

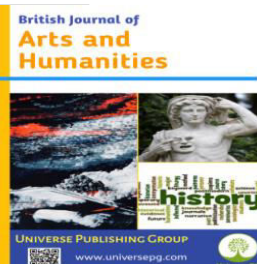


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Exploring the Factors Influencing Students Pursuing Bangladesh Civil Service Cadre: A Study on Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur

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ABSTRACT

This study endeavors to ascertain why Begum Rokeya University students pursue the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) cadre, the highest-prioritized job exam in Bangladesh. Additionally, it seeks to find out the challenges and obstacles students constantly face when entering civil service. However, a spree to choose BCS as the ultimate career goal is the by-product of Bangladesh's faulty and complicated education system. Even though candidates of BCS have to face stiff competition to be a BCS cadre, they take precedence BCS over any job exams or academic field. Even many tertiary-level students reject higher study offers abroad because they are determined to become a BCS cadre by any means. Students who aspire to pursue a career in the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) Cadre must complete their undergraduate or postgraduate education before embarking on BCS exam preparations. The BCS syllabus is extensive, and the practice can be time-consuming. Nevertheless, most students are increasingly focusing solely on preparing for the BCS exams, causing a decline in their academic pursuits, research interests, and higher education aspirations.

Keywords: Bangladesh civil service, Pursue, Education, Aspirations, Extensive, and Time-consuming.

INTRODUCTION:

A nation's civil service typically consists of all administration employees who are employed permanently; however, the military ministry and its other departments do use some civil servants (Wahhab, 2009). The state's executive branch, the civil service, is charged with carrying out policies and programs for the general welfare of the populace by applying specific structures, regulations, values, and duties (Ara, 2021). Therefore, the term 'civil service' is understood to refer to the civil bureaucracy that oversees the nation's whole administrative structure (Haque & Mahfuzul Haque, 2019).

"Cadre" refers to a specifically trained group of individuals tasked with fulfilling particular tasks and implementing government policies. The arrange-

ment of government officials into clearly listed services and groups, or cadres, is known as cadre service, and the term "civil service" refers to the collective term for state employees (Wahhab, 2009). Bangladesh's public service system still operates today, carrying a long history of colonialism from British colonial authority (Ara, 2021). Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC) is a constitutional organization for BCS cadres comprising 26 distinct cadres who recruit, monitor, and instruct BCS cadres. Moreover, BPSC also arranges some special training for them so that they become fully-fledged cadres. Despite this, an elected minister who serves as the executive branch of government in Bangladesh's parliamentary democracy is ultimately responsible for conducting the country's affairs. However, it is unrealistic to expect a small number of

ministers to handle each of the numerous issues facing contemporary government on a personal level. Government employees carry out the policy that the ministers establish. Every year, job aspirants take the Bangladesh Civil Service Examination (BCS) in the highest numbers compared to other exams. Few government servants in Bangladesh are hired for cadre services, which are regarded as highly prestigious positions (Ara, 2021). This year, 346,000 people participated in the BCS exam, and the number of applicants is expected to continue in the coming years (Prothomalo, 2023). BCS has shifted from being a matter of necessity to a point of interest. It diverts a significant portion of the country's population from their primary life pursuits to pursuing the BCS exam. Consequently, one of the most challenging careers in Bangladesh is considered to be in civil service, particularly in cadre services (Islam, 2020; Ara, 2021).

The BCS test serves as the entrance examination for the republic's civil service (Karim, 2007). To choose government officials, the Bangladesh Public Service Commission administers the highest level of competition job-related test in the country, known as the BCS exam (BPSC, 2012). The BCS Test is among the most challenging and competitive tests (Ara, 2012). To become a BCS cadre, a prominent government job position, individuals must pass the nationwide competitive examination administered by the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (Dhaka-Tribune, 2020). Almost everyone in our country who meets the eligibility requirements for education wants to serve as a BCS cadre (Jalal, 2021). Obtaining higher education in Bangladesh primarily revolves around universities where students are expected to engage in self-motivated research after completing their undergraduate degrees. Even with a degree from a prestigious university, students are more inclined to study for a government job (Rahman, 2023). Nevertheless, compared to many other countries, the educational scenario in Bangladesh is different. Instead of pursuing academic education, students often lean towards various competitive job examinations after completing their bachelor's degrees, considering it more lucrative. With a monthly salary of up to Tk 78,000, BCS Cadre's salary is among the finest in Bangladesh (Bangladesh-Post, 2021). One such job examination is the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) exam, the

nation's ultimate competitive exam akin to every student's dream.

