Report On

“Women-led Organization Contributions to SDGs and Employment Practice in Bangladesh: Ujjwala Care”

By

Amena Haque

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An internship report submitted to the BRAC Business School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Business Administration

BRAC Business School

Brac University

September 2025

Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The internship report submitted is my/our own original work while completing degree at Brac University.

2. The report does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.

3. The report does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.

4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Student’s Full Name & Signature:

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Amena Haque

20304055

Supervisor’s Full Name & Signature:

____

Dr. Nusrat Hafiz

Assistant Professor & Director of Women Empowerment Cell, BRAC Business School (BBS)

BRAC University

Letter of Transmittal

Dr. Nusrat Hafiz
Assistant Professor & Director of Women Empowerment Cell,
BRAC Business School (BBS)
BRAC University
Kha 224 Pragati Sarani, Merul Badda , Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh

Subject: Submission of my internship report on women-led organization contributions to SDGs and Employment Practice in Bangladesh: Ujjwala Care.

Dear Professor,
It gives me pleasure to present the internship report I decided to prepare for BRAC Business School. I have put in a lot of effort over the past three months and finished the internship at Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC.

This period allows me to gather knowledge and ideas about how to work at a professional level. I hope you will find something useful in my report. I have completed my research under pressure, so some inconsistencies might be there. That is why I politely request you to consider my mistakes.

I want to thank you for the valuable guidance, advice, and support you gave me during this internship period. Other than that, if you have any queries about this report, please let me know.

Sincerely yours,

____

Amena Haque
20304055
BRAC Business School
BRAC University
Date: September 21, 2025

Non-Disclosure Agreement

This agreement is made and entered into by and between Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC and the undersigned student at Brac University named Amena Haque for the duty to protect the firm's confidential information from disclosure.

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Amena Haque

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BRAC Business School

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Acknowledgement

Firstly, I'm thankful to my supervisor, Professor Dr. Nusrat Hafiz ma'am and my co-supervisor Dr. Md. Hasan Maksud Chowdhury sir, for their guidance during the internship period. I could complete this research due solely to their immense knowledge and support. Secondly, I'm grateful to my on-site supervisor, Azme Shahadat Fakhruddin bhaiya at Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC, for providing me with the specific knowledge to finalize my internship report. I'm so glad to work with him, and I have learned working in a professional capacity from him. Also, I would like to thank my seniors who had been very considerate during my internship at Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC.

Executive Summary

Chapter one included- Student Information, where I had to write about my information, internship information that means company details, where I got the opportunity to work, and also what type of responsibilities I have done at the company.

Chapter two the organization's part included the company. Al-Arafah Islami Bank is a prominent financial institution in Bangladesh that strives to implement the ideals of ethical banking, financial inclusion, and Islamic values. Their vision to become the most trusted Islamic bank in the country, contributing to national development and customer welfare in compliance with Shariah. They aim to operate on the principles of innovation and growth. In addition, their selection and recruitment procedures are very standard. Their financial situation and assets are growing every year. Additionally, this Bank enabled me to get involved and gave me insight into the job sector.

For my project part, I studied the Ujjwala Care Organization. To collect primary data, I interviewed four members of the organization, including two founders (one woman), a female management employee and a female worker. The issues raised during the interviews represent the basis for my analysis of women-led entrepreneurship, empowerment, and innovation in this sector. I further verified and supplemented my findings using articles, Ujjwala Care's official website, and LinkedIn resources to ensure that I was adequately covering their goals, impact, and development strategies.

Keywords: Ujjwala Care, Women's Empowerment, Mental Health, Sustainable Development Goals, Employee practice, Innovation training model.

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CHAPTER 01: OVERVIEW OF INTERNSHIP

1.1 Student Information

My name is Amena Haque (ID: 20304055), and I am pursuing a Bachelor of Business Administration with a dual major in Marketing and Human Resource Management at Brac University.

1.2.1 Period

I began my internship at Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC (AIBL) on July 15, 2025, which will continue until October 15, 2025. During this period, I am working in the General Banking (GB) Division, where I am gaining practical experience in day-to-day banking operations and customer service procedures. My placement is at the Banani Branch, located on the Tower Hamlet, 1st and 2nd floors of 16 Kamal Ataturk Avenue, Banani, Dhaka. This internship provides me with valuable exposure to the professional banking environment and allows me to apply theoretical knowledge from my academic studies to real-world practices.

1.2.2 Internship company Supervisor's Information

My internship company supervisor's Azme Shahadat Fakhruddin, CAMS Principal Officer, Al- Arafah Islami Bank (AIBL), Banani Branch.

1.2.3 Job Scope – Job Duties/Responsibilities

Part of my job is to assist colleagues in their normal tasks. As an intern in the General Banking Department, I have been assigned to support various day-to-day operations and assist bank officers in the following tasks so far: Such as, Assisting customers with account opening and documentation, learning and helping with cash receipt and payment procedures, sorting and filing customer profile forms (MTDR, MSD,AWCD) and NID Verification. Additionally, opening new accounts, Identifying dormant and closing accounts, cheques, and other documents. Observing customer service interactions and helping guide clients when needed. One day I work in Foreign exchange department. I had the responsibility of Local LC document payment scheduled.

1.3 Internship Outcomes

1.3.1 Student's Contribution to the Company

I Provided customer service support to ensure smooth running of daily operations. I assisted clients in opening new accounts by collecting the required information and documents and accurately filling them in the account book. I helped reduce workload by preparing and organizing documents accurately and on time, assisted the General Banking team in maintaining up-to-date records, and showed initiative in learning various areas of general banking practices such as: keeping checkbooks, debit card registers, and storing data in Excel sheets.

1.3.2 Benefits to the Student

During my internship, I gained practical and hands-on experience on core general banking activities and Shariah-compliant financial practices. This experience has taught me to gain a deeper understanding of Islamic banking principles. I have improved communication and professional behavior, customer interaction, and time management skills in a formal banking environment. I learned to work with compliance processes and banking policies accurately and efficiently even under real-time pressure. This helped me build early networking with banking professionals.

1.3.3 Problems/Difficulties (Faced During the Internship period)

One of the main challenges I faced during the limited time of the internship was juggling multiple responsibilities. Gathering necessary information, conducting interviews, and simultaneously conducting an academic course with classes and exams. Along with my office work, it has become really difficult to produce such a comprehensive report within the given deadline. Initial difficulty in understanding banking terminologies and systems in a short time. Also limited access to core banking software functionalities due to security policies.

1.3.4 Recommendations (To the Company on Future Internships)

The bank should provide remuneration to those who come to do internships in the future and also provide some sort of things which can feel welcoming at the beginning for interns. To ensure a balanced workload, especially during lunch breaks or when an employee or multiple employees takes extended leave for emergencies, they should consider hiring additional staff. This will help distribute tasks more efficiently and reduce pressure on individual team members. The work environment can be further improved by making it cleaner and more organized. Additionally, attention should be given to enhancing the women’s washroom facilities to ensure greater comfort and hygiene.

CHAPTER 02: ORGANIZATION PART

2.1 Introduction

Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC (AIBL) operates as a leading Shariah-compliant financial institution in Bangladesh that actively supports Islamic banking activities. The objective of the research is to study AIBL's management approach along with its marketing performance and financial results, operational effectiveness, and market position from the last three years of data (2021-2023). This study will evaluate AIBL's business operations through critical appraisal to formulate recommendations for sustainable growth. This study examines all important organizational functions through annual reports and analysis of industry research and published studies.

