**Development Compilation**
Bangladesh Institute of Professional Studies
https://bips.bd/journal
ISSN: 2072-3334 (Print), ISSN: 2663-1547 (Online)

Volume 19 | Issue 1 | July 20, 2026 | Page: 210-222 | Article |

# Accessibility of Public Spaces for Persons with Disabilities in Rajshahi City: A Rights-Based Study

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**HOW TO CITE**
Hossain, M. T., Anjum, T., Gope, A., & Khatun, S. (2026). Accessibility of public spaces for persons with disabilities in Rajshahi City: A rights-based study. *Development Compilation, 19*(1), 210–222. https://bips.bd/journal

**ARTICLE HISTORY**
**Received:** 16 June 2026
**Revised:** 10 July 2026
**Accepted:** 13 July 2026
**Available online:** 20 July 2026



## Abstract

*Accessibility to public spaces is essential for ensuring the dignity, independence, participation, and social inclusion of persons with disabilities. This study examines the accessibility of public spaces in Rajshahi City from a rights-based perspective, with particular attention to physical, environmental, institutional, and attitudinal barriers. Guided by the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the study evaluates how existing public infrastructure and services support or restrict the equal participation of persons with disabilities. A descriptive survey approach was used to explore respondents' perceptions of accessibility and inclusion. The findings indicate that many public spaces in Rajshahi City remain insufficiently accessible, with most survey items receiving predominantly negative responses. Respondents reported challenges associated with mobility, infrastructure, transportation, service access, institutional support, and social attitudes. These barriers limit the ability of persons with disabilities to participate fully in educational, economic, cultural, healthcare, recreational, and civic activities. The study concludes that accessibility should be treated not as a charitable provision but as a fundamental human right.*

**Keywords:** persons with disabilities; public-space accessibility; social inclusion; disability rights; Rajshahi City

## 1. Introduction

This study is based on the rights-based understanding of disability, which recognizes accessibility to public spaces as a fundamental human right and an essential condition for the full participation, independence, dignity, and social inclusion of persons with disabilities; therefore, the research investigates the accessibility of public spaces in Rajshahi City by examining the physical, environmental, institutional, and attitudinal barriers that affect the mobility and participation of persons with disabilities, assessing the extent to which public infrastructure and services comply with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and exploring how accessibility influences the realization of equal rights, opportunities, and quality of life for persons with disabilities within the urban context of Bangladesh. Accessibility to public spaces is a fundamental human right recognized by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), as it enables persons with disabilities to participate fully and equally in social, economic, cultural, and civic life. Despite national and international commitments to disability rights, many persons with disabilities continue to face physical, environmental, and attitudinal barriers in accessing public spaces, highlighting the need to examine the accessibility of public infrastructure and services in Rajshahi City from a rights-based perspective. Bascom and Christensen (2017) found that limited access to transportation significantly restricts the social and community participation of persons with disabilities, with many individuals experiencing transportation-related exclusion that affects their ability to access employment, healthcare, services, and social activities. Söder (1990) argued that attitudes toward persons with disabilities should not be understood solely as expressions of prejudice; rather, they often reflect ambivalence arising from conflicting social values, highlighting the complexity of societal responses to disability and the need for more nuanced approaches to attitude research. Béland et al. (2006) found that an integrated care system for older persons with disabilities improved access to coordinated health and social services, reduced unnecessary hospital utilization, and increased caregiver satisfaction without increasing overall healthcare costs, highlighting the value of coordinated service delivery for persons with disabilities. Mikton et al. (2015) found that persons with disabilities are at a disproportionately higher risk of experiencing interpersonal violence, while the existing evidence on effective interventions to prevent and respond to such violence remains limited and methodologically weak, highlighting the urgent need for stronger research and policy initiatives, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Smith et al. (2022) emphasized that assistive technologies are fundamental to the realization of the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), as they promote independence, accessibility, social participation, and equal access to education, healthcare, employment, and other essential aspects of life for persons with disabilities. To examine the accessibility of public spaces for persons with disabilities in Rajshahi City from a rights-based perspective by identifying physical, environmental, institutional, and attitudinal barriers and assessing their impact on the social inclusion, participation, and quality of life of persons with disabilities.

## 2. Literature Review

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), adopted in 2006 and entering into force in 2008, represents a landmark international human rights treaty that was developed through an unprecedentedly inclusive and transparent drafting process involving persons with disabilities, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders (Lord & Stein, 2023). Persons with disabilities have distinct healthcare needs that significantly affect the organization, delivery, and financing of

health services; however, despite their higher healthcare utilization and expenditures, they have historically received limited attention within mainstream health services research (DeJong et al., 2002). Mégret (2015) argues that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) goes beyond merely applying existing human rights to persons with disabilities by redefining and expanding traditional human rights concepts to reflect the unique experiences and rights claims of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities continue to experience lower employment rates than the general population, often due not only to the effects of impairment but also to environmental barriers such as inaccessible workplaces and discriminatory hiring practices, which limit their opportunities for labour market participation and social inclusion (Turcotte, 2014). Lawthers et al. (2003) argued that healthcare quality for persons with disabilities should be conceptualized through a multidimensional framework encompassing clinical quality, access, patient experience, patient safety, and care coordination, emphasizing that effective coordination among medical and social service providers is critical for improving health outcomes and quality of care. Jones (1997) identified both individual factors (e.g., disability-related stigma, stereotypes, and self-limiting behaviors) and organizational factors (e.g., limited mentoring opportunities, perceptions of poor job fit, tokenism, and lack of role models) as significant barriers to the career advancement of persons with disabilities, and highlighted the importance of workplace accommodations, diversity training, and mentoring programs in overcoming these challenges. Fernández-Moral et al. (2015) found that empowerment evaluation, supported by the role of a facilitator acting as a "critical friend," strengthened organizational capacity and community participation in rural Spanish communities by enabling local groups to identify needs, set goals, and actively manage their own development processes. Rimmer et al. (2004) found that participation in physical activity among persons with disabilities is influenced by a complex interplay of environmental, economic, psychological, informational, and policy-related factors, highlighting the need for accessible facilities, supportive programs, and informed professionals to reduce barriers and promote active lifestyles. Beatty et al. (2019) reviewed 88 empirical studies on the treatment of persons with disabilities in organizations and found that workplace inclusion is constrained by persistent research and practice gaps, including limited attention to disability diversity, stigma processes, contextual differences, and nuanced measures of workplace treatment, underscoring the need for more evidence-based and inclusive human resource practices. Scheer et al. (2003) found that persons with disabilities encounter multiple environmental, structural, and process-related barriers when accessing primary, specialist, and rehabilitative healthcare services, with these barriers negatively affecting their health, functioning, well-being, and utilization of healthcare resources. Antonak and Livneh (2000) emphasized that the accurate assessment of attitudes toward persons with disabilities requires reliable, valid, and multidimensional measurement instruments, and they identified a wide range of direct and indirect methods for evaluating attitudes that can support research on social acceptance and inclusion. Schur et al. (2005) argued that corporate culture plays a critical role in shaping the employment and advancement opportunities of persons with disabilities, as organizational attitudes, behaviors, and workplace practices can either create barriers to inclusion or foster a supportive environment that promotes equal participation and career growth. Glazier and Kling (2013) found that persons with disabilities consistently exhibited higher rates of substance abuse than persons without disabilities across most substances between 2002 and 2010, highlighting the need for accessible, disability-sensitive prevention and treatment programs to address this disproportionate burden. Harpur (2012) argued that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) established a transformative disability rights paradigm by strengthening the realization of human rights, empowering disability organizations, and providing a more effective framework for advancing the

