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Documents across Generations: Citizenship Claims among Urdu-Speaking Families in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Documentary recognition can vary within the same family when registration histories and administrative practices change across generations. This study explores how Urdu-speaking families in Bangladesh assemble documents when seeking services associated with citizenship. Research involved 49 family interviews in three urban settlements, observations at legal-support sessions, and analysis of participant-shared copies of registration correspondence. Case comparison traced links between school records, birth registration, national identification, and proof of residence. Younger adults often held one recognised document while encountering difficulties when another office requested evidence from a parent. Address discrepancies created repeated verification demands, particularly for families who had moved between settlements. Community advisers helped translate these inconsistencies into administrative explanations but could not guarantee acceptance across offices. The findings highlight the cumulative work required to make documentary recognition usable in everyday settings. The study examines reported administrative experiences and does not determine any participant's legal status. Service reform should improve procedures for correcting inconsistent records and avoid treating intergenerational documentary gaps as straightforward evidence of ineligibility.

Keywords: citizenship documentation, Urdu-speaking communities, intergenerational inequality, administrative recognition, Bangladesh

1. Introduction

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2. Methods

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