



# Religious Education as a Tool for Countering Extremism: Rethinking Education Policy of Bangladesh

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**Public Policy & Governance Program**  
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**Dedicated...**

*To my parents*

## **Declaration**

I declare that the dissertation entitled “Religious Education as a Tool for Countering Extremism: Rethinking Education Policy of Bangladesh” submitted to the PPG Program of North South University, Bangladesh for the Degree of Master in Public Policy and Governance (MPPG) is an original work of mine. No part of it, in any form, has been copied from other sources without acknowledgement or submitted to any other university or institute for any degree or diploma. Views and expressions of the thesis bear the responsibility of mine with the exclusion of PPG for any error and omission to it.

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## **Abstract**

In Bangladesh, now there is an increasing threat of extremism as more and more youths are turning to radical activities. Extremist groups are capturing the young minds through misinterpretation of religious ideologies, and gradually motivating them to terrorism. Along with madrasa students, they are also targeting the vulnerable youth groups of public and private universities, colleges, and schools.

Education can play dual role in context of religious extremism, as it can both propagate and counter extremist ideologies. In recent years, the role of religious education has gained prominence among policy makers, practitioners, and academicians since it can provide effective counter narratives against extremist ideologies and doctrines.

Traditionally, responses to extremism and terrorism in Bangladesh have been dominated by hard power approaches (coercive and aggressive measures) by the government and law enforcement agencies, but contemporary trends in security discourse have drawn attention to the role of education as an effective soft power tool for countering extremism and terrorism. In countering extremist tendencies, education, especially religious education, can act as an early intervention and effective counterstrategy. This research has tried to study these issues in context of Bangladesh.

This research has tried to investigate the role of religious education of secular schools in countering extremism in the present context of Bangladesh. With this concern, it intends to know the level of importance of formal religious education in countering extremism from the students (demand side) perspective. With reviewing contemporary effective approaches to religious education worldwide, this research has tried to analyze the religious text books and teachers' instruction books along with curriculum and current education policy (supply side) in order to investigate whether they are supportive to provide adequate narratives (as per the needs of the students) for countering extremism.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

This chapter introduces the general background of the study with significance of the issue. It presents statement of the problem and rationale of the research. It also highlights the objectives of this research. Finally, it ends up with the structure of the thesis.

### 1.1 Background and significance of the issue

In Bangladesh, now there is an increasing threat of extremism as more and more youths are turning to radical activities. Contrary to the traditional notion that people from economically deprived backgrounds and of low education are more susceptible to extremism and terrorism, recent trends show that higher educated youth from affluent families are also engaging in such activities.

Bangladesh, the fourth largest Muslim and seventh largest populous country in the world, has been witnessing a new wave of religious extremism and terrorism. The emergence of technologically advanced militant radical groups (like Hizbut Tahrir, Hizbut Tawhid, Harakatul Jihad, Ansarullah Bangla Team, Jamatul Mujahedeen Bangladesh, Neo JMB, and others)<sup>1</sup> is now posing a serious threat to the peace, security, internal stability, and development of the society. These proscribed extremist groups are capturing the young minds through misinterpretation of religious ideologies, and gradually motivating them to terrorism.

Extremists are targeting the vulnerable youth groups starting from *madrasa* (Islamic educational institutions) students to private university students, and from poverty-stricken individuals to elite section of the society. In the daily newspapers, it has become a frequent news that teachers and students (the youths) are being captured from different educational institutions for their religion based extremist activities affecting the academic atmosphere, religious harmony, and social stability. Local militants' connections to regional and international terrorist organizations indicate that the threat is obviously present, clear, and cannot be neglected<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/country\\_bangladesh](https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/country_bangladesh) (accessed: 12/10/1027)

Earlier, only the students of *madrasas* were alleged to be involved in extremist activities. Religious education in *madrasas* was usually suspected to be responsible for producing extremist ideologies. But, some recent phenomena (e.g. Gulshan Attack, 2016)<sup>1</sup> also indicate that students from various universities or traditional educational institutions (having secular educational background) are also becoming involved in extremist and terrorist activities. This raises questions whether the education system in secular educational institutions is also problematic or unable to play its expected role. Even, we don't know actually what role the education system of secular educational institutions of Bangladesh can play in context of countering extremism. Recent phenomena also claim further review of the current education policy of the country<sup>2</sup>.

As a catalyst for social change, education can empower people to overcome any social problem. In recent years, the role of religious education has gained prominence among policy makers, practitioners, and academicians since it can provide effective counter-narratives against violent extremist ideologies.

Traditionally, responses to extremism and terrorism in Bangladesh have been dominated by hard power approaches (coercive and aggressive measures) by the government and law enforcement agencies, but contemporary trends in security discourse have drawn attention to the role of education as an effective soft power tool for countering extremism and terrorism. In countering extremist tendencies, education, especially religious education, can act as an early intervention and effective counterstrategy. This research has tried to study these issues in context of Bangladesh.

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<sup>1</sup><https://thediomat.com/2016/07/the-rise-of-islamic-extremism-in-bangladesh/> (accessed: 26/09/2017)

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/country\\_bangladesh/terrorist\\_attacks](https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/country_bangladesh/terrorist_attacks) (accessed: 12/10/1027)

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

In the mainstream secular schools of Bangladesh, current approach of religious education provides partial knowledge about respective religion to the pupils. This approach of providing partial knowledge about religion has some negative implications.

When students acquire partial knowledge and limited view of their own religion, they focus only on some selected portions of their holy text. As they do not get a holistic view of their own religion, they may become susceptible to the misinterpretation of their holy verses at any time.

In addition, in every religion, a number of divergent doctrines/ideologies are observed with diverse interpretations on different sensitive and controversial issues. According to the current approach of religious education, pupils do not get any opportunity to be deeply acquainted with the concept of different ideologies and interpretations within their religions. Lack of holistic knowledge and proper interpretation of diverse religious issues, students and young generations may become more susceptible to the extremist ideologies and terrorist activities.

Indeed, religious education can play dual role both in propagating or countering extremist ideologies. Weakness in religious education may contribute to the spreading of extremist ideologies. On the other hand, proper utilization of religious education can contribute to the countering extremist ideologies.

Although the young generation of Bangladesh is now more vulnerable to the extremist ideologies and religious misinterpretations for various practical reasons, the current education policy of Bangladesh provides no effective approach to religious education in countering extremism and terrorism. The problem area of this research lies in this issue. Religious education can be used as one of the effective means for preventing extremism, but its capability is unutilized and potentiality is wholly neglected in Bangladesh.

### **1.3 Rationale of the research**

The rationale of this research is twofold:

a) A number of researches have been performed on the factors instigating extremism such as relative deprivation, rapid modernization, social injustice, power inequality, corrupt regime, religious discrimination, political violence, civil wars, historical antecedents, integration problems and so on. But little have been done regarding the role of religious education in countering extremism in context of Bangladesh.

b) Education, especially religious education, can play dual role in context of extremism. If it is not utilized as a tool of providing narratives for countering extremism, it may be utilized by the extremists to propagate their extreme narratives and ideologies. Bangladesh needs proactive response in this context where the output of this research may help a lot.

Considering the above mentioned arguments, this research has tried to investigate the role of formal religious education of secular schools in countering extremism in the present context of Bangladesh. With this concern, it intends to examine whether there is any role played by the formal religious education of secular schools in countering extremism, or whether formal religious education of secular schools is necessary (demanded) for countering extremism in context of Bangladesh.

This research has tried to study the role of religious education of secular (mainstream non-religious) schools in countering extremism in the present context of Bangladesh. With this concern, it intends to know the level of importance of formal religious education in countering extremism from the students (demand side) perspective. With reviewing contemporary effective approaches to religious education worldwide, this research will try to analyze the curriculum, religious text books and teachers' instruction books along with current education policy (supply side) in order to investigate whether they are supportive to provide adequate narratives (as per the needs of the students) for countering extremism.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the research**

The research has been performed with the following objectives:

- 1) To investigate the role and importance of formal religious education of secular schools in providing interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives) in the context of Bangladesh.
- 2) To analyze the scope of the current education policy of Bangladesh in using the formal religious education system of secular schools as a tool for countering extremism.

#### **1.5 Structure of the study**

This thesis is developed through five Chapters. 1st Chapter introduces the general background of the study with significance of the issue. It presents statement of the problem and rationale of the research. It also highlights the objectives of this research. Finally, it ends up with the structure of the thesis.

2nd chapter presents literature review that provides insight on the research problem and objective of this study. Then, it focuses on research questions, theoretical overview, analytical framework, hypothesis, methodological overview and research design.

3rd chapter presents a brief overview of socio-institutional system of religious education where it discusses about formal and informal socio-institutional sources. Then it focuses on the national education policy of Bangladesh in line with religious education.

4th chapter presents empirical data that the researcher found from quantitative and qualitative phases of the research. It aims to analyze and interpret the empirical data in line with the analytical framework, research questions, and hypotheses. Findings of quantitative phase has been tried to explain with the opinions and observations found from qualitative phase which involved in-depth interview, focus group discussion (FGD), and analysis of textbooks, curriculum and education policy.

5th chapter is the concluding chapter that presents the major findings of the study in brief account. Then it attempts to answer all the research questions on basis of research findings. Lastly it also discusses about theoretical implication and policy implication that involves the major findings of the research.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review and Conceptual Overview

This chapter includes literature review that provides insight on the research problem and objective of this study. For convenient study, literature review has been divided into three distinct parts. As literature found on this issue limited both globally and locally, review has been done in some details in order to uphold a clear concept. This chapter further tries to reveal the research gap with some lacking of studies in country context. Then, it focuses on research questions, theoretical overview, analytical framework, hypothesis, methodological overview and research design.

#### 2.1 Literature Review

##### 2.1.1 PART-I: Role of Education in Countering Extremism

##### ***2.1.1a Education & Security: A Global Literature Review on the Role of Education in Countering Violent Religious Extremism (Ghosh et al., 2016a)***

Relationship between extremism and education is apparently paradoxical. Education can be used for both facilitating and combating extremism. In order to obtain an overall picture of global practice and understanding in this concern, the Tony Blair Faith Foundation (TBFF) has carried out this review with the faculty from McGill University. The purpose of this review is to provide a better understanding of what is practiced currently worldwide, and to assess whether education should be given priority in combating extremism. It also identifies the knowledge-gaps therein.

Three core questions have been considered for this review –

The objective of the first question (is education important?) is to study the paradoxical nature of education in the context of extremism. On one side, the authors find evidence on the use of education for propagating extremist ideologies. On the other side, they find arguments why education should be used in preventing extremism.

The objective of the second question (what kind of education helps counter violent extremism?) is to review various forms of education that are necessary for countering extremism. The authors argue that only general education is not sufficient for countering extremism. Special approach is needed to serve this purpose.

Finally, the objective of the third question (how does education help?) is to review current evidences on how education contributes to countering extremism as a soft power tool.

This paper reviews existing policies and programs in different countries in order to demonstrate what kind of education is being promoted in countering extremism effectively.

Some of the key findings of this review are-

- 1) Extremist groups set young people as their prime target.
- 2) Education, as a double-edged sword, can be used for both propagating extreme ideology and countering extremism.
- 3) Educational programs create both direct and indirect impact on countering extremism.

This review paper has identified education as an evident tool for addressing extremist ideologies. Education can develop critical thinking as well as respect for diversity within and among religions. As education can provide narratives for countering extremism, it should be considered as a significant soft-power tool to complement hard-power initiatives.

This review focuses on education as a vital component for countering extremism. As universal system of education entails that young pupils should spend 16 years (approximately) of their lives in schools, it can be used as an obvious instrument for developing resilience and offering counter narratives. Since education offers an effective and sustainable response to the problem of extremist ideologies, it should be given priority as a means for countering extremism.

### ***2.1.1b Can Education Counter Violent Religious Extremism? (Ghosh et al., 2016b)***

Authors of this paper argue that education needs to be considered as one of the effective tools for countering religious extremism. Education can build resilient communities through ethical, critical and active citizenship.

This paper presents a brief discussion on the significance of education for the youths in their psycho-social development. For clarity, it also discusses different pull and push factors that can trigger radicalization, extremism and terrorism.

This article vividly describes how education can counter extremism. Unlike the European Union, in North American countries (especially Canada), little attention has been

paid to the role of education in countering extremism and terrorism. Counter-extremism policies do not incorporate the educational sector.

As issues of extremism are not addressed within the formal education systems of North America, the youths are being prevented from developing the ability of critical analysis of extremist ideologies. Authors of this article argue that education can play a vital role as one of the soft-power proactive initiatives in countering extremism.

#### **Summary**

Both literatures reviewed in sub-section 2.1.1a and sub-section 2.1.1b argue that education can play a significant role in countering extremism through providing narratives against extremist ideologies. So, it should be used as one of the effective soft-power tools for countering extremism.

Since religious education is the main area of interest for this research, in the next part, literatures concerned will be reviewed for searching effective approaches to religious education in countering extremism.

### **2.1.2 PART-II: Searching effective approach to religious education for countering extremism**

#### **2.1.2a Contemporary pedagogies of religious education: What are they? (Grimmitt, 2000)**

To describe the main types of religious education existing worldwide, Michael Grimmitt has differentiated among '*learning religion*,' '*learning about religion*,' and '*learning from religion*' approaches. Grimmitt's distinctions clearly categorize the various approaches to the religious education across the world.

##### **a) Learning religion**

'*Learning religion*' approach represents the situation where a single religion is taught as per the curriculum of religious education. Here, religion is taught from the inside where teachers are expected to be believers of that particular religion. The objective of this approach is to make students active believers of a particular religion or to strengthen their commitment to it.

Generally, respective religious group controls the method and curriculum of religious education. Children (pupils) from each religion (faith) are educated in separate classrooms, where they receive religious education from their respective religious representatives. For

example, in separate classroom, the Muslim children are educated by the Muslim teachers, the Hindu children are educated by the Hindu teachers, and so on. In Bangladesh, the religious education system in normal schools basically falls into this category i.e. '*Learning religion*'.

However, this type of religious education tends to be challenged, since it restricts cognitive horizon and freedom of the pupils. For this kind of religious education, the attempt against religious intolerance is strictly limited.

### ***b) Learning about religion***

'Learning about religion' corresponds to Michael Grimmitt's second distinction. In the case of '*learning about religion*', religion is taught from the outside. This approach focuses on the content of different religions. Sometimes this kind of religious education may be called 'education in comparative religion' or 'religious studies' based upon history, phenomenology and anthropology of religions.

However, this kind of religious education, 'learning about religion,' plays a significant role in preventing religious intolerance. Since this approach empowers the pupils with critical thinking ability for interpreting religious phenomena, it emancipates them from unexamined beliefs within own religion and negative understanding among others' religions. This approach helps the youths to get rid of stereotypes of other religious traditions.

In most parts of England and Wales, all school children (irrespective of faith) are taught about religions in the same classroom. The pedagogy and philosophy of the subject may vary from school to school, but some form of '*learning about religion*' is a common element.

### ***c) Learning from religion***

'Learning from religion' is the third kind of religious education which is newly emerged. As per this approach, pupils need not to participate in the beliefs and practices of the religions being taught. Distance between religious content and pupils is firmly maintained. In this case, children learn from other religions for their own moral and spiritual development. For example, '*ahingsha*' is one of the central beliefs in Buddhism. If Muslim children learn from '*ahingsha*', they may be said to have learned from religion – Buddhism.

For young people to become more tolerant of others through the study of religion is to learn from religion.

This literature focuses on the issue that only learning 'own religion' is not enough for pupils in religious education. Rather, learning about 'other religions' is equally important for gaining religious tolerance, resilience, and mutual respect.

### **2.1.2b The Academic Study of Religions and Integrative Religious Education in Europe (Alberts, 2010)**

This article presents an overview of the book *Integrative Religious Education in Europe: A Study-of-religions Approach* (Alberts, 2007). In this book, the author has introduced the notion of 'integrative religious education'. As opposed to separative confessional approaches, integrative religious education is related to education about different religions in religiously mixed classrooms.

Discussing on recent theory and methodology in the study of religions (considering examples from England, Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, and Germany), the author has taken a slightly different approach to religious education in European context. Rather than following traditional models of distinguishing between *confessional* and *non-confessional* religious education, or between education *into* religion, education *about* religion and education *from* religion, she has distinguished between *integrative* religious education and *separative* religious education.

In the case of integrative religious education, children with different religious backgrounds are integrated in one classroom for learning together about different religions. In the case of separative religious education, they are separated according to their religious traditions for learning about 'their own' and often also about 'other' religions in separate groups.

Aims of integrative religious education can be identified as:

- (a) Knowledge and understanding of different religious traditions;
- (b) Mutual respect and harmony in a multicultural society; and
- (c) Personal, moral and spiritual development of the pupils.

In England and Sweden, integrative religious education is considered as an important component of education, since it can provide a common arena where children (pupils) with

different religious backgrounds learn together. Pupils, thereby, also learn how to live with one another, despite the different worldviews they may have.

The main argument in this literature is that knowledge about different religions and worldviews help the pupils to maintain inter-faith harmony in a religiously diverse world.

**2.1.2c *The Interpretive Approach to Religious Education and the Development of a Community of Practice (Jackson, 2009)***

**2.1.2d *Addressing Religious Extremism: A Positive Approach for Policy Makers and Practitioners (Jackson, 2014)***

**2.1.2e *Religious extremism, religious education, and the interpretive approach (Miller, 2013)***

In the first two articles, Robert Jackson has tried to provide an overview of the interpretive approach to religious education. This article contains theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical dimensions of interpretive approach. This approach takes account of the diversity that exists *within* and *among* religions, which helps pupils to understand and interpret other views with tolerant interaction and mutual respect.

Interpretive approach to religious education was originally developed in publicly funded community schools in England and Wales. Its objective is primarily focused in empowering pupils to achieve a reflective and critical understanding of religions. Its methodology emerged from the field study and experience of young people and children from different religious backgrounds in United Kingdom. It uses the methods of hermeneutics and social anthropology.

The author's book, *Religious Education: An Interpretive Approach* (Jackson, 1997), was the first text that provided a detailed account of the interpretive approach to religious education (mainly based on the theory of Interpretation /Hermeneutics). Since then, this approach is being used and developed further both in Europe and beyond. The interpretive approach has been used in Norway, Germany, Canada, South Africa, and Japan as well as in a Council of Europe project and the EC-funded REDCo project. It has produced a series of action research related to religious education.

