arrivals to 700,000 and also opened up a diversity visa program. The Diversity Visa Program was designed to invite immigrants from the underrepresented countries in the US population (for details, see White 2018). This plan to diversify the US population created a group of new principal source countries and regions such as Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean (Foner 2005; Hatton 2015).

Along with the growth of immigrants from new source regions in the USA, there is also the emergence of immigrant organisations by these new immigrant groups (Cordero-Guzmán 2005; Kibria 2011; Portes and Fernandez-Kelly 2015; Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008; Sidney 2014). For instance, we find substantial literature on Latin American and Caribbean immigrant organisations (Basch 1987; Lane 1976; Levitt 1998; Orozco 2000; Portes and Zhou 2012). These studies provide us valuable insights into the typologies of organisations, formation of organisations, group characteristics and collective activities targeting the US and the origin countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region. Within greater Asian countries, two populous countries – China and India – also constitute significant new immigrants in the USA and existing scholarship reports the emergence of immigrant organisations among Indian and Chinese immigrants (Agarwala 2016; Poros 2001; Portes and Zhou 2012; Rahman and Ranjan 2020; Zhou and Lee 2013). We also find research on immigrant organisations among other Asian immigrant groups in general (Bohra-Mishra 2011; Chung 2005; Majka and Mullan 2002; Zhou and Gatewood 2000). However, immigrant organisations,

formed and run by some other smaller Asian countries are scarcely found in the existing migration scholarship. Of these smaller Asian immigrant groups, Bangladeshi immigrant group in the United States is a case in point.

Since the 1990s onwards, a good number of Bangladeshis have started to immigrate to the US under various US immigration programmes such as Diversity Visa and Opportunity Visa and last but not the least the family reunification programme (Kibria 2011; Rahman 2010; Rahman, Alshawi, and Hasan 2021; Stevanovic-Fenn 2012). Mizanur Rahman estimates that the US Department of State – Bureau of Consular Affairs, offered 263,681 immigrant visas and 455,215 non-immigrant visas to Bangladeshis between 1991 and 2019 (Rahman, Alshawi, and Hasan 2021). Drawing on the US Department of Homeland Security data, Rahman and his colleagues estimate that around 312,877 Bangladeshis obtained permanent resident status from 1973 to 2018 (Rahman, Alshawi, and Hasan 2021). However, this number excludes earlier immigrants and children of the Bangladeshi American citizens and residents. Given the immigrant and non-immigrant visa holders and their children, it is apparent that a burgeoning Bangladeshi immigrant community exists throughout the major cities of the United States. With the growth of community members, Bangladeshi immigrants also form various types of organisations to serve the growing Bangladeshi community and to create, express, and promote a collective Bangladeshi identity in the United States. However, research on the invisible immigrant communities, such as the Bangladeshi community, is missing in the mainstream literature.

Broadly, this study explores Bangladeshi immigrant organisations by shedding light on opportunity structure, group characteristics, organisational activities, and finally the transnational engagement in Bangladesh. This paper addresses the following questions: What are different types of Bangladeshi organisations found in the USA? How do immigrant organisations come into being? How do they mobilise resources? What types of activities do such organisations arrange for its members and greater community in the United States? How do these organisations engage in Bangladesh? Empirically, this study bases its analyses on Bangladeshi immigrant organisations in New York and other key cities and states in the United States.

The following section discusses theoretical issues related to the emergence of immigrant organisations, followed by a discussion of research methods undertaken for this study. The formation of immigrant organisations and group characteristics are presented in the next two sections, followed by a section on national and transnational engagements in the United States and Bangladesh. The final section concludes with key findings and direction for future research.

Theoretical issues

In the existing literature, ethnic organisations and immigrant organisations are sometimes used interchangeably (Babis 2016a; Jenkins 2009). However, these two terms do not refer to the same thing. Clearly, there is a need for a conceptual clarification between ethnic and immigrant organisations. Babis reports that there are three types of ethnic organisations: native or indigenous organisations, organisations of descendants of immigrants, and immigrant organisations (Babis 2016b). Immigrant organisation is one of three kinds of ethnic organisations. Babis argue that every immigrant organisation is an ethnic organisation, but we cannot say that every ethnic organisation is an

immigrant organisation (Babis 2016b). Broadly speaking, immigrant organisations can primarily be seen as formal organisations, which share the basic characteristics of the non-profit sector such as formal, private, non-profit distributing, self-governing and voluntary features (Salamon and Anheier 1992). In most cases, immigrant organisations are formed by new and long-term immigrants for the benefit of their own communities.

The collective engagement of immigrant groups has always existed; however, with the increase in immigration and immigrant organisations, the level of engagement among new immigrant groups is intensifying and becoming more pervasive throughout the global North (Rahman and Ranjan 2020). An organisation of immigrants is a meso-level unit of analysis that lies between micro-level analysis such as immigrants, their families, and immigrant children on one hand, and macro level analysis such as regional migration, governance, and migration regime on the other hand (Zhou and Lee 2013). Unlike macro- and micro-level research, the meso-level research focusing on organisational engagement of immigrants with their host and origin countries has not received adequate attention in migration scholarships. Immigrant organisations tend to engage with immigrant communities in the local and national levels in the host country. By undertaking various transnational activities, they engage with the people in the origin countries as well. The term, 'engagement' is widely used in migration research and analysis (for details, see Tan and Rahman 2013). Gamlen broadly identifies three levels of vertical engagement, that is, local, national and international, and uses the term, 'engagement' to refer mainly to various transnational activities of immigrants towards their origin countries (Gamlen 2011). This paper underlines that collective engagement in both societies is important for acceptability and viability of the organisations over time and therefore merits scholarly attention.

There is relatively a long history of research on immigrant organisations. D. Halm and Z. Sezgin identifies three major chronological periods for the development of research on immigrant organisations (Halm and Sezgin 2013, 3–6). The first period, which started after World War II, when research on immigrant organisations centred largely on their effects on assimilation and integration processes (e.g. Gordon 1964; Soyer 1997; Taft 1957). The second period, which started since the 1990s, research on immigrant organisations began looking more into the political dimension with a focus on claim-makings, social movements and political mobilisations, and civic participation (e.g. Soysal 1994; Yurdakul 2009). In the third period, which started since the 2000s, we notice the shift in focus on transnational dimension of immigrant organisations, what we above identify as organisations that are oriented towards both host country and origin country (e.g. Mercer, Page, and Evans 2009; Portes, Escobar, and Radford 2007).

We find another set of classification by Z. Sezgin and D. Dijkzeul, where they investigate the relevance of immigrant organisations for the host country, the origin country, and the immigrant groups themselves and thus categorise immigrant organisation research into four groups or clusters (Sezgin and Dijkzeul 2014). The first research cluster concentrates on integration processes and categorises immigrant organisations as actors either hindering or supporting integration in the host country (Alba and Nee 2003; Johnston 1967; Morad and Puppa 2019). The second cluster analyses civic and political participation of migrants in the host country (Landolt and Goldring 2010; Portes, Escobar, and Arana 2008; Yurdakul 2009). The third cluster focuses on the emergence and development of immigrant organisations (Akcapar 2009; Mishra 2011; Vermeulen

2007). The fourth and final cluster focuses on transnational characteristics of immigrant organisations (Halm and Sezgin 2013; Pries and Sezgin 2012).