social inclusion and equality of persons with disabilities. To investigate how healthcare access, social attitudes, employment opportunities, environmental barriers, and the implementation of disability rights collectively influence the social inclusion, participation, and quality of life of persons with disabilities within a specific local context.

## 3. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative, descriptive, and cross-sectional survey design to assess the accessibility of public spaces for persons with disabilities in Rajshahi City. Primary data were collected from 100 respondents using a structured questionnaire containing 13 closed-ended statements on physical, environmental, transportation-related, institutional, and attitudinal accessibility. Participants expressed their opinions through a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. After data collection, the responses were checked, coded, and entered into Microsoft Excel for analysis. Descriptive statistical techniques, particularly frequency and percentage distributions, were used to summarize the responses to each statement. The findings were presented through Excel-generated bar charts and pie charts to illustrate the distribution of responses and identify the dominant perceptions regarding accessibility, participation, and social inclusion. As the study was limited to quantitative data, no qualitative interviews, thematic analysis, or inferential statistical tests were conducted.

## 4. Results and Discussion

**Experiences of the Physically Challenged people if they have received any facilities provided by Rajshahi City Corporation**

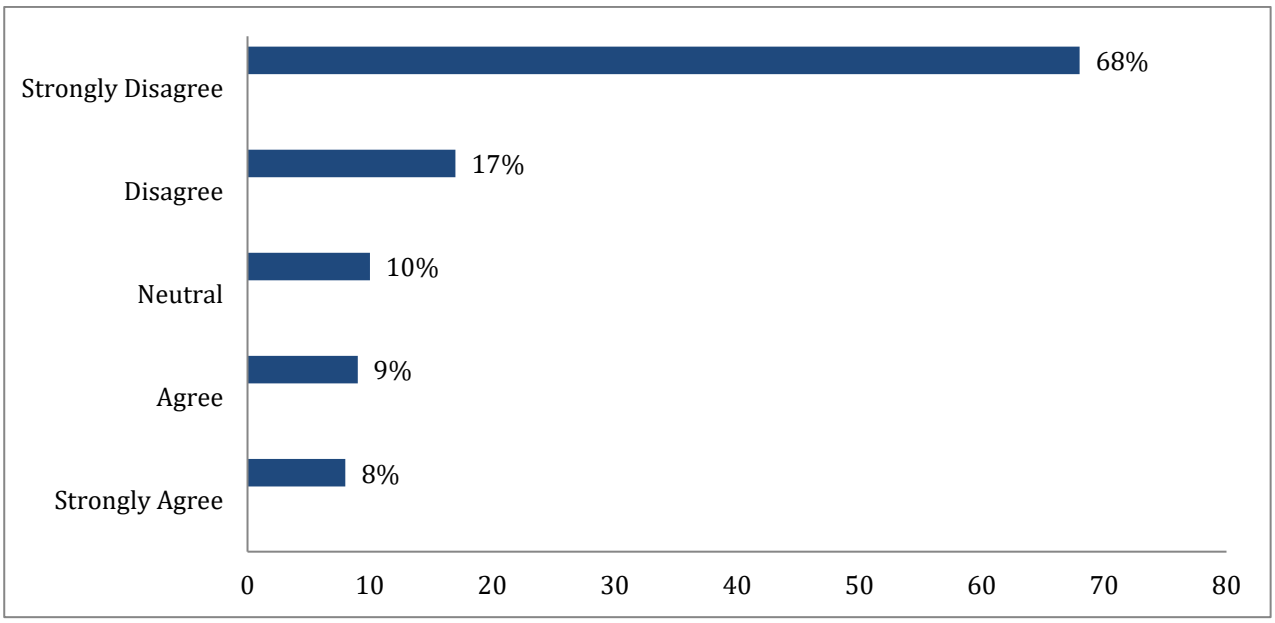


Figure: 1 (Source: Field Data, 2026)

The findings show that the majority of respondents (68%) selected the first response, indicating it is the most preferred or significant option among the participants. The remaining responses received much lower percentages, with 17%, 10%, 9%, and 8%, suggesting considerably less support. Overall, the results demonstrate a clear preference for the leading response, highlighting a strong consensus among the respondents.