The REDCo Project (which included various research studies with 14-16 year olds in eight European countries) shows that interpretive approach can help to develop a culture of

'living together'. Concerned survey demonstrated that majority of participants wanted to learn from and about one another's religious perspectives in the 'safe space' of their classroom.

Interpretive approach involves three major concepts relating to the analysis of religious diversity- representation, interpretation and reflexivity. This approach encourages students to understand and interpret various representations of a religious group and the diversity of practices and beliefs within and among groups. Thus, interpretive approach encourages dialogue, inquiry, and critical thinking among students for the purpose of social cohesion. Here, teachers act both as the facilitators of dialogue and the sources of knowledge and understanding.

Using interpretive approach, trained teachers can be instructed to make their students aware of the nature of religious extremism and its violent outcomes. This approach minimizes isolation, since it incorporates critical pedagogy, dialogical methods, and co-operative learning that help students develop more comprehensive understanding of the issues related to religious extremism and counter-extremism. Thus, this approach provides an effective method of countering extremist ideologies which is also advocated by Miller (2013).

Miller (2013) argues that interpretive approach to religious education promotes recognition of internal diversity and avoidance of external stereotyping. Thus, interpretive approach encourages pupils to show tolerance to and respect for different perspectives and beliefs that are imperative for countering extremism.

From these literatures, it is explicable that religious education having proper interpretation of diversity within and among religions can help pupils in countering extremist ideologies.

### **Summary**

Literatures reviewed in sub-section 2.1.2a and sub-section 2.1.2b argue that learning about different religions can be a significant part of religious education. Learning about different religions help pupils to develop mutual understanding and tolerance among different religious groups.

Literatures reviewed in sub-section 2.1.2(c-e) argue that religious education should contain proper interpretation of diversity within and among religions. It argues that interpretive approach to religious education provides better understanding of religious diversities that facilitates pupils to counter religious extremism with mutual respect and tolerance.

Considering the above-mentioned features of effective approaches to religious education, in the next part, literatures regarding the features and role of religious education along with education policy of Bangladesh will be reviewed specially in the context of countering extremism.

## **2.1.3 PART-III: Reviewing education policy of Bangladesh in context of countering extremism**

### ***2.1.3a The Role of Education in Countering Radicalization in Bangladesh (Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, 2015)***

This paper is basically a report which is one of the deliverables of a project titled “Towards Developing a Better Counter Terrorism Regime in Bangladesh – Phase II”. This project is being implemented by Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) with financial support from the Royal Danish Embassy, Dhaka. The paper tries to explore the role of education in countering radicalization and extremism in context of Bangladesh.

As methodology, a perception survey was conducted among representatives of the education sector in Dhaka City through administering structured questionnaire. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were also held with highly placed education sector representatives of Bangladesh. Furthermore, extensive literature review was undertaken to analyze the trends, incidents, prospects and challenges of the role of education in countering extremism in context of Bangladesh.

Major findings of the report (according to the perception survey conducted by BEI):

- 1) 67% of the respondents think that radicalization is a problem in Bangladesh;
- 2) 56% of the respondents consider the Youth as the most vulnerable section of the society to the appeal of radical organizations, followed by people with less/poor/inadequate knowledge and understanding of Islam (55%), and 14adrasa students (41%).
- 3) A good majority of the respondents (76%) consider “Education” as one of the important means to face the challenges of radicalization and extremism in Bangladesh.
- 4) 51% of the respondents think that the issues related to radicalization and extremism should be incorporated into the education policy.

From the findings of this report, education can be identified as one of the crucial means of countering radicalization and extremism. The report suggests that the National Education Policy (NEP) 2010 should be revised in order to incorporate the issues of religious intolerance, radicalization, and extremism. NEP 2010 does not address social problems like extremism, radicalization, and terrorism properly. Text books have not yet incorporated the relevant sections necessary for countering extremism. Curriculum should include separate chapters on extremism and radicalization to make students more aware on the issues. The contents of curriculum and textbooks at all levels should be carefully scrutinized to ensure that the textbooks provide inter- and intra-faith understanding with proper interpretation.

This paper concludes that effective education can play a pivotal role in helping young people keep away themselves from extremism. Education can help counter extremist ideologies through raising awareness, generating respect for others, and promoting cultures of peace and dialogue. In addition, it can also act as an early intervention and effective counterstrategy for countering violent extremist tendencies. Therefore, looking into the role of education in countering extremism in Bangladesh is a very sensible approach towards preventing the threat of terrorism.

### ***2.1.3b Reviewing Education Policy of Bangladesh: Is the Present Education Policy Adequate for Countering Terrorism, Ethnic and Religious Intolerance? (Hoque, 2014)***

Originally, this is an outcome of a research project on “Reviewing Education Policy of Bangladesh: Is the Present Education Policy Adequate for Countering Terrorism, Religious and Ethnic Intolerance?”. This project was funded by South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF), Belgium.

The paper provides a literature review on education and religious extremism in context of Bangladesh. It also presents a critical overview of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2010.

The main objective of this study was to find out whether the issues like religious intolerance, extremism and terrorism are focused or not in the latest NEP for facing these challenges through education. It tries to search the opportunities of incorporating several issues such as counter-extremism, counter-terrorism, religious tolerance and social harmony in the text books of elementary and secondary school levels.

Some major findings of this study are:

a) 71.60% respondents think that the religious intolerance, extremism and terrorism are a problem for Bangladesh.

b) 43.60% respondents share that present NEP is not adequate to face the challenges of religious intolerance, extremism and terrorism.

c) People opine (85% opined) that it is important to incorporate these issues in NEP, curriculum/syllabuses and text books with priority basis.

d) The most significant finding of this study is that people treat (91.20% opined) ‘education’ as an important means to face the challenges of religious intolerance, extremism and terrorism in context of Bangladesh.

On the basis of the study, this paper recommends that current National Education Policy of Bangladesh should be revised in order to incorporate the issues of religious intolerance, extremism and terrorism. It also emphasizes on the urgent need of a careful scrutiny of the curriculum/syllabus and textbook contents at all levels to ensure that education promotes inter-faith understanding, religious tolerance and social harmony.

### Summary

Literatures reviewed in sub-section 2.1.3a and sub-section 2.1.3b explore that present National Education Policy of Bangladesh is not capable enough to face the challenges of extremism. Curriculum and text books should incorporate the issues like countering extremism and terrorism. It is also noticeable that elements of learning diverse religious issues with proper interpretation are not evident in the religious education and education policy of Bangladesh.

But there are limitations in these studies, since these studies are only survey based. Here, the authors have not examined and analyzed the education system and education policy of Bangladesh in the light of any tested theory or dependable approaches to explore the factual relationships among various factors.

By summarizing the whole literature review, the following key facts have been explored:

**Part-I. Education can play a significant role in countering extremism through providing narratives against extremist ideologies.**

**So, it should be used as one of the effective soft-power tools for countering extremism.**

2.1.1a(Ghosh et al., 2016a), 2.1.1b(Ghosh et al., 2016b)

**Part-II. Religious education should provide proper interpretation of diversity within and among religions for avoiding extremist ideologies and religious intolerance.**

2.1.2a(Grimmitt, 2000), 2.1.2b(Alberts, 2010), 2.1.2c-e (Jackson, 2009 & 2014; Miller, 2013)

**Part-III. National Education Policy of Bangladesh is not capable enough to face the challenges of extremism. As a tool of countering extremism, religious education is neglected in Bangladesh.**

2.1.3a(Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, 2015), 2.1.3b(Hoque, 2014)

But there are limitations specially in the studies of part-III, since these studies are only survey based. Here, the authors have not examined and analyzed the education system and education policy of Bangladesh in the light of any tested theory or dependable approaches to explore the factual relationships among various factors.

This literature review explores that present national education policy and current religious education system of Bangladesh has limitations in context of countering religious extremism and radicalization. Though education is an indispensable component for countering extremism, and a number of countries in other parts of the world are now following new approaches to religious education for facing the challenges of extremism, Bangladesh is still lagging behind.

The research-gap found in the literature review raises the following new questions for further research (specially focusing on the religious education of secular schools in Bangladesh)-

1) Is religious education of secular schools really important (or demanded) for countering extremism in the present context of Bangladesh?

2) Is there any role (positive or negative) being played by the religious education of secular schools in countering extremism in Bangladesh context?

3) Is there any limitation in the existing religious education system of secular schools of Bangladesh in countering extremism?

4) Is there any scope in the current education policy of Bangladesh for using religious education of secular schools as a tool for countering extremism?

These questions stimulate to rethink the religious education system and education policy of Bangladesh in context of countering extremism. Bangladesh, where religious extremism is an emerging problem, requires urgent attention to face the challenges of countering extremism through religious education with new effective approaches.

For this, extensive research attempts with proper theoretical and empirical base need to be performed in order to fill the research gaps for effective policy inputs.

## 2.2 Research questions

To bridge the knowledge-gap found in the literature review, this research intends to find answers of the following research questions-

- 1) Do students demand interpretive narratives for countering extremism (i.e. counter narratives)?
- 2) Does religious education of school provide interpretive narratives for countering extremism (i.e. counter narratives)?
- 3) Has religious education of school any comparative importance in countering extremism from the demand-supply perspective of interpretive narratives?
- 4) Is the current education policy of Bangladesh supportive for using the religious education of school as a tool for countering extremism?

### *Rationale of the Research Questions*

We still don't know whether formal religious education is really important (or demanded) for countering extremism in comparison with other informal religious educations. The 1<sup>st</sup> research question has tried to find this answer from the demand-side perspective i.e. from the perspective of the students.

Then, the 2<sup>nd</sup> research question has tried to study the supply-side (i.e. text books, curriculum, and teachers/pedagogy) through content analysis, in-depth interview and focus group discussion).

3<sup>rd</sup> question has tried to investigate the comparative role of formal religious education in countering extremism in the present context of Bangladesh (analyzing findings from demand-supply perspective).

Answer of the 4<sup>th</sup> question (through analyzing education policy) helped to explain whether we need any further policy input or not in the present context of Bangladesh.

### 2.3 Operational definition

In this research, **‘Formal religious education’** refers to the religious education offered in the secular schools of the country;

**‘Informal religious education’** refers to the religious education informally provided to children from family, community and media.

**‘School’** refers to text books and teachers of secular schools.

**‘Secular schools’** refers to all the mainstream (traditional/non-religious) Bengali and English medium schools up to secondary and O level (i.e. excluding madrasa/ religious educational institutions).

[This research has its particular focus on the secular schools (non-religious schools having religious education as minor), because a number of researches have already been done on the madrasa education (where religious education is major) and government is modernizing madrasa education with necessary interventions.]

**‘Extremism’** refers to the strong rejection of other perspectives, when one’s own views are thought to be exclusive. It can be defined as activities (beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, strategies) of a character far removed from the ordinary.

[In this research, the term ‘extremism’ has been used only to denote ‘religious extremism’ provoked by religious ideologies; i.e. not political extremism.]

**‘Narratives’** refers to message, story, content, description, information or knowledge provided to the pupils.

**‘Counter narratives’** refers to interpretive narratives of counter-extremism.

**‘Counter-extremism’** refers to ideological stand about countering or preventing extremism.

**‘Interpretive narratives of counter-extremism’** refers to explanatory narratives that properly interpret fundamental and diverse issues of religions for countering extremist ideologies.

**‘Family’** refers to parents, elder brothers-sisters and relatives.

**‘Mass media’** refers to television, radio, newspaper, internet, facebook etc.

**‘Community’** refers to neighbors, friends, mosque, club etc.

## 2.4 Theoretical overview

*Theory of interpretation* (Hermeneutics) and *Interpretive approach to religious education* will be used in this research as its theoretical base.

Hermeneutics (known as *science of interpretation*) provides theory and methodology of interpretation, especially the interpretation of philosophical, historical, legal and theological texts. In Hermeneutics, *theory of interpretation* involves *hermeneutic circle* that shows the process of interpreting text. This process constantly moves back and forth between the 'parts' and the 'whole' that we seek to interpret (explain and understand).

Hermeneutic circle (Heidegger: 1927, Gadamer: 1975, and Ricoeur: 1988) refers to the concept that the text as a 'whole' is understood by reference to the individual 'parts' and each individual 'part' of the text is understood by reference to the 'whole'. In interpreting text, neither the 'whole' text nor any 'part' can be understood without reference to one another. Therefore, it is called a circle. Hermeneutic circle also implies that the meaning of a text must be found within its historical, cultural, and literary context. Proper interpretation (explanation and understanding) of the text is achieved when real relationships among reader (interpreter), text (whole and part), and context are established. Otherwise text becomes misinterpreted and it cannot serve its purpose.

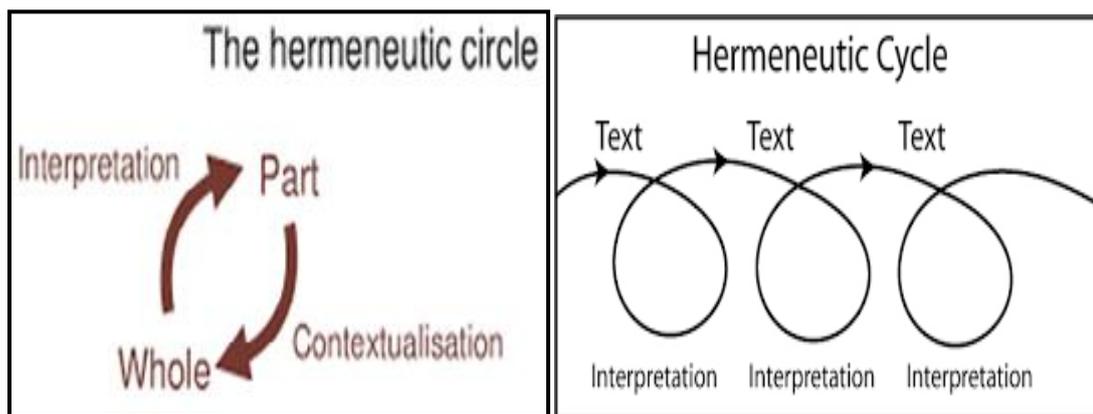


Figure-1: The hermeneutic circle in interpretation of text

By applying *theory of interpretation*, Robert Jackson proposes *interpretive approach to religious education* (Jackson: 2004, 2009) where he argues that young pupil can avoid religious intolerance if they achieve proper interpretation regarding diverse issues about 'own religion' and 'other religions' through religious education. Proper interpretation of

theological text encourages the youths to promote mutual understanding, religious tolerance, and social cohesion.

Later, *interpretive approach to religious education* has been advocated (Miller: 2013, Jackson: 2014, Ghosh et al: 2016a and 2016b) for countering extremism, since formal religious education with this approach can be used as an effective source of counter-narratives against extremist ideologies. Different informal sources like family, community and media can also educate pupils through providing narratives. These unorganized narratives, provided through informal education, may not be effective. Also, they may facilitate extremism. But religious education with interpretive approach can effectively provide interpretive narratives of counter-extremism to the youths with proper interpreting skill and critical thinking ability.

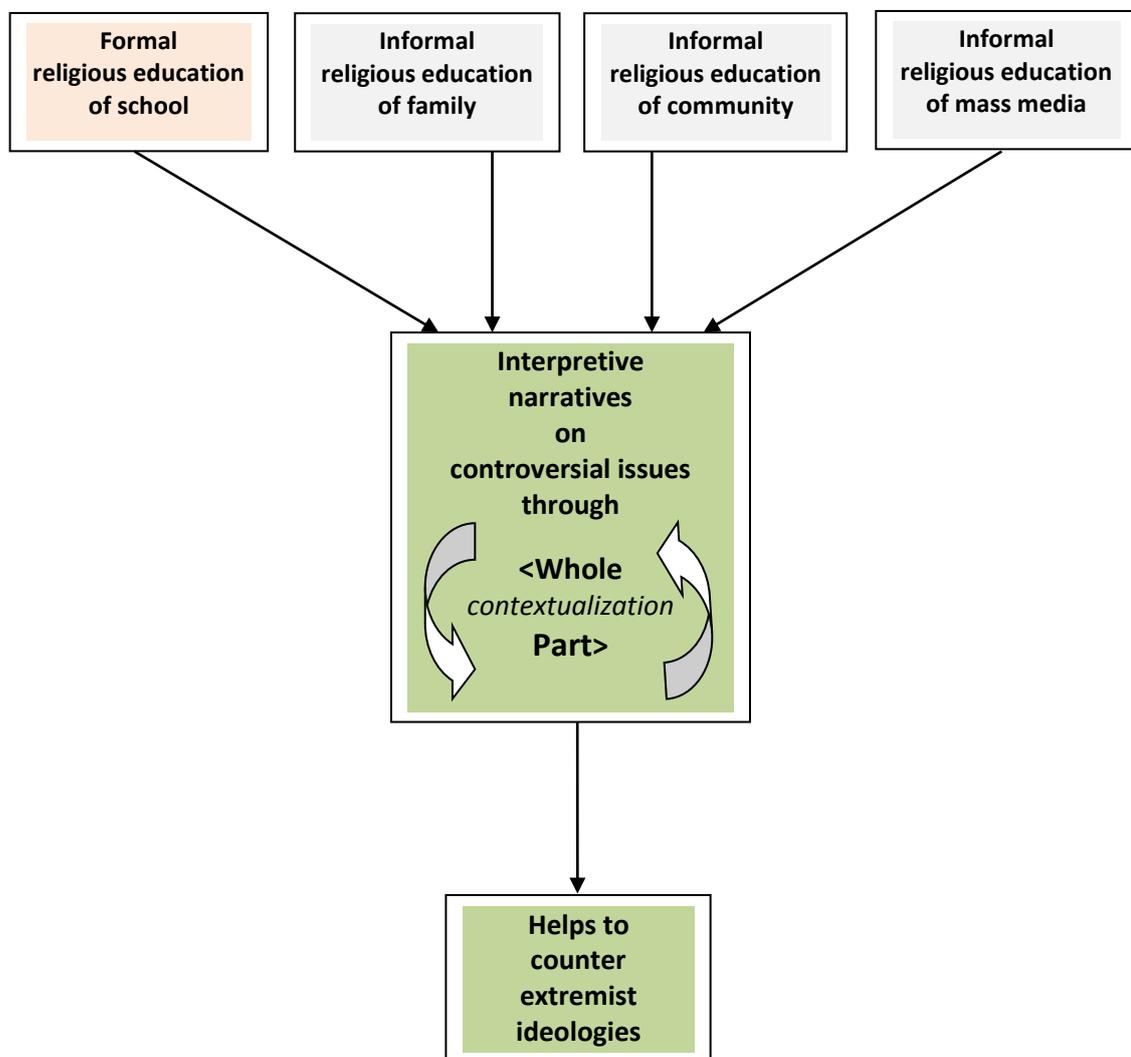


Figure-2: Illustration on how interpretive approach helps religious education to provide counter narratives

Underlying argument of interpretive approach to religious education (based on theory of interpretation) is that formal religious education of school needs to be considered as one of the important sources of interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives) for the young pupils. And, if formal religious education involves proper interpretive knowledge (as per theory of interpretation), it becomes an effective tool for countering extremism.