Scholars offer various typologies of immigrant organisations. For example, based on the range of activities, Basch identifies nine categories of organisations: benevolent societies, sport and social clubs, welfare organisations, occupational associations, educational and cultural clubs, political clubs, performing and cultural clubs, women's groups, and umbrella organisations (Basch 1987). Moya also bases his classification on the range of activities and offers a six-fold classification such as secret society, rotating credit associations, mutual aid societies, religious organisations, hometown associations, and political groups (Moya 2005). Instead of using the range of activities, Layton-Henry offers a three-fold classification of immigrant organisations based on the orientations of the organisations such as organisations oriented towards the country of origin, organisations oriented towards the host country and organisations oriented towards the origin country as well as the host country (Layton-Henry 1990). This paper employs this three-fold classification for mapping the Bangladeshi immigrant organisations in the USA.

The questions of why and how immigrant organisations emerge in a host country also draws the attention of scholars in the field (Breton 1964; Moya 2005; Schrover and Vermeulen 2005). The reasons for the emergence of immigrant organisations in a host country are extensively investigated in the existing literature (Babis 2016b; Halm and Sezgin 2013; Sezgin 2011; Sezgin and Dijkzeul 2014). Breton identifies three sets of factors that contribute to the formation of ethnic organisations: cultural differences, differential level of resources, and migration patterns (Breton 1964). Breton's work offers us insights into how group dynamics influence the emergence of migrant organisations. However, it heavily draws on cultural explanations. M. Schrover and F. Vermeulen offer a three-fold factors for the emergence of immigrant organisations: the migration process, the opportunity structure, and the immigrant group characteristics (Schrover and Vermeulen 2005). Of these three, the two sets of factors, that is, the opportunity structure and group characteristics that they elaborate in their research, are related to the founding of organisations (Schrover and Vermeulen 2005). The emphasis on both cultural and structural factors, which are later discussed by other scholars as well (Babis 2016b), adds a new dimension to the theoretical advancement of research on the making of immigrant organisations.

Babis identifies and analyzes four factors to account for the development and diversity in immigrant organisations (Babis 2016b, 359–366). Firstly, the attributes of the immigrant population influence the nature of the organisations (Akcapar 2009). Secondly, the characteristics of the country of origin shape the type of organisations that immigrants form in the host country (Moya 2005; Rex, Joly, and Wilpert 1987). Thirdly, the gaps vis-à-vis the host society means that immigrants carry their own culture, customs, language and religion which are often fundamentally different from those of the host country (Owusu 2000). Fourthly and finally, the attitudes and policies of the host society in relation to immigrants such as racism and exclusion influence the emergence of immigrant organisations (Schrover and Vermeulen 2005). Broadly, Babis adds both structural or opportunity structure and cultural or group characteristics to his conceptual framework for understanding the emergence of immigrant organisations. This study draws on existing theoretical insights into the emergence of immigrant

organisations, especially opportunity structure and migrant characteristics, digging deeper into their engagements in host and home countries as well as the diversity within these organisations.

Research methods

Bangladeshi immigrants have settled in various cities and states across the United States, and they have also formed numerous organisations in these cities and states. In spite of this, the vast majority of organisations are located in New York due to the concentration of Bangladeshi immigrants in this premier gateway city (Rahman, Alshawi, and Hasan 2021). Identifying Bangladeshi immigrant organisations was a challenging task for this research. In my early phase of fieldwork in New York, I noticed that Bangladeshi immigrant organisations communicate with the wider Bangladeshi community through ethnic newspapers published in the United States. They advertise their activities in a noticeable way with images of leaders of organisations, mobile numbers, postal addresses, and present and future events with dates and places in Bengali newspapers such as *The Weekly Bangla Patrika*, *The New York Bangla*, *The Akhon Samoy*, *The Thikana*, *The New York Bangla*, *The America Bangla*, *The PBC (Probashi Barta Corporation)* and many other Bangladeshi ethnic newspapers and news portals. During my search of these ethnic newspapers, I identified a number of active immigrant organisations in across the United States. For further information, I visited their websites, including social media sites, and conducted desk research on their nature, formation, and activities.

Following my online research, I conducted a pilot study by interviewing a few organisations in New York. The purpose of this pilot study was to better understand the characteristics, formations, scope of activities, resources, membership, and other related issues and to develop a detailed interview schedule. Following the pilot study, I developed a semi-structured interview schedule, having both open-ended and closed-ended questions and administered it to 33 purposefully-selected organisations with diverse regional and professional origins. Most Bangladeshi organisations are formed and engage with people of regional origin. In other words, most organisations are regional in nature. In order to achieve a diverse sample, I deliberately excluded many regional organisations and attempted to include other organisations that are formed on the basis of occupations, culture, faith and so on. The reason for this exclusion was to avoid repetition of the data as such regional organisations often share similar experiences in terms of their memberships, leadership, resource mobilisation, and collective engagements in Bangladesh and the United States.

Most of the organisations included in this sample are located in New York, but some are located in other states as well. I have found that most Bangladeshi immigrant organisations are involved in both national and transnational activities, which makes separating these two phenomena difficult. I barely found any organisations that do not run some sort of transnational activities for the people in Bangladesh. Therefore, I use the terms immigrant organisation and transnational immigrant organisation interchangeably. The data is collected through face-to-face meetings with leaders of organisations located in New York, and a telephone interview with organisations located outside of New York. Interviews were conducted with the key personnel of these organisations including president, vice-president, and other influential committee members. The

average duration of an interview was two hours for person interviews and one and a half hours for telephone interviews, which have been often conducted over the course of two calls. When I began interviewing the organisations, I had a thorough understanding of their activities. Due to this advantage, our discussion was focused, and I was able to cross-check the responses with additional questions as needed. By doing this, I was able to obtain reliable and relevant information from the respondents.

The respondents chose most of the sites for meetings, which included organisation premises, community centres, ethnic restaurants and grocery stores, and their residences, often between 4 and 10 pm on weekdays and in the evening on weekends. Respondents were not always forthcoming with information. In some cases, the respondents were hesitant to divulge information about their organisations, particularly their sources of funding. Since I expected it, I raised questions as to how resources are mobilised for the organisation and the areas in which expenditures are incurred. Thus, I avoided sensitive issues related to total funds mobilised from different sources. I found community leaders from different regions of Bangladesh and discussed my research purposes with them and solicited their assistance. Several Bangladeshi community leaders provided me with references and even introduced me directly to the leaders of some immigrant organisations. The interviews were supplemented by participant observation and discussion with members of organisations.