**Public buildings in Rajshahi City have adequate ramps and accessible entry facilities for persons with disabilities.**

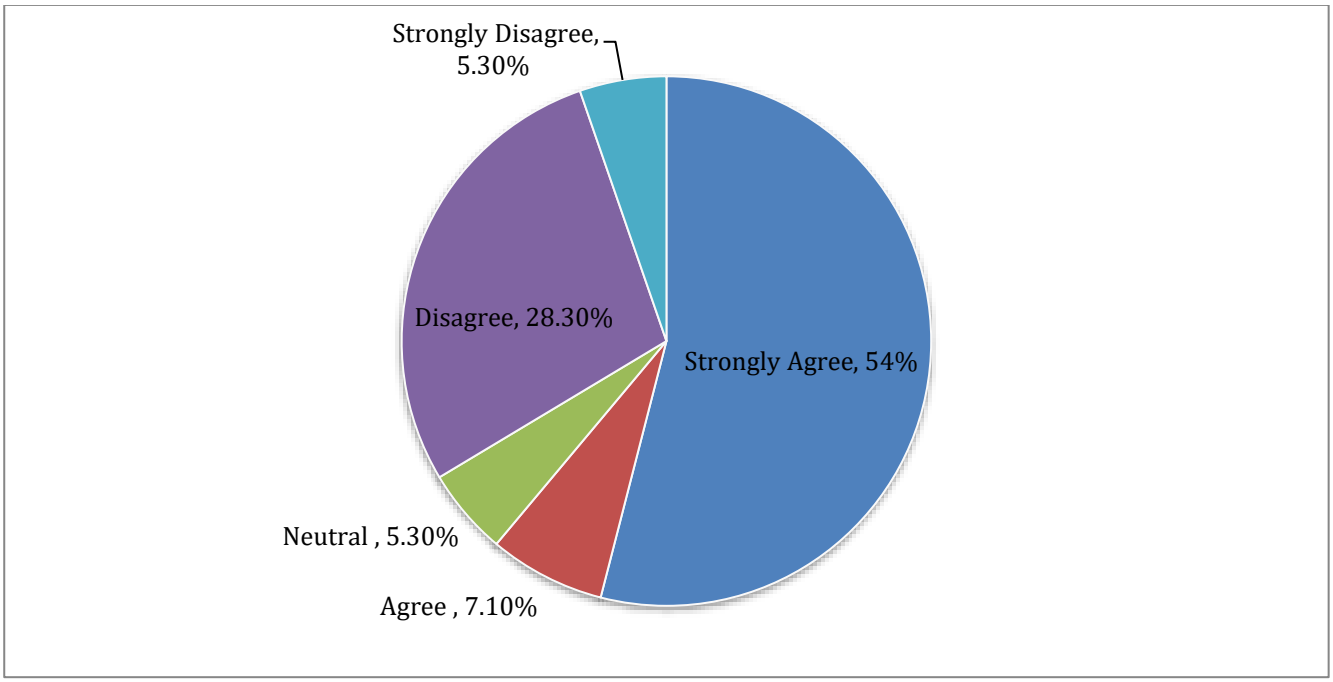


Figure: 2 (Source: Field Data, 2026)

The findings indicate that the majority of respondents (54%) strongly agree with the statement, suggesting a generally positive perception of the topic being studied. However, a notable proportion of respondents (28.3%) disagree, while smaller percentages selected agree (7.1%), neutral (5.3%), and strongly disagree (5.3%). Overall, the results show that although most participants strongly support the statement, the presence of opposing responses suggests differing opinions that should be considered in the interpretation of the findings.

**Sidewalks, roads, and public pathways in Rajshahi City are safe and accessible for persons with disabilities.**

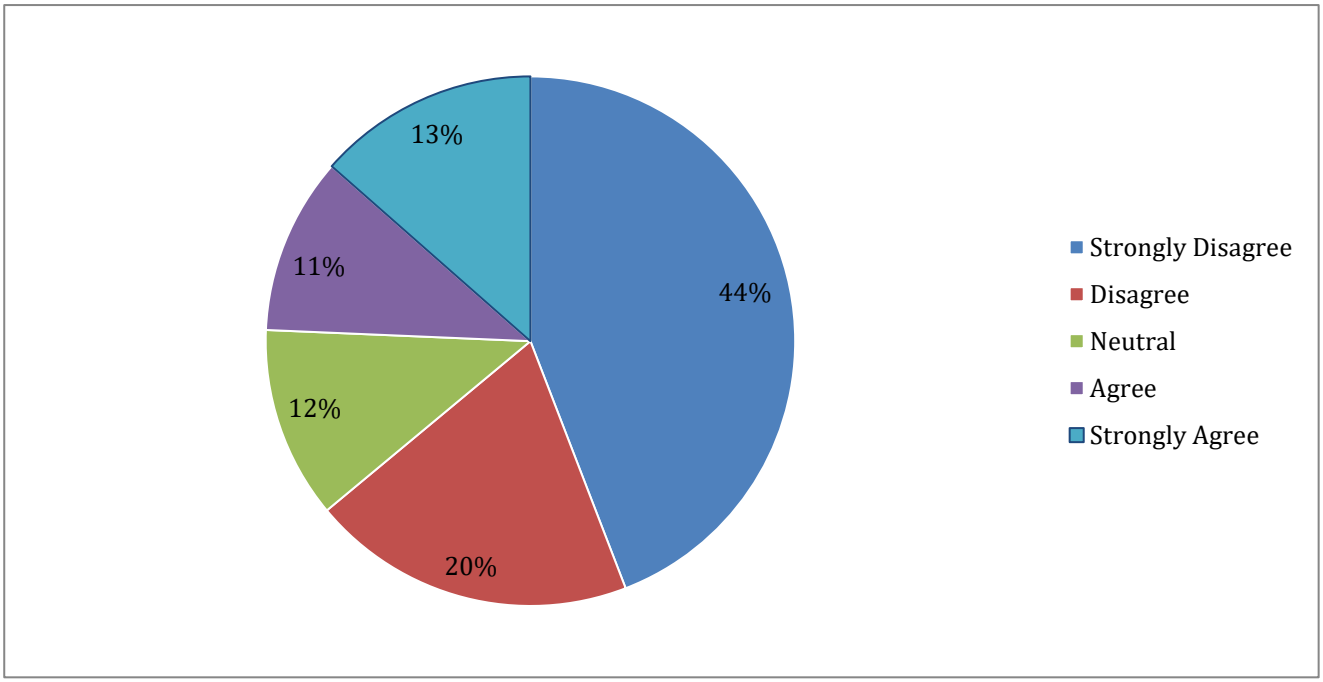

Figure: 3(Source: Field Data, 2026)

The results indicate that 44% of respondents strongly disagree, making it the most common response and suggesting that many participants hold a negative perception of the statement. Meanwhile, 20% disagree, 12% are neutral, 11% agree, and 13% strongly agree, reflecting a range of opinions but with negative responses outweighing positive ones. Overall, the findings suggest that respondents generally do not support the statement, indicating a need to address the concerns or issues that may have influenced their responses.