Consequently, many students forgo conventional educational paths to focus on studying non-academic materials for these competitive job exams. Therefore, academic education sometimes does not yield proper results in Bangladesh due to the complexity of the educational system. This research investigates why most of the students at Begum Rokeya University in Bangladesh appear to gravitate towards pursuing a career in the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) instead of focusing on academic studies or research. Becoming part of the BCS cadre has become a societal trend and has assimilated into the social culture. Therefore, the objectives of the study are (1) to identify and analyze the factors influencing students entering the BCS cadre, (2) to explore how family and peer groups impact students' career choices in the BCS cadre, and (3) to investigate students' challenges and obstacles in entering the BCS cadre.

Review of Literature

Considerations about and professional aspects all play a part in choosing a career in civil service. Recruitment campaigns, talent development programs, and creating public sector employment policies depend on understanding these variables. Our analysis of the research offers a thorough summary of the significant elements found in the literature that motivate students' choices of public service occupations. The public sector primarily appeals to individuals due to favorable work circumstances, strong job security, and little oversight of individual performance (Delfgaauw & Dur, 2008). Also, a "wage premium" enhances the appeal of the public sector as an employer (Gundersen, 1979; Tansel, 2005). Furthermore, personal beliefs, socialization experiences, corporate culture, and work qualities substantially affect people's tendency towards public service (Vandenabeele, 2007; Kim & Vandenabeele, 2010). Public service occupations that allow flexitime arrangements provide enhanced training possibilities financed by public administration organizations, higher and steady earnings, and work security, among other benefits (Habánik *et al.*, 2018).

One of the primary motivations driving students towards civil service careers is a genuine desire to serve the public and contribute to the betterment of

society (Houston, 2000; Bright, 2007). Research has shown that individuals with a strong sense of altruism and social responsibility are more likely to be attracted to public sector roles (Perry & Wise, 1990). This intrinsic motivation to positively impact communities and address societal challenges is a central theme in many students' career aspirations (Kim & Vandenabeele, 2010).

Students passionate about public policy, governance, and public administration are drawn to civil service careers to engage in policy-making processes and shape society's future direction (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007; Wright & Pandey, 2010). The opportunity to contribute to developing and implementing policies that address pressing societal issues is a significant driver for students pursuing careers in the public sector (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999). Civil service careers allow students to work towards a larger mission or cause, whether promoting social justice, protecting the environment, ensuring public safety, or advancing economic development (Vandenabeele, 2007; Perry *et al.*, 2010). The sense of purpose inherent in public sector roles resonates with many students who seek meaningful and fulfilling work that aligns with their values and aspirations (Ritz *et al.*, 2016). Civil service careers offer opportunities for professional growth, skill development, and career advancement, appealing to students seeking continuous learning and progression (Crewson, 1997; Leisink & Steijn, 2009). Government agencies often provide training programs, mentorship opportunities, and pathways for promotion, allowing students to develop their skills and advance within the organization (Pod-sakoff *et al.*, 2000).

Although each person chooses their path in life, several factors, including pay, benefits, safety, work-life balance, and job attributes, significantly impact the decision (Zareen *et al.*, 2019). The choice to start a career in public service is generally affected by two key factors: the certainty of employment security, the possibility to display one's knowledge and talents, and the potential for personal growth and development (Supmak & Yabushita, 2016). Moreover, Job stability, social values, financial gain, and a poor impression of other career options are the main factors influencing students' decision to choose a career in the public sector (Ajani & Oyekola., 2019). Civil service positions' stability and job security are

attractive to students seeking long-term career prospects and financial stability (Wright & Pandey, 2008). Compared to private sector jobs, civil service positions often provide greater job security and benefits such as tenure, retirement plans, and healthcare coverage, which can appeal to students with concerns about future employment prospects (Kim, 2006). In Bangladesh, the state sector now favors itself over the private sector due to non-wage advantages (Rahman *et al.*, 2021). There is a growing demand for government jobs in Bangladesh due to factors such as increased financial benefits, job security, safe retirement plans, dissatisfaction with non-government sector job offerings, long work hours, and unpleasant working environments (Byron, 2019; Rahman *et al.*, 2021; Danzer, 2019; Faruque, 2018; Cho *et al.*, 2010; Kabir *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, the public sector offers a more flexible work environment, a better pension plan, and excellent conditions of service, and students prefer working in it over the private sector (Boateng & Street, 2019).