The emergence of immigrant organisations: opportunity structure

The emergence of immigrant organisations is one of the many kinds of services that we find among immigrant groups around the world. The development of immigrant organisations in a host country is shaped by both opportunity structure and group characteristic of immigrant organisations. The presence of certain basic conditions must prevail at both a structural and group level in order for the emergence of immigrant organisation in a host country. There are at least two opportunity-structure conditions for the development of immigrant organisations: a niche in which the immigrant organisations can viably function and access to government legal support structure and valuable resources. Firstly, there should be a significant number of immigrants who require ethnic-friendly immigration services in the settlement process starting from legal documentations, tax-filing, schooling, job search, health insurance, housing, and car loan, and so on. Such services are often met by members who are connected by social ties in a traditional society (Faist 2000).

However, Bangladeshi immigrants find themselves isolated from traditional social network in the USA, creating a demand for services that they come together to address by forming organisations. Apart from ethnic-friendly services, Bangladeshi immigrants carry their own culture, customs, language, and religion which are fundamentally different from those of the United States. Bangladeshi children that are born into immigrant families get exposed to a culture different from their own. The need for exposure to national, regional, and religious culture is felt by the greater Bangladehsi community members, creating a niche area for the emergence of immigrant organisations. Bangladeshi organisations come to serve the growing demand for representing their community and reinforcing their collective identity in the United States. Apart from this, there also exist attitudes and policies in relation to immigrants in the

United States such as racism and exclusion that also create a market niche for the emergence of immigrant organisations, including Bangladeshi organisations (Noor et al. 2022; Rahman 2010).

Secondly, despite the existence of a market niche for immigrant organisations, there is a need for legal framework to form an organisation and receive government support to run it. Access to legal establishment is affected by government policies setting the terms on which immigrants can form organisations. It is observed that the United States offers a conducive environment for the formation of nonprofit organisations including immigrant organisations, and Bangladeshi immigrant organisations take advantage of this policy. For instance, Section 501 (c) (3) of the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and specific tax category offer several types of nonprofit organisations with tax exemption and tax deductibility facilities.¹ Granting nonprofit status is done by the state while granting tax-exempt designation (IRC 501c) is granted by the federal government via the IRS. Many Bangladeshi organisations register with the IRS and meet the requirements set forth in the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) when they open an organisation and often enjoy the benefits of tax exemptions and tax-deductible contributions.

In addition to host country's legal support structure, we also need to consider the macro-features in the origin country that allow transnational engagement. Bangladesh's legal framework for transnational engagement by immigrant organisations overseas is also relatively open and welcoming, given that partner organisations in Bangladesh keep records for financial transactions and expenditures and available for auditing by relevant authority. The government of Bangladesh encourages the Bangladeshi emigrants to visit Bangladesh and engage with the development activities in Bangladesh. A separate ministry, the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment was formed in 2001 to serve affairs related to Bangladeshi emigrants overseas. Bangladesh allows dual citizenship and offers NVR (No Visa Requirement) facilities to emigrants of Bangladeshi origin including children resulting in regular, uninterrupted visits to home country. Such concerted efforts of the origin country fortify the social and economic bonds between emigrants and their relatives back home and ensure a sustained and lasting engagement with Bangladesh.

The emergence of immigrant organisations: group characteristics

The emergence of immigrant organisations is not merely driven by the opportunity structure, but also by the favourable characteristics of immigrant groups that contribute to their success (Rosenow-Williams 2014). It is observed that the size of the immigrant community, demographic features, socio-economic status, legal status, and the characteristics of the leaders of the organisations influence the emergence of organisations. A sizeable Bangladeshi immigrant population lives in New York, and other key cities and states across the United States. We also find the burgeoning of immigrant organisations in New York and other key cities. Characteristics of Bangladeshi immigrant organisations are diverse, producing a class character in Bangladeshi immigration to the United States. The class character is reflected in the diversity of organisations such as professional organisations, national organisation, regional organisations, advocacy organisation, and faith-based organisation. In view of this, [Table 1](#) presents the salient features of immigrant organisations.

Table 1. Bangladeshi immigrant organisations in the United States: some key features

No.	Name	Geographical coverage and/or main orientation	Year started and location	Members (approx.)	Leadership: (election or selection)	Types of activities in the USA	Types of activities in Bangladesh
1	Nawabganj Association of USA Inc.	Regional	2007, New York	150–200	Election in every two years	Eid reunion party, picnic, cultural programmes, Bengali new year	Orphanages, flood relief, winter clothes distribution, school, madrassa, mosque
2	Dohar Upazilla Association USA Inc.	Regional	2004, New York	200–250	Election in every two years	Cultural events, picnic, street fare, religious parties (Iftar party, Eid reunion party) national events, Bengali new year	School, mosque, student scholarship, medical treatment to needy people
3	Bangladesh Association of America, Inc. (BAAI)	National	1972, Washington DC, Virginia and Maryland	1000–1200	Election in every two years	National events, picnic, Eid reunion parties, Bengali new year	School, flood relief, mosque,
4	Samhati – Bangladesh Women’s Organization	National/ women empowerment	1984, Washington DC.	Not available	Election or selection	Fund-raising events	Women empowerment programmes in different districts
5	Dhaka Zila Association USA Inc.	Regional	2011 New York	800–1000	Election in every two years	Picnic, Iftar party, cultural event, community welfare	Eye camp, scholarship to poor students, special deep tube-wells for arsenic-free water, medical treatment
6	Nawabgonj Foundation of North America Inc.	Regional	2013, New York	80–100	Election in every two years	Settlement issues such as job search, health insurance, schooling, immigration assistance through layers	Winter clothes distribution, special deep tube-wells for arsenic-free water, eye camps, student scholarship
7	Ruposhi Chandpur Foundation, Inc.	Regional	1998 New York	1000–1200	Election in every two years	Picnic, blood donation, Eid reunion, Bangladeshi national events, cultural events	Student scholarship, winter clothes, donation to people affected by river bank erosion, mosque and temple construction, poverty eradication
8	Rajshahi University Student Welfare Association	Alumni association	2007, New York	60–100	Selection	Job search, training about small business opening, helping in identifying accommodation, family reunion, picnic, fund raising events	Scholarships to meritorious and needy students in Rajshahi University, Rajshahi University press development, information on graduate education in the USA and Canada, campus visits and information sharing
9		National	2002, Houston	700–800		Cultural events, celebration of national days of Bangladesh, Eid reunion,	Scholarship to needy students, constructions of educational