In this research, theory of interpretation and concept of interpretive approach to religious education will be used in order to find the answers of the research questions in the context of Bangladesh.

This research is mainly of qualitative kind. By using the theory of interpretation in analysis of the religious text books, curriculum and pedagogical instruction books, it has tried to know 'whether formal religious education of secular schools provides interpretive narratives of counter-extremism to the students'. It deals basically with the supply side. But, this study needed to be performed from demand-side perspective also. So, before going for this study, it was important to study the demand-side (students' perspective) with a perception survey (quantitative questionnaire). Through this survey, researcher tried to know whether formal religious education is comparatively important to the students as a source of interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives). This research also tried to investigate one of the preliminary arguments in favor of interpretive approach to religious education that formal religious education is important for countering extremism.

Lastly, through analyzing current education policy, this research tried to know 'whether the current education policy of Bangladesh is supportive for using the formal religious education system of secular schools as a tool for countering extremism'. In order to interpret the findings of perception survey, and analysis of textbooks, curriculum and education policy, the researcher performed in-depth interview and focus group discussion (FGD) that also helped to validate and cross check the findings.

## 2.5 Analytical framework

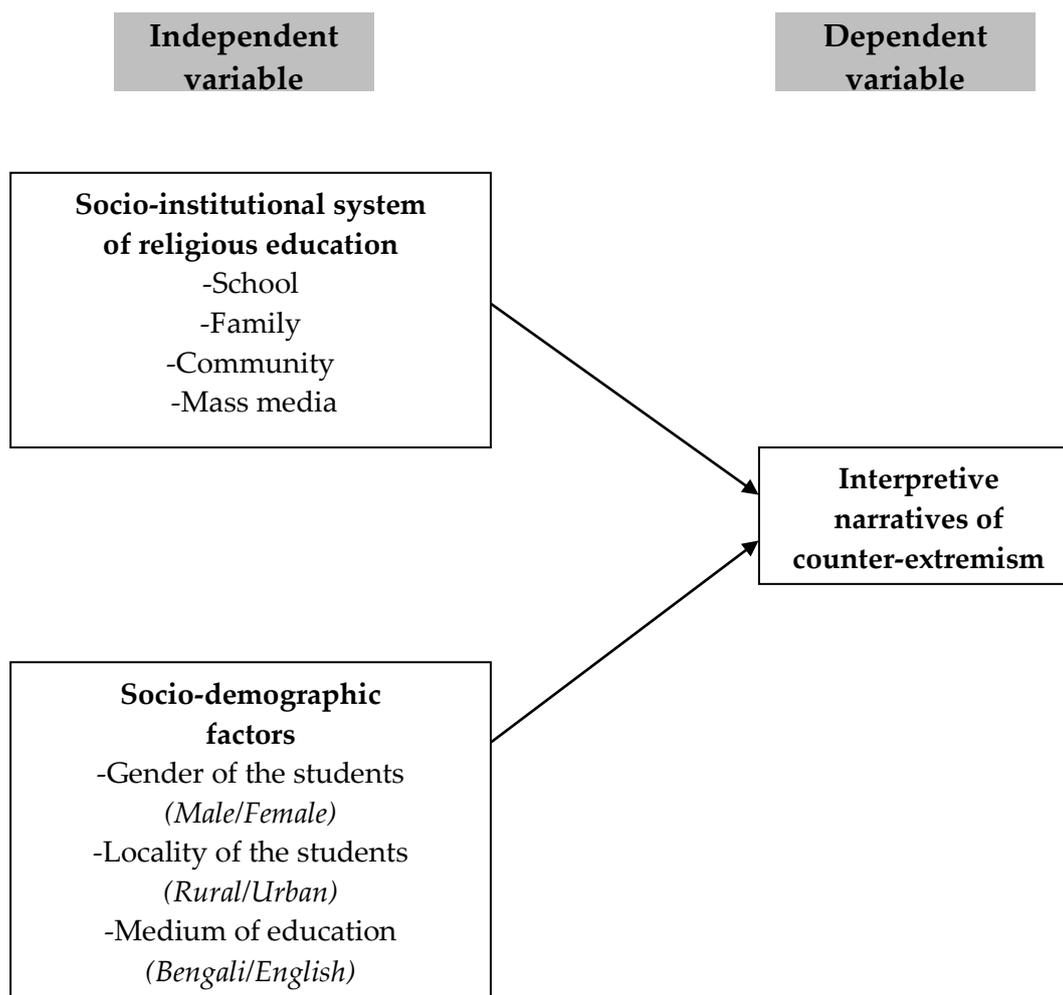


Figure-3: Analytical framework

## 2.6 Indicator and measurement

Independent variables	Dependent variable	Indicator and measurement (dependent variable)
<b>Socio-institutional sources of religious education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-School</li> <li>-Family</li> <li>-Community</li> <li>-Mass media</li> </ul> <i>Ghose et al (2016), Jackson (2014), Miller (2013), Dhabi (2014)</i>	<b>Interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives)</b>	<u>Indicator:</u> <i>Perception of the students found in questionnaire survey</i>  <u>What measured:</u> <i>Received extent of interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives)</i>  <u>Measuring scale:</u> <i>Yes-Partial-No</i>
<b>Socio-demographic factors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Gender of the students</li> <li>-Locality of the students</li> <li>-Medium of education</li> </ul>		

## 2.7 Hypothesis

This research also involved two hypotheses linking with this analytical framework:

*1) Socio-institutional sources of religious education are significantly related with interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives).*

*2) Socio-demographic factors are significantly related interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives)*

## 2.8 Methodological Overview

The research has been performed on the basis of both quantitative and qualitative methodology (a mixed method research having two phases). Both primary and secondary data sources have been used in the analysis of this study.

The first phase of this research was quantitative. In that phase, perception survey with structured questionnaire was performed on SSC and O-level students (i.e. class-IX/X and Grade-9/10).

The second phase of this research was qualitative. In that phase, firstly analysis of textbooks, pedagogical books, curriculum and education policy were performed. Then the researcher performed in-depth interview and different focus group discussion (FGD) among students, guardians, and teachers.

### Data Collection Methods

In order to conduct the research, the following 3 (three) methods were used:

#### **i) Perception Survey**

A perception survey will be conducted through administering structured questionnaire among secondary school level students (representing the young generation). The survey (structured) questionnaire will contain relevant questions on important issues like students' perception regarding extremism in Bangladesh, importance of formal religious education, students' demand for counter-narratives, limitations of religious education system, education's role in countering extremist ideologies, and other interrelated issues.

## ii) Analysis of textbooks, pedagogical books, curriculum and education policy

In the qualitative phase of this study, analysis of textbooks, pedagogical books, curriculum and education policy was performed. During textbooks analysis, contents of religious text books (class: VI-IX/X, grade: 6-9/10) of secular schools and pedagogical instruction books (for teachers) concerned were analyzed to find the answer of the second and third research question. At the same time, National Education Policy (NEP) 2010 was analyzed to find the answer of the fourth research question.

## iii) In-depth interviews and Focus group discussion (FGD)

In order to gain in-depth understanding and insights as well as cross check the quantitative findings, in-depth interviews and FGDs were taken from and among students, teachers and guardians. In-depth interview and FGD provided in-depth understanding and information, which are not generally available from structured survey. Participants' inputs contributed significantly to the understanding of the survey findings. Strict research ethics were followed in collecting information to ensure utmost confidentiality of the participants, discussants and interviewees.

## 2.9 Summary of research design

### Target population, sample/content size, and data collection techniques

Data collection Method/technique	Target Population	Sample/content/Group size
1. Perception Survey (questionnaire)	Secondary school (SSC/O level) students (representing the young generation)	415 students
2. Analysis of contents	i) Text books (Religious text books of secondary level, class/grade: 6-10) ii) Pedagogical books (Board instruction books for the teachers) ii) Curriculum and education policy	
3. In-depth Interview	13 Teachers and 12 Guardians	25 interviewees
4. Focus group discussion (FGD)	8 Students, 6 Teachers and 6 Guardians	3 Groups

### **Summary of research design according to research questions**

1) Do students demand interpretive narratives for countering extremism (i.e. counter narratives)?

*(Answer was searched through quantitative study: perception survey)*

2) Does religious education of school provide interpretive narratives for countering extremism (i.e. counter narratives)?

*(Answer was searched through qualitative study: analysis of religious textbooks, pedagogical instruction books and curriculum, in-depth interview, and focus group discussion)*

3) Has religious education of school any comparative importance in countering extremism from the demand-supply perspective of interpretive narratives?

*(Answer was searched through both quantitative and qualitative study: perception survey, analysis of religious textbooks, pedagogical instruction books and curriculum, in-depth interview, and focus group discussion)*

4) Is the current education policy of Bangladesh supportive for using the religious education of school as a tool for countering extremism?

*(Answer was searched through qualitative study: analysis of education policy, in-depth interview, and focus group discussion)*

### **2.10 Data analyzing and processing technique**

After performing the perception survey, all the quantitative data were coded and entered onto computers. Data will be processed and analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Arguments from interviewees and FGD discussants were processed and analyzed qualitatively to clarify and explain the survey findings and content analysis.

## Chapter 3

### Overview of Socio-institutional System of Religious Education and Education Policy of Bangladesh

This chapter presents a brief overview of socio-institutional system of Religious Education where it discusses about formal and informal socio-institutional sources. Then it focuses on the national education policy of Bangladesh in line with religious education.

#### 3.1 Overview of socio-institutional system of religious education in Bangladesh

Socio-institutional system of religious education primarily involves two major divisions. One is formal religious education of educational institutions. And the other is informal religious education of family, community, and mass media.

Formal religious education of educational institutions involves two major streams. Religious education of secular (mainstream and non religious) schools and religious education of Islamic educational institutions (called *madrasha*). As *madrasha* education system is out of scope of this research, this discussion will be confined to secular school perspective.

Socio-institutional system of religious education can be discussed according to the following four socio-institutional sources from where a child can receive his/her religious education:

##### ***a) Formal religious education of school***

In Bangladesh, primary and secondary secular (mainstream and non religious) schools offer compulsory religious education to the students. Higher secondary secular schools and tertiary educational institutions (i.e. college and universities) do not offer compulsory religious education. Compulsory religious education is only confined to SSC (Secondary School Certificate) level of Bengali medium schools and O-(ordinary) level of English medium schools.

Generally, students of four major religions (Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, and Buddhism) get their religious education as they comprise almost all population.

In Bengali medium schools, religious education is offered from class-III to class-IX/X, whereas English medium schools offer religious education from grade-1 to grade-9/10. However, English medium schools vary in providing religious education. Some English

medium schools offer up to grade-9/10, whereas some offer up to grade-8. In both Bengali and English medium schools, syllabi of each class or grade are designed with 100 marks usually.

Bengali medium schools have their fixed curriculum and textbooks for religious education of each class. Curriculum and textbooks are designed by National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). On the other hand, English medium schools have no fixed curriculum and textbooks. Although they follow General Certificate of Education (GCE) syllabus under Edexcel and University of Cambridge International Examinations, different English medium schools prescribe different textbooks of various local and foreign origins. It is mentionable that some of the English medium schools use NCTB books as references. In the following, profile of religious textbooks of both Bengali and English medium schools have been given:

**Table-1: List of textbooks of religious education in Bengali medium schools**

Class	Book name	Publisher	latest Year of Publication	Place of Publication
III	Islam and Moral Education	NCTB	2014	Dhaka
IV	Islam and Moral Education	NCTB	2014	Dhaka
V	Islam and Moral Education	NCTB	2014	Dhaka
VI	Islam and Moral Education	NCTB	2014	Dhaka
VII	Islam and Moral Education	NCTB	2014	Dhaka
VIII	Islam and Moral Education	NCTB	2014	Dhaka
IX/X (SSC)	Islam and Moral Education	NCTB	2014	Dhaka

**Table-2: List of textbooks of religious education in English medium schools**

Grade	Book name	Publisher	Latest Year of Publication	Place of Publication
1-5	1) An Introduction to Islam	Printcraft Publication	2007	Dhaka
	2) Teaching of Islam	Nabarun Publication	2013	Dhaka
	3) Islamiyat	Goodword Publication	2005	New Delhi
6	1) Teaching of Islam	Nabarun Publication	2013	Dhaka
	2) An Introduction to Islam	Printcraft Publication	2010	Dhaka
	3) Islamic Studies	Goodword	2005	New Delhi
7	1) Teaching of Islam	Nabarun Publication	2013	Dhaka
	2) An Introduction to Islam	Printcraft Publication	2007	Dhaka
	3) Islamic Studies	Goodword Publication	2005	New Delhi
8	1) Islam: Beliefs and Teachings	Muslim Educational Trust	2000	London
9-10 (O- Level)	1) Islamiyat	Oxford University Press	2010	Oxford
	2) Islamiyat for Students	Ferozsons (Pvt.) Ltd.	2002	Lahore

It is also mentionable that NCTB also publishes pedagogical books only for teachers naming 'Teacher Curriculum Instruction'. These books are published for every textbook of every class where teachers are instructed how they will teach the lessons as per curriculum.

#### ***b) Informal religious education of family***

Besides formal education of school, family is regarded as the basic source of religious education. Parents are the preliminary provider of religious knowledge and education to the children. Basically, a child learns about religious beliefs, practices and rituals from his/her family first. Elder brothers, sisters and other relatives may also provide religious education to the children.

Family's religious belief, tradition and ideology create deep impact on the children. Quality of religious education of family largely depends on the depth of religious knowledge, level of education, and level of interaction of the family members.

#### ***c) Informal religious education of community***

Community is considered to be an important informal source of religious education. Community neighbors, community friends, members of religious organizations, leaders of religious institutions like *imam* of mosques are the important providers of religious knowledge. Children often learn from them and become influenced by them.

Informal religious education of community depends on the level of interaction among community members and often quality of the community.

#### ***d) Informal religious education of mass media***

In recent times, mass media has been emerged as a significant informal source of religious education. Electronic media (e.g. television, radio), print media (e.g. newspapers, magazines, journals), internet, and social networking media (e.g. Facebook, twitter etc.) are providing considerable amount of religious knowledge to the children.

Radio and television channels broadcast different religious programs on regular basis. Daily newspapers publish religious articles. There are a remarkable number of religious websites on internet. Members of social networking media can share religious knowledge that may educate or influence other members positively or negatively. However,

getting informal religious education from mass media depends both on the access to and use of the media concerned.

All these socio-institutional sources of religious education discussed above are also related to interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives).

### **3.2 Overview of National Education Policy (NEP) of Bangladesh**

For any country, education policy is the supreme document guiding the whole education system. Latest national education policy of Bangladesh<sup>1</sup>, adopted in 2010, has set 30 (thirty) aims and objectives for Education as a whole. It has also set particular aims and objectives for distinct subsectors of education. For implementation, it also describes particular strategies which are specific to different types of education.

National Education Policy (NEP) 2010 bears the following distinctive features<sup>2</sup>:

- a) The policy seeks to bring all students of the country, irrespective of their religions, genders, and physical limitations, socio-economic and geographic locations under one system.
- b) One-year pre-primary education for children over five years of age will be introduced.
- c) Compulsory primary education extended up to class-VIII from class-V, and secondary education to class-XII with uniform curriculum and syllabus to be followed in general, madrassa and vocational levels.
- d) The policy is non-communal but there will be compulsory subjects on religion and ethics for students up to class-VIII. The policy dropped the word "secular" from its draft to make it acceptable to all segments of the society.
- e) Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Bangladesh Studies have been introduced at the primary and secondary levels.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.moedu.gov.bd/site/page/318a22d2-b400-48a7-8222-303ab11cc205/NEP2010>

<sup>2</sup> <http://bei-bd.org/publications/the-role-of-education-in-counteracting-radicalization-in-bangladesh>  
(both Accessed on: 20 October, 2017).

f) The compulsory subjects are Bangla, English, Mathematics, Bangladesh Studies, *Paribesh Parichiti* (education on social environment and climatic change), Information Technology and Science.

g) The policy says technical education institutions would be established in every *upazila* (sub-district) and the number of educational institutions on polytechnic, textile and leather will be increased.

h) Teachers will be given more facilities alongside more and modern training. Steps will be taken to frame an integrated education law and form a permanent education commission.

i) More training for teachers and promotion will be contingent upon experience and training.

In the National Education Policy (NEP), 2010, the government of Bangladesh has taken few steps to address and combat the spread of radicalization and extremism like planning to introduce religious and moral education; introducing the idea of integration of different streams by creating a uniform curricula and syllabus for some specific subjects at the primary and secondary level; updating the curricula of Madrassa education by giving importance to the subjects such as, English, Science, Mathematics, Bangladesh Studies, Information Technology and Vocational Education in the syllabus and curriculum of that stream.

According to the NEP, religious and moral education needs to be introduced to put emphasis on moral aspects; along with fundamental teachings of every religion. NEP also mentions that religious education would not limit itself only to religious customs and rituals; rather it would seek to build up the moral character of the students. NEP has particular objective to impart proper and quality religious and moral education by redesigning the existing system.

## Chapter 4

### Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter attempts to present empirical data that the researcher found from quantitative and qualitative phases of the research. It aims to analyze and interpret the empirical data in line with the analytical framework, research questions, and hypotheses. Findings of quantitative phase has been tried to explain with the opinions and observations found from qualitative phase which involved in-depth interview, focus group discussion (FGD), and analysis of textbooks, curriculum and education policy.

#### 4.1 Background of the study area

For doing research, researcher selected two particular districts as research area, Dhaka and Kurigram. Here, Dhaka is representing as urban area and Kurigram is representing as rural area. Dhaka is the capital of Bangladesh where Kurigram district is about 400 kilometers away from this capital. This kind of selection helped researcher to study rural-urban dimension of the issue as a socio-demographic factor. It also helped to study from center-periphery perspective.

#### 4.2 Sample size and profile

In quantitative phase, for perception survey with structured questionnaire, the total sample size was 415. From 11 schools of 2 districts, total 415 students participated in the perception survey.