2.1.1 Background of the study

Students who want to earn a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degree must demonstrate a practical understanding of classroom concepts in real-life business situations. The practical implementation of the theory learned through the BBA program enables students to gain professional skills and practical experience. BRAC Business School at BRAC University includes a three-month mandatory internship program for students pursuing their undergraduate degree. After considering several options, I decided to do my internship at Al-Arafah Islami Bank Limited. My three-month internship evaluation of performance at Al-Arafah Islami Bank Limited will be conducted by Azme Shahadat Fakhruddin, who is serving as the Principal Officer and Manager of operations, Al- Arafah Islami Bank (AIBL), Banani Branch.

2.2 Overview of the company

2.2.1 Profile

Al-Arafah Islamic Bank PLC was established with the aim of achieving success in this world and the Hereafter through the grace of Allah and the path shown by His Rasul (SM). On 18

June 1995 it became a private limited company and was begun on 27 September 1995 (Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC, 2023). Al-Arafah Islami Bank Limited was established under the banner of leading Islamic scholars and other renowned businessmen of Bangladesh; it is a special privilege for the bank that it is 100 percent owned by citizens. Achieved an authorized capital of Tk 15,000.00 million as on 31 December 2023, with a paid-up capital of Tk 10,649.02 million. Since its establishment, Al-Arafah Islami Bank has demonstrated strong growth, its equity reached Tk. 2,348.32 crore in 2018, the number of employees increased to 5,768 by 2023, and the number of shareholders grew to 19,146 in 2021 (AIB PLC Profile). Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC is a customer-service-oriented company with the application of cutting-edge technology and a combination of Sharia-compliant financial services and products. Its impact on the socio-economic development of Bangladesh is reflected in the operations of its 211 branches including 25 authorized branches as well as its extensive dealer network spread across the country (AIB PLC profile). So AIB has maintained profitable growth and consistently paid dividends.

2.2.2 Vision

Being a pioneer of islami banking in Bangladesh and making a significant contribution to the growth of the national economy (AIB PLC Profile).

2.2.3 Mission

Al-Arafah Islami Bank Limited (AIBL) aims to achieve the pleasure of Almighty Allah in this world and the Hereafter. Based on these guiding principles, (AIB PLC Profile) it is dedicated to expanding Sharia-compliant banking practices and providing financial services with modern technology that harmonizes with Islamic values. Its goal is to ensure ethical service while maintaining standards of excellence, while being efficient, fast and reliable.

2.2.4 Commitment

AIBL is committed to ensuring strong growth and becoming a modern and customer-centric Islamic bank through responsible deposit collection and quality investment practices. Its goal is to provide services with sincerity and care and maintain a strong position as a leading Islamic bank in Bangladesh. Through a wide branch network across the country, AIBL provides financial assistance to a wide range of clients from individuals to small and medium enterprises, as well as large corporate organizations. The bank also recognizes the growing needs of commerce and industry and, therefore, continuously adapts its business policies in line with changing customer needs (AIB PLC Profile).

2.2.5 AIB at Its Best

With its strong religious foundation, AIBL embraces modern banking by introducing online services and local IT solutions to better serve its customers. All its investments follow Islamic principles and have a track record of sharing investment income with Mudaraba depositors, ensuring fairness and transparency. AIB's welfare-oriented approach is a core mission of the bank, expanding financial inclusion to low-income groups, supporting small and medium enterprises, and contributing to rural development and employment creation. Beyond core banking, it has also taken initiatives in education and social welfare, such as establishing an AIBL Madrasa and library, which reflects its dedication to both economic and social progress. (Speciality of AIB PLC).

2.2.6 Organizational Structure

AIBL is a participative managed company. Decision making includes the Managing Director and the senior management, and should incorporate the input of the executives at the branch level, a hierarchy, but promoting both feedback and contribution on the chain of command.

2.2.7 Designation Levels (Taken from Banani Branch)

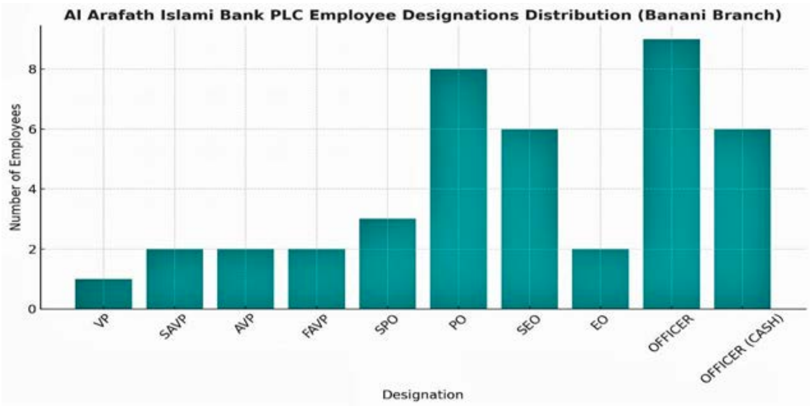

Figure 1: Designation Levels

A total of 41 employees were recruited in various designations at Al Arafat Islami Bank PLC's Banani branch. The largest group is Officer (9) and Probationary Officer- PO (8), followed by Senior Executive Officer-SEO (6) and Cash Officer (6). Mid-level titles include Senior Principal Officer-SPO (3), Executive Officer-EO (2), and Assistant Vice President-AVP (2), Vice President (1), Senior Assistant Vice President-SAVP (2) and First Assistant Vice President-FAVP (2). This distribution highlights a broad base of entry-level and mid-level employees supporting a lean management structure.

2.2.8 AIBL Products and Services (Taken from Banani Branch)

<u>Deposit Products:</u>

- Mudaraba Savings Deposit (MSD)
- Mudaraba Short Notice Deposit (SND)
- Mudaraba Savings Deposit (Staff)
- Mudaraba Student (Minor) Savings Deposit Account
- Mudaraba Freedom Fighters Savings Deposit
- Mudaraba Senior Citizen Savings Deposit
- Mudaraba Foreign Currency Deposit (MFCD)
- Non-Resident Foreign Currency Deposit (NFCD)
- A-Wadiah Current Deposit (AWCD)

- AI-Wadiah Merchant Account
- Mudaraba Farmers Savings Deposit
- Mudaraba Grihini Savings Deposit
- Mudaraba Garments Workers Savings Deposit
- Mudaraba Slum Dwellers Savings Deposit
- Resident Foreign Currency Deposit (RFCD)
- Al Wadiah Current Deposit (CD)

<u>In case of fixed deposit:</u>

- Mudaraba Term Deposit (MTDR)
- Mudaraba Pensioner Deposit Scheme (PDS)
- Mudaraba Excellent Benefit Deposit Scheme
- Mudaraba Term Cash WAQF Deposit
- Mudaraba Monthly Profit Payable (PTD)
- Mudaraba Somriddhi Deposit Scheme
- Mudaraba Term Haj Deposit (THD)