**Government offices and public institutions provide adequate support for persons with disabilities.**

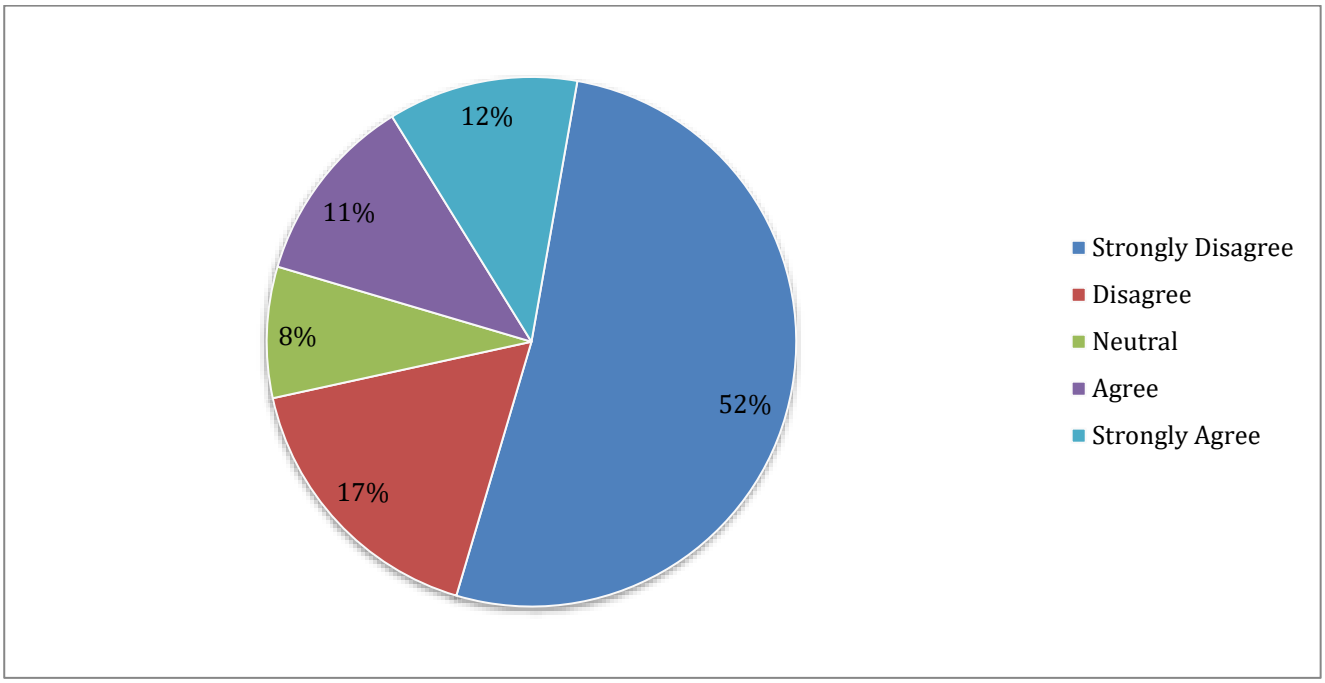


**Figure: 4(Source: Field Data, 2026)**

The findings reveal that 52% of respondents strongly disagree, making it the dominant response and indicating that most participants have a negative perception of the statement. Additionally, 17% disagree, while 8% are neutral, 11% agree, and 12% strongly agree, showing that positive responses are considerably lower than negative ones. Overall, the results suggest that the majority of respondents do not support the statement, highlighting the need to investigate the factors contributing to their unfavorable views.

**Accessibility policies and disability rights laws are effectively implemented in public spaces.**

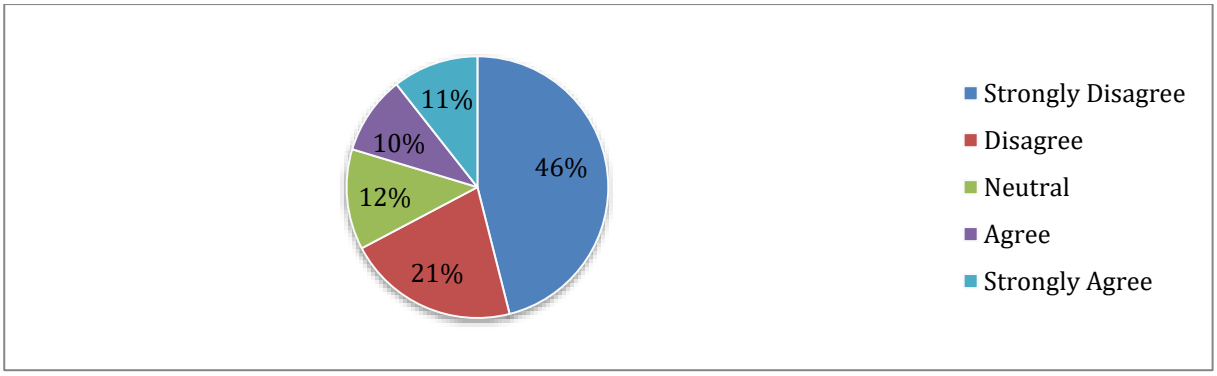

**Figure: 5(Source: Field Data, 2026)**

The findings show that 46% of respondents strongly disagree, representing the largest proportion and indicating that many participants hold an unfavorable view of the statement. Additionally, 21% disagree, while 12% are neutral, 10% agree, and 11% strongly agree, demonstrating that negative responses exceed positive ones. Overall, the results suggest that the majority of respondents do not support the statement, highlighting the need to examine the underlying reasons for their negative perceptions.