**Table-3: Socio-demographic profile of the respondents**

Location	Respondents	Gender	Respondents
Urban/Center (Dhaka)	269	Male	255
Rural/Periphery (Kurigram)	146	Female	160
<b>Total</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>415</b>

Medium	Respondents
Bengali	337
English	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>415</b>

In qualitative phase, the researcher interviewed total 25 guardians and teachers (12 guardians and 13 teachers). Also, there were arranged 3 focus group discussions (FGD): One among 8 students, one among 6 guardians and one among 6 teachers.

As this research was of very preliminary kind in the context of Bangladesh, only Muslim students were included in the sample with a very focus study on Islamic religious textbooks. It was done in order maintain the focus of the study.

**Table-4: Profile of the schools under perception survey**

SI No.	Name of the school	Number of respondents/students	Category	
1	Government Laboratory High School Dhanmondi, Dhaka	43	Bengali medium	Government
2	Motijheel Government Boys School Motijheel, Dhaka	40		
3	Kurigram Government Boys School Kurigram Sadar, Kurigram	54		
4	Kurigram Government Girls School Kurigram Sadar, Kurigram	56		
5	Ideal School & College (Girls' shift) Motijheel, Dhaka	35	English medium	Non Government
6	Ideal School & College (Boys' shift) Banasree, Dhaka	36		
7	Udayan Higher Secondary School Polashi, Dhaka	37		
8	Collectorate School & College Kurigram Sadar, Kurigram	36		
9	Mastermind School Dhanmondi, Dhaka	48		
10	Maple Leaf International School Dhanmondi, Dhaka	17		
11	Sunnydale School Dhanmondi, Dhaka	13		
<b>Total</b>		<b>415</b>		

Especially in perception survey, the data have been collected by researcher along with two data collectors who were methodically oriented and trained by the researcher.

In the next, this chapter firstly will discuss and interpret the findings of quantitative survey question by question. Then it will interpret the empirical data found from qualitative study.

Q.1) Do you think interpretive narratives (i.e. explanatory message, story, content, description, information or knowledge) are important for countering extremism in the present context of Bangladesh?

#### Data Presentation and Analysis

Response	Frequency	Percent
1) Yes, it is important	331	79.8
2) Partially it is important	72	17.3
3) No, it is not important	9	2.2
9) No opinion	3	0.7
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0</b>

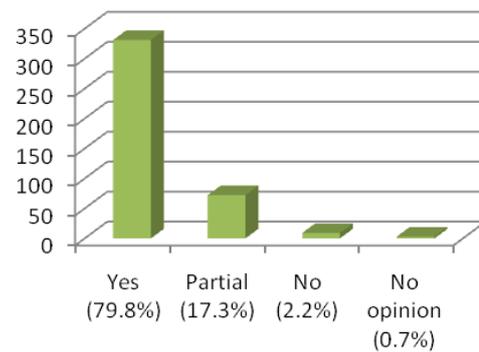


Chart: Frequency table and Graphical presentation

As indicated by univariate analysis, among 415 respondents, 79.8% (almost 80%) respondents think that interpretive narratives are important for countering extremism in the present context of Bangladesh. Collectively, only 19.5% respondents think that it is partially important or not important at all for countering extremism.

#### Interpretation

This very first question, involving the dependent variable, has tried to explore the importance of interpretive narratives perceived by the respondents (i.e. students). It implies that demand for interpretive narratives is considerably very high. Demand side (i.e. students) seems to be well aware of it and they feel the urgency of it.

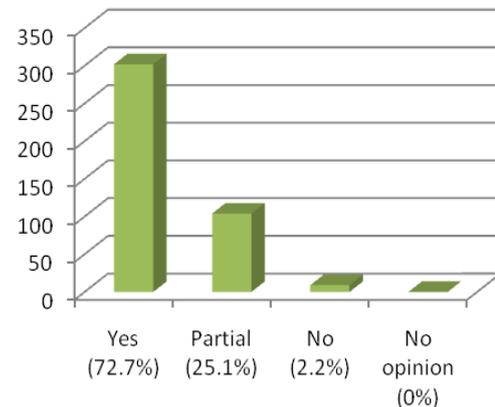
During in-depth interview and focus group discussion (FGD), researcher tried to find out the reason behind this strong demand of interpretive narratives for countering extremism. Most of the interviewees opined that extremist activities have become much more vibrant in recent years. Extremist occurrence (both at home and abroad) is making the young minds more worried about it. Consequently, they are becoming more curious about the causes as well as solutions to this problem.

In FGD, students have unanimously opined that anyone can be misguided (or involved in extremist activities) if he/she don't get interpretive narratives for countering extremism in the present context of Bangladesh. Perhaps, as a part of the solution, they are voting on the higher importance of interpretive narratives which have been reflected through their response.

Q.2) Do you think religious education plays an important role in providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism (i.e. counter- narratives)?

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Response	Frequency	Percent
1) Yes, it plays an important role	302	72.7
2) Partially it plays an important role	104	25.1
3) No, it doesn't play any important role	9	2.2
9) No opinion	0	0.0
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0</b>



*Frequency table and Graphical presentation*

As indicated by univariate analysis, among 415 respondents, 72.7% respondents think that religious education plays an important role in providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism. Collectively, only 27.3% respondents think that religious education partially plays an important role or plays no important role at all in this concern.

### Interpretation

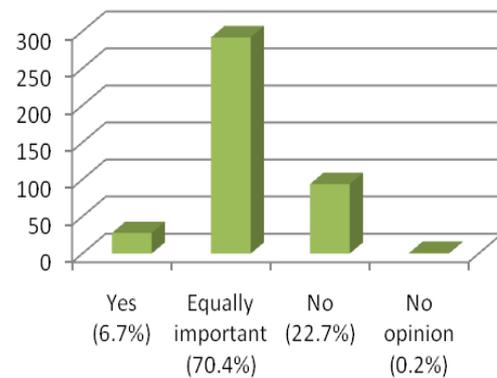
This question, involving independent variable, has tried to explore the importance of religious education perceived by the respondents (i.e. students). It shows that perceived importance of religious education is also considerably high. It also implies that students demand interpretive narratives from religious education.

Majority of the interviewees have identified this strong demand for interpretive narratives from religious education as expected and normal, because demand side (i.e. young students) are always supposed to be enthusiastic and curious. In all the three FGDs (i.e. students, guardians and teachers), discussants have opined that religious education as a provider of interpretive narratives was not so important to the students 10-15 years back. But changing scenario (both at home and abroad) with frequent occurrence of violent extremist activities has increased the importance of religious education to the students recently. Cautious students are trying to get counter narratives from various socio-institutional sources which may be a cause behind the rising importance of religious education.

Q.3) Do you think religious education of school (i.e. text books and teachers) plays more important role than religious education of family (i.e. parents, elder brothers-sisters and relatives) in providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism?

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Response	Frequency	Percent
1) Yes, school plays more important role	28	6.7
2) Neutral, both play equally important role	292	70.4
3) No, family plays more important role	94	22.7
9) No opinion	1	0.2
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0</b>



Frequency table and Graphical presentation

As indicated by univariate analysis, among 415 respondents, 70.4% respondents think that both religious education of school and religious education of family can play equally important role in providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism (i.e. counter narratives). Only 22.7% respondents think that family can play more important role in this concern.

### Interpretation

Response to this question (in association with the next two questions) involves a comparative study regarding the importance of religious education from school, family, community and mass media perspective.

Most of the interviewees and discussants (guardians and teachers) have identified this finding as interesting and bit surprising. Generally family is widely regarded as the most influencing source of religious education. Children learn about religious beliefs and rituals basically from family, and school plays a secondary role in this regard.

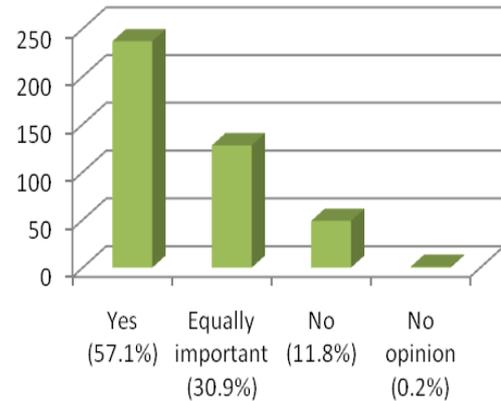
Although family plays the major role of providing the knowledge of religious beliefs and rituals in an informal environment, formally school's role is increasing specially in providing counter narratives of extremism. FGD discussants (teachers) have pointed to this issue which may be a strong cause of giving equal importance to family and school by majority of the students.

Recently added interpretive narratives (finding discussed later) in Bengali medium religious textbooks may also influence the students in this context.

Q.4) Do you think religious education of school (i.e. text books and teachers) plays more important role than religious education of community (i.e. neighbors, friends, mosque, club etc.) in providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism?

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Response	Frequency	Percent
1) Yes, school plays more important role	237	57.1
2) Neutral, both play equally important role	128	30.9
3) No, community plays more important role	49	11.8
9) No opinion	1	0.2
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0</b>



Frequency table and Graphical presentation

As indicated by univariate analysis, among 415 respondents, 57.1% respondents think that religious education of school can play more important role than religious education of community in providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism (i.e. counter narratives). Only 11.8% respondents think that community can play more important role in this concern.

### Interpretation

Community provides informal religious education, and it is also regarded as an important source of interpretive narratives. Children often receive religious knowledge from senior neighbors, community friends and religious institutions like mosques.

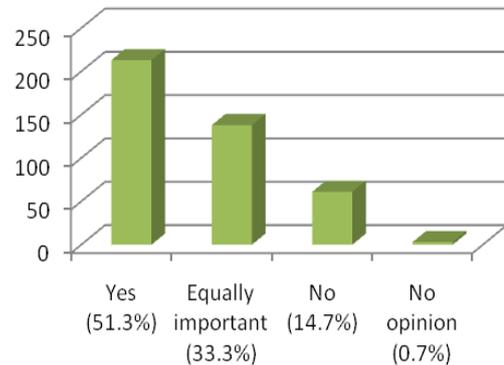
From overall score, it is clear that community carries relatively less importance than school in providing interpretive narratives. Most of the interviewees and FGD discussants (guardians) have opined that school going children shares a large portion of their daily time with their school, family and mass media. For relatively less time sharing, they are giving less importance to community. Furthermore, female children have less external orientation than male children (for example, male child can go to mosque but female child can't).

Another important issue observed here that community interaction is very limited especially in urban areas and it is decreasing day by day. One interviewee commented as 'even many of urban dwellers don't know who live in their next flat'. Urban culture is limiting community orientation which might act as a reason behind giving lower importance to community as a provider of counter narratives.

Q.5) Do you think religious education of school (i.e. text books and teachers) plays more important role than religious education of mass media (i.e. television, radio, newspaper, internet, social media like Facebook etc.) in providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism?

#### Data Presentation and Analysis

Response	Frequency	Percent
1) Yes, school plays more important role	213	51.3
2) Neutral, both play equally important role	138	33.3
3) No, mass media plays more important role	61	14.7
9) No opinion	3	0.7
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0</b>



Frequency table and Graphical presentation

As indicated by univariate analysis, among 415 respondents, 51.3% respondents think that religious education of school can play more important role than religious education of mass media in providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism (i.e. counter-narratives). Only 14.7% respondents think that mass media can play more important role in this concern.

#### Interpretation

Data shows that more than half of the students prioritize school over mass media as a source of counter narratives. Most of the interviewees also have opined that school carries additional importance in this concern.

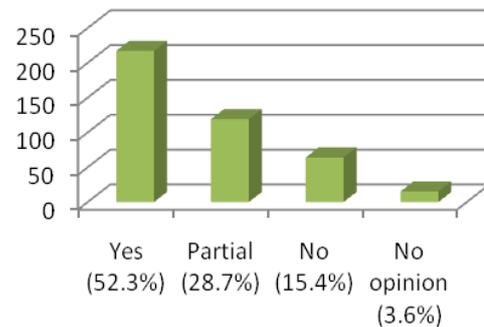
Finding from FGD argues that all students don't have equal access to all kinds of mass media for socio-economic reasons. Again, students with particular background may not feel interested for a particular media. Additionally, mass media has some negative sides since it can provide narratives in favor of extremism also. Many extremist groups disseminate their extremist ideologies using mass media.

On the other hand, school is likely to be free from such complexities. In schools, all students of a particular class have equal access to the same books where they are required to read those books. Teachers are also bound to teach what textbooks contain. Students generally trust their textbooks and teachers. Comparing such various factors, majority students perhaps prefer school to mass media as a dependable provider of interpretive narratives for countering extremism.

Q.7) Do you think learning about fundamental and sensitive issues of other religions (besides own religion) is also important for countering extremism?

#### Data Presentation and Analysis

Response	Frequency	Percent
1) Yes, it is important	217	52.3
2) Partially it is important	119	28.7
3) No, it is not important	64	15.4
9) No opinion	15	3.6
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0</b>



Frequency table and Graphical presentation

As indicated by univariate analysis, among 415 respondents, 52.3% respondents think that learning about fundamental and sensitive issues of other religions (besides own religion) is also important for countering extremism. Only 15.4% respondents think that it is not important in this concern.

#### Interpretation

In some European countries, learning about fundamental and sensitive issues of other religions (besides own religion) is also a significant part of their religious studies. Knowledge about other religions creates mutual respect and tolerance in society. So, it may also be a part of interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives).

As data reveals, more than half of the students think that learning about fundamental and sensitive issues of other religions is important for countering extremism. It indicates that there is an obvious demand for knowledge regarding other religions.

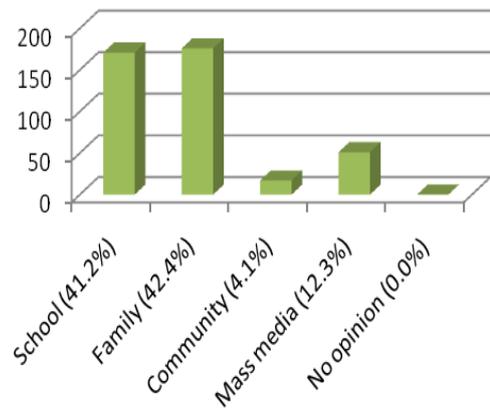
As observed from FGD (students), current phenomena of worldwide religious extremism are making them more curious about intra and inter religious debates on sensitive issues. Most of the interviewees have opined that misconception regarding other religions also contribute to religious intolerance. In order to avoid extremist ideologies, students might want to know about common counter narratives in different religions. When a student learns that extremism is supported by no religion, then it may become easier for him/her to possess tolerant view to other religions and thus avoid extremism.

However, FGD (teachers) discussants have opined that inclusion of fundamental knowledge regarding other major religions in the religious textbook may create burden on curriculum as well as students. Also, it is a sensitive issue which needs national policy debates and implicates public opinion.

Q.8a) Which one do you consider as the most important source of interpretive narratives (i.e. explanatory message, story, content, description, information or knowledge) for countering extremism?

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Response	Frequency	Percent
1) School	171	41.2
2) Family	176	42.4
3) Community	17	4.1
4) Mass media	51	12.3
9) No opinion	0	0.0
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0</b>



*Frequency table and Graphical presentation*

As indicated by univariate analysis, among 415 respondents, 41.2% respondents think that school is the most important source of interpretive narratives. On the other hand, 42.4% respondents think that family is the most important source of interpretive narratives.

As data reveals, both family and school are remarkably more important sources whereas mass media and community are remarkably less important sources of interpretive narratives for countering extremism (i.e. counter narratives) as perceived by the students.

### Interpretation

Regarding independent variable, it was one of the most important questions on the questionnaire. Through responding to this question, students have demonstrated their perception about the most important (i.e. most demanded) source of counter narratives.

From very close figures, it is comprehensible that both school and family are almost equally demanded sources of counter narratives. But it was anticipated that family would be of highest importance having greater difference with any other source.

As per major opinions of the interviewees, importance of school as a provider of counter narratives has increased in recent years. Specifically, FGD (teachers) discussion reveals that Bengali medium (particularly class-IX/X) textbooks of religious education are providing some counter narratives which are creating awareness among the young minds. So, it is not that importance of family as a provider of counter narratives has decreased. Rather, importance of school as a provider of counter narratives has increased for the

changing reality. Perhaps, for this reason, school has become almost equally important as family for providing counter narratives.

However, many of the interviewees and FGD discussants (especially guardians) have shown concern over family role. Family is supposed to play as the most vital provider of counter narratives, but it may not possible for all families to provide expected extent of counter narratives. It depends on educational qualification and awareness level of the family members. Level of interaction and bonding among family members may also be an issue in this concern. These factors may significantly affect the supply of counter narratives from family.

Whereas it seems that both school and family are more (almost equally) demanded for providing counter narratives, community and mass media are demanded less. Most of the interviewees opined that mass media has started to play a role, but it is relatively not much as school and family. As FGD (students) discussion shows, students are also receiving extremist narratives from mass media (especially from social networking media). Probably, for this reason, students put less importance on mass media as a source of counter narratives. Access and interest to mass media are not same for all students (children) which may also act as influencing factors here.

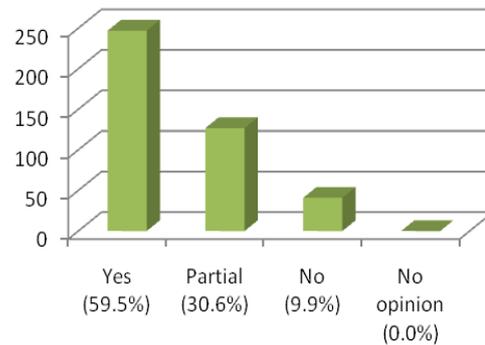
On the other hand, community seems to be least important to the students in this concern. As per opinions found from FGD (guardians) and FGD (teachers), community interaction is remarkably limited especially in urban areas. It is because urban people are likely to become more oriented with urban culture which involves more busy life and less community interaction. Leading busy life and maintaining limited community orientation also have impact on children. In such culture, children also get limited scope for interacting with community seniors which may act as a cause for getting less counter narratives.

Some other reasons may also work behind. It is seen that students (children) are getting less time for community interaction since they remain busy with heavy schooling hours, coaching schedule and private tutors in the competitive urban environment. It gives the less time for community interaction. Again, number of playgrounds is also limited in cities. For this, children often pass their free time in home keeping engaged themselves with indoor games, social media and internet. Perhaps, these various reasons are working behind the poor supply of counter narratives from community to its children.