<u>(In case of Mudaraba Savings Scheme /Special Scheme):</u>

- Mudaraba Monthly Installment Term Deposit (ITD)
- Mudaraba Special Pension Dep. Scheme (SPDS)
- Mudaraba Marriage Savings & Invt. Scheme
- Mudaraba Denmohor Deposit Scheme
- Mudaraba Monthly Hajj Deposit (MHD)
- Mudaraba Installment Cash WAQF Deposit
- Mudaraba Probashi Kallyan Deposit Pension Scheme
- Mudaraba Aman Deposit Scheme
- Mudaraba Shadhin Term Deposit

- Mudaraba Ahsan Plus Deposit Scheme
- Mudaraba Ahsan Deposit Scheme
- Mudaraba Education Savings Scheme

AIBL Services:

- General Banking: Everyday banking transactions through branches and ATMs.
- Corporate Banking: Financing, trade services, and customized solutions for corporate clients.
- Foreign Exchange Services: Currency exchange and remittance services compliant with islamic laws (Real-Time Gross Settlement-RTGS) and (Bangladesh Electronic Funds Transfer Network-BEFTN)
- Islamic Credit Cards: Cards like La Riba Platinum Card operating within Shariah guidelines.
- Online and Mobile Banking: Digital Platforms including internet banking, mobile apps, and agent banking to enhance accessibility.
- Social and Microfinance Services: Special focus on micro and Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) financing to promote inclusive economic development.

2.3 Management Practices

2.3.1 Leadership Style

AIBL has a participative leadership style, which involves employees in the decision making process at different levels. The executive leaders also conduct frequent meetings to seek the input of employees and they develop a feeling of ownership, different views and morale. Although participative leadership is good in employee inclusion and innovation, it hinders decision-making because it requires consensus and input collection.

2.3.2 Human Resource Planning

Figure 2: Recruitment and Selection Process

The bank develops elaborate job descriptions of vacant positions, details and outlines of duties, qualifications and expectation of the job. Recruitment and selection is based on merit and conformity to the Islamic values. The compensation tools consist of competitive pay, bonuses, and fringe benefits designed to bring and keep talent.

2.3.3 Training and Development

The Training and Research Institute of AIBL offers basic and advanced training courses to its employees to develop their skills in ethical behaviors, technical banking, and customer oriented practices. The performance appraisal systems are designed to have periodic appraisal depending on targets, quality of work and compliance to Islamic practices.

2.4 Marketing Practices

2.4.1 Marketing Strategy

The advertising of AIBL focuses on differentiation in the form of Shariah compliant products, high service delivery, strong customer relationships, and progressive digital banking. It maintains its competitive edge through massive customer relationship projects and product differentiation.

2.4.2 Target Customers & Positioning

The bank divides its clients into five categories such as prospective, former, high-value, medium-value, and low-value clients. The priority of generating profits is given to high-value clients, and such innovative products as Islamic Wallet focus on tech-savvy segments. Its positioning focuses on service excellence, Islamic banking principles, and technological edge.

2.4.3 Marketing Channels & Promotion

AIBL also employs the use of multi-channel distribution, which comprises branches, ATMs, mobile banking (Islamic Wallet), and digital channels. It uses both the traditional and digital/social media campaigns, which focus on the urban and rural markets. Loyalty programs and community engagement are incorporated into the promotion strategies but the challenge is built on the ATM coverage and rural outreach.

2.4.4 Branding and New Product Development

The bank regularly introduces Shariah compliant financial products and builds its brand through community investment and through educational publications, which assists in positioning itself in a market where other products and services of the same have been introduced.

2.4.5 Marketing Issues

The main problems are the lack of ATM booths, the necessity of the further development of e-banking, and the rise of fintech and traditional banks.

2.5 Financial Performance and Accounting Practices (Based on 2021-2023 Year data)

2.5.1 Liquidity and Solvency

2.5.1.1 Investment/Deposit Ratio:

Investment/Deposit Ratio = Investment/Deposits × 100

2021: The bank's reported result is 87.57%

2022: The bank's reported result is 91.23%

2023: The bank's reported result is 92.06%

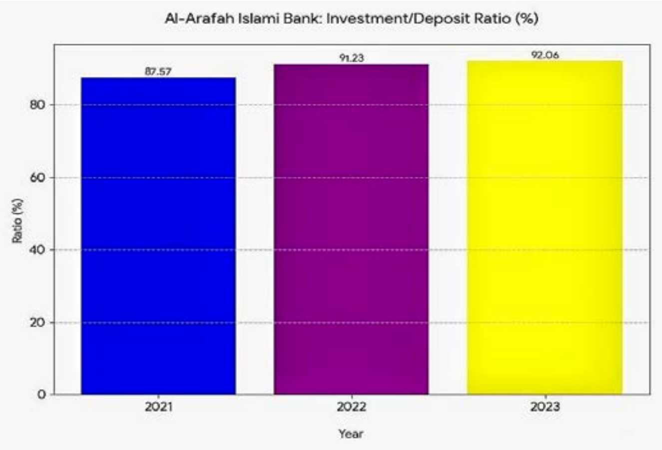

Figure 3: Investment/Deposit Ratio

<u>Interpretation:</u> The investment/deposit ratio has changed from 87.57% in 2021 to 91.23% in 2022 to 92.06% in 2023, which means that the investment activities financed by the bank's deposits have continued to increase. This means that the bank is effectively using its funds to generate income which is satisfactory.

2.5.1.2 Total Capital Ratio:

CAR = (Tier 1 Capital + Tier 2 Capital) / Risk Weighted Assets

2021: The bank's reported result is 15.66%

2022: The bank's reported result is 14.17%

2023: The bank's reported result is 15.47%

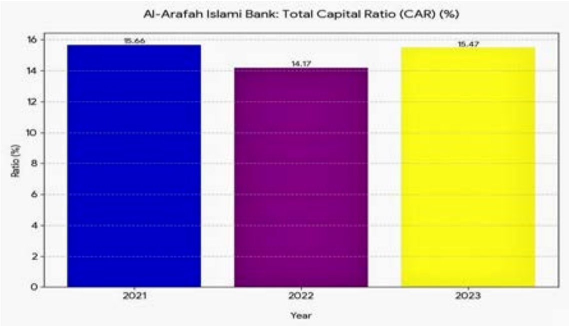

Figure 4: Total Capital Ratio

Interpretation: The graph shows AIBL's capital ratio started at 15.66% in 2021, decreased slightly to 14.17% in 2022 but fell to 15.47% in 2023, indicating that the bank's capital is well above the required regulatory minimum, demonstrating strong financial stability. This outcome is highly satisfactory.

2.5.2 Efficiency & Profitability

2.5.2.1 Return on Assets (ROA):

ROA = Net Income/Avg Total Assets × 100

2021: 2,126.44 / 399,705.47 × 100 = 0.53%

2022: 2,106.62/ 467,775.32 × 100 = 0.45%

2023: 2,356.12 / 434,141.01 × 100 = 0.54%

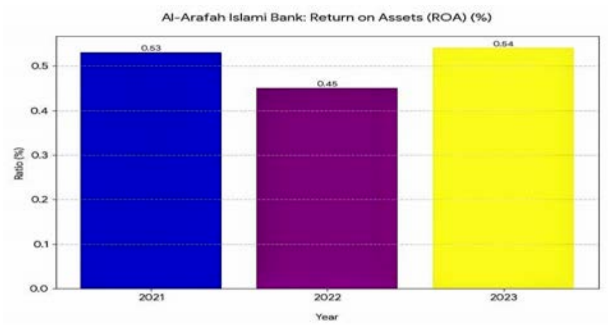

Figure 5: Return on Assets (ROA)

Interpretation: The figure shows the AIBL's ROA declined from 0.53% in 2021 to 0.45% in 2022 but improved significantly to 0.54% in 2023. A year later, the bank was significantly more efficient at generating profit from its assets, indicating overall satisfactory performance.