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

No.	Name	Geographical coverage and/or main orientation	Year started and location	Members (approx.)	Leadership: (election or selection)	Types of activities in the USA	Types of activities in Bangladesh
10	Bangladesh-American Society of Greater Houston Srijony Sanskritik Sansad	Cultural	2007, New York	5–10	Election and selection annually Selection in every two years or more	educational counselling to young generation for educational advancement Providing music lessons (running music school), organising cultural events and national days,	institutions, helping the freedom fighters, medical treatments to handicaps Bringing artists from Bangladesh and organise events in the USA, helping needy artists in Bangladesh, bridging the relationships between Bangladeshi artists and Bangladeshi diaspora artists
11	Bangladesh Medical Association of North America (BMANA)	National and Professional	1981, Born in Michigan (now in New York)	500–700	Election in every two years	Free treatment to needy community members, Helping newly arrived medical professionals settling in the USA,	Disaster fund, exchange programme, medical equipment to medical colleges, training to medical professionals, medical technology transfers, cyclone shelter construction in Borguna, campus visits and information sharing, job and training information sharing
12	Shilpakala Academy USA Inc.	Cultural	2003 New York	90–100	Election or selection in every three years	National days, cultural events, music lessons/music training, organising events for Bangladeshi artists in the USA	Bridging the gap between Bangladeshi based artists and the USA based artists, recognising Bangladeshi music talents, inviting Bangladeshi cultural groups to the USA
13	Bangladesh society	National	1975 New York	17,000–18,000	Election in every two years	National days of Bangladesh, Iftar party, Eid reunion, computer literacy programme, Bangladeshi food festivals, free tax filing for community members	Natural disaster relief, school, mosque
14	Bangladesh Association of Chicagoland	National	1980, Chicago	400–500	Election in every two years	National days, Eid reunion, cultural events	Natural disaster relief, scholarship for needy students, sponsoring artists from Bangladesh, donation Red Cross, UNICEF children, direct relief, Bangladesh prime minister fund
15	Bangladeshi-American Police Club	Professional	2001, New York	Not available	Selection in every two to three years	Domestic violence awareness, traffic rules and ticketing, law enforcement, job seminar, assistance in policy matters, traffic system, weekly	Sharing expertise with Bangladesh police department, introducing the concept of community policy in Bangladesh, student essay

16	Bogra Samiti of North America	Regional	2008 New York	200–250	Election in every two years	seminar for community members, Annual picnic, annual dinner, police department outreach	competition in Bangladesh on theme of law and order
17	Manikganj Shomitee of North America	Regional	1989 New York	600–800	Election in every two years	Picnic, assistance to bereaved family, funeral of diseased bodies, reunion event, national days, Iftar party, Eid reunion,	Natural disaster relief, medical treatment to needy people, healthcare for women and children
18	Dhaka University Alumni Association of USA (DUAAUSA)	Alumni organisation	1994, New York	800–900	Election or selection in every two years	National days, cultural events, Dhaka University Day	Healthcare in Manikganj, scholarship to poor, meritorious students, natural disaster relief
19	Narayanganj District Association of North America	Regional	1989 New York	1400–1600	Election or selection in every two years	Helping new immigrants from Narayanganj to settle in the USA, national days, picnic, organising political protests on issues that concerned Narayanganj	University development and welfare, exchange of information for faculties, student scholarship, campus visits, conference grant supports
20	Bangladesh Beanibazar Social and Cultural Society, USA	Regional	1987 New York	3000–3500	Election in every two years	Funeral projects (Long Island graveyard and New Jersey graveyard), National days, Iftar party, Eid reunion, medical care assistance, sending deceased body to Bangladesh	Scholarship to poor students, flood relief, financial assistance to poor journalists,
21	Jalalabad Association of America	Regional	1988, New York	14,000–15,000	Election in every three years	National days, funeral events, honouring respectable, renowned people from the region, picnic, prayer for deceased persons	Natural disaster relief, student scholarship, supply of health equipment to hospitals and clinics, donation to religious organisations
22	Munshigonj Bikrampur Association	Regional	2011 New York	600–800	Selection in every two to three years	Assistance to newly arrived immigrants, funeral activities in USA or sending the deceased body to Bangladesh, national days,	Computer literacy programme in Bangladesh, student scholarship, natural disaster relief
23	Probashi Bengali Christian Association (PBCA)	National and faith-based organisation	1983 New York	2500–3000	Election in every two years	Religious events, national days, Easter reunion, picnic, pilgrimage, Bengali Mass Christmas reunion, community welfare, Palm Sunday Mass,	Disaster relief, helping needy across religious line, scholarship to poor students, medical treatment, Church-centred donation
24	World Human Rights and Development (WHRD)	National and rights-based organisation/advocacy	1994 New York	500–600	Selection in every two to three years	Providing legal assistance on Immigration matters, job search	Raising voices for Climate change issues, human rights issues of garments workers, climate refugee

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

No.	Name	Geographical coverage and/or main orientation	Year started and location	Members (approx.)	Leadership: (election or selection)	Types of activities in the USA	Types of activities in Bangladesh
25	Kerajiganj Foundation USA, Inc.	Regional	2005, New York	300–500	Election in every two years	Picnic, national days, Muslim religious events, cultural events with Bangladeshi artists	issues, donating to the Prime Minister's disaster relief fund Natural disasters, student scholarship, election matters in Bangladesh (local election and member selectin and support)
26	Pabna Welfare Association, USA Inc.	Regional	1991 New York	2000–3000	Election in every two years	Picnic, Eid reunion parties, iftar party, national days, Cricket tournament for funding raising. Honouring national leaders when they visit to the USA	Natural disasters, winter cloth, school, mosque, deep tube-well for arsenic free water
27	North Bengali Foundation (people of 16 districts)	Regional	2008 New York	16,000–17,000	Election or selection in every two years	Helping to new immigrants, picnic, helping group member in time of emergency/ need, helping to bereaved families, sending dead body home,	Disaster relief, helping needy people, winter cloth
28	Bangladeshi Hindu Mandir, Inc.	National and Faith-based organisation	1990 New York	300–500	Selection by board members in every five years	Religious events and prayers, weekly prayers, organising religious events at the family level, book fare	Reaching and strengthening Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian union council, natural disaster, raising voices for minority rights
29	Bay Area Bangladesh Association, (BABA)	National	1995 Northern California	400–600	Election in every year	Cultural events, picnic, national events, key religious events (including minority religions), sports event,	Help in technological advancement in Bangladesh
30	Chittagong Association of North America, Inc.	Regional organisation	1997 New York	6000–8000	Election in every two years	Eid events, picnic, mela (bazar), iftar, national days, free computer learning centre, cultural events	Medical equipment for Chittagong Medical College, medical treatment for poor patients, school, student scholarship
31	Jahangirnagar Alumni Association of America (JAAM)	Alumni association	2014 New York	400–600	Election in every three years	Picnic, national days, religious events, cultural events, award ceremonies,	Natural disasters, scholarships to meritorious students, contributions to building university properties, exchange of information for career advancements for teachers and scholarship information in the USA for graduate studies
32	Bangladeshi Association of New Jersey (BANJ)	National	1994 New Jersey	500–700	Election in every two years	Picnic, Bangladeshi national days, cultural events	Natural disaster relief, winter cloths

33	American Association of Bangladeshi Engineers and Architects, Inc., (AABEA)	Professional	1984 Pennsylvania	2000–3000	Election in every two years	Career development services, engineer-in-training (EIT), professional engineering (PE), AUTOCAD software training classes to students and engineers, workshop for women employment, science fair and art competitions for K1-12 students, student scholarship, job information and job fairs in collaboration with federal agencies and public and private enterprises	Development of a state-of-the-art computer lab at BUET in Dhaka and CUET in Chittagong, Robert Noyce Simulation Lab (RNSL) and Linux Lab for BUET, research and development on VLSI circuit at East West University in Dhaka. Developed marketing tools for Bangladesh IT companies to sell their products in US market in collaboration with the World Bank, funds for humanitarian assistance
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Note: In addition to interview data, some information is compiled from organizations' websites as well. Most organizations do not keep records of their memberships strictly. Therefore, an approximate number of members are provided in several cases. Some organizations engage in other local and transnational activities and I did not provide a full list of their activities.