*Q.8b) Have you got interpretive narratives of counter-extremism from your perceived most important source?*

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Response	Frequency	Percent
1) Yes, I have got	247	59.5
2) Partially I have got	127	30.6
3) No, I have not got	41	9.9
9) No opinion	0	0.0
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0</b>



*Frequency table and Graphical presentation*

As indicated by univariate analysis, among 415 respondents, 59.5% (almost 60%) respondents have received interpretive narratives from the most important source they think. On the other hand, collectively, 40.5% students have received partial or no interpretive narratives from the most important source they think.

### Interpretation

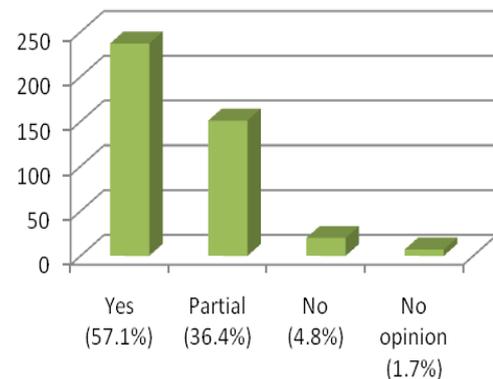
This question involves dependent variable and linked with the previous question of independent variable. Majority of the interviewees and FGD discussants (teachers) have discussed this finding from two different perspectives. On one side, it is obvious that almost 60% students are getting counter narratives from different demanded sources like school, family, community and mass media. On the other side, a vast portion (40.5%) of the students are getting partial or no counter narratives from the source they demand which may create vulnerability for them.

From bivariate analysis (discussed later), it is found that socio-institutional and socio-demographic factors are creating a wide range of variance in this concern. Every child (student) has his/her own reality with different opportunities and challenges. Extent of received interpretive narratives may vary with educational qualification of family members, attributes of school textbooks and teachers, degree of community interaction, and use of mass media. Gender, locality and medium of education are also affecting factors here.

Q.9) Have you got any interpretive narrative from your family (i.e. parents, elder brothers-sisters and relatives) for countering extremism?

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Response	Frequency	Percent
1) Yes, I have got	237	57.1
2) Partially I have got	151	36.4
3) No, I have not got	20	4.8
9) No opinion	7	1.7
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0</b>



*Frequency table and Graphical presentation*

As indicated by univariate analysis, among 415 respondents, 57.1% respondents have got interpretive narratives from family for countering extremism. On the other hand, collectively, 41.2% respondents have got partial or no interpretive narratives from family for countering extremism.

### Interpretation

From data analysis, it is obvious that family is playing a role in providing counter narratives to their children. At the same time, it seems that all families are not playing the same role. Remarkably, a large portion (more than 40%) of the students is getting partial or no counter narratives from their families.

As per major opinions of the interviewees, family is supposed to play as the most vital provider of counter narratives, but it may not possible for all families to provide expected counter narratives. It depends on educational qualification and awareness level of the family members. Level of interaction among family members may also be an issue.

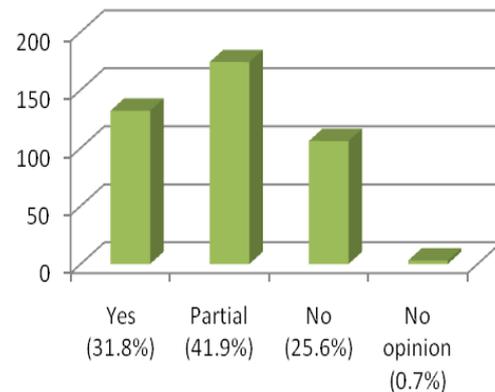
Generally, educational qualification of the parents particularly in rural areas is found to be lower. For this, most often they are not able to provide expected counter narratives. On the other hand, educational qualification of the parents particularly in urban areas is found to be higher. But, in some cases, they themselves are not aware of counter narratives. Eventually, they fail to provide counter narratives to their children also.

Again, in some families, where both the parents are involved in jobs, there is little interaction among children and parents. Especially in urban life, over engagement of parents with external activities, mass media and internet is creating less sharing among family members resulting in less or no counter narratives provided. On the other hand, excessive educational pressure also hinders necessary interaction among children and other family members where flow of counter narratives may be inhibited.

*Q.10) Have you got any interpretive narrative from your community (i.e. neighbors, friends, mosque, club etc.) for countering extremism?*

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Response	Frequency	Percent
1) Yes, I have got	132	31.8
2) Partially I have got	174	41.9
3) No, I have not got	106	25.6
9) No opinion	3	0.7
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0</b>



*Frequency table and Graphical presentation*

As indicated by univariate analysis, among 415 respondents, only 31.8% respondents have got interpretive narratives from community for countering extremism. On the other hand, collectively, 67.5% respondents have got partial or no interpretive narratives from community for countering extremism.

### Interpretation

As per students' response, it is obvious that community is providing counter narratives to them. However, this source is providing counter narratives at the lowest extent in comparison with other expected sources.

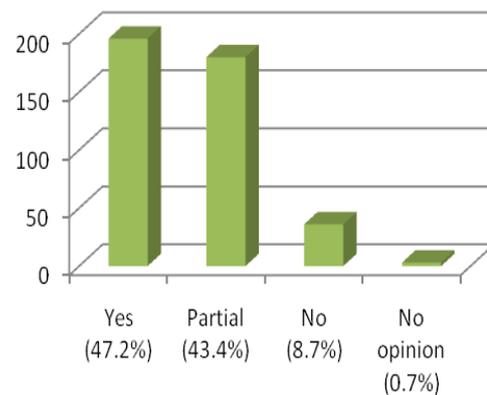
As per major opinions of the interviewees, community interaction (especially in urban area) has become limited for various socio-cultural reasons. Weak orientation within community may result in poor supply of counter narratives from this source. On the other hand, quality of the community is a vital factor especially for rural area. Less educated (i.e. less knowledgeable) community becomes less aware of counter-extremism and thus provides less counter narratives to its members.

Particularly in urban area, members of the community are poorly oriented among themselves. Even in cities, people often don't know who live in their nearby flats. On the other side, students (children) are getting less time for community interaction since they remain busy with heavy schooling hours, coaching schedule and private tutors. Number of playgrounds is also limited in cities. For this, students often pass their free time in home keeping engaged themselves with indoor games, social media and internet. Perhaps, these various causes are working behind the poor supply of counter narratives from community to its young members.

Q.11) Have you got any interpretive narrative from mass media (i.e. television, radio, newspaper, internet, social media like Facebook etc.) for countering extremism?

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Response	Frequency	Percent
1) Yes, I have got	196	47.2
2) Partially I have got	180	43.4
3) No, I have not got	36	8.7
9) No opinion	3	0.7
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0</b>



*Frequency table and Graphical presentation*

As indicated by univariate analysis, among 415 respondents, 47.2% respondents have got interpretive narratives from mass media for countering extremism. On the other hand, in combine, 52.1% respondents have got partial or no interpretive narratives from mass media for countering extremism.

### Interpretation

As per survey's response, it is evident that mass media is providing counter narratives to the students. Although mass media is not so strong as family and school as a source from demand side's perspective (as earlier data shows), it is playing a role in providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism.

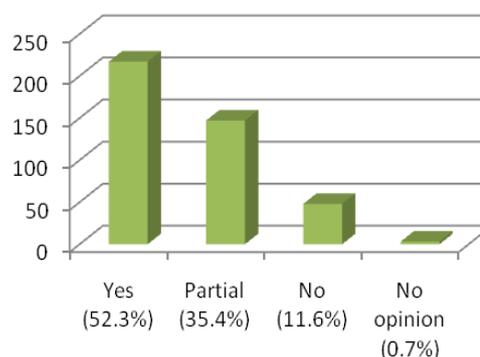
Most of the interviewees have opined that mass media is playing both positive and negative role in this concern. Mass media plays positive role when it provides counter narratives. On the other hand, mass media plays negative role when extremist groups use it as the provider of extremist narratives.

For example, many local and international extremist groups have their own websites and Facebook pages. Even they publish books containing extremist narratives. At the same time, on a limited scale, some law enforcing agencies (e.g. Rapid Action Battalion, RAB) have now started to broadcast their own counter narratives through local television channels. But, here the problem is that people are more interested to some particular foreign channels. During FGD, discussants (students) have opined that interpretive narratives of counter-extremism are not available enough on mass media. On the other hand, all students have not equal access and interest to all mass media. These factors are likely to cause students getting less interpretive narratives from mass media.

*Q.12) Have you got any interpretive narrative from your school (i.e. text books and teachers) for countering extremism?*

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Response	Frequency	Percent
1) Yes, I have got	217	52.3
2) Partially I have got	147	35.4
3) No, I have not got	48	11.6
9) No opinion	3	0.7
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0</b>



*Frequency table and Graphical presentation*

As indicated by univariate analysis, among 415 respondents, 52.3% respondents have got interpretive narratives from school for countering extremism. On the other hand, collectively, 47% respondents have got partial or no interpretive narratives from school for countering extremism.

### Interpretation

As per survey's response, it is evident that school is providing counter narratives to the students. More than half of the total respondents have received counter narratives, which indicates that school has started to play an important role as a source of interpretive narratives for countering extremism.

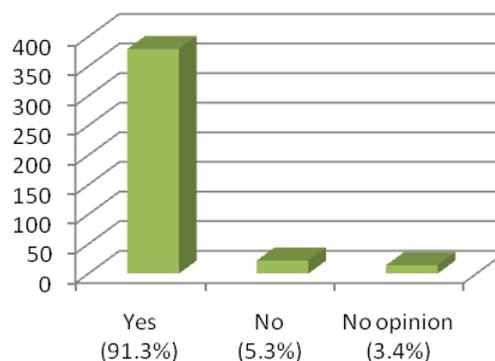
In FGD, teachers have opined that school (especially Bengali medium school) is playing a significant role in providing counter narratives. Religious textbooks of Bengali medium schools have been a good source of interpretive narratives particularly after the inception of new curriculum in the year 2013. However, for English medium schools, the scenario is different which has been interpreted in a later section of this chapter.

Content analysis of religious textbooks reveals that religious textbook of SSC level (i.e. class IX/X of Bengali medium) contains counter narratives. Although these narratives have been inserted in recent years on a limited scale, they are likely to create positive impact on the young minds in countering extremism. On the other hand, since interpretive narratives are available in the textbook, teachers are also becoming bound to teach students as per curriculum instruction. Inception of newly designed curriculum is perhaps the main cause behind this significant role of school.

Q.13) Do you think interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives) need to be specially included in the text books of religious education of school?

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Response	Frequency	Percent
1) Yes, it is needed	379	91.3
2) No, it is not needed	22	5.3
9) No opinion	14	3.4
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0</b>



*Frequency table and Graphical presentation*

As indicated by univariate analysis, among 415 respondents, 91.3% respondents think that interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives) need to be specially included in the text books of religious education of school. Collectively, only 8.7% students have gone for negative answer or no opinion.

### Interpretation

This question tries to gain more deep insight about the demand of counter narratives. It is notable that students' response is very strong in this concern. Both Bengali and English medium students have shown this high demand from textbook perspective.

Most of the interviewees have opined that religious textbooks can act as an effective source of counter narratives. All FGD discussants have agreed that counter narratives need to be specially included in the text books of religious education.

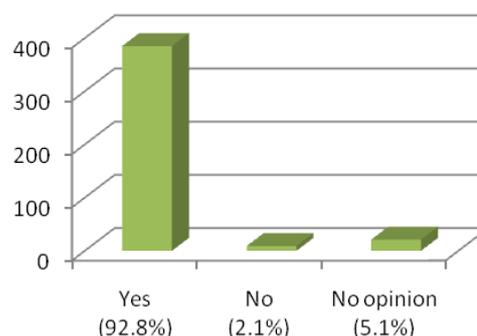
Any single word or text in the textbooks of school can create lasting impact on the students (children). Generally students trust their textbooks and hold a high perception regarding their texts. In everyday life, often they prioritize the knowledge of their textbooks over the knowledge of their parents.

Since students (particularly Bengali medium students) are already getting some counter narratives from their textbooks, they have started to feel the importance of interpretive narratives for countering extremism. Many English medium schools also use Bengali medium religious textbooks as reference books. Probably students have been sensitized with their texts which have led them to put very positive response to this question.

*Q.14) Do you think teachers of the religious education of school need to be especially sincere in providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism (i.e. counter narratives)?*

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Response	Frequency	Percent
1) Yes, it is needed	385	92.8
2) No, it is not needed	9	2.1
9) No opinion	21	5.1
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0</b>



*Frequency table and Graphical presentation*

As indicated by univariate analysis, among 415 respondents, 92.8% respondents think that teachers of the religious education of school need to be especially sincere in providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism.

### Interpretation

Response to this question reveals the expectation of the demand side (i.e. students) from one of the supply sides (i.e. teachers). Data shows a highly positive response in this concern where students tend to demand more sincerity from their teachers in providing counter narratives.

During FGD, it was revealed that many religious teachers usually feel discomfort to talk about extremism in the class. Sometimes, they want to avoid controversial and sensitive issues like ideological diversity, extremism, terrorism, militancy and so on. Teacher's ideology is another vital factor here. Sometimes, it is found that teacher himself/herself follows extremist ideology. He/she is often delivering extremist narratives in lieu of counter narratives.

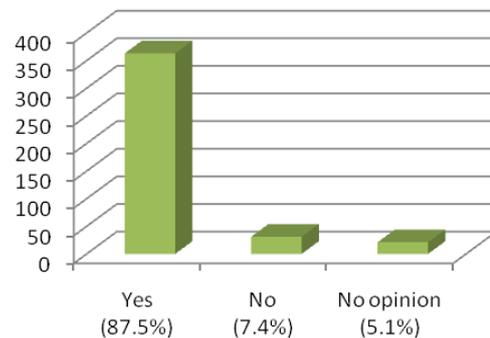
Presence of interpretive narratives in the religious textbooks makes it easier and comfortable for the teachers to discuss the issue of counter-extremism from a neutral point of view. It also makes teachers compelled to deal with this sensitive issue which they used to avoid before.

It seems that students want teachers to play neutral, proactive and sincere role so that they can get more interpretive narratives for countering extremism.

Q.15) Are you interested to get more interpretive narratives from school for countering extremism?

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Response	Frequency	Percent
1) Yes, I am interested	363	87.5
2) No, I am not interested	31	7.4
9) No opinion	21	5.1
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0</b>



*Frequency table and Graphical presentation*

As indicated by univariate analysis, among 415 respondents, 87.5% respondents are interested to get more interpretive narratives from school for countering extremism. Collectively, only 12.5% respondents are not interested or have no opinion on getting more interpretive narratives from school for countering extremism.

### Interpretation

This question also investigates the demand of interpretive narratives for countering extremism (i.e. counter narratives) from school perspective. Response to this question reveals that most of the students are interested for getting more counter narratives from school.

From in-depth interview, two reasons have found behind this high demand. Firstly, students are likely to perceive school as a good source of counter narratives. Secondly, students probably are not receiving satisfactory counter narratives from other sources like family, community and mass media.

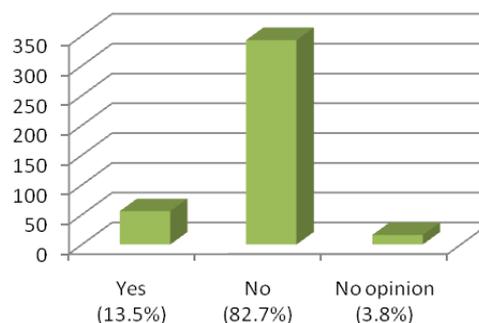
In FGD, students opined that additional counter narratives will not create burden on them. They seemed to be benefitted through receiving the current interpretive narratives and now they want to be benefitted more by getting more interpretive narratives.

However, in FGD, both teachers and guardians opined somewhat differently. They were agreed that current interpretive narratives (particularly in Bengali medium religious textbooks) are giving benefit to the students. But they gave priority to qualitative improvement of this narratives, rather than quantitative enhancement.

Q.16) Do you think current curriculum of religious education of school is enough to get necessary interpretive narratives for countering extremism?

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Response	Frequency	Percent
1) Yes, it is enough	56	13.5
2) No, it is not enough	343	82.7
9) No opinion	16	3.8
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0</b>



Frequency table and Graphical presentation

Among 415 respondents, 82.7% respondents think that current curriculum of religious education of school is not enough to get necessary interpretive narratives for countering extremism. Only 13.5% respondents think that current curriculum of religious education is enough for this purpose.

### Interpretation

This response also reveals a very high demand for counter narratives from the demand side. It is natural that young minds are always enthusiastic and inquisitive. Frequent occurrence of extremist activities are making them more anxious and demanding. But why they perceive current curriculum as inadequate has some apparent reasons.

During interview, most of the teachers and guardians have opined that counter narratives are absent in the religious textbooks of English medium schools. Teachers are also found not interested in delivering interpretive narratives since textbooks do not deal with the issue. Some English medium schools even have withdrawn religious education from O-level. In case of Bengali medium, only religious textbooks of class-VIII and SSC level contain some counter narratives, albeit limited, scattered and unorganized.

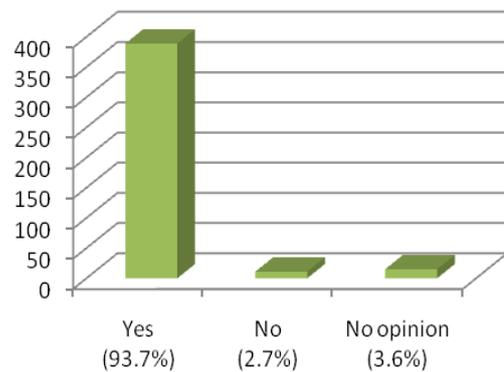
In FGD, teachers have showed deep concern about the contents of English medium religious textbooks. About these foreign books, they have opined that discussing about only 'Jihad' without warning about its misinterpretation may misguide the students. It is because there is a chance for the students to take 'jihad' as a compulsory undertaking without considering the context.

Since English medium religious textbooks contain quantitatively zero counter narratives and Bengali medium religious textbooks contain qualitatively weak counter narratives, students are likely to find current curriculum as not enough to get necessary interpretive narratives for countering extremism.

Q.17) Do you think 'interpretive narratives' is equally important as 'sports' and 'cultural activities' for countering religious extremism?