2.5.2.2 Return on Equity (ROE):

ROE = Net Income/Avg Shareholders' Equity × 100

2021: 2,126.44 / 24,082.93 × 100 = 8.83%

2022: 2,106.62 / 26,864.73 × 100 = 7.84%

2023: 2,356.12 / 24,888.60 × 100 = 9.47%

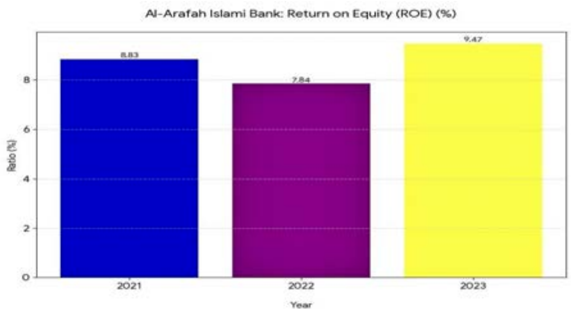

Figure 6: Return Of Equity (ROE)

<u>Interpretation:</u> The ROE graph shows it decreased from 8.83% in 2021 to 7.84% in 2022, but then increased to 9.47% in 2023. This clearly demonstrates that returns to shareholders have been restored and have exceeded previous results which is satisfactory.

2.5.2.3 Net Profit Margin (NPM):

NPM = Net profit/Total Revenue × 100

2021: 2,126.44 / 65,136.06 × 100 = 3.26%

2022: 2,106.62 / 72,279.79 × 100 = 2.91%

2023: 2,356.12 / 55,616.79 × 100 = 4.24%

Figure 7: Net Profit Margin (NPM)

<u>Interpretation:</u> Looking at the NPM graph, which fell from 3.26% in 2021 to 2.91% in 2022, it's a large jump from 2.91% increase to 4.24% in 2023. The bank has been significantly more effective at converting revenue into profit in recent years compared to the past two years. So this is a satisfactory outcome.

2.5.2.4 Cost-to-Income Ratio (CIR):

CIR = Operating Expenses/Operating Income × 100

2021: 4,057.97 / 8,345.54 × 100 = 48.62%

2022: 3,846.64 / 7,720.69 × 100 = 49.82%

2023: 4,050.56 / 8,222.71 × 100 = 49.27%

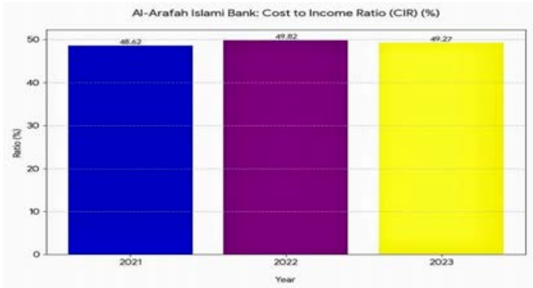

Figure 8: Cost-to-Income Ratio (CIR)

Interpretation: The graph shows the CIR increased from 48.62% in 2021 to 49.82% in 2022 and 49.27% in 2023, which shows that the bank's rising operating expenses in 2022 were brought under control by 2023, but there is still a moderate cost increase, the results are moderately satisfactory but can be improved.

2.5.3 Leverage and Shareholder value

2.5.3.1 Earnings Per Share (EPS):

EPS= Profit After Tax/ Number of Shares Outstanding

2021: 2,126.44 / 1,064.092 = 2.00 Tk

2022: 2,106.62 / 1,096.246 = 1.74 Tk

2023: 2,356.12 / 1,096.246 = 2.15 Tk

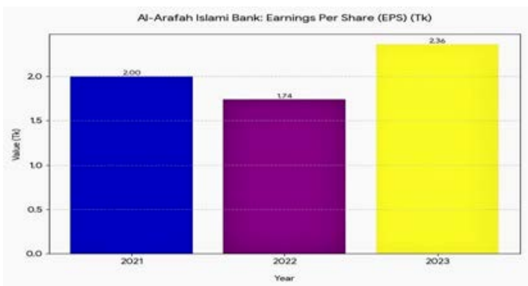

Figure 9: Earnings Per Share (EPS)

Interpretation: The graph clearly shows EPS decreased from Tk 2.00 in 2021 to Tk 1.74 in 2022, but increased again to Tk 2.36 in 2023. The increase in EPS indicates that the bank has become profitable again and has the capacity to generate higher returns for shareholders.

2.5.3.2 Book Value Per Share (BVPS):

BVPS = Shareholders' Equity / Number of Shares Outstanding

2021: 21,080.57 / 1,064.092 = 19.82 Tk

2022: 24,082.93 / 1,096.246 = 21.97 Tk

2023: 24,888.60 / 1,096.246 = 22.65 Tk

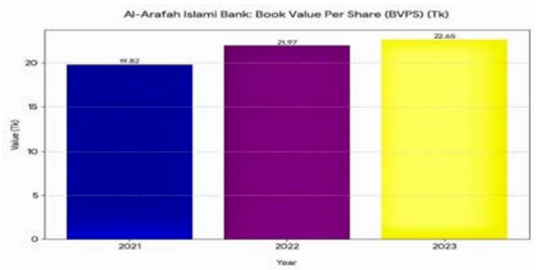

Figure 10: Book Value Per Share (BVPS)

Interpretation: Over time, BVPS has increased consistently, from Tk 19.82 in 2021 to Tk 22.65 in 2023. This consistent increase indicates that the bank's net assets and equity have increased. This is very satisfactory.

2.5.4 Market value and Economic value

2.5.4.1 Market Value Added (MVA):

MVA = Market Value of Equity − Book Value of Equity

2021: (22.20×1,064.092) − 21,080.57 = 2,533.40 mn BDT

2022: (26.70×1,096.246) − 24,082.93 = 5,185.06 mn BDT

2023: (23.53×1,096.246) − 24,888.60 = 964.70 mn BDT

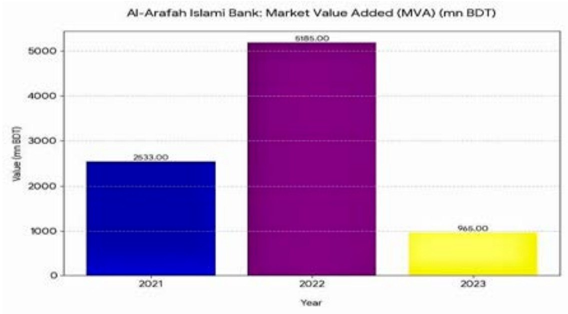

Figure 11: Market Value Added (MVA)

<u>Interpretation:</u> MVA shows how much more (or less) value the bank has generated than the book value of its investments. MVA increased from Tk 2,533 million in 2021 to Tk 5,185 million in 2022, which decreased significantly to Tk 965 million in 2023. This decline is significant and demonstrates that the market's perception of banks' ability to create value in the future has deteriorated. This result is not satisfactory.