The nature of organisations

Region, occupation, culture, faith, and greater social and environmental concerns (e.g. women empowerment and climate change issues) shape the nature of the surveyed organisations. Bangladeshi immigrants tend to organise on the basis of their regions of origin in Bangladesh. As discussed in the research method section, despite my attempt to have fewer regional organisations in the sample, nearly half of the surveyed organisations were regional in nature. In the context of Bangladesh, the region is often associated with administrative units like division (8 divisions in Bangladesh – each of them consists of a few districts), district (64 districts in Bangladesh – each of them consists of a few subdistricts or *Upazilas*), and subdistricts (504 subdistricts or *Upazilas* and they consist of several union parishads). Bangladeshi immigrant organisations are named after divisions, districts, and *Upazilas*, depending on the size of immigrants located in particular US cities and the underlying unifying forces that bring them together. Organisations that are located in small cities across the United States tend to form organisations based on macro units such as divisions, clusters of divisions, or the whole of Bangladesh to appeal to residents living in those cities.

When migrants use the name of their *Upazila* as the name of their organisation, it is assumed that there are a large number of immigrants from that particular *Upazila*, for instance, case no 20, Beanibazar Social and Cultural Society, case no 1 (Nawabganj association), and case no 2 (Dohar *Upazila* Association). Some organisations are formed on the basis of districts of origin such as Dhaka Zila association (case no 5), Bogra sumiti (case no 16), and Manikganj shomitee (case no 17) while others are formed on the basis of divisions such as Chittagong association (case no 30). Efforts are being made to go up to a level that includes several divisions or the entire country for membership. For instance, we find greater units for forming organisations such as North Bengal foundation (case no 27) that includes more than one division and many districts, and whole of Bangladesh such as Bangladesh Association of America (case no 3) and Bangladesh Society (case no 13).

Membership in an organisation that considers greater geographical units and professional backgrounds is more prestigious to the immigrant communities. As a result, we find several organisations that are formed based on alumni matter such as alumni associations (case no 8, 18, 31) and professional organisations (case no 11, 15, 33). Bengali culture, religion and greater human concerns are also integrated in the purpose of forming organisations such as cultural organisations (case no 10, 12), religious organisations, (case no 23, 28) women empowerment organisation (case no 4), and advocacy organisation (case no 24). Bangladesh is primarily a Muslim country, and therefore Islamic organisations among Bangladeshi Muslims are hardly found during the fieldwork. The two religion-based organisations in the sample are basically formed and run by followers of Hinduism and Christianity. Sometimes, the inspiration for a new organisation is sparked by events back home. For instance, World Human Rights and Development (case no 24), Samhati – Bangladesh Women’s Organization (case no 4), and Bay Area Bangladesh Association (case no 29) are basically formed to address the social and environmental concerns in Bangladesh.

Years started and locations

Most organisations have started to surface since the 1990s. However, there are a few organisations that emerged immediately after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. The Bangladesh Association of America Inc. (BAAI) is the first of the Bangladeshi immigrant organisations formed after independence in 1971. The BAAI was born in 1972 as a non-profit, non-political, and non-discriminatory, IRS 501c (3) tax-exempt organisation registered in Washington DC, Virginia, and Maryland. In 1971, the Bangladesh Liberation War took place in the country, which gave rise to the existence of this organisation. Before 1971, there was an organisation known as the Pakistan League of America, which was formed by both Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. As a result of the Liberation War in 1971, the Bangladeshi people broke away from the main organisation and formed a new organisation, the Bangladesh League of America and later renamed Bangladesh Association of America, Inc. in 1973. The organisation was instrumental in mobilising public support for the Bangladesh Liberation War in the United States. The second organisation is Bangladesh Society Inc., founded by a group of scholars from Columbia University, New York, following a meeting on 23 November 1975. Dr Abdul Haque was the founding convener of the ad hoc committee.

Bangladesh Association of Chicagoland (BAC) and Bangladeshi Medical Association of North America (BMANA) are two other popular organisations that were established in 1980 and 1981 respectively. The BAC is formed in the city of Chicago by renowned Bangladeshi architect Dr F. R. Khan with a vision to serve the Bangladeshi community in the Chicagoland area. The BMANA is a non-profitable, educational and charitable organisation of medical professionals of Bangladeshi descent. The BMANA was established in Michigan in 1981 and since then 18 chapters of BMANA have been established across the United States. Along with the medical professional organisation, Bangladeshi engineers formed the American Association of Bangladeshi Engineers and Architects in Pennsylvania in 1984. These two are early Bangladeshi professional organisations in the United States. A faith-based organisation that was established in 1983 is Probashi Bengali Christian Association (PBCA), located in New York. This organisation is the first Bengali Christian association in the USA that plays a vital role in bringing Bengali Christians under single platform. The organisation is currently active in the tri-state area of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

In the late 1980s, we notice a growth of region-based organisations such as Bangladesh Beanibazar Social and Cultural Society (1987), Jalalabad Association of America (1988), Manikganj Shomitee of North America (1989), and Narayanganj District Association of North America (1989). In the 1990s and 2000s, there have been an exponential growth of Bangladesh organisations with the concurrent growth of the Bangladeshi immigrant population in the USA (Rahman, Alshawi, and Hasan 2021). While most organisations are located in New York, there are a few surveyed organisations that are located in other cities such as Washington DC (case no 4), Houston (case no 19), Chicago (case no 14), New Jersey (case no 32), and North California (case no 29). Thus, we notice that organisations formed in the 1970s were primarily national in character; the organisations established in the early 1980s were professional and national but since the late 1980s, there is a burgeoning of organisations based on districts and Upazilas.

Memberships and leaderships

To mobilise resources and serve the immigrant community, immigrant organisations need a strong membership base. It is common for organisations to conduct membership drives and attract new members based on their vision, mission, and nature of organisation. Paid members are those members who pay membership fees, involve in regular activities including meetings and decision-making issues, participate in organisations' elections for leadership, and spearhead community activities nationally and transnationally and carry out other related activities. In addition to paid members, organisations tend to have unpaid members who are not formal members of the organisation but tend to attend and contribute to the programmes of organisations voluntarily. For a variety of reasons, many immigrants choose not to be paid members, including time constraints, political views of leadership, location of residence (e.g. inter-city or inter-state residence and working place), and a set of personal reasons. A non-paid member is not obligated to remain loyal to any particular organisation and is free to participate in programmes of other organisations, giving them access to greater resources.