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Response	Frequency	Percent
1) Yes, it is equally important	389	93.7
2) No, it is not equally important	11	2.7
9) No opinion	15	3.6
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0</b>



*Frequency table and Graphical presentation*

As indicated by univariate analysis, among 415 respondents, 93.7% respondents think that 'interpretive narratives' is equally important as 'sports' and 'cultural activities' for countering extremism. Only 2.7% respondents think that it is not equally important in this concern.

### Interpretation

This is actually a supplementary question with an intention to gain more insight regarding the importance of counter narratives in comparison with sports and cultural activities from the students' perspective. On various forum and social discussion, sports and cultural activities are often considered as means of diverting students from extremist activities. Recently, necessity of counter narratives is also being discussed for countering extremism effectively.

Most of the interviewees have opined that 'sports', 'cultural activities' and 'counter narratives' have their respective importance from different points of view. All are equally important for preventing or avoiding extremism, and they play their roles in different contextual grounds. In all FGDs, discussants have also justified the perception of the students.

'Sports', 'cultural activities' and 'counter narratives' can be seen as soft power approaches for countering extremism. All these can imprint lasting impact on the young minds. By giving highly positive response, students perhaps indicate the equal necessity of all these means in countering or preventing extremism.

#### 4.4 Bivariate Analysis of the Quantitative Data

This section deals with bivariate analysis through which hypotheses have been tested. With the help of SPSS, cross tabulation have been executed among various variables. Relatedness among different variables have been analyzed and interpreted on the basis of Chi square test.

##### 4.2.1) 'Socio-institutional sources of religious education' and 'Interpretive narratives of counter-extremism'

According to the proposed analytical framework, different socio-institutional sources of religious education (independent variable) are related with interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (independent variable). It is assumed that students (children) are dependent on various social institutions (i.e. school, family, community, and mass media) for getting interpretive narratives. And they receive different extent of interpretive narratives from different kind of social-institutional sources.

*Null hypothesis: There is no relationship between socio-institutional sources of religious education and interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives).*

*Alternative hypothesis: Socio-institutional sources of religious education are significantly related with interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives).*

#### Data Presentation and Analysis

Socio-institutional source of religious education	Interpretive narratives received			Total count	Chi square test	
	Yes	Partial	No		Pearson X <sup>2</sup> Value	Sig.
<i>School</i>	121	40	10	171	28.054	0.000 (P<0.01)
<i>Family</i>	94	65	17	176		
<i>Community</i>	6	5	6	17		
<i>Mass media</i>	26	17	8	51		
<b>Total count</b>	247	127	41	<b>415</b>	Relation significant	

Table-5: Chi square test between 'Socio-institutional source of religious education' and 'interpretive narratives received from the source concerned' (here 'no opinion' has been re-coded with 'no' to get more simplified scale)

Chi square test shows that Pearson's  $\chi^2$  value is 28.054 (where asymptotic significance  $p=0.000$ ). Since Chi square value is greater than its correspondent table value (16.812 at  $df=6$ ) with  $P<0.01$  significance level, the relationship between two variables is found to be statistically significant. So, alternative hypothesis is accepted and null hypothesis is rejected.

### **Interpretation**

Accepted alternative hypothesis (with significance value  $P<0.01$ ) indicates that there is a strong relationship between these two variables with 99% confidence level. It implies that socio-institutional sources of religious education are significantly related with interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives).

As examination of the observed cell frequency reveals, in total, highest 49.0% (almost 50%) students have received full interpretive narratives from school, 38.1% students have received full interpretive narratives from family, only 2.4% students have received full interpretive narratives from community, and only 10.5% students have received full interpretive narratives from mass media. These figures indicate that school and family are the major providers of interpretive narratives, whereas community and mass media are the minor providers of interpretive narratives.

From school, almost 50% students have received interpretive narratives, which is highest in percentage. It upholds the greater significance of school as a provider of interpretive narratives. As interpreted in the univariate analysis earlier, addition of interpretive narratives in the current curriculum of Bengali medium is likely to enhance the role of school in this concern. On the other hand, it is not that family (with 38.1% respondents) is playing a less important role in comparison with school. Rather it can be interpreted that school's role has increased significantly.

As interpreted in the univariate analysis earlier, community interaction is becoming limited day by day particularly in urban area which might contribute to the less supply of interpretive narratives in this regard. As mass media may provide extremist narratives along with counter narratives also, students seem to be not largely dependent on this source. However, as most of the interviewees and FGD discussants opined, importance of mass media in countering extremism has increased to a significant extent recently for its advantage of wider access.

Some important findings also found in this regard. Frequency observed in the cross tabulation among independent variables (ANNEX-IV, Crosstabulation-4) indicates a lot of important variance. Perception about most important source of interpretive narratives does not considerably vary among male and female students. But it is remarkably vary with rural-urban and English medium-Bengali medium dimensions.

a) ***As the most important source of interpretive narratives, rural students depend more on school, less on family; and urban students depend more on family, less on school*** (e.g. about 60% rural students prefer 'school' as the most important source whereas only about 30% urban students prefer 'school' as the most important source. In other way, those who prefer 'family' as the most important source, among them only about 20% are rural students and almost 80% are urban students).

Most of the interviewees and FGD discussants have interpreted this variance in the light of educational level of family members. In general, parents are comparatively less educated and less conscious in rural areas. Consequently, rural children receive less interpretive narratives from family, and they are likely more dependent on school (i.e. textbooks and teachers). On the other hand, in general, parents are comparatively more educated and more conscious in urban areas. Consequently, urban children receive more interpretive narratives from family, and they are likely less dependent on school.

b) ***As the most important source of interpretive narratives, Bengali medium students depend more on school, less on family; and English medium students depend more on family, less on school*** (e.g. about only 35% Bengali medium students prefer 'family' as the most important source whereas about 70% English medium students prefer 'family' as the most important source. In other way, those who prefer 'school' as the most important source, among them about 90% are Bengali medium students and only about 10% are English medium students).

Most of the interviewees and FGD discussants have interpreted this variance in the light of contents of the religious textbooks. Bengali medium religious textbooks have incorporated interpretive narratives (especially in the SSC level). Consequently, Bengali medium students are receiving more interpretive narratives from school, and they are now likely less dependent on family. On the other hand, English medium religious textbooks have not incorporated any interpretive narratives. Consequently, English medium students are receiving almost no interpretive narratives from school, and they are likely more dependent on family.

#### 4.2.1) 'Socio-demographic factors' and 'Interpretive narratives of counter-extremism'

##### 4.2.1.1) 'Gender' and 'Interpretive narratives of counter-extremism'

According to the proposed analytical framework, socio-demographic factor like gender of the respondents (independent variable) is related with interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (dependent variable). In this research, it is assumed that male students and female students receive different extent of interpretive narratives for countering extremism.

*Null hypothesis: There is no relationship between gender of the respondents and interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives).*

*Alternative hypothesis: Gender of the respondents is significantly related with interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives).*

#### Data Presentation and Analysis

Gender	Interpretive narratives received			Total count	Chi square test	
	Yes	Partial	No		Value ( $X^2$ )	Sig.
Male	140	81	34	255	10.646	0.005 ( $P < 0.01$ )
Female	107	46	7	160		
<b>Total count</b>	247	127	41	<b>415</b>	Relation significant	

Table-6: Chi square test between 'Gender of the respondents' and 'interpretive narratives received' (here 'no opinion' has been re-coded with 'no' to get more simplified scale)

Chi square test shows that Pearson's  $X^2$  value is 10.646 (where asymptotic significance  $p=0.005$ ). Since Chi square value is greater than its correspondent table value (9.210 at  $df=2$ ) with  $P < 0.01$  significance level, the relationship between two variables is found to be statistically significant. So, alternative hypothesis is accepted and null hypothesis is rejected.

#### Interpretation

Statistically accepted alternative hypothesis (with significance value  $P < 0.01$ ) indicates that there is a strong relationship between these two variables with 99% confidence level. It implies that gender of the respondents is significantly related with interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives).

Although observed cell frequency of this table does not articulate much, gender and source wise cross tabulation (ANNEX-IV, Crosstabulation-1) provides significant information.

From those tables, it is observed that gender does not significantly affect receiving narratives from school, family, and mass media. But it affects receiving narratives from community. It is observed that female students are receiving less counter narratives from community. Most probably, comparatively less interaction with community is causing this variation. For example, male children generally get the scope of going to mosque and play grounds. But female children generally do not get such scopes for religious and cultural reasons.

#### 4.2.1.1) 'Locality' and 'Interpretive narratives of counter-extremism'

According to the proposed analytical framework, socio-demographic factor like locality of the respondents (independent variable) is related with interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (dependent variable). In this research, it is assumed that rural students and urban students receive different extent of interpretive narratives for countering extremism.

*Null hypothesis: There is no relationship between 'locality of the respondents' and 'interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives)'.*

*Alternative hypothesis: 'Locality of the respondents' is significantly related with 'interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives)'.*

#### Data Presentation and Analysis

Locality	Interpretive narratives received			Total count	Chi square test	
	Yes	Partial	No		Value (X <sup>2</sup> )	Sig.
Urban	135	102	32	269	27.708	0.000 (P<0.01)
Rural	112	25	9	146		
<b>Total count</b>	247	127	41	<b>415</b>	Relation significant	

Table-7: Chi square test between 'locality of the respondents' and 'interpretive narratives received' (here 'no opinion' has been re-coded with 'no' to get more simplified scale)

Chi square test shows that Pearson's  $X^2$  value is 27.708 (where asymptotic significance  $p=0.000$ ). Since Chi square value is greater than its correspondent table value (9.210 at  $df=2$ ) with  $P<0.01$  significance level, the relationship between two variables is found to be statistically significant. So, alternative hypothesis is accepted and null hypothesis is rejected.

## **Interpretation**

Statically accepted alternative hypothesis (with significance value  $P < 0.01$ ) indicates that there is a strong relationship between these two variables with 99% confidence level. It implies that locality of the respondents is significantly related with interpretive narratives of counter extremism (i.e. counter narratives).

Locality and source wise cross tabulation (ANNEX-IV, Crosstabulation-2) shows that locality significantly affects receiving interpretive narratives from school, family, and community. But it does not significantly affect receiving narratives from mass media.

From data analysis, it is observed that rural students are receiving comparatively less interpretive narratives from family and comparatively more from school. On the other side, urban students are receiving comparatively more interpretive narratives from family and comparatively less from school. Through FGD, this researcher tried to find out the possible reasons behind this variance.

It was revealed that level of awareness and educational qualification of the family members probably is playing a role in this regard. Generally, parents are comparatively less educated and less aware in rural areas. So, rural children are likely to receive less counter narratives from family, and they are likely more dependent on school in this regard. On the other hand, parents are comparatively more educated and more aware in urban areas. So, urban children are likely to receive more counter narratives from family, and they are likely less dependent on school in this regard.

In case of community, it is found that urban students are receiving less counter narratives from community. Level of community interaction may play a role here. For urban culture, community interaction is generally limited in urban areas. Since urban people generally maintain low orientation with their community members, urban children get less scope to interact with others and consequently get less counter narratives from this source. On the other hand, rural people generally maintain high orientation with their community members. Thus rural children get more scope to interact with others and consequently get more counter narratives from this source.

#### 4.2.3.1. 'Medium of education' and 'Interpretive narratives of counter-extremism'

According to the proposed analytical framework, socio-demographic factor like medium of education of the respondents (independent variable) is related with interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (dependent variable). In this research, it is assumed that Bengali medium students and English medium students receive different extent of interpretive narratives for countering extremism.

*Null hypothesis: There is no relationship between 'medium of education of the respondents' and 'interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives)'.*

*Alternative hypothesis: 'Medium of education of the respondents' is significantly related with 'interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives)'.*

#### Data Presentation and Analysis

	Interpretive narratives received			Total count	Chi square test	
	Yes	Partial	No		Value ( $X^2$ )	Sig.
<b>Medium</b>						
<i>Bengali</i>	211	97	29	337	7.768	0.021 ( $P < 0.05$ )
<i>English</i>	36	30	12	78		
<b>Total count</b>	247	127	41	<b>415</b>	Relation significant	

Table-8: Chi square test between 'medium of education' and 'interpretive narratives received' (here 'no opinion' has been re-coded with 'no' to get more simplified scale)

Chi square test shows that Pearson's  $X^2$  value is 7.768 (where asymptotic significance  $p=0.021$ ). Since Chi square value is greater than its correspondent table value (5.991 at  $df=2$ ) with  $P < 0.05$  significance level, the relationship between two variables is found to be statistically significant. So, alternative hypothesis is accepted and null hypothesis is rejected.

#### Interpretation

Statistically accepted alternative hypothesis (with significance value  $P < 0.05$ ) indicates that there is a strong relationship between these two variables with 95% confidence level. It implies that medium of education of the respondents is significantly related with interpretive narratives of counter extremism (i.e. counter narratives).

Medium and source wise cross tabulation (ANNEX-IV, Crosstabulation-3) shows that medium of education significantly affects receiving interpretive narratives from school and community. But it does not significantly affect receiving interpretive narratives from family and mass media.

From data analysis, it is observed that Bengali medium students are receiving comparatively more interpretive narratives from school. On the other side, English medium students are receiving comparatively less interpretive narratives from school.

As FGD (teachers) reveals, recent addition of counter narratives in Bengali medium religious textbooks is probably playing a role behind this variance. From the analysis of textbook contents, it is found that religious textbooks (particularly SSC level/class-IX/X) of Bengali medium contain some counter narratives. Perhaps, for this reason, Bengali medium students are getting comparatively more counter narratives from school. On the other hand, religious textbooks of English medium are found to contain almost no counter narratives. Most probably, for this reason, English medium students are getting comparatively less or no counter narratives from school in this concern.

In case of community, the finding is bit interesting. No satisfactory reason was found for why English medium students are receiving comparatively less counter narratives from community. One probable reason is that English medium students generally belong to affluent families having higher socio-economic status. It is seen that this class of people usually live in more developed community where urban culture is more acute and therefore community interaction is limited. May be, for this limited interaction within community, English medium students (children) are receiving less counter narratives from this source.

## 4.5 Analysis of curriculum and textbooks of religious education

Question: Which topic(s)/issue(s) in the following need to be included in the curriculum of religious textbooks of school for countering extremism more effectively?

1. Narratives on different sensitive/controversial issues derived from religion (e.g. *Jihad*<sup>1</sup>, extremism, terrorism/militancy etc.)
2. Narratives on religious tolerance, fraternity/brotherhood, and communal harmony
3. Narratives on different communities/sects (e.g. *Shia and Sunni*), different *madhhabs*/jurisprudences (e.g. *Hanafi, Shafi, Maliki, and Hanbali*) and different ideologies/doctrines (e.g. *Tabligh, Caliphate, Sufism, Salafism etc.*) within Islam, and peaceful coexistence among them.
4. Narratives against the subversive activities, ideologies, strategies or traps of the extremist/terrorist/militant groups, and the ways of avoiding or preventing them.
5. Any other topic/issue.....
9. No opinion

This question was intended to get a comprehensive list of counter narratives on which analysis of the contents of religious textbooks would be done. Besides closed ended set-options, this question also contained an open ended option for allowing respondents to give their opinion freely. Students were allowed to tick off several options.

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<sup>1</sup>*Jihad* is an Arabic word. Its literal meaning is labor, toil, effort etc. It involves the idea of establishing truth and justice by the way of sacrifice in terms of life, wealth etc as well as through spreading knowledge, good deeds, writings and speeches.

(source: Textbook, Islam and Moral Education, Class-9/10, published by NCTB)

Out of 415 respondents, 227 respondents have given their opinions. These opinions were not mutually exclusive (i.e. same opinion has been given by several respondents). Through analysis, these 227 opinions (along with other set-options) have been organized into 8 (eight) major categories that provide the following 8 (eight) kinds of major topics/issues.

**Table-9: Summary of analysis of the opinions on topics/issues which need to be included in the curriculum of religious textbooks of school for countering extremism more effectively**

Category	Topics/Issues	Frequency (No. of respondents)
1	Narratives on clear distinction between <i>Jihad</i> and <b>extremism/terrorism</b> . (in light of relevant Quranic verses and Hadis/sayings of messenger)	93
2	Narratives on causes of extremism/terrorism	35
3	Narratives on consequences of extremism/terrorism in personal and social life (including criminal punishment and eternal punishment)	55
4	Narratives on raising awareness regarding the ways of avoiding and preventing extremism/terrorism.	87
5	Narratives on religious tolerance, fraternity/brotherhood, and communal harmony	31
6	Narratives on common and specific lessons/teachings of other major religions regarding their fundamental beliefs, diversities and prevention of extremism/terrorism.	13
7	Narratives on diversities (i.e. different communities, jurisprudence, ideologies or doctrines) within Islam and peaceful coexistence among them.	5
8	Narratives against the subversive activities, ideologies, strategies or traps of the extremist/terrorist groups.	19

From table, it is observed that first five categories of topics/issues have frequency more than 30, whereas the last three categories of topics/issues have frequency less than 20. From frequency observation, it is obvious that first five categories are more demanded as the topics/issues of counter narratives, whereas the last three categories are less demanded as the topics/issues of counter narratives. The researcher took all the 8 (eight) categories of topics/issues as the base of analysis of textbooks and curriculum.

It is mentionable that religious textbook of class/grade: 1-5 only deal with preliminary knowledge of religious beliefs, practices, and rituals. Counter narratives are beyond the scope of these textbooks. For this reason, religious textbooks of class/grade: 6-9/10 have been analyzed in order to see whether they provide the above mentioned counter narratives or not.