Government service officials, driven by solid public motives, implemented the 2015 payscale reform in Bangladesh, doubling government workers' wages (Rajibul & Kijima, 2021). Access to power exercise, play role, social status, prestige (intrinsic factors), job security, salary, and facilities motivated simultaneously the students to choose BCS (Rashid, 2019). Students are joining the Bangladesh civil service (BCS) because of the prestige and power associated with civil service positions and the attractive financial and non-financial benefits of these occupations (Karim, 2007). Furthermore, the desire to wield authority, get recognition, attain a high social standing, ensure work stability and personal safety, access state resources, fulfill personal aspirations, and leverage family connections were identified as the primary driving forces for individuals' pursuit of the BCS (Chowdhury, 2024).

METHODOLOGY:

At present, Bangladesh has 54 public universities. Among these, Begum Rokeya University was selected conveniently because there are hardly any discernible differences in all public universities' educational and cultural atmospheres. Furthermore, students also often foster identical thoughts, lifestyles, and aims. Therefore, it is evident that almost all students pursuing tertiary-level education answered the questions of the existing issue similarly.

As the two researchers in the study pursue their undergraduate degrees from Begum Rokeya University, establishing rapport with fellow students was advantageous, facilitating thorough data acquisition. Moreover, as it is qualitative research, which entails deep interpersonal communication, the selection of other universities than Begum Rokeya University might not only hinder rapport-building but also increase the cost. So, Begum Rokeya University was selected to consider all associated issues and benefits. Data collection was accomplished from September 2023 to October 2023.

A qualitative research design is used in the study to obtain profound, rich data. Qualitative research offers in-depth knowledge and comprehension of issues (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). The advantage of qualitative research is its ability to describe intricate, hard-to-quantify patterns and processes in human behavior (Foley & Timonen, 2015). Begum Rokeya University comprises six faculties: Arts, Social

Science, Business Studies, Science, Engineering, and Life and Earth Science. Moreover, the university also consists of 22 departments. Using purposive sampling, students from 11 departments were appropriated for interviews. In-depth Interviews, Key Informant Interviews (KII), and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were leveraged to elicit desired information from participants. Finally, a predetermined open-ended questionnaire was formulated to procure appropriate details. In this regard, 32 in-depth interviews were conducted, including two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and a Key Informant Interview (KII). One primary data collection technique in qualitative research is conducting in-depth interviews (Legard *et al.*, 2003). Through 32 in-depth interviews, participants were encouraged to share comprehensive narratives about their experiences and perceptions. Among them, 26 were males, and six were females.

Table 1: Participants Sampling.

Name of Departments	Sampling Size
	Count
Total #	32
Bangla	2
English	4
History & Archaeology	3
Economics	3
Sociology	6
Political Science	2
Public Administration	1
Statistics	2
Physics	2
Accounting & Information Systems	3
Finance & Banking	4

Two Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were held by students staying in the university dormitories. One FGD was conducted separately for male and female students. Data were collected from students who prepared for BCS after graduation. The discussion topics emphasized some broad questions, such as the reasons behind choosing BCS, the impact of family and peers on career choice in BCS, obstacles and challenges to entering BCS, etc. A civil service official was selected as an informant interviewee. A cadre of highly knowledgeable and experienced civil officers known as the Bangladesh Civil Service, or BCS Cadre, is essential to Bangladesh's government (Ahmed, 2023). Key informant interviews are inten-

ded to gather data from various sources, such as local leaders, experts, and citizens who thoroughly grasp the community (Carter & Beaulieu, 1992). Due to his extensive experience and deep understanding of the BCS examination process, the civil service official was chosen as an informant with his consent. When he was apprised of the interview, he gave us a schedule for the interview. An 18-minute phone call was recorded so that information gleaned from him could be employed later for further study. Voice records were taken contingent upon participants' consent. The data analysis procedure in this research followed a systematic manner. Initially, audio recordings of interviews and focus group discussions

were transcribed verbatim, assuring accuracy in data representation. We evaluated transcripts, categorizing significant ideas to construct a theme framework. In this research process, we acknowledge our

research biases and limits. Significantly, the research was carried out without causing any detriments to the environment or nature.

RESULTS:

Table 2: Key themes emerged from the thematic analysis of the interview transcripts.

Objectives	Themes
Factors influencing students entering the BCS cadre	Limited opportunities to build up a career in academic sectors
	Job security
	Fairness in BCS recruitment
	Better job salary
	Aspirations for power
	Social status
	Serving for nation
	Preparation for other job examinations
	Social trend
Family and peer groups influence students' career choices in the BCS cadre.	Influence of family
	Influence of friends and seniors
Challenges and obstacles in entering the BCS cadre	Highly competitive examination
	Lengthy process
	Financial support
	Maintaining consistency in the study
	Marriage

Following the thematic data analysis based on objectives, nine key themes emerged from the study's first objective, two from the second objective, and five from the last objective, as shown in **Table 2**. Every theme is explained in more detail in the section that follows.