**Persons with disabilities face negative attitudes or stigma in public places.**

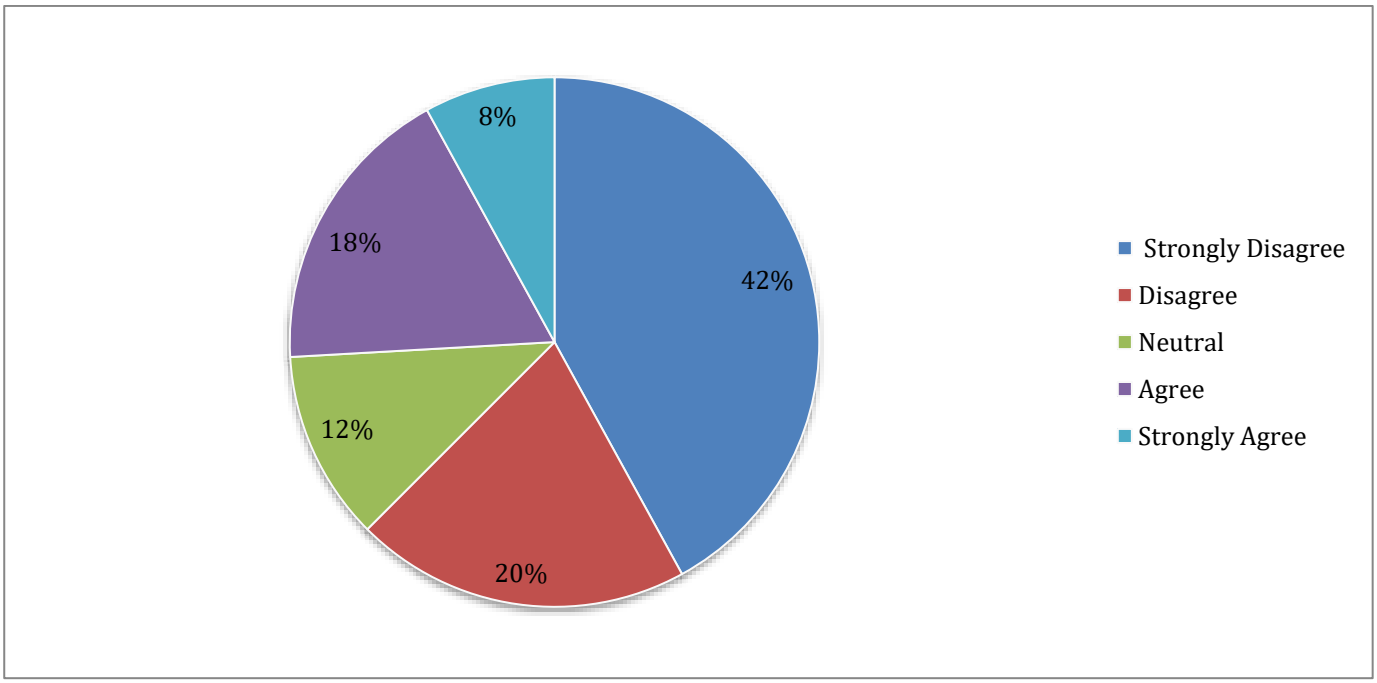


Figure: 6(Source: Field Data, 2026)

The findings indicate that 42% of respondents strongly disagree, making it the most common response and suggesting that a significant proportion of participants have a negative perception of the statement. Furthermore, 20% disagree, 12% are neutral, 18% agree, and 8% strongly agree, showing that negative responses outweigh positive ones. Overall, the results suggest that respondents generally do not support the statement, indicating the need to address the issues or concerns that may have influenced their perceptions.

**Public service providers and citizens treat persons with disabilities respectfully. (reverse-coded if needed)**

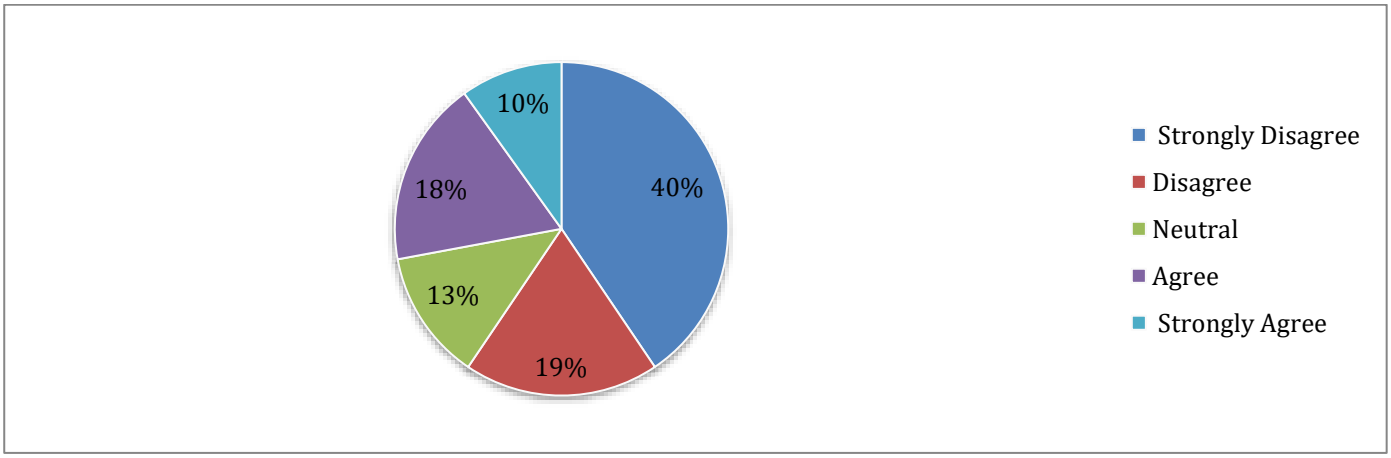

**Figure: 7(Source: Field Data, 2026)**

The findings reveal that 40% of respondents strongly disagree, representing the highest percentage and indicating that many participants have an unfavorable view of the statement. In addition, 19% disagree, 13% are neutral, 18% agree, and 10% strongly agree, showing that negative responses are more prevalent than positive ones. Overall, the results suggest that the majority of respondents do not support the statement, emphasizing the need to identify and address the factors contributing to their negative perceptions.