**Table-10: Summary of the analysis of curriculum and textbook contents (Islamic textbooks)**

Ctg.	Topics/Issues	Bengali medium textbooks (NCTB)	English medium textbooks (Foreign/Non NCTB)
1	Narratives on clear distinction between Jihad and extremism/terrorism (in light of relevant Quranic verses and hadis/sayings of messenger)	<p><u>Class-VIII</u> 1 lesson: Terrorism only (1.5 page out of 128 pages)</p> <p><u>Class-IX/X (Chapter-3)</u> 1 lesson: Jihad (1.5 page out of 178 pages)</p> <p><u>Class-IX/X (Chapter-3)</u> 1 lesson: Jihad vs Terrorism (1 page out of 178 pages)</p> <p><u>Class-IX/X (Chapter-4)</u> 1 lesson: Terrorism (1.5 page out of 178 pages)</p>	<p><u>Grade-8</u> 1 lesson: Jihad only (2 pages out of 230 pages: Published from London)</p> <p><u>Grade-9/10</u> 1 lesson: Jihad only (4 pages out of 279 pages: Published from Lahore)</p> <p><u>Grade-9/10</u> 1 lesson: Jihad only (2 pages out of 161 pages: Published from Oxford)</p>
2	Narratives on causes of extremism/terrorism/militancy	<p><u>Class-VIII</u> 1 Paragraph: Terrorism only (3 lines out of 128 pages)</p>	No text found
3	Narratives on consequences (bad effects) of extremism/terrorism in personal and social life (including criminal punishment and eternal punishment)	<p><u>Class-VIII</u> 1 Paragraph: Terrorism only (6 lines out of 128 pages)</p>	No text found
4	Narratives on raising awareness regarding the ways of avoiding and preventing extremism/terrorism/militancy	<p><u>Class-VIII</u> 1 Paragraph: Terrorism only (22 lines out of 128 pages)</p>	No text found
5	a) Narratives on religious tolerance	<p><u>Class-VIII</u> 1 lesson (1 page out of 128 pages)</p>	<p><u>Grade-9/10</u> 1 lesson (2 pages out of 279 pages: Published from Lahore)</p> <p><u>Grade-9/10</u> 1 Paragraph (9 lines out of 161 pages: Published from Oxford)</p>
	b) Narratives on fraternity/brotherhood	<p><u>Class-VIII</u> 1 lesson (2 pages out of 128 pages)</p>	No text found
	c) Narratives on communal harmony	<p><u>Class-IX/X</u> 1 lesson: fraternity &amp; communal harmony (3 page out of 178 pages)</p>	No text found

Continuing...

Ctg.	Topics/Issues	Bengali medium textbooks (NCTB)	English medium textbooks (Foreign/Non NCTB)
6	Narratives on common and specific teachings/views of other major religions regarding fundamental beliefs and prevention of extremism/terrorism	No text found	No text found
7	Narratives on different ideologies/diversities within Islam and peaceful coexistence among them	No text found	No text found
8	Narratives against extremist/terrorist groups and their subversive activities, ideologies, traps and tactics	No text found	No text found

The above table reveals the following findings:

- a) There are no narratives regarding countering extremism up to class-VII (Bengali medium) and Grade-7 (English medium).
- b) An English medium textbook of grade-8 contains narratives only regarding *Jihad*.
- c) English medium textbooks of grade-9/10 contain narratives regarding *Jihad*, and religious tolerance.
- d) Bengali medium textbook of class-VIII contains narratives regarding terrorism, brotherhood, and religious tolerance.
- e) Bengali medium textbook of class-IX/X contains narratives regarding Jihad, Jihad and terrorism, terrorism (as *fitna-fasad*), and fraternity and communal harmony.
- f) Topics/issues of the last three categories (i.e. category 6, 7, and 8) have not found in any religious textbooks of both Bengali medium and English medium.

#### 4.6 General interpretation of findings regarding curriculum and textbook analysis

During analysis, it has been observed that English medium religious textbooks (Islam) have no narratives of counter-extremism. Though these books contain narratives on *jihad* which is qualitatively of high standard, it doesn't narrate anything about the other side i.e. the extremist end of *jihad*. It deals with nothing about countering extremism and terrorism. Even these words are totally missing from the texts. Though an O-level book (grade-9/10) has narratives on religious tolerance, it provides only some general discussions from religious perspective.

On the other hand, it has been observed that Bengali medium religious textbooks (Islam and Moral Education) contain narratives regarding counter-extremism. These books (particularly class-VIII and IX/X) provide narratives on *Jihad*, terrorism, and especially the difference between *jihad* and terrorism.

Though Bengali medium textbooks do not directly provide narratives on counter-extremism, they provide narratives on preventing the extremist end of *Jihad*, i.e. terrorism. Other narratives on religious tolerance, communal harmony, fraternity and brotherhood provide discussions from religious perspective.

It is notable that there is no fixed curriculum for the English medium religious textbooks. Different schools teach their students differently from different books. On the other hand, Bengali medium religious textbooks have fixed curriculum designed by NCTB. Not only that, NCTB has published class-wise pedagogical instruction books for teachers dealing with religious education in different classes.

Curriculum and pedagogical books analysis reveals that there are some particular pedagogical instructions to be followed by teachers on discussing counter narratives. For example-

a) In class-IX/X, textbook of 'Islam and Moral Education' contain a lesson on *Jihad* and terrorism. It discusses *Jihad* and terrorism from different dimensions. In curriculum, teachers are instructed to ask the students to be divided into groups and discuss the difference between *Jihad* and terrorism after learning from that lesson. In pedagogical instruction book, teachers are also instructed to discuss how students will lead a life free of terrorism with the spirit of humanity.

b) In class-VIII, textbook of 'Islam and Moral Education' contain a lesson on 'terrorism'. It discusses about the causes of terrorism, bad effects of terrorism and prevention on terrorism. In curriculum, teachers are instructed to ask the students to be divided into groups and make a list of bad effects of terrorism after learning from that lesson. In pedagogical instruction book, teachers are also instructed to encourage students to prevent terrorism.

**Table-11: Summary of Major opinions from interviewees and three FGDs on the topics of interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives)**

Ctg.	Topics/Issues	Text availability	Interviewee (opinion in favor) (out of 25)	FGDs (Status about inclusion)
1	Narratives on clear distinction between <i>Jihad</i> and <b>extremism/terrorism</b> . (in light of relevant Quranic verses and Hadis)	Class: VIII & IX/X Grade: 8 & 9/10	23	Agreed/ Justified
2	Narratives on causes/reasons (কারণ) of extremism/terrorism/militancy	Class: VIII	18	Agreed/ Justified
3	Narratives on consequences/adverse effects/ negative impact of terrorism/militancy in personal and social life (including criminal punishment and eternal punishment)	Class: VIII	19	Agreed/ Justified
4	Narratives on raising awareness regarding the ways of avoiding and preventing extremism/terrorism.	Class: VIII	19	Agreed/ Justified
5	Narratives on religious tolerance, fraternity/brotherhood, and communal harmony	Class: VIII & IX/X Grade: 9/10	15	Agreed/ Justified
6	Narratives on common and specific lessons/teachings/views of other major religions regarding their fundamental beliefs, diversities and prevention of extremism/terrorism.	No text found	8	Debated
7	Narratives on diversities (i.e. different communities, jurisprudence, ideologies or doctrines) within Islam and peaceful coexistence among them.	No text found	7	Debated
8	Narratives against the subversive activities, ideologies, strategies or traps of the extremist/terrorist/militant groups.	No text found	9	Debated

As per major opinions found from interviewees and three FGDs (students, guardians, and teachers)-

a) Difference between Jihad and extremism/terrorism is the most important counter narratives. Addition of this topic to the Bengali medium religious textbook was highly appreciated and unanimously justified by the discussants of all FGDs.

b) Difference between Jihad and extremism/terrorism, causes of extremism/terrorism, consequences of extremism/terrorism, and awareness of avoiding or preventing extremism/terrorism – these 4 (four) topics/issues are necessary to be included in textbooks as parts of interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives). These topics needs to be included in both Bengali and English medium religious textbooks.

c) Class-VIII/Grade-8 is the most important class/grade where interpretive narratives including these four topics need to be learnt. FGD discussants (guardians and teachers) unanimously opined on this issue. It was argued that students become divided into science/arts/commerce groups after this class. Some may leave school for vocational education. Some may drop out for different reasons. Again, Class-VIII/Grade-8 is going to be considered as the last class/grade of primary level. So, it is the appropriate class/grade for providing interpretive narratives of counter-extremism.

It was also opined that first four categories of interpretive narratives are necessary to be included as a whole in class-VIII/grade-8. Religious textbooks of Class-IX/X or Grade-9/10 need to contain these four topics more elaborately.

d) First four categories of interpretive narratives have been considered as enough for comprising interpretive narratives. Most of the interviewees and all the FGD discussants agreed upon this issue.

e) Interpretive narratives on religious tolerance, fraternity/brotherhood, and communal harmony are also found to be important and need to be included as they are already remaining.

f) Topics/issues of the last three categories (i.e. category 6, 7, and 8) have not found in any religious textbooks of both Bengali medium and English medium. All the FGD discussants unanimously agreed that these issues need not to be included in any textbooks of school level. They may create burden both on the curriculum and students. Some of the

discussants opined that these topics are beyond the intellectual capacity of the school level students. Students may also misinterpret them.

g) Lastly, all the FGD discussants unanimously agreed that issues/topics of interpretive narratives found in the Bengali medium religious textbooks are quantitatively enough for comprising ideal interpretive narratives. No additional topic needs to be included. No further chapter or lesson needs to be added. But it is observed that they have qualitatively poor discussion. Necessary topics are there, but elaboration is scattered and unorganized.

FGD discussants (teachers) have unanimously opined that first four categories of topics/issues (i.e. difference between Jihad and extremism/terrorism, causes of extremism/terrorism, consequences of extremism/terrorism, and awareness of avoiding or preventing extremism/terrorism) are need to be discussed as a whole (like an essay) in the same class (preferably in class-VIII/grade-8). And discussion should be in the light of relevant Quranic verses and Hadis (sayings of messenger). Then, interpretive narratives are expected to be fully effective qualitatively. English medium religious textbooks also need to be redesigned in the same way, as FGD discussants opined. It is also noted that directly 'counter-extremism' has not been discussed in any religious textbooks of English and Bengali medium. For this, majority of the interviewees and discussants have also opined on discussing 'counter-extremism' directly along with 'counter-terrorism'.

FGD discussants have also opined that seminar or symposium may also be arranged in every school once in a year. This may create awareness as a whole among students, guardians and teachers for countering extremism.

#### **4.7 Theoretical interpretation of findings regarding textbook analysis**

As per the theory of interpretation and interpretive approach to religious education, any issue in religious texts need to be interpreted in the context of whole and part. If a text is discussed from all possible parts (perspectives) along with the whole in the proper context, then it becomes properly interpreted. Otherwise there is a chance for misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

For example, Jihad and extremism/terrorism are countering ideologies to one another. If in the same text, only Jihad is discussed without interpreting its counter-part (i.e. extremist end), then Jihad may be misinterpreted. In the other way, if extremism/terrorism is discussed in any religious text without any notion of Jihad, Jihad may become also misinterpreted later.

So, both these ideologies need to be interpreted with proper context at the same time, in the same text. Then counter narratives will be available.

As per the findings of textbook analysis, no counter narratives have found in the textbooks of English medium schools. For Bengali medium, only textbooks of class-VIII and SSC level contain some interpretive narratives.

As per strict theoretical sense, it can be concluded that only religious textbook of class-9/10 (Bengali medium) contain proper interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives). Because, in only this textbook, difference between Jihad and terrorism (i.e. the extremist end of misinterpreted Jihad) has been properly interpreted in the same text with proper contextualization.

#### 4.8 Education Policy Analysis in respect of countering extremism

A thorough analysis shows that there is no single notion about ‘countering extremism’ or ‘countering terrorism’ in the National education Policy of Bangladesh (NEP) 2010. For overall education, NEP has set 30 (thirty) aims and objectives. But no direct issue has been covered relating to extremism or terrorism. Indirectly, only 3(three) issues have been covered relating to counter narratives which are shown in the following table:

Table-12: Issues relating to counter narratives covered in the aims & objectives of education (as a whole) in NEP 2010

Serial no. in original document	Description	Page No.
3	<i>“.....to develop qualities of good citizens (i.e. sense of justice, <b>non-communalism</b>, dutifulness, awareness of human rights, cultivation of free thinking and discipline, love for honest living, the <b>tolerance</b> of corporate life, friendliness and perseverance)”</i>	8
7	<i>“to remove socio-economic discrimination irrespective of race, religion and creed and to eradicate gender disparity; to develop <b>non-communalism</b>, friendliness, global <b>fraternity</b>, fellow-feeling and respect for human rights”</i>	8
9	<i>“to show <b>tolerance</b> for different ideologies for the development of a democratic culture and to help develop a life-oriented, realistic and positive outlook”</i>	9

This table shows that non-communalism, fraternity and tolerance are the only issues in the aims and objectives of education (as a whole) in NEP 2010 which can be indirectly related to counter narratives. During analysis, it was also observed that religious and moral education bears only 2(two) aims and objectives in NEP 2010 and these two aims and objectives indicates no issue like countering extremism or terrorism.

Table-13: Aims & objectives of religious and moral education as described in NEP 2010

Serial no. in original document	Description	Page no.
1	<i>“to impart proper and quality religious and moral education by radicalizing the existing system”</i>	29
2	<i>“to put further emphasis on moral aspect; along with fundamental teachings of every religion; Religious education will not limit itself only to religious customs and rituals, rather it will seek to build up the moral character of the students”</i>	29

On the question whether the current education policy of Bangladesh supportive for using the religious education of school as a tool for countering extremism, different opinion comes from different interviewees and FGD discussants. In order to get valuable findings, these opinions have been analyzed in the following manner:

**Table-14: Summary of analysis of opinions on whether NEP 2010 is supportive for using the religious education of school as a tool for countering extremism**

	<b>Opinions (not mutually exclusive)</b>	<b>Interviewee in favor (out of 25)</b>	<b>FGD opinion</b>
1	As 'developing non-communalism' is in the aims and objectives of <i>Education (as a whole)</i> in NEP, it is partially supportive (at least, not creating any bar) to use religious education as a tool for countering extremism.	18	Agreed
2	'Countering extremism' needs to be incorporated in the aims and objectives of <i>Religious Education</i> in NEP, so that it becomes fully supportive for using religious education as a tool for countering extremism.	17	Agreed
3	As 'countering extremism' is not in the aims and objectives of <i>Education (as a whole)</i> in NEP, so it is not supportive for using religious education as a tool for countering extremism.	7	Debated
4	As 'developing non-communalism' is not in the aims and objectives of <i>Religious Education</i> in NEP, so it is not supportive for using religious education as a tool for countering extremism.	6	Debated
5	As 'countering extremism' is not in the aims and objectives of <i>Religious Education</i> in NEP, so it is not supportive for using religious education as a tool for countering extremism.	7	Debated
6	As 'developing non-communalism' is in the aims and objectives of <i>Education (as a whole)</i> in NEP, it is mandatory to use education as a tool for countering extremism (i.e. fully supportive)	6	Debated
7	No/Neutral opinion	3	-

There were a lot of debates found on this issue. 'Countering extremism' is not in the aims and objectives of education or religious education as described in NEP 2010. So, some of the interviewees opined that NEP 2010 is not supportive for using religious education of school as a tool for countering extremism. But some interviewees opined differently. They think that as 'developing non-communalism' is one of the aims and objectives of NEP 2010, and it conceptually incorporates the spirit of countering/preventing extremism, NEP is supportive (at least, not created any bar) for using religious education of school as a tool for countering extremism.

Many more debatable opinions came. Later in FGD (guardians) and FGD (teachers), discussants were unanimously agreed upon the two following opinions-

a) As 'developing non-communalism' is in the aims and objectives of Education (as a whole) in NEP, it is partially supportive for using religious education as a tool for countering extremism.

b) 'Countering extremism' needs to be incorporated in the aims and objectives of Religious Education in NEP, so that it becomes fully supportive for using religious education as a tool for countering extremism.

FGD discussants also pointed to teachers' training in providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism, which needs to be addressed specially in education policy. Majority of the interviewees also pointed to this important issue. It is because teachers play the main role of discussing lessons in the class room. Main interpretation or explanation of the texts comes from them. It is found that Bengali medium curriculum and pedagogical instruction books designed by NCTB also have taken teachers' role seriously in this regard. For interpreting issues described in textbooks, curriculum has set number of instructions for teachers.

## Chapter-5

### Major findings and Conclusion

This concluding chapter presents the major findings of the study in brief account. Then it attempts to answer all the four research questions on basis of research findings. Lastly it also discusses about theoretical implication and policy implication that involves the major findings of the research.

#### 5.1 Major findings of the research

##### ***1) Religious education is important for providing interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives)***

Frequent extremist occurrences (both at home and abroad) are making the young minds worried about their vulnerability. Inquisitive students search for interpretive narratives for countering or avoiding extremist ideologies. About 80% students think that interpretive narratives are important for countering extremism. 72.7% students think that religious education plays an important role in providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism. It also implies that students strongly demand interpretive narratives for countering extremism. They think that anyone can be misguided (or involved in extremist activities) if he/she don't get interpretive narratives. Changing context has increased the importance of religious education which was not so important few years back in this concern.

##### ***2) Socio-institutional sources of religious education (i.e. school, family, community and mass media) are significantly related with counter narratives***

School, family, community and mass media are significantly related with interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives). They can play role as different sources of counter narratives for students (children). Supply of counter narratives may vary with attributes of school textbooks and teachers, educational qualification of the family members, degree of community interaction, and use of mass media.

**3) As source of counter narratives, family and school are almost equally important to the students**

For counter narratives, students depend mostly on family and school. These two sources are almost equally important to them, whereas community and mass media are comparatively less important to them. For various reasons, they are comparatively less dependent on community and mass media in getting interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives).

**4) Socio-demographic factors (i.e. gender of the students, locality of the students, and their medium of education) are significantly related with counter narratives**

Gender of the students, locality of the students, and their medium of education are significantly related with counter narratives. Received extent of counter narratives may vary with these socio-demographic factors.

Rural students are receiving comparatively less counter narratives from family and comparatively more from school. On the other side, urban students are receiving comparatively more counter narratives from family and comparatively less from school. Urban students are receiving less counter narratives from community, whereas rural students are getting more from this source.

Male students are receiving comparatively more counter narratives from community. On the other hand, female students are receiving comparatively less counter narratives from community.

Bengali medium students are receiving comparatively more counter narratives from school. On the other side, English medium students are receiving comparatively less or no counter narratives from school.

**5) Interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives) involves mainly four major topics or issues**

Difference between Jihad and Terrorism, causes of extremism/terrorism, consequence of extremism/terrorism, and awareness of avoiding or preventing extremism/terrorism are considered to be the four major topics or issues of counter narratives. These topics essentially need to be interpreted in the religious textbooks of school. Tolerance, fraternity,

and communal harmony are considered as supporting topics of counter narratives which are also important to be discussed. Among the four major topics, difference between *jihad* and terrorism is found to be the most important topic of counter narratives.

It is also found that any additional topic for counter narratives may prove burden on the students. Topics mentioned above are found in the Bengali medium religious textbooks. They just need to be more qualitatively discussed where no further chapter or lesson is needed to be included. Any further topic needs to be cautiously securitized so that it couldn't be a source of misinterpretation or beyond the intellectual capacity of the students.