Some organisations offer individual, family, and life memberships. There is also a type of membership category that is similar to this, but it has a different name: silver, gold, and platinum. In general, members of the silver category are individuals, members of the gold category are families, and members of the platinum category are members for life. Often, lifetime and platinum members are invited to take part in various committees within the organisation's governing body as part of their privileges and benefits. A member may be affiliated with more than one organisation as membership is fluid and often overlaps. Among the surveyed organisations, Bangladesh Society (case no 14) has approximately 18,000 members, North Bengali Foundation (case no 28) approximately 17,000 members, and Jalalabad Association of America (case no 22) around 15,000 members. There are at least six other organisations with 1000 or more members. There are other many organisations that have between 100 and 1000 members. We have a few organisations with a small number of members because they are still run by a small of number of dedicated individuals with a vision to serve specific purposes such as women empowerment, law and order, immigrant rights issues, and art and music (case no 4, 10).

An immigrant organisation's leadership is vital to its internal dynamics, acceptability, and continuity over time. Additionally, this is also an area of controversy due to conflicting interests and leadership ambitions among members, which may slow down the organisation's activities, damage its reputation, and affect the organisation's lifetime. Some organisations started off with noble missions and visions but failed to sustain themselves over time due to internal conflicts and a failure to renew leadership. Organisations practice two types of methods for leadership renewal: election and selection. Twenty-two organisations in the sample practiced leadership renewal through election only, in which paid members cast vote for the potential leaders usually in every two to three years. A balloting system is used to elect members for leadership role. Paid members usually enjoy the rights to vote their potential leaders in election.

Selection by consensus is another mode of leadership renewal. This study has found five organisations that select their leaders based on consensus only, that is, their leaders are chosen primarily based on their reputations, qualifications, dedication, and acceptance within their respective immigrant communities and organisation members.

During such a selection process, members propose qualified candidates, negotiate the office post themselves, and reach an undivided decision. Despite the fact that leadership is selected, it is a continuous process that is repeated every two to five years. In response to a question about the transparency of the leadership renewal in such manner, some respondents justified their practice of selection as follows:

Many good people do not wish to run for office; they do not view the election process positively. We need qualified individuals to oversee and lead the organization. Therefore, we identify the ideal candidates for the position and propose a few names for consideration by other members of the committee and the members of the organisation. In selecting the leaders, we take a consensus approach to do so, rather than a direct selection.

A member of Munshigonj Bikrampur Association, aged 45, New York

There are 10 organisations that conduct either election or selection depending on the proposals from their members and the governing bodies when the time comes for leadership renewal. In other words, when it comes to the renewal of leadership, there is a mixed bag of practices.

Resource mobilisation

As a nonprofit organisation, immigrant organisations require sustained funding to operate their various programmes and accomplish their visions and missions. In the long run, funding plays a significant role in determining the success of immigrant organisations. Consequently, immigrant organisations take a robust strategy for mobilising resources. A variety of resource mobilisation drives and strategies have been observed among organisations. In general, there are five broad ways in which the organisations mobilise funds to run their programmes: membership fees, individual donations, fundraising events, corporate sponsorship, and government grants. Among the most common methods of securing financial support for organisations is membership fees. All surveyed organisations charge fees for new members and renewal of memberships. In order to generate higher revenue for the organisations, they offer different levels of membership from ordinary to elite membership, from individual to family membership, and from annual renewal to lifetime membership. The fees for different types of memberships also vary significantly. As an example, ordinary membership fees are generally under US \$100, while fees for family, elite, or lifetime membership can range from a few hundred dollars to a few thousand dollars.

Another important tool for mobilising resources is individual donations in which individuals make a lump sum payment to support humanitarian, social, or religious causes. In general, well-off members of the immigrant community make individual donations to organisations for building schools, hospitals, madrasas (religious schools), or helping needy meritorious students, underprivileged sections of society, or women empowerment projects. The contributions of such individual donors are generally celebrated and awarded with a token of appreciation in their annual events, encouraging other members to carry on similar contributions to the organisations.

The third source of revenue generation is fundraising events. These events may range from glittering galas to cultural events to community picnics. Organisers charge a fee for participation in events, which is higher than the expenses involved in organising them.

Sometimes, Bangladeshi immigrant entrepreneurs contribute a cash lump sum for supplying food, beverages, and transports, or venue booking, and such corporate sponsorship cut down expenses for organising the fundraising events and making more fund available for organisations. Bangladeshi immigrant entrepreneurs usually do not pay a cash lump sum to organisations but choose to sponsor some events. These entrepreneurs tend to sponsor trips for Bangladeshi artists and public figures so that they can attend these events in the United States. However, it is not direct charity work; these entrepreneurs choose to reach out to the community and make their products popular within the community as an innovative business strategy (Rahman, Alshawi, and Hasan 2021).

In addition to typical fundraising activities, some organisations also take advantage of benefits of tax-related laws designed to support charitable giving in the United States. For instance, Section 501c (3) is a portion of the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and specific tax category for nonprofit organisation and organisations that meet Section 501c (3) requirements are exempted from federal income tax, contributions are tax deductible, and also eligible for US government and private grants.² Many of the Bangladeshi organisations meet the requirements and enjoy the government support such as *Probashi* Bengali Christian Association, Bangladesh Association of America Inc. (BAAI), Bangladesh Association in Houston, Bangladeshi Medical Association of North America, and many other surveyed organisations. However, some organisations do not want to seek social support under Section 501c (3) due to the restrictions that it imposes on immigrant organisations such as operational limitations, control over organisation's activities and financial transparency and management of the organisation that come under strict, continuous scrutiny. Thus, Bangladeshi immigrant organisations use a variety of sources to obtain funding for their organisations.

Collective engagement: local and transnational dimensions

Local engagement

Immigrant organisations engage actively with the local immigrant community in a variety of ways, and it is through this active engagement that they embed themselves deeply within the community and become truly immigrant organisations, catering to the community's needs and aspirations. Bangladeshi organisations run two types of programmes: one type celebrates political, socio-cultural, and religious events that have special significance for Bangladesh and the other type offers settlement services to community members. Under the first category, this study identified three types of celebrations that Bangladeshi organisations arrange with the assistance of community members: national days, socio-cultural days, and religious days. Some organisations organise national days such as Language Martyr's Day (21st February), Independence Day (26 March), Martyred Intellectuals Day (14 December), and Victory Day (16 December) across the USA (Table 1). Observance of national days is attended by all sections of the immigrant community and marked by a strong sense of pride and emotional attachment to their homeland. Additionally, some organisations arrange cultural performances and lectures on the historical significance of such days.