**Feeling of being included and accepted while using transportation in RCC**

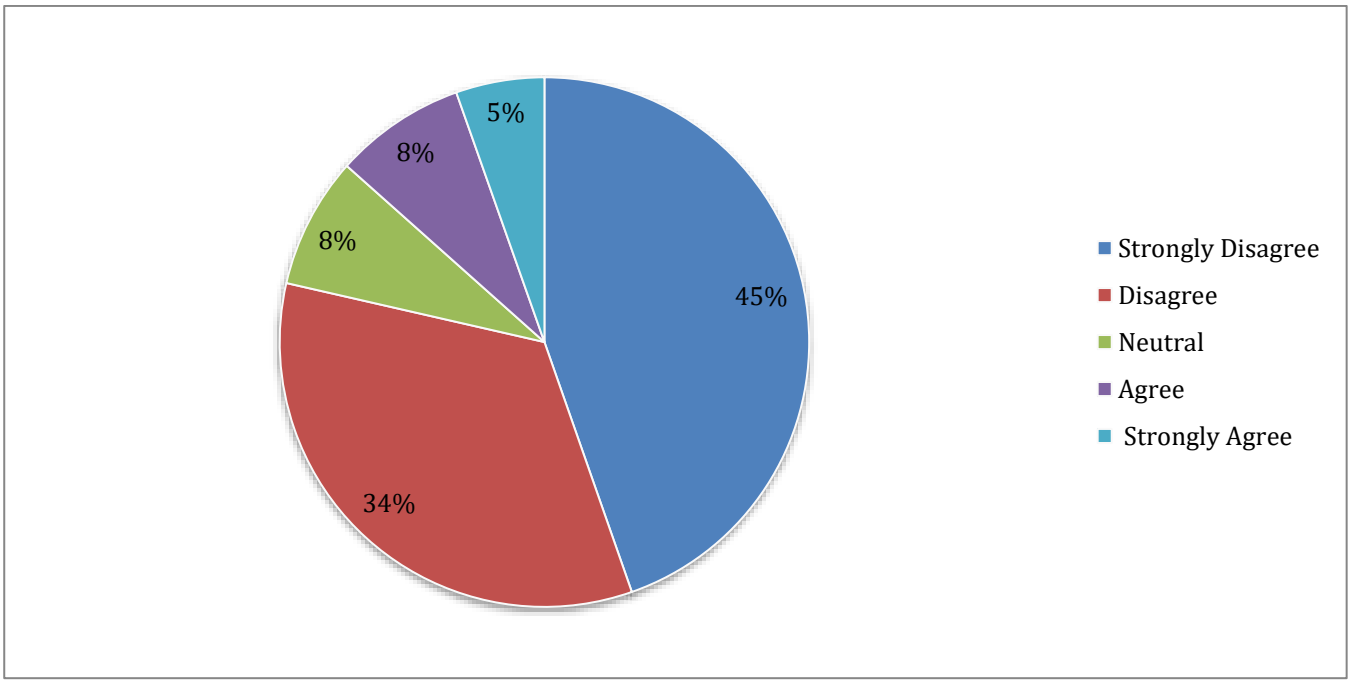


**Figure: 8(Source: Field Data, 2026)**

The findings show that 45% of respondents strongly disagree, representing the largest proportion and indicating that many participants hold a negative perception of the statement. Additionally, 34% disagree, while 8% are neutral, 8% agree, and 5% strongly agree, demonstrating that negative responses overwhelmingly exceed positive ones. Overall, the results suggest that respondents generally do not support the statement, highlighting the need to examine and address the factors contributing to their unfavorable perceptions.

**Able to participate in community and social activities without barriers.**

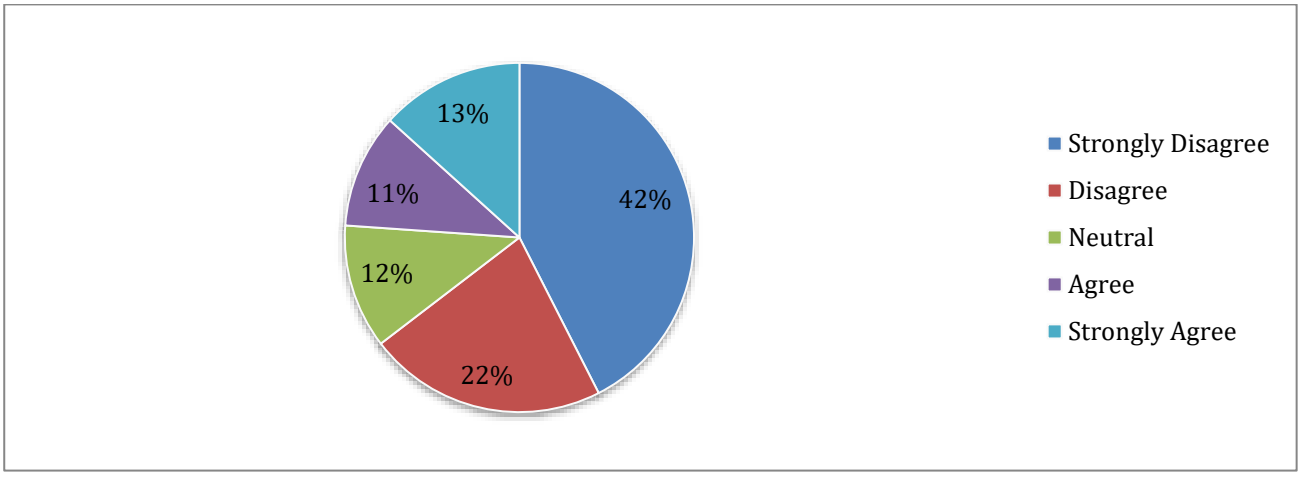

Figure: 9(Source: Field Data, 2026)

The findings indicate that 42% of respondents strongly disagree, making it the highest response and suggesting that many participants have an unfavorable view of the statement. Furthermore, 22% disagree, 12% are neutral, 11% agree, and 13% strongly agree, showing that negative responses are more prevalent than positive ones. Overall, the results suggest that the majority of respondents do not support the statement, emphasizing the need to identify and address the factors influencing their negative perceptions.

**Can access and use public services (transport, hospitals, offices) independently.**

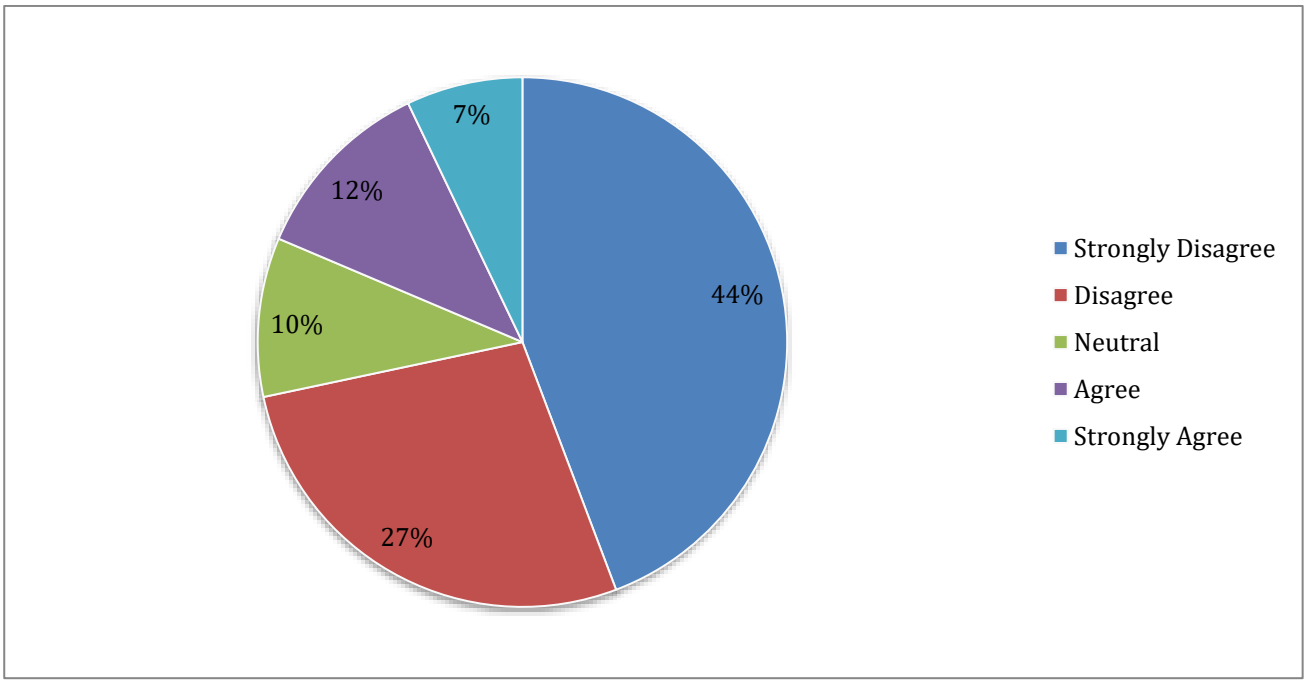


Figure: 10(Source: Field Data, 2026)