The Factors Influencing Students Entering the BCS Cadre

Limited Opportunities to Build up a Career in Academic Sectors

Due to the lack of job opportunities in the academic field (academic field refers to students' respective departments at university), most participants said they are interested in the BCS cadre. Moreover, they do not have any other job sectors besides the teaching profession. So, they blame both the social and education system.

“I completed my undergraduate and post-graduate degree in Physics. Nevertheless, in our country, I have limited opportunities beyond the teaching profession, and I will not have a promising career in academic research. Furthermore, whatever I do, whichever job I am employed in, people always hold BCS in high esteem in society, compelling me to yearn to become a BCS cadre to have a bright future.”

Furthermore, some participants reported that they could not derive any pleasure from academic study because of teachers' banal lectures. Therefore, they place a superficial focus on the academic subject while profoundly emphasizing BCS.

“During my enrollment at the university, I was admitted to the history and archeology department. Although teachers taught us history, they never instilled any interest in history. As a result, BCS seemed the best career option for me after completing my Master’s. So, I planned a BCS-centric career.”

Other participants reported that, as their CGPA is under 3.5, which is a minimum criterion for becoming public university teachers, they chose BCS because it has no CGPA barrier. As a result, they prioritize BCS over the academic field in terms of building careers.

“My CGPA is 3.44. I have no chance to become a university teacher, but I can easily be eligible for BCS. So, my plan is BCS-centric.”

Job Security

The majority of participants chose BCS because of its supreme job security. There is no chance of losing the job unless you are accused of anti-state cons-

piracy. Most non-government jobs do not guarantee employment, which was particularly noticeable during COVID-19 when many private sector employees were laid off under the flimsy pretext of financial strain.

“It is a grueling task to manage a job in the private sector, but the job security is minimal. Moreover, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many employees were dismissed without prior notice and for no reason. So, no other job security is as high as BCS unless one is accused of an anti-state conspiracy.”

Other respondents informed that private companies have less independence. Apart from this, nepotism and promotions to unqualified employees are concomitant in the private sector. On the other hand, BCS is entirely based on meritocracy with experts and qualified employees. So, students are dying to become BCS cadres.

“The direct and hidden control of owners of private companies hinder employees from continuing their job independently because, for promotion, salary increase, and leaves, the company owners display unpredictable behavior. Sometimes, they resort to biased behavior, elevating unqualified employees to a higher position and relegating experienced employees to a lower position. However, BCS operates without nepotism, relying solely on meritocracy. Therefore, I am determined to become a BCS cadre.”

Fairness in BCS Recruitment

Most participants agree with one claim: while jobs other than BCS still influence corrupt people, BCS is less susceptible to external influence and nepotism.

“To me, BCS is the only sector in Bangladesh where recruitment is conducted with transparency. So, my long-cherished career goal is to join BCS.”

Other participants said BCS is never influenced by political power.

“When we examine the BCS exam closely, candidates must undergo a rigorous process, namely preliminary, written, and viva stages. Even during the viva board, neither candidates nor interviewers know who will participate. This level of transparency greatly appeals to students wanting to join the BCS cadre. Even no political power cannot manipulate BCS recruitment.”

Better Job Salary

In BCS, attractive salaries motivate the participants to become BCS cadres.

“I am eager to become a BCS cadre because its lucrative salary, along with additional amenities and perks, is higher than other jobs available in Bangladesh, which is a prerequisite to leading a comfortable lifestyle with family and relatives.”

Additionally, the soaring price of daily essentials also compels respondents to pursue a career as a BCS aspirant, as its salary and promotion prospects surpass those of other jobs in Bangladesh.

“Due to the increasing prices of daily commodities, the low salary is insufficient to cover family expenses. Thus, only a handsome salary from BCS can provide financial stability amidst such high costs.”

Aspirations for Power

The opportunity to wield power motivated the participants to pursue careers as BCS cadres. Participants were informed that, as a ministry's modus operandi revolves around the directions of a BCS cadre, exerting authority is a remarkable ability.

“Administrative cadres can advance their careers by securing positions such as assistant secretary, Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner of land, and Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO). In addition, the higher the ranking is, the more amenities the officials will receive. Finally, with the continuation of promotion, the administrative cadre can become the cabinet secretary.”

Others reported that the primary intention of the students to become BCS cadres is to exercise power.

“In Bangladesh, everyone wants to wield power. Some want to be police cadres; some want to be magistrates. In a word, the primary intention of students to become BCS cadres is to exercise power, as BCS paves the way to hold unprecedented power.”