**6) Religious textbooks of Bengali medium schools are providing interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives) to the students**

According to the new national curriculum of 2013, Religious textbooks (Islam and Moral Education) of Bengali medium schools are providing counter narratives to the students. Particularly, religious textbooks class-VIII and class-IX/X are providing interpretive narratives of counter-extremism. And these interpretive narratives (e.g. difference between Jihad and Terrorism, causes of extremism/terrorism, consequence of extremism/terrorism, and narratives of avoiding or preventing extremism/terrorism) are creating awareness among the Bengali medium students about countering extremism and terrorism. Getting interpretive narratives especially on the difference between *Jihad* and terrorism is making them less vulnerable to extremist ideologies.

**7) Religious textbooks of English medium schools are providing no interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives) to the students which may increase vulnerability for them**

This research has found no interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives) in the Religious textbooks of English medium schools. Different English medium schools use different textbooks for religious education which are written by different writers from different countries. There is no fixed curriculum for these textbooks. These religious textbooks contain high quality narratives on *Jihad*, but counter narratives on the extremist end of *Jihad* (i.e. terrorism) is missing in these books. As no discussion is provided regarding the difference between Jihad and extremism/terrorism in English medium religious

textbooks, the concept of *Jihad* can be easily misinterpreted to the English medium students. This may increase their vulnerability to extremist ideologies.

**8) *Class-VIII/Grade-8 is considered to be most important class/grade for providing counter-narratives***

It was argued that students become divided into science/arts/commerce groups after this class. Some may leave school for vocational education. Some may drop out for different reasons. Again, Class-VIII/Grade-8 is going to be considered as the last class/grade of primary level. So, it is the appropriate class/grade for providing interpretive narratives of counter-extremism. It was also opined that four major topics of interpretive narratives are necessary to be included as a whole in class-VIII/grade-8. Religious textbooks of Class-IX/X or Grade-9/10 need to contain these four topics just more elaborately.

**9) *Special training for teachers of religious education is vital for providing counter narratives***

Teachers play the main role of discussing lessons in the class room. Main interpretation or explanation of the texts comes from them. Special training (focused on counter narratives) for teachers of religious education is vital in this concern so that they can provide interpretation on sensitive and debated issues being free from personal biasness and respective ideologies.

## **5.2 Answering the research questions**

**1) Do students demand interpretive narratives for countering extremism (i.e. counter-narratives)?**

**Answer:** Students demand interpretive narratives for countering extremism (i.e. counter-narratives). Survey data demonstrates that their demand is remarkably very strong in this concern. Changing reality is working behind their increased awareness. Although demand side (students) expresses a very high demand for counter-narratives, supply side (especially teachers and guardians) has delivered a bit cautious opinion in this regard. They are in favor of a reasonable extent of quality counter narratives.

**2) Does religious education of school provide interpretive narratives for countering extremism (i.e. counter narratives)?**

**Answer:** As per findings, particularity, religious textbook of class-IX/X of Bengali medium schools is providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism (i.e. counter narratives). And these recently added texts are increasing the awareness level of the Bengali medium students regarding counter-extremism. This research has found no counter narratives in the religious textbooks of English medium schools.

**3) Has religious education of school any comparative importance in countering extremism from the demand-supply perspective of interpretive narratives?**

**Answer:** Religious education of school has found to be almost equally important as the religious education of family. On the other hand, religious education of school has found to be more important than religious education of community and mass media. Students are demanding more from school as they think they are being benefitted with the current counter narratives. Supply of counter narratives can't be always ensured from family, community and mass media for different factors. State can ensure the supply of counter narratives by using the channel of formal religious education of school, since textbooks and teachers are under the direct control of government.

**4) Is the current education policy of Bangladesh supportive for using the religious education of school as a tool for countering extremism?**

**Answer:** This research has found the National Education Policy 2010 as partially supportive (at least, not creating any bar) for using the religious education of school as a tool for countering extremism. Inserting the concept of counter-extremism along with non-communalism may make it fully supportive.

**5.3 Theoretical implication and scope of further research**

Theory of interpretation and the interpretive approach of religious education are both of European origins. European community has started to work on countering extremism by religious education. They have performing a lot of research on it. Extremism is a similar threat to our country also. But we are neither creating our own approach to counter-extremism in our own socio-political context, nor following the best practices around the world. So, from theoretical perspective, there are wider scope where significant

research can be performed to produce knowledge which may help countering extremism more effectively.

#### **5.4 Policy implication of this research**

In society, everything is not under state's control. State cannot solve each and every problem in society. However state can use its own mechanism or channel to find solution.

Counter narratives are important for countering extremist ideologies. But state cannot compel family, community and mass media to provide counter narratives, since all these are not under direct control of it. Being a direct controller, state can directly intervene into education system through its education policy.

Bengali medium religious textbooks are providing some counter narratives. But English medium religious textbooks are providing no counter narratives to the students, which is increasing their vulnerability to extremism. On the other hand, supply of counter narratives significantly vary among different socio-institutional sources which are also affected by socio-demographic factors. It is clear that a significant portion of our children are getting partial or no counter narratives for countering extremism. State can use its already established channel of formal religious education to ensure the supply of counter narratives to all its citizens. And in doing so, there is lot to rethink about education policy.

#### **5.5 Concluding remarks**

For Bangladesh, it is an undeniable reality that the threats of extremism and terrorism are emerging where the youths are the core target of exploitation. For facing the same kind of challenges or threats, many of the European countries are now utilizing their religious education system with new effective approaches. But, in case of Bangladesh, we are neither following their best practices nor developing our own approaches.

In countering extremism and terrorism, religious education can be an effective counter-strategy. It needs to be considered as one of the effective soft-power tools complementing other hard-power initiatives for countering extremism. On the contrary, it is also notable that narrowly-focused and ineffective approach to religious education may work as a facilitating factor for extremism and terrorism.

We can kill an extremist or terrorist by using weapons, but it is not the proper solution since we cannot kill his/her extremist ideology by using weapons. It is ideology that can only be countered with ideologies. So, counter narratives are always important which can be provided through education. Scholars argue, for preventing extremism with long-lasting (sustainable) impact, education needs to be considered as one of the soft-power

tools along with cultural activities and sports. It is because extremist groups are now using education for propagating their extremist ideologies.

For countering extremist ideologies, it is necessary to provide counter narratives to our children so that they become conscious of avoiding intolerance and extremism. Although family, community and media are important means of providing counter-narratives, it is not possible for the state to control these sources wholly and directly. Children may receive narratives even in favor of extremism from family, community and media. However, there is already an established channel of education system through which holistic, objective and neutral counter-narratives can be provided to our children for countering extremism.

This research is actually a challenging attempt, since no organized research has been performed before so far, and as research issues like 'religion' and 'extremism' are always considered to be sensitive. However, this research has tried its best to find the answers of its research questions keeping the sophisticate reality in mind.

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## ANNEX- I

### Questionnaire for Perception Survey

**Q.1) Do you think interpretive narratives (i.e. explanatory message, story, content, description, information or knowledge) are important for countering extremism in the present context of Bangladesh?**

1. Yes, it is important
2. Partially it is important
3. No, it is not important
9. No opinion

**Q.2) Do you think religious education plays an important role in providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism?**

1. Yes, it plays an important role
2. Partially it plays an important role
3. No, it doesn't play any important role
9. No opinion

**Q.3) Do you think religious education of school (i.e. text books and teachers) plays more important role than religious education of family (i.e. parents, elder brothers-sisters and relatives) in providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism?**

1. Yes, school plays more important role
2. Neutral, both school and family play equally important role
3. No, family plays more important role
9. No opinion

**Q.4) Do you think religious education of school (i.e. text books and teachers) plays more important role than religious education of community (i.e. neighbors, friends, mosque, club etc.) in providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism?**

1. Yes, school plays more important role
2. Neutral, both school and community play equally important role
3. No, community plays more important role
9. No opinion

**Q.5) Do you think religious education of school (i.e. text books and teachers) plays more important role than religious education of mass media (i.e. television, radio, newspaper, internet, social media like Facebook etc.) in providing interpretive narratives for countering extremism?**

1. Yes, school plays more important role
2. Neutral, both school and mass media play equally important role
3. No, mass media plays more important role
9. No opinion

**Q.6) Which topic(s)/issue(s) in the following need to be included in the curriculum of religious text books of school for countering extremism more effectively?**

1. Narratives on different sensitive/controversial issues derived from religion (e.g. *Jihad*, extremism, terrorism/militancy etc.)
2. Narratives on religious tolerance, fraternity/brotherhood, and communal harmony
3. Narratives on different communities/sects (e.g. Sunni and Shia), different madhhabs/jurisprudences (e.g. Hanafi, Shafi, Maliki, and Hanbali) and different ideologies/doctrines (Tabligh, Caliphate, Sufism, Salafism etc.) within Islam, and peaceful coexistence among them.
4. Narratives against the subversive activities, ideologies, strategies or traps of the extremist/terrorist/militant groups, and the ways of avoiding or preventing them.
5. Any other topic/issue.....
9. No opinion

**Q.7) Do you think learning about fundamental and sensitive issues of other religions (besides own religion) is also important for countering extremism?**

1. Yes, it is important
2. Partially it is important
3. No, it is not important
9. No opinion

**Q.8a) Which one do you consider as the most important source of interpretive narratives (i.e. explanatory message, story, content, description, information or knowledge) for countering extremism?**

1. School
2. Family
3. Community
4. Mass media
9. No opinion

**Q.8b) Have you got interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives) from your perceived most important source?**

1. Yes, I have got
2. Partially I have got
3. No, I have not got
9. No opinion

**Q.9) Have you got any interpretive narrative from your family (i.e. parents, elder brothers-sisters and relatives) for countering extremism?**

1. Yes, I have got
2. Partially I have got
3. No, I have not got
9. No opinion

**Q.10) Have you got any interpretive narrative from your community (i.e. neighbors, friends, mosque, club etc.) for countering extremism?**

1. Yes, I have got
2. Partially I have got
3. No, I have not got
9. No opinion

**Q.11) Have you got any interpretive narrative from mass media (i.e. television, radio, newspaper, internet, social media like Facebook etc.) for countering extremism?**

1. Yes, I have got
2. Partially I have got
3. No, I have not got
9. No opinion

**Q.12) Have you got any interpretive narrative from your school (i.e. text books and teachers) for countering extremism?**

1. Yes, I have got
2. Partially I have got
3. No, I have not got
9. No opinion

**Q.13) Do you think interpretive narratives need to be specially included in the text books of religious education of school for countering extremism?**

1. Yes, it is needed
2. No, it is not needed
9. No opinion

**Q.14) Do you think teachers of the religious education of school need to be specially sincere in providing interpretive narratives to the students for countering extremism?**

1. Yes, it is needed
2. No, it is not needed
9. No opinion

**Q.15) Are you interested to get more interpretive narratives from school for countering extremism?**

1. Yes, I am interested
2. No, I am not interested
9. No opinion

**Q.16) Do you think current curriculum of religious education of school is enough to get necessary interpretive narratives for countering extremism?**

1. Yes, it is enough
2. No, it is not enough
9. No opinion

**Q.17) Do you think 'interpretive narratives' is equally important as 'sports' and 'cultural activities' for countering extremism?**

1. Yes, it is equally important
2. No, it is not equally important
9. No opinion

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## **ANNEX-II**

### **Checklist for In-depth Interview**

- 1) Do you think religious education is important for countering extremism in the present context of Bangladesh?
  
- 2) Do you think religious education of school is providing interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives)?
  
- 3) Do you think religious education of school has special significance in countering extremism in comparison with religious education of family, community and mass media?
  
- 4) Do you think socio-demographic factors (e.g. gender, locality, and medium of education) make differences in receiving counter narratives?
  
- 5) Do you think counter narratives need to be included in the textbooks of religious education of schools?
  
- 6) Do you think current education policy of Bangladesh is supportive for using the religious education of school as a tool for countering extremism?

### **ANNEX-III**

#### **Checklist for Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**

- 1) Please discuss whether religious education is important for countering extremism in the present context of Bangladesh.
  
- 2) Please discuss whether religious education of school is providing interpretive narratives of counter-extremism (i.e. counter narratives).
  
- 3) Please discuss whether religious education of school has special significance in countering extremism in comparison with religious education of family, community and mass media.
  
- 4) Please discuss whether socio-demographic factors (e.g. gender, locality, and medium of education) make differences in receiving counter narratives.
  
- 5) Please discuss whether counter narratives need to be included in the textbooks of religious education of schools.
  
- 6) Please discuss whether current education policy of Bangladesh is supportive for using the religious education of school as a tool for countering extremism.

ANNEX-IV

Cross Tabulation-1

Gender	Interpretive narratives from school			Total count	Remark
	Yes	Partial	No		
Male	137 (53.7% of total male)	79 (31.0% of total male)	39 (15.3% of total male)	255	No remarkable variation
Female	80 (50.0% of total female)	68 (42.5% of total female)	12 (7.5% of total female)	160	
<b>Total count</b>	217	147	51	<b>415</b>	

Gender	Interpretive narratives from family			Total count	Remark
	Yes	Partial	No		
Male	154 (60.4% of total male)	85 (33.3% of total male)	16 (6.3% of total male)	255	No remarkable variation
Female	83 (57.9% of total female)	66 (36.2% of total female)	11 (5.9% of total female)	160	
<b>Total count</b>	237	151	27	<b>415</b>	

Gender	Interpretive narratives from community			Total count	Remark
	Yes	Partial	No		
Male	94 (36.9% of total male)	103 (40.4% of total male)	58 (22.7% of total male)	255	Female are receiving less
Female	38 (23.8% of total female)	71 (44.4% of total female)	51 (31.9% of total female)	160	
<b>Total count</b>	132	174	109	<b>415</b>	

Gender	Interpretive narratives from mass media			Total count	Remark
	Yes	Partial	No		
Male	120 (47.1% of total male)	109 (42.7% of total male)	26 (10.2% of total male)	255	No remarkable variation
Female	76 (47.5% of total female)	71 (44.4% of total female)	13 (8.1% of total female)	160	
<b>Total count</b>	196	180	39	<b>415</b>	

Cross Tabulation-2

	Interpretive narratives from school			Total count	Remark
Locality	Yes	Partial	No		
Urban	114 (42.4% of total urban)	109 (40.1% of total urban)	46 (17.5% of total urban)	269	Rural students getting more from school
Rural	103 (70.5% of total rural)	38 (26.7% of total rural)	5 (2.7% of total rural)	146	
<b>Total count</b>	217	147	51	<b>415</b>	

	Interpretive narratives from family			Total count	Remark
Locality	Yes	Partial	No		
Urban	162 (62.2% of total urban)	89 (31.1% of total urban)	18 (6.7% of total urban)	269	Rural students getting less from family
Rural	75 (47.4% of total rural)	62 (44.5% of total rural)	9 (8.1% of total rural)	146	
<b>Total count</b>	237	151	27	<b>415</b>	

	Interpretive narratives from community			Total count	Remark
Locality	Yes	Partial	No		
Urban	85 (31.6% of total urban)	102 (37.9% of total urban)	82 (30.5% of total urban)	269	Urban students getting less from community
Rural	47 (34.2% of total rural)	72 (49.3% of total rural)	27 (16.5% of total rural)	146	
<b>Total count</b>	132	174	109	<b>415</b>	

	Interpretive narratives from mass media			Total count	Remark
Locality	Yes	Partial	No		
Urban	112 (44.6% of total urban)	127 (47.2% of total urban)	30 (8.2% of total urban)	269	No remarkable variation
Rural	84 (52.5% of total rural)	53 (41.3% of total rural)	9 (6.2% of total rural)	146	
<b>Total count</b>	196	180	39	<b>415</b>	

Cross Tabulation-3

	Interpretive narratives from school			Total count	Remark
Locality	Yes	Partial	No		
Bengali	197 (58.5% of total Bengali)	113 (33.5% of total Bengali)	27 (8.0% of total Bengali)	337	Bengali medium students are getting more from school
English	20 (25.6% of total English)	34 (43.6% of total English)	24 (30.8% of total English)	78	
<b>Total count</b>	217	147	51	<b>415</b>	

	Interpretive narratives from family			Total count	Remark
Locality	Yes	Partial	No		
Bengali	201 (59.6% of total Bengali)	118 (35.0% of total Bengali)	18 (5.3% of total Bengali)	337	No remarkable variation
English	36 (51.2% of total English)	33 (39.3% of total English)	9 (9.5% of total English)	78	
<b>Total count</b>	237	151	27	<b>415</b>	

	Interpretive narratives from community			Total count	Remark
Locality	Yes	Partial	No		
Bengali	110 (32.6% of total Bengali)	154 (45.7% of total Bengali)	73 (21.7% of total Bengali)	337	English medium students are getting less from community
English	22 (28.2% of total English)	20 (25.6% of total English)	36 (46.2% of total English)	78	
<b>Total count</b>	132	174	109	<b>415</b>	

	Interpretive narratives from mass media			Total count	Remark
Locality	Yes	Partial	No		
Bengali	170 (47.4% of total Bengali)	141 (43.8% of total Bengali)	26 (8.8% of total Bengali)	337	No remarkable variation
English	26 (36.3% of total English)	39 (48.0% of total English)	13 (15.7% of total English)	78	
<b>Total count</b>	196	180	39	<b>415</b>	

Cross Tabulation-4

		Perceived most important source of interpretive narratives								Total
		<i>School</i>		<i>Family</i>		<i>Community</i>		<i>Mass media</i>		
Locality	<b>Urban</b>	49.1	31.2	79.5	52.0	64.7	4.1	66.7	12.6	100%
	<b>Rural</b>	50.9	59.6	20.5	24.7	35.3	4.1	33.3	11.6	100%
<b>Total</b>		100%		100%		100%		100%		
Gender	<b>Male</b>	61.4	41.2	58.5	40.4	88.2	5.9	62.7	12.5	100%
	<b>Female</b>	38.6	41.2	41.5	45.6	11.8	1.2	37.3	11.9	100%
<b>Total</b>		100%		100%	100%			100%		
Medium	<b>Bengali</b>	89.9	45.1	68.2	35.6	100	5.0	94.1	14.2	100%
	<b>English</b>	10.1	24.4	31.8	71.8	0.0	0.0	5.9	3.8	100%
<b>Total</b>		100%		100%		100%		100%		