2.5.4.2 Economic Value Added (EVA):

EVA = NOPAT − (WACC × Capital Employed)

2021: (2,126.44 mn) − (8% × 44,871.00 mn) = -1,463.24 mn BDT

2022: (2,106.62 mn) − (8% × 45,457.00 mn) = -1,530.94 mn BDT

2023: (2,356.12 mn) − (8% × 46,141.00 mn) = -1,335.16 mn BDT

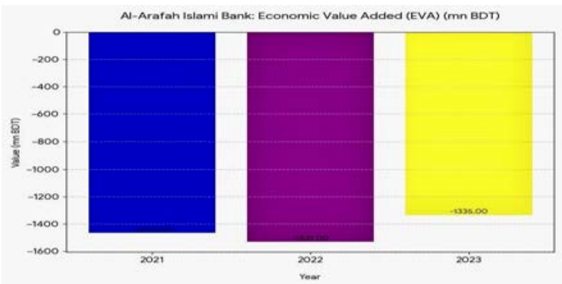

Figure 12: Economic Value Added (EVA)

<u>Interpretation:</u> The bank faced an EVA deficit during the analyzed period, at -1,464 million taka in 2021, -1,531 million taka in 2022, and -1,335 million taka in 2023. Negative EVA occurs when a bank's profits cannot cover its cost of capital. Such results would be considered unsatisfactory.

2.5.2 Accounting Practices:

AIBL is an abided user of accrual basis of accounting as stipulated by the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), which is required by the Bangladesh Bank. The accounting cycle is monitored, and it includes elaborate recording, classification, adjustments, and disclosures. Depreciation is computed both under straight line and reducing balance methods as noted with accounts. Complete disclosures make sure of compliance, transparency, and confidence of the stakeholders.

2.6 Operations Management and Information System Practices

AIBL has established effective information systems in gathering, processing and distributing data among the stakeholders. Its banking system has a core banking system that incorporates real time transaction processing, customer relationship management as well as regulatory compliance modules. SWIFT based cross border transactions and web-based vessel tracking-based trade finance promote the safety of the operations, and green banking and mobile financial solutions focus on the customer experience. Resource scheduling and allocation is performed through database management, office automation software and quality management principles by the bank to guarantee operational excellence and address the customer feedback to continue improvement.

2.7 Industry and Competitive Analysis

2.7.1 Porter's Five Forces Analysis of Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC

1. Threat of New Entrans (Low): There are generally high barriers to entry into the market, which keeps the risks for new banks low. In a complex and highly regulated environment governed by Bangladesh Bank and multiple regulators, starting a bank in Bangladesh requires significant capital investment that meets operational requirements. There are already many banks in this industry: more than 57 scheduled banks (International Journal of Business and Management Futures, 2018).

Establishing public trust in banking is also essential, and gaining public trust is a long, laborious process that will be difficult for new banks to achieve.

2. Bargaining power of suppliers (Moderate to High): In the banking context, suppliers are the depositors who hold the capital that the bank can use to make loans. The bargaining power of the rising elites is not high because they are constrained by a large pool of idle funds (International Journal of Business and Management Futures, 2018). Recently, there has been an increase in bargaining power. According to a report by The Daily Star, public confidence in the Islamic banking sector has declined due to reports of mismanagement and irregularities, which amounted to a decline in deposits and remittances in early 2025 (Star Business Report 2025). The shift in public confidence has allowed depositors to legally transfer their funds more easily, and banks now have to compete with each other on interest rates and service levels to attract and retain capital.
3. Bargaining Power of Buyers (High): In the Bangladeshi banking sector, buyers (or borrowers) are dependent on banks and the related products and services they provide because of how competitive the market is and many banks offer similar products and services. Customers are highly sensitive to interest rates, fees, and service quality (International Journal of Business and Management Futures 2018; Canvas Business Model 2024). Moreover, increasing digital literacy and standardization of many financial products reduce the cost of switching. This means that whether borrowers are individual or corporate clients, the cost of transferring an account to another bank to get better terms is now very low (Canvas Business Model 2024).
4. Threat of Substitute Products or Services (High and Increasing): The threat of alternatives is a major challenge for banks, including AI-Arafah Islami Bank PLC. The growth of mobile financial services (MFS) like bKash and Nagad has

strengthened the fast and cheap options, making it popular for person-to-person transfers, bill payments, and numerous small deposits. Although MFS platforms do not offer a wide range of services offered by any bank, they have been able to secure a significant market segment in retail banking and rural banking, and rural banking, and in a way that embodies convenience and exhilaration. This creates a strong incentive for banks to invest heavily in digital banking to survive competitively.

5. Rivalry Among Existing Competitors (High): Bangladesh's banking industry is highly competitive. There is intense competition in a fragmented market with 57 banks and hundreds of branches. It is not just other dedicated Islamic banks like Islami Bank Bangladesh PLC and First Security Islamic Bank PLC competes with conventional banks with Islamic banking windows, such as Al-Arafah Islamic Bank PLC and Standard Chartered Sadiq (Euromoney, 2025). The battle for market share is evident in recent data, which shows that both conventional and Islamic banks have seen growth, Conventional banks have surpassed Islamic banks in terms of new deposit and investment collection (Islamic Banking and Finance Statistics, 2025). This intense competition has resulted in continuous pressure on innovation, marketing efforts, and profit margins.

2.7.2 SWOT Analysis

Strengths

1. Common Strength: The bank's Islamic Shariah framework is attractive and formulates an ethical banking system, which develops the customer segment (Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC, 2023). The bank offers a wide choice of Shariah-compliant products and at the same time has a large number of branches, which ensures access for customers (Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC, 2024).

2. Distinctive Strength: The bank's market position is unique because there are very few Islamic banking institutions in the early stages of development, which makes AIBL's past loyalty clear. The bank's market share and deposit growth in the Islamic banking sector is significant - see Bangladesh Bank's report for the first quarter of 2025 for more details. This is a significant competitive advantage as it provides the bank with stable, low-cost funding (Bangladesh Bank, 2025).

<u>Weakness</u>

1. There is a continuous need to develop its technological infrastructure to keep pace with rapidly evolving technology. Financial analysis shows that it has an inconsistent liquidity position (AIBL, 2022).
2. Like any bank, AIBL has data privacy issues and a lack of current and readily available information for analysis, which weakens its internal and external reporting (Ahnaf, 2023).

<u>Opportunity</u>

1. The growing demand for Shariah-compliant financial products in Bangladesh is an opportunity for AIBL to expand its range of services to customers.
2. Its well-established reputation can certainly help attract new customers in the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and micro-finance sectors.
3. The spread of digital banking, and the resulting new products and services for customer convenience, may prove beneficial (Khan, 2018).

<u>Threats</u>

1. There is intense competition in the banking sector, and AIBL is facing competition from established conventional banks that provide Islamic "windows" and also full-fledged Islamic banks.

2. The current global economic turmoil has also led to fluctuations in energy and commodity prices, which will expose AIBL to the risk of financial distress and further slow its ability to recover from non-performing loans (Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC, 2024).