The findings reveal that 44% of respondents strongly disagree, representing the largest percentage and indicating that many participants have a negative perception of the statement. Additionally, 27% disagree, while 10% are neutral, 12% agree, and 7% strongly agree, showing that negative responses significantly outweigh positive ones. Overall, the results suggest that the majority of respondents do not support the statement, highlighting the need to identify and address the factors contributing to their unfavorable perceptions.

**Active participation in educational, employment, or social activities in my community.**

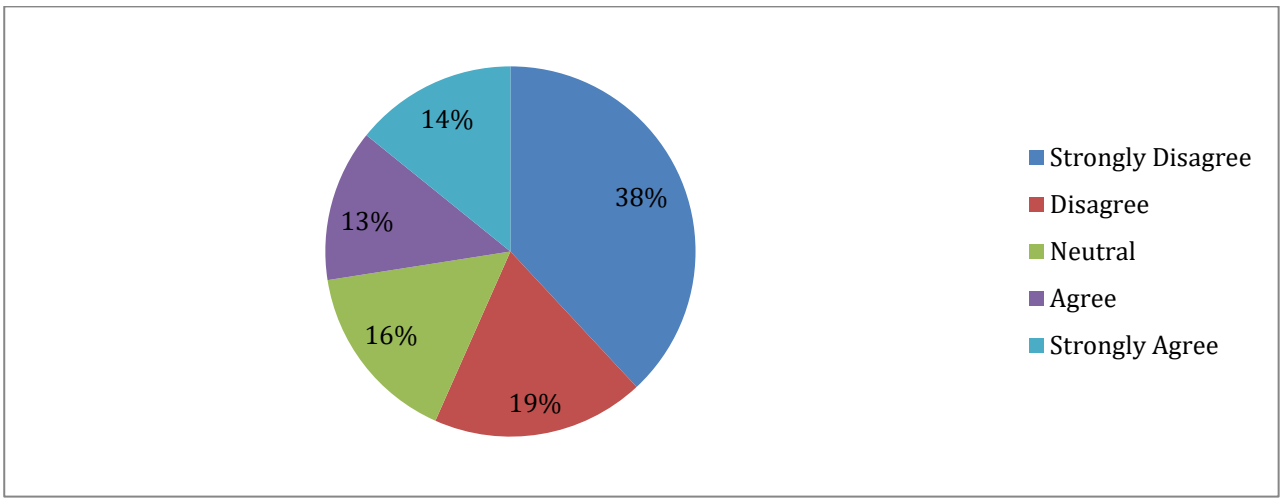

Figure: 11(Source: Field Data, 2026)

The findings indicate that 38% of respondents strongly disagree, representing the largest proportion and suggesting that many participants have a negative perception of the statement. Additionally, 19% disagree, 16% are neutral, 13% agree, and 14% strongly agree, indicating that negative responses still exceed positive responses despite a relatively balanced distribution among the remaining categories. Overall, the results suggest that respondents generally do not support the statement, highlighting the need to address the factors contributing to their unfavorable perceptions.

**Satisfaction with overall quality of life in Rajshahi City.**

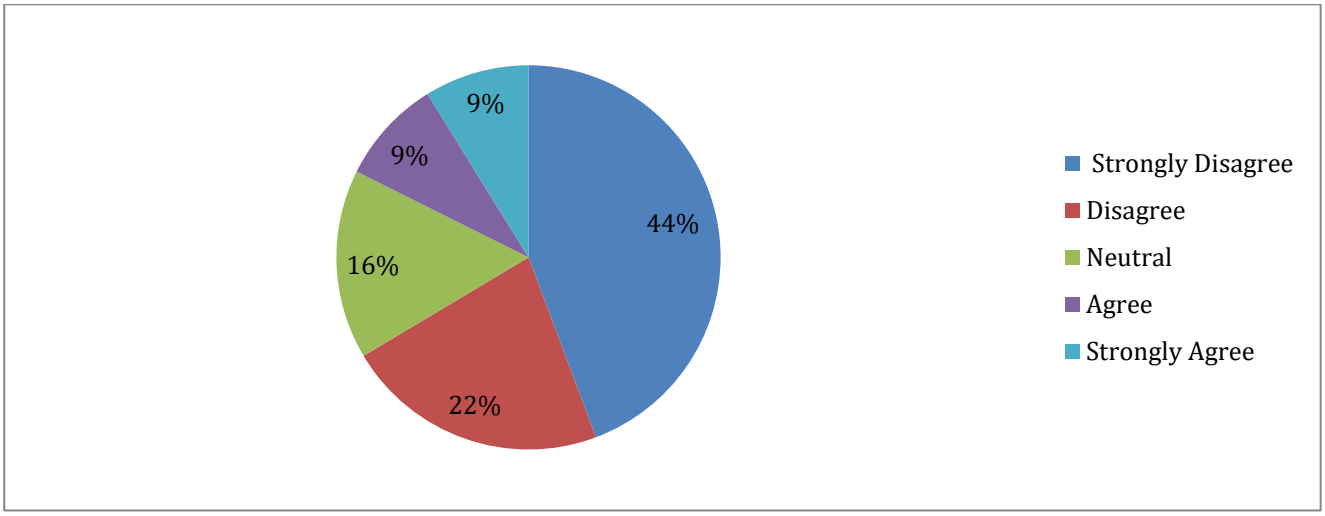


Figure: 12(Source: Field Data, 2026)

The findings show that 44% of respondents strongly disagree, making it the largest response and indicating that many participants hold a negative perception of the statement. Additionally, 22% disagree, while 16% are neutral, 9% agree, and 9% strongly agree, showing that negative responses clearly outweigh positive ones. Overall, the results suggest that the majority of respondents do not support the statement, highlighting the need to investigate and address the factors contributing to their unfavorable perceptions.