Secondly, some organisations observe socio-cultural days such as *Pohela Falgoon* (the first day of Spring), *Pahela Baishakh* (Bengali New Year's Day) with great interest. They

organise Bengali *mela* (Bazaar) where a variety of Bangladeshi products can be found, including food, apparel, books, music, cosmetics, and other items. The organisations charge entry fees and receive corporate sponsorships from small Bangladeshi immigrant entrepreneurs who sell the products at the *mela*. Thirdly, organisations host parties on special religious occasions such as *Iftar* parties, *Eid-ul-Fitr* parties, and *Eid-ul-Adha* parties. As the majority of Bangladeshi immigrants are Muslim, most organisations arrange parties to celebrate these special occasions in the context of the family and thereby serve to strengthen and renew community bonds. There are a few Hindu and Christian organisations of Bangladeshi origin (cases no 29 and 24); they are responsible for organising *Durga Puja* and Christmas celebrations, which are attended by a larger immigrant community regardless of their religious beliefs and practices.

Furthermore, most organisations arrange an annual picnic for members of the community in addition to these national, cultural, and religious celebrations. Typically, picnics are seen as family events where those who share similar interests dine together following some cultural activities. As part of the community organisation, these celebrations serve as a means to bring community members together across organisational lines and to reinforce organisational spirit, vision, and mission. A picnic may be organised by several organisations at the same time, creating a platform for social interaction and inter-organisational networking. In addition to celebrations and entertainments, organisations also run various welfare activities to serve the new immigrants (Table 1). These activities include sharing information on job availability, health insurance, small business venture development, and accommodation, conducting educational and immigration counselling, filing tax information, educating basic laws regarding trafficking, emergency police and medical assistance, providing legal aid for domestic violence, assisting in the burial of deceased persons or sending deceased person's body back to Bangladesh, and running skill programmes such as computer learning and spoken English.

Thus, we have noticed that Bangladeshi immigrant organisations take two, complementary strategies to engage with the community. Firstly, they celebrate various days of importance in Bangladesh with immigrant community members often in a family setting and thus make children of immigrants familiar with the Bangladeshi political, social, cultural, and religious life, helping retain and reinforce a strong Bangladeshi identity. Secondly, welfare programmes provide organisations with the opportunity to reach out to members of the community and make a lasting impact on them. In general, organisational engagement should be viewed as a process of adapting to a new environment while maintaining and preserving Bangladeshi cultural norms and values.

Transnational engagement

With an expanding Bangladeshi diaspora in many foreign countries, Bangladesh has massively benefited from family remittances and such contribution has been extensively reported in existing literature (Rahman and Tan 2015; Ullah 2013, 2018). It is important to note that the scope of transnational engagement of immigrant organisations is not always limited to financial remittances, but also other types of contributions that have broader implications for the Bangladeshi society as a whole (Faist 2008). There are a variety of ways in which organisations are engaging with Bangladesh, as shown in Table 1.

Two factors may contribute to this high level of transnational engagement: time and class characteristics of immigration. Firstly, the time factor is crucial because most Bangladeshi immigrants have immigrated to the USA in the last three decades. In their memories, the general socioeconomic conditions of their home communities are vividly recalled, which encourages them to become involved in social and economic causes within the communities of their origin. Secondly, different types of US lottery visas (e.g. diversity visa and opportunity visa), family reunion visa, student visa, tourist visa, and finally irregular border-crossing migration from South American countries have compounded the class character of immigrant population, accelerating the emergence of substantial immigrant population from the middle-class background in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi middle class found immigration a lucrative option for gaining the access to transformative power of the foreign countries and a means of material transformation for those who stayed behind (Gardner 1995). Those of middle-class origin who immigrated to the USA remember their hardships and struggles back home, and now feel compelled to lend a helping hand to those in Bangladesh who are mired in perpetual poverty.

In a study on Indian transnational organisations in the global North, it was reported that Indian professional immigrants used the concept of ‘pay-back to the motherland’ to justify their involvement with India (Rahman and Ranjan 2020). As in this case, they were primarily professionals who studied in Indian higher education institutions in engineering and technology, medicine, science, management, and business studies. In my discussions with Bangladeshi immigrants and their organisations, I have noticed that members of professional organisations like university alumni organisations, medical doctors, and engineers also used the same phrase, ‘pay-back to the homeland’ when they explain the rationale for engagement with Bangladesh. While speaking with nonprofessional organisations, such as regional organisations, which make up half of this study’s surveyed organisations, they justified their engagement by referring to the concept of ‘*desh-er manush-ke sahajjo kori,*’ that is, ‘helping the countrymen.’ The use of the notion of ‘helping the countrymen’ derives from the complex understanding that they are not ‘paying the debt,’ that is, they do not consider much in terms of indebtedness to the home country, but in terms of ‘giving’ as a gift to the countrymen. A member of professional organisation, AABEA and a member of regional migrant organisation stated:

I am indebted to my country for providing me with higher education at the top technology university in Bangladesh. It is my responsibility to pay back to my country as much as possible. I am contributing to AABEA for organizational engagement in Bangladesh. I am also personally doing many welfare activities in my home district in Bangladesh.

An engineer from BUET, aged 45, member of AABEA, New Jersey

I have entered the USA through Mexico. I have a brother living in New York who has paid all the expenses associated with my migration to the United States. I have finished my higher secondary education from my home district in Munshigonj. I help my organization for the welfare of immigrants from Munshigonj and district community in Bangladesh

A member of Munshigonj Bikrampur Association, aged 51, New York

It has been observed that the nature of engagement varies significantly among immigrant organisations. Professional organisations often engage in activities that differ from those

of regional and national organisations. Therefore, in the upcoming discussion, I will describe transnational engagement in terms of professional, national, and regional organisations. The sample includes six professional organisations who are actively involved in various transnational activities in Bangladesh. Three of these organisations are leading university alumni organisations (cases 8, 18, 31). They are formed by their respective university alumni and are predominantly concerned with the welfare of their respective institutions. As part of their mission, they provide scholarships to students, contribute to expansion work, and exchange information about jobs, graduate scholarships, and career advancement. Furthermore, they also visit their universities during vacation and share their experiences with students. The remaining three organisations are formed by Bangladeshi engineers and architects called AABEA (case no 33), medical practitioners, BMANA (case no 11), and police officers (case no 15).

The AABEA promotes technical education in Bangladesh by providing educational and research assistance. The AABEA in collaboration with Intel Engineers and Intel Foundation's matching grant, developed a state-of-the-art computer lab at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) in Dhaka and Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (CUET) in Chittagong. The AABEA has also established a large scale integrated (VLSI) circuit area for graduate programme and developed the Robert Noyce Simulation Lab (RNSL) and Linux Lab for the BUET. In addition, a joint research centre for advanced system engineering has been established at East West University in Dhaka in order to facilitate education, research, and development on VLSI circuits. In collaboration with the World Bank, the organisation has developed marketing tools to assist Bangladeshi IT companies in selling their products in the United States. The organisation has also provided humanitarian assistance to disaster-stricken regions throughout the world, including in the aftermath of cyclone disasters in Bangladesh, earthquakes in Haiti and tsunami-devastated countries in Southeast Asia in collaboration with the Salvation Army and Bangladesh Mission in the United States.