2.8 Summary and Conclusions

The participative nature of management of AIBL is ensuring growth and innovation as well as its growth using strong strategic orientation and compliance with Islamic principles. It exhibits financial stability in revenue growth and digital transformation but it still has flaws in cost management and particular customer groups. It has solid market positioning, which relies on technology and Shariah compliance, and digital growth and employee development are its growth drivers.

2.9 Recommendations/Implications

To continue the sustainable growth, AIBL needs to pay attention to the following:

- Increasing digital and ATM networks to expand outreach and convenience.
- Enhance cost management and efficiency in order to enhance margins and competitiveness.
- Increase employee development and leadership track.
- Expand marketing and branding efforts to attract the younger and unbanked segments via digital channels.
- proactively watch regulatory and competitive dynamics and respond to industry changes and new client needs by adjusting service offerings.

With these recommendations being tackled, Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC will be able to become a market leader in Islamic banking and be able to maintain its long-term financial and social goals.

CHAPTER 03: PROJECT PART

Topic: Women-led Organization Contributions to SDGs and Employment Practice in Bangladesh: Ujjwala Care.

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Background:

Ujjwala Care is a visionary brand that is inspired and grounding in recognizing the power of nature. Ujjawala Care was established in 2017 and brings traditional wisdom and modern science together, the linkedin page provides information about Ujjawala's operations to create personal care products that nurture hair and skin without harsh chemicals. Ujjwala care is a Dhaka based group of 11-50 employees working together to empower women through capacity building, mental health and entrepreneurship training, as well as beauty and grooming industry skills. Ujjwala is not just a product-based company, it also provides training and salon services to redefine the beauty industry and create sustainable livelihood for women. According to (U care Ltd, 2025) Ujjwala is a celebration of natural skin and radiance, creating awareness of a scientific formula with efficacy and confidence in the product based on community needs, while allowing individuals to shine in their own natural beauty.

3.1.2 Problem Statement:

Although the beauty and grooming industry in Bangladesh has achieved rapid growth, professionals in this industry, especially women, still face significant social stigma, limited professional recognition, and they are missing formal training paths to further their careers. The absence of clear formal certification pathways and support systems limits economic opportunity and perpetuates disparities between male and female professionals in the labor market, both in the workplace and in entrepreneurship. Because this industry is largely unregulated, untrained men and women are able to open beauty service establishments, which puts clients at risk of providing their services and weakens the industry as a whole. As a result, talented and motivated women, often desperate for income, struggle to achieve economic security, status, and upward mobility. There is an urgent need to create disruptive and scalable models to provide high-quality and accessible skills, increase professionalism across the sector, and empower women to gain recognition as professionals and business owners. Addressing these systemic challenges is not only essential to advancing women's economic empowerment and gender equality (SDG 5). Rather, it is to foster decent work and entrepreneurship across the growing service economy in Bangladesh.

3.1.3 Objectives:

The main objective of this study is to evaluate Ujjwala's role in women's empowerment and determine the position of gender equality for women in the beauty and grooming workforce in Bangladesh. Examine the organization's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals relevant to activities and business development related to SDG4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth). Engage with Ujjwala's creative employment practices and thereby assess workplace culture and employee satisfaction. Evaluate the effectiveness of Ujjwala's training program and the skills it has generated in creating sustainable livelihoods and entrepreneurial opportunities. In conducting this report, the study will focus on the following main research questions:

- How has Ujjwala's unique integrated training approach and mobile delivery model added value to achieving Sustainable Development Goals 4, 5, and 8 in the beauty and grooming sector in Bangladesh?
- What organizational methods, KPIs, and measurement frameworks demonstrate Ujjwala's effectiveness in changing attitudes towards the sector while empowering women and achieving financial sustainability?

- How does Ujjwala Care incorporate support for mental health and well-being into its training and workplace practices, and how do these efforts impact employee satisfaction and productivity?

3.1.4 Significance:

This report is important in many contexts and to different stakeholders, as it raises a broader question about the extent of women-led social enterprises and development in developing countries. For policymakers, this study will highlight how targeted interventions in sectors that have historically faced marginalization can build capacity and contribute to national development goals. In addition, women's economic potential has increased. This report will explain how new and creative training methods, combined with supportive employment practices, can improve individual livelihoods and reshape entire industrial sectors. This finding is significant from an academic perspective, contributing to the emerging literature on social entrepreneurship, women's leadership in development contexts, and skills development for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It provides empirical evidence of how small local projects can tackle difficult socio-economic problems and achieve some degree of financial stability. Ujjwala's vision for creating decent work opportunities and eliminating social stigma provides practical guidance for similar initiatives in South Asia and beyond.

3.2 Literature Review

Women's economic empowerment does not only mean gaining economic opportunities, but it also requires organizations to make strategic life choices and recognize their contributions to society. This method is useful for evaluating multidimensional models of brightness to solve problems in the beauty and grooming sector. Study on social entrepreneurship in developing countries has emphasized the need for context-specific solutions to address social challenges as well as economic challenges. Conducted in Bangladesh has shown that women-led social enterprises have incorporated new and creative ways to address cultural challenges, in addition to creating sustainable economic opportunities. The importance of vocational training in women's economic empowerment has been extensively researched. Skills development programs in Bangladesh only when combined with technical skills, business development and confidence building elements were effective. This discovery is consistent with Ujjwala's comprehensive approach to curriculum development. The literature on the beauty and wellness industry in South Asia highlights clear issues around formal training structures and professional accreditation. Evidence suggests that workers in this sector are socially stigmatized, as well as facing limited opportunities for upward mobility despite economic opportunities. This context emphasizes the importance of Ujjwala's work in changing attitudes towards art. The literature exploring organizational culture and employee satisfaction in social enterprises suggests that mission-driven organizations have higher levels of employee engagement when open communication channels and genuine concern for employee well-being are prioritized. This literature provides a framework for examining Ujjwala's employment practices.

3.3 Methodology

Adopting a qualitative research design, explores the Ujjwala model, role, and contribution to sustainable development in the beauty and grooming industry in Bangladesh. The report is based on primary data collected through semi-structured interviews with key participants: two co-founders (one of whom is a female leader), a senior management official and a staff member who worked directly with beneficiaries. The interviews provide descriptions of Ujjwala's organizational philosophy, training and education, employment practices, and activities related to engagement with stakeholders. This approach triangulates by capturing multiple perspectives from both strategic leadership and staff at the local level. To reflect validity and triangulate the results, for secondary data, the report also collected publicly available data from online sources. Using keyword searches, the project reviewed news articles, reports from local NGOs, and business-related publications published by governments and national databases and consumer products or services from reputable e-commerce and media platforms in Bangladesh. All information was objectified by cross-referencing sources to prove authenticity.