**Independence and ability to manage own daily life effectively.**

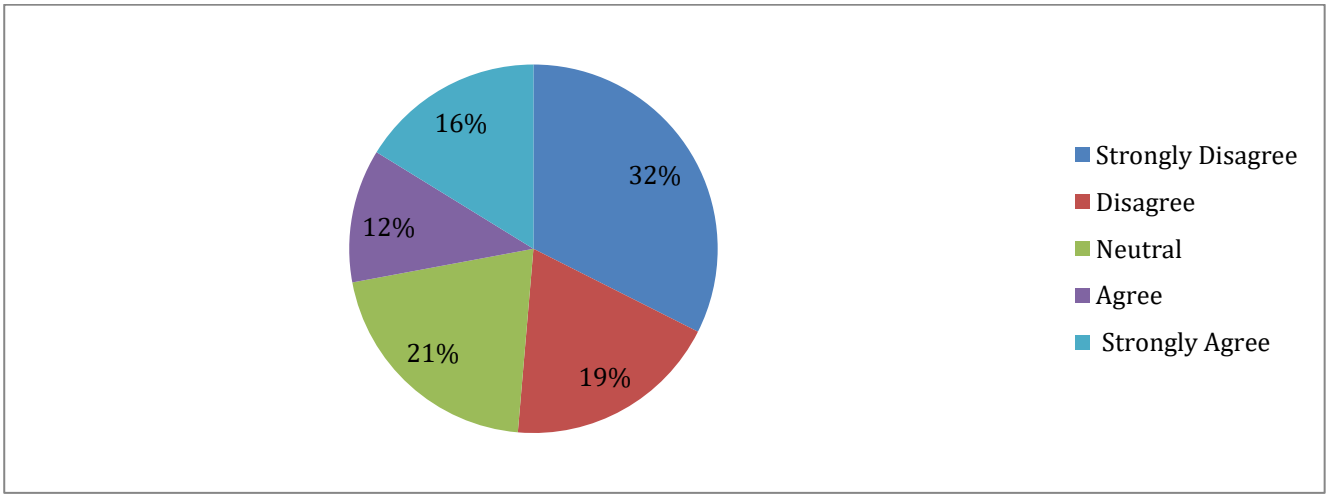


Figure: 13(Source: Field Data, 2026)

The findings indicate that 32% of respondents strongly disagree, representing the largest proportion and suggesting that many participants have a negative perception of the statement. Meanwhile, 19% disagree, 21% are neutral, 12% agree, and 16% strongly agree, indicating a more balanced distribution of opinions compared to previous responses, although negative responses remain the majority. Overall, the results suggest that respondents generally do not support the statement, highlighting the need to explore the factors influencing their perceptions and address the concerns raised.

## 5. Recommendations

The findings indicate the need for coordinated action to improve the accessibility of public spaces for persons with disabilities in Rajshahi City. Rajshahi City Corporation and other responsible authorities should conduct regular accessibility audits of roads, footpaths, pedestrian crossings, public transport facilities, government offices, hospitals, educational institutions, markets, parks, and recreational areas. Existing facilities should be renovated according to universal design principles by incorporating properly designed ramps, handrails, curb cuts, tactile paving, non-slip surfaces, accessible toilets, elevators, adequate lighting, and clear visual and Braille signage.

Public transportation should be made more inclusive through low-floor vehicles, boarding ramps, reserved seating, accessible bus stops, and audible and visual travel information. Disability-accessibility requirements should be strictly incorporated into building approval procedures, public procurement, urban development projects, and infrastructure maintenance. Appropriate penalties should be imposed when public or private service providers fail to comply with established accessibility standards.

Persons with disabilities and their representative organizations should be directly involved in urban planning, decision-making, project implementation, and accessibility monitoring. Municipal officials, transport workers, healthcare personnel, law-enforcement officers, and employees of public institutions should receive disability-awareness and rights-based service training. Public education campaigns are also necessary to reduce stigma, discriminatory attitudes, and inappropriate behaviour toward persons with disabilities. Accessible complaint and redress mechanisms should be established so that individuals can report barriers and receive timely responses. Dedicated funding, institutional coordination, and periodic public reporting would further support the effective implementation of disability-related laws and the principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

## 6. Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, it focuses only on Rajshahi City; therefore, its findings may not represent the accessibility experiences of persons with disabilities in other cities, rural areas, or different administrative regions of Bangladesh. Second, the study primarily relies on respondents' self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by personal experiences, expectations, recall limitations, or social desirability.

The descriptive and cross-sectional nature of the study limits its ability to establish causal relationships between accessibility barriers and outcomes such as social participation, independence, employment, healthcare access, and quality of life. The experiences of people with different forms and degrees of disability may also not have been represented equally. Persons with physical, visual, hearing, intellectual, psychosocial, and multiple disabilities may encounter different barriers that require separate analysis.

Furthermore, the study did not appear to include systematic physical accessibility audits, direct observation of public facilities, or extensive qualitative interviews with policymakers, urban planners, transport providers, and service administrators. Future research should adopt mixed-method approaches, include larger and more diverse samples, compare different locations, and examine accessibility changes over time. Disaggregating the findings by disability type, gender, age, education, income, and occupation would also provide a more comprehensive understanding.

## 7. Conclusion

This study examined the accessibility of public spaces for persons with disabilities in Rajshahi City from a rights-based perspective. The findings suggest that persons with disabilities continue to experience significant physical, environmental, institutional, transportation-related, and attitudinal barriers. Across most survey items, negative responses outweighed positive responses, indicating that many public spaces and services do not adequately support independent mobility, equal participation, dignity, and social inclusion.

The study demonstrates that accessibility should not be regarded as an optional welfare measure or an act of charity. It is a fundamental human right and an essential condition for participation in education, employment, healthcare, recreation, cultural life, and civic activities. Although national and international frameworks recognize disability rights, a considerable gap remains between formal commitments and practical implementation at the local level.

Creating an inclusive Rajshahi City requires the consistent application of universal design, stronger enforcement of accessibility standards, accessible public transportation, institutional accountability, public awareness, and meaningful participation by persons with disabilities. Government agencies, municipal authorities, private organizations, civil society groups, and local communities must work together to remove existing barriers and prevent new ones. Such measures would help transform Rajshahi into a more equitable, inclusive, and rights-respecting city for all residents.

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