The BMANA is involved in donating medical equipment to hospitals and health centres, building shelter homes to cyclone-prone area, sharing information on medical education and scholarships in the USA, providing scholarships to needy medical students, and training to medical professionals. Members of this organisation make regular visits to medical colleges and universities where they were educated and share their experiences and opportunities in the US healthcare sector. The last organisation is Bangladesh-American Police Club (case no 15). This organisation was formed by Bangladeshi-origin police members who are working in the USA police department. The organisation is in contact with Bangladesh police department and regularly exchange ideas about ways to improve the laws and orders in Bangladesh. This organisation was involved in introducing the concept of 'community policy' in Bangladesh. Occasionally, this organisation sponsors a nationwide essay contest for students on crime prevention topics.

This survey includes 10 national organisations whose membership and activities target the entire country. Of these 10 organisations, four organisations are involved in promoting women empowerment (case no 4), artists and their works (case no 10 and 12) and the plight of climate-affected people in Bangladesh (case no 24). Of them, Samhati – Bangladesh Women's organisation (case no 4) run various women empowerment programmes

in different parts of Bangladesh and help uplift the status of deprived women. There are two cultural organisations (case no 10 and 12), and they sponsor Bangladeshi artists and cultural personalities to fly to the USA and join various cultural events and help raise funds for other philanthropic activities in Bangladesh. They also offer financial support to needy artists for talent development and medical treatment. Finally, the World Human Rights and Development (WHRD) organisation engages with climate change issues in Bangladesh and advocate for the plight of climate refugees in Bangladesh at the global stage. The remaining six organisations are engaged in various development projects in Bangladesh such as educational institutions, medical centres and hospitals, student scholarship programmes, disaster relief, winter clothes, medical programmes (e.g. eye camps, medical treatment to handicaps), and technological skills transfers.

As for the remaining 17 organisations, they are regional organisations based on administrative units such as divisions, districts, and Upazilas. Regional organisations based on districts and Upazilas are usually more effective in reaching out to their regions of origin and having a positive impact on their local communities. For instance, they are engaged with myriad activities such as running orphanages, building mosques, madrassas, school, disaster shelters, and medical centres, providing flood relief and other disaster relief, distributing winter clothes and student scholarship, and supporting poverty eradication, girl education, and other related activities.

Bangladesh's coastal areas have been adversely affected by climate change (Islam 2022). In some regions, getting arsenic free water is a big challenge for villagers and some organisations have provided deep tube-wells for arsenic free water (case no 5, 6, 20). Riverbank erosion is another problem that people near big rivers confront in their everyday life. Ruposhi Chandpur Foundation runs a programme to help the people who are affected by riverbank erosion. Organisations like Bangladesh Beanibazar Social and Cultural Society (case no 20) have been running a project to ensure free deep tube well and toilet at every union and villages in Beanibazar. Chittagong Association of North America donated medical equipment to Chittagong medical College (CMC), a regional pride for inhabitants of Chittagong division and run free medical treatment programmes for poor patients. Consequently, three sets of organisations, that is, professionals, national and regional organisations, engage with Bangladesh at different levels and in different ways. In the end, their transnational engagement contributes to enhancing the quality of life in Bangladesh.

Conclusion

This study has investigated the emergence of immigrant organisations within the Bangladeshi immigrant community in the United States by shedding light on the opportunity structures, immigrant organisation characteristics, and local and transnational engagement. The paper has discussed two opportunity-structure conditions for the development of immigrant organisations: a niche in which the immigrant organisations can viably function as access to government support and resources. The paper described the opportunity structure or demand side of immigrant organisations by detailing the demand for immigrant-friendly organisational services and ethnic-cultural programmes for the presentation and preservation of the collective identity. The immigrant organisations receive government support in terms of policy framework, grants, and access to

other valuable resources. The United States support nonprofit organisations including immigrant organisations through tax exemption and tax deductibility policy. Meeting the requirement of the Section 501c (3) of the US-IRS for specific tax category allows organisations to get the tax-exempt status and enjoy tax deductible contributions.

This paper has examined the characteristics of immigrant organisations and reported the existence of different types of organisation from professional, regional, cultural, to advocacy. It is important to note that within an immigrant group, there can be different types of organisations serving different needs and oriented towards the host country, the origin country, or both host and origin countries. In the similar vein, members of an immigrant group may join more than one organisation depending on the range of activities and interests, and the orientation towards locations. Nevertheless, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive in their involvement with different organisations. In most organisations, the leadership is renewed through elections and selection. Holding a post of the leadership of an organisation brings prestige and honour for members in host and origin countries, and immigrants with desired leadership qualities compete for leadership posts.

Most organisations confront challenges in resource mobilisation; however, they usually take on two-pronged strategies to raise funds for organisation. They arrange different types of events throughout the year ranging from national, cultural, religious to fund raising events and by organising such events, they generate revenue for running their organisations. However, celebrations of various national, cultural, and religious days or fund-raising events go beyond festivity and fund-raising. Such local engagement help Bangladeshi immigrants find a way to fit into a new environment in the United States while still holding onto the cultural beliefs, values, and norms of the Bangladeshi society. Transnational engagement is all about working towards bettering the lives of those who are marginalised and disadvantaged in the country of origin in Bangladesh. Donations for social causes and welfare of the deprived section of the origin society offer relief, comfort, and a sense of gratification to the organisations and its members.

Although this paper has attempted to provide insights into the complex making of the immigrant organisations among new immigrant groups, more work is needed to document the development, the scope, and the outcomes of organisational engagement for settlement in the United States and development implications for origin countries like Bangladesh. Bangladeshi immigrant community is not the only new immigrant community in the United States. There are many other new immigrant groups from Asia and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region that demand scholarly attention. Among the lines of research to be developed, it would be advisable to study the complexity of organising the events, managing the resources, and engaging at the local and transnational levels, and the multiple orientations of the members and leaders within organisations that may produce outcomes very different from the stated, publicised visions and missions of organisations. It would be also interesting to see how local and transnational engagements differ, yet both aim to create a positive impact in different ways.

Notes

1. US Internal Revenue Service (IRS), 'Exempt Organization Types', and 'Exemption Requirements – 501 (c) (3) organizations', accessed on 24 June 2023: <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/exempt-organization-types> and <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/exemption-requirements-501c3-organizations>
2. US Internal Revenue Service (IRS), 'Exempt Organization Types', and 'Exemption Requirements – 501 (c) (3) organizations', accessed on 24 June 2023: <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/exempt-organization-types> and <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/exemption-requirements-501c3-organizations>

Acknowledgements

The author likes to acknowledge the fieldwork assistance offered by Anisur Rahman Khan during my data collection process in the USA. Open Access funding is provided by the Qatar National Library.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

Md Mizanur Rahman is a Research Associate Professor at the Gulf Studies Program and Center, College of Arts and Sciences, P.O. Box: 2713, Doha, Qatar. His research interests include migration studies and Gulf Area Studies. Email: mizan@qu.edu.qa.

ORCID

Md Mizanur Rahman  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6857-7602>

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