3.4 Findings and Data Analysis

3.4.1 Products and Service Portfolio:

Ujjwala, a leading company in the beauty and makeup industry in Bangladesh, is dedicated to empowering women through skill development, entrepreneurship, and innovation within the industry. Under the name "Ujjwala Care", Ujjwala manufactures various beauty and wellness products specifically for Bangladeshi consumers:

1. Anti Hairfall Herbal Shampoo: A paraben-free shampoo made with herbal extracts that is formulated to reduce hair fall, repair damage, and improve the overall condition of hair. Key ingredients include hibiscus, bhringraj, shikakai, and reetha. This shampoo is considered effective and safe for the climate of Bangladesh and can also be targeted for common hair problems in women and men.
2. Skin Lightening body Oil: 100% natural, non-sticky body oil that reduces the appearance of skin discoloration, fades scars and stretch marks, and penetrates the skin for deep moisture. The powerful blend of ingredients includes olive oil, almond oil, aloe vera, eucalyptus, and tea tree oil. It is suitable for dry, sensitive skin and the climate of Bangladesh.
3. Anti Hairfall Herbal Hair Oil: Formulated to prevent hair loss through a powerful blend of natural herbs, this product can be used on any hair type and is specially formulated to combat the effects of local environmental factors. Ujjwala BD's products can be purchased and shipped across the country through e-commerce channels such as Shajgoj, Chaldal, Daraz, and others.

In addition to products, Ujjwala Offers: Training workshops and multi-level educational courses (e.g. skincare, grooming, etc.) designed in collaboration with medical professionals, industry professionals, and aspiring entrepreneurs. Help for job seekers and aspiring salon owners. Overseeing incubation, securing loans, and assisting with alumni network engagement. Includes grooming and wellbeing workshops and support for vulnerable youth in rural and urban areas.

3.4.2 Significant projects and success:

Ujjwala has implemented several projects that have impacted the quality of the sector. Some examples: Ujjwala has successfully transformed from a city-based location to a mobile training center, which has enabled them to operate in 64 districts. This model has helped rural and suburban communities effectively deliver practical education training, entrepreneurship, and psychosocial support, reaching hundreds of the region's most vulnerable young women. According to (Tribune Desk, 2022) Women Entrepreneur Awards: Ujjwala presents some of the best women entrepreneurs with the “Shera Ujjwala”, “Shrestho Ujjwala” and “Adamya Ujjwala”. These awards celebrate the impact of the field. Ujjwala and its founder Afroza Parveen have been recognized with numerous distinguished awards:

- SME Award: Recognized by various trophies and plaques displayed at Ujjwala's office, Afroza Parveen is honored as a "lifetime member" of the Women Entrepreneurs' Association and her leadership role in SME development.
- Entrepreneur Leadership Award: Awards and accolades from multiple fields related to women empowerment, business innovation and transformational sector leadership recognized at Ujjwala headquarters. Ujjwala publicly recognizes and awards over 100 women entrepreneurs, a testament to Ujjwala's role in increasing women's empowerment (Tribune Desk, 2022).

3.4.3 Collaborations and Partnership:

Ujjwala has established relevant working relationships with government agencies and private sector organizations, including leading NGOs, to build capacity:

- Government Engagement: Ujjwala engages with ministries and agencies to support and build capacity in small and medium enterprises, explore policy changes to support the sector, and set standards for product certification.
- Collaborations with BRAC: Ujjwala has collaborated with BRAC, the largest development organization in Bangladesh, to help empower women entrepreneurs and grassroots women in the country. Together, they provide training, advocacy for non-formal education policies, and dual employment opportunities with CAMPE, in consultation with BRAC, which creates improved access to government resources for NGO students.
- Salon and Product Partnership: Ujjwala has established effective relationships with three-star rated salons and product distribution companies to increase the number of products in the market, while ensuring practical, hands-on internship experiences for trainees and alumni.

3.5 Discussion

3.5.1 Innovative Training Method and Curriculum Development:

Ujjwala Training Model is a real breakthrough in vocational training in the beauty and grooming training sector in Bangladesh. Ujjwala Training has created a model that works at different levels, and combines knowledge from science and practice in a way that sets new standards for training and professional development in this sector. The five-day skin care training is just one example of this modern approach and includes experts from the medical profession who teach students about skin anatomy, industry experts about product application, industry knowledge about bringing products to market, and bio-expert trainers about preparing natural skin care products. The ability to integrate this information in a way that not only helps students understand the theories, but also helps them translate the theory into their professional practice, is a significant advantage for Ujjwala students. In addition to practical skills, Ujjwala's curriculum is also designed from a holistic development perspective. Ujjwala knows that 80% of the women trained are entering the sector not out of desire but out of necessity and this has led Ujjwala to design their programs in a way that includes elements related to building confidence, understanding and supporting mental health needs, and socially appropriate respect. Ujjwala wants to enhance the technical skills of their students, but they also need to address psychosocial barriers to success in their professional development. To take this topic further, Ujjwala looks at entrepreneurship and business ownership within their curriculum. Many who participate in the training want to own a business instead of working, and the addition of business planning, financial management, and marketing helps participants gain the skills needed to successfully run a salon.

3.5.2 Organizational Culture and Employment practice:

Ujjwala's employment practices reinforce their commitment to creating a welcoming and supportive workplace that systematically reflects their larger goal of empowering women and transforming the way the industry operates. This is evident through the planned and nurtured open culture, and many employees feel open to sharing their opinions and concerns, with equally open access to everyone, including the managing director. The open access culture has encouraged greater outreach through external structures that encourage junior staff to provide information, ideas, and concerns that can influence organization-wide decision-making. The organization recognizes the personal crises of employees (e.g., the wife of an employee in the marketing department was diagnosed with COVID-19; Ujjwala provided substantial financial support). Their inherent commitment to ensuring meaningful employee experiences extends beyond the workplace. Ujjwala understood that employee "well being" is about more than how one's career spills over into one's personal life. During the interview, the management employee indicated that all employees meet weekly to participate in mindfulness activities that promote well-being and support each other. Regular monthly meetings provide a consistent space for employees to discuss their concerns, ideas, and feedback, which is important for improving communication methods. This systematic and prescribed method of communication in the workplace suddenly allows for an ongoing approach to organizational learning as well as individual employee development. Combined with other open access opportunities for interaction at all levels, this process leads to a very work-friendly and collaborative work environment. This environment encourages transparency and creates a comfortable environment where employees feel free and empowered to raise concerns or issues, or simply ideas for improvement, with the expectation that everyone will have the opportunity to be heard.

3.5.3 Contributions to Sustainable Development Goals:

Ujjwala Care's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are designed to measure the organization's impact on Quality education, gender equality, and decent work & economic growth. Ujjwala directly contributes to multiple Sustainable Development Goals, with particularly notable impacts on SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Ujjwala Care's strategy for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals reflects a sophisticated understanding of the integrated approach to identifying integrated solutions to interconnected development problems. Their strategy reflects alignment with the national Sustainable Development Goals framework for Bangladesh, while also addressing specific sector-specific gaps that traditional approaches have failed to address.

- **SDG 4: Quality Education:** Ujjwala's implementation strategy extends beyond the basic vocational training model used by non-profit organizations. They have developed a comprehensive, skills-based framework that directly links science and practice to Goal 4, which focuses on increasing the number of people with relevant skills and training for jobs and entrepreneurship. Their key performance indicators include trainees' skills assessment scores, training completion rates, and employment status after training completion. They also track alumni progress through a digital monitoring system that keeps records of income-generating activities, business start-ups, and continuing education for skill development. Their course instructions stick to international quality standards as they employ medical professionals, industry practitioners, and biological experts. Their five-day specialized courses have measurable learning outcomes and improved skill acquisition that they assess before and after the course. After completing the training, participants sit for an exam and are awarded a certificate. Many of them also appear for various government exams and Ujjwala provides support throughout the process. Collectively, these help drive higher retention of skilled workers for the beauty and wellness industry, while also providing protection against attrition and workplace negligence.

- **SDG 5: Gender Equality:** The Ujjwala Action Plan specifically addresses Goal 5 (Gender Equality) and ensures equal opportunities for women's full participation and leadership. The organization uses various indicators to measure impact. For example, the percentage of women who become economically independent after training, Leadership opportunities within the alumni network and changing perceptions of women in the community related to the beauty sector. Their program of recognizing over 100 women entrepreneurs serves as both a measurement strategy and an intervention strategy, as women have formally documented higher social status and entrepreneurial assets (Tribune Desk,2022). Ujjwala is already measuring gender-based outcomes by implementing monthly surveys of graduates and alumni, measuring, for example, income, decision-making autonomy, and community leadership roles. Ujjwala's interest in empowering women, who face considerable stigma around gender equality, supports and builds on this thinking. Increasing opportunities for skills training, which includes building confidence and helping women develop entrepreneurial skills, creates the potential for their economic independence and recognition.

- **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth:** Emphasis on supporting entrepreneurs is a potential way to drive economic growth, by encouraging people to create businesses and subsequently provide jobs for others. Ujjwala's results regarding employment outcomes for alumni and entrepreneurs provide tangible results towards productive employment and economic opportunities. Ujjwala's "Care" brand products (Shampoos, Oils and more) create employment for women in the community and provide market access for product expansion to alumni to diversify income and formalize the sector. Ujjwala helps inform the sector through policy development, loan and internship opportunities, and policy support to strengthen employment regulations and support micro-entrepreneurs through partnerships with NGOs (BRAC) and government SME programs (TBS Report, 2021). Ujjwala recognizes and celebrates women's achievements, promotes the visibility of the sector, and supports female entrepreneurship by inspiring new women to participate in decent employment or start their own businesses.

Also, Ujjwala's efforts in prioritizing mental health can be seen through implementing weekly meditation sessions and intentionally creating open lines of communication to promote a supportive culture. This holistic approach aims to address psychosocial barriers to well-being and productivity and improve the well-being and productivity of employees. These efforts create a resilient workforce, which supports the organization's mission of empowering women and providing them with opportunities to achieve Justice in their professional and personal lives.

3.5.4 Innovation and Adaptability:

Ujjwala's innovative approach is an example of forward-thinking and market-oriented education. Early attempts like artificial intelligence-based hair styling and online training failed, but Ujjwala has created an opportunity to respond quickly if the situation is favorable. The aforementioned COVID-19 pandemic has validated Ujjwala's previous commitment to online training, highlighting the value of having an innovative vision for the future despite a lack of short-term market acceptance. This experience highlights the role time plays in innovation and maintaining a strategic long-term vision. Ujjwala's combined ability to accept failure, learn, and adjust its strategy is a reflection of the organization's mature learning capacity and resilience in the face of challenges.

3.5.5 Future Vision and Expansion Plans:

Ujjwala's goal of building a university focused on entrepreneurship and the creative industries is an amazing vision for sector transformation and women's advancement. While acknowledging the potential difficulties in creating a government-backed institution, the organization is dedicated to providing world-class training through the private sector. Ujjwala aims to move beyond beauty and grooming to other areas where women can succeed as entrepreneurs, which is a smart move and shows some foresight in whether successful models should be developed for wider potential use. The development of other sectors means some confidence in the Ujjwala development model and an understanding of how the challenges of other sectors exist. By creating pilot projects that will allow the company to test and develop its expansion strategy in new sectors, the organization will be able to experiment while working to their strengths and commitment to their goals.

3.6 Summary and Conclusion

Ujjwala has become a model of women-led social entrepreneurship, successfully addressing multiple socio-economic challenges and making meaningful contributions to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Through innovation in products, training, promotions, and collaborations, Ujjwala has emerged as a national model in the beauty and grooming industry in Bangladesh. Its efforts to bring about change in the beauty and grooming sector in Bangladesh are multifaceted, exemplifying how interventions can have lasting impacts at both individual and systemic levels. The combination of its mobile distribution strategy, strong product portfolio, award-winning leadership, and recognized collaborative partnerships with BRAC and government institutions, helps create a sustainable path towards women's success and systemic change in the agribusiness sector. There are four key elements to Ujjwala's success. The organization's training model integrates technical skills and holistic development. Second, it is committed to reaching the underprivileged through effective and flexible delivery models. Third, it has created a supportive culture that takes employee opinions and well-being seriously. Ujjwala's support for partially professionalizing the industry and changing perceptions of beauty professionals represents a meaningful contribution to changing the industry. Ujjwala's financial stability and access to diversified funding demonstrate that it has clearly built an ongoing growth capability and that social impact is consistent with a viable business idea. The use of a funded development model and growing awareness offer Ujjwala the potential to develop scalable solutions to development challenges. The organization's evidence and contributions to SDGs 4,5 and 8; particularly SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), have been documented through ongoing implementation results include increased levels of alumni employment and entrepreneurship, geographic expansion, and increasing levels of absorption of trainees. Ujjwala's success proves that women-led social enterprises can effectively address complex development issues in a financially sustainable and scalable way.

3.7 Recommendations and Implications

This report provides important insights for partners seeking to support women's empowerment and sustainable development in Bangladesh's rapidly growing beauty and grooming sector. The report findings suggest several important recommendations for consideration in policy, practice, and future research.

<u>For Policymakers:</u>

- The National Skills Development Authority of Bangladesh may consider adopting an employment license requirement for beauty and grooming professionals, which is more closely aligned with international best practice.
- Government agencies should consider supporting mobile delivery models of technical skills education, through partnerships with Ujjwala and similar social enterprises, as a way to potentially reach resource-poor populations.
- Ujjwala and similar successful social enterprises could be formally recognized as part of the national skills development strategy to promote coordination and learning to expand their impact and further exploit effective solutions.

<u>For Development Organizations:</u>

- The Ujjwala model represents a replicable process of market transformation that can be applied to other industrial or geographic contexts, perhaps especially in stigmatized or marginalized economic sectors.
- Development agencies could seek to partner with successful wave initiatives like Ujjwala rather than creating or funding parallel programs, as existing expertise and established relationships will be beneficial to the project's success.

- The integration of technical skills training, confidence building, mental health support, and stigma reduction should be considered as a natural part of educational and vocational development and implementation.

For Academia and research:

- An Impact Measurement: Based on Ujjwala's experience and discoveries, there is still merit in taking work forward to measure impact for social impact from transformative initiatives in this area.
- Comparative Studies: There is scope for comparative studies on the Ujjwala experience, which can provide insights into relevant variables related to similar efforts in other countries that support success and replicability.
- A Longitudinal Study: Longitudinal research on Ujjwala graduates can provide meaningful insights into the sustainable impact of an intensive vocational training program for graduates, families, and communities.

The private sector and corporate social responsibility (CSR) stakeholders need to make valuable contributions through genuine partnerships with initiatives like Ujjwala, using their networks, products and market access to improve employment outcomes. Considered together, these recommendations demonstrate the need for systematic, context-sensitive, and multi-sectoral collaboration to clearly and sustainably support the Sustainable Development Goals across Bangladesh's service economy.

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