Social Status

As the participants reported, BCS is an effective channel for gaining social respect, making cadres the center of society.

“Society does not accept other jobs than BCS highly. Those who become BCS cadres secure a respectable position in society.”

Others informed that sometimes failure to become a BCS cadre brings a stream of criticism from society.

"As BCS is the most competitive exam in Bangladesh, it is utilized as a standard to gauge students' life achievements. Even failing to qualify for the exam leads to a torrent of critique regarding students' intelligence and resilience."

Serving for Nation

Most participants decided to join BCS after being inspired by former BCS cadres.

"I am eager to devote my energy to serving our country, and becoming a BCS cadre can help fulfill my dream." During COVID-19, I observed that under the supervision of the Deputy Commissioner, the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) and the Assistant Commissioner of land worked together wholeheartedly to provide food assistance to marginalized people, which inspired me to pursue a career as a BCS cadre.

Others reported that BCS cadres have a promising side to work for the country, but the opportunities for personal gains exceed the prospects of being patriotic. So, students want to become BCS cadres for their benefit.

"Although everyone wants to become a BCS cadre to serve the country, not everyone is ultimately dedicated to working for the betterment of their country. Enhancing one's own life is prioritized over patriotism."

Preparation for Other Job Examinations

Most participants report that the expansive syllabus of BCS facilitates their preparation for other job examinations.

"As the BCS syllabus consists of Bangla Literature, English Grammar and Literature, Bangladesh and International Affairs, Current Affairs, Environment and Geography, General Science, Computer, and Ethics, preparing the comprehensive syllabus helps job seekers develop a broad skill set. It prepares candidates for other job examinations, including banks and teacher recruitment."

Others reported that BCS preparation covers up to eighty hundred percent of bank jobs and other jobs, respectively.

"BCS is the combination of all job syllabuses in Bangladesh. So, I think 80% and 100% of bank

preparation and other job preparation are completed if students prepare for BCS."

Social Trend

Most participants reported that the acceptance of BCS cadres in society is remarkable, which also impels students to pursue BCS. However, the media is vital in promoting BCS cadres around our country.

"In this regard, a respondent said, "Social media and newspapers consistently feature success stories of BCS cadres, indirectly motivating students to be resolute to become BCS cadres. Therefore, being BCS cadres has become a societal phenomenon."

Some participants said that BCS has become an ill competition among job seekers.

"BCS has become such a trend in society that doing other jobs than BCS is a beneath of dignity."

Family and Peer Groups Influence Students' Career Choices in the BCS Cadre

Influence of Family

Many respondents said that they diverted their attention from academic study to BCS due to the influence of family.

"I did not have much interest in BCS during my early university life, but I shifted my focus from academic study to BCS merely to conform to my parents' wishes."

Others reported choosing BCS as their career after being pressured by parents and relatives.

"I had a superficial proclivity for BCS, but my parents and relatives put mounting pressure on me to become a BCS cadre."

The participants who already have a BCS cadre in their family are mostly coerced to take intensive preparation for BCS.

"My father is the principal of a college. As he is a BCS cadre, my other family members nurture the dream to see me as a BCS cadre."

Furthermore, some participants are determined to become BCS cadres, thanks to the influence of their respective elder brothers.

"My elder brother wanted to become a BCS cadre but could not because of unpropitious situations. So, my brother told me it was an onus on me to be

a BCS cadre to fulfill his unfulfilled dream. I refuse his long-fostered dream, as he always aids me financially.”

Influence of Friends and Seniors

Their friends or seniors influence participants who do not have a BCS cadre in their respective families. Sometimes, to consolidate and facilitate their preparation, they study collectively by sharing books, notes, and coaching center sheets, and they also explain respective problems to be solved by the group members.

“Many of my friends and seniors became BCS cadres. They constantly contact me, aid me financially, and give me tips and tricks to pass the BCS examinations. Moreover, some of my senior brothers in my department shared their hand notes and books with me so that I could have comprehensive insights about their strategies to be fully prepared for BCS.”

Challenges and Obstacles in Entering the BCS Cadre

Highly Competitive Examination

Most participants reported that the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination stands out as one of the most fiercely competitive job assessments, and gaining entry into the BCS cadre represents the primary challenge within this rigorous competition. Despite the limited vacancies available in each BCS exam, millions of aspirants contend for these positions. As a BCS candidate has to vie with 200-220 candidates for a post, staying in the competition is the main challenge.

“Only a limited number of candidates will ultimately be recruited among thousands of candidates. Even not all viva-qualified candidates will be employed. In 41st BCS, while the vacancies are 2166, the number of examinees is 476520, 220 candidates competing for one post.”

Others reported that there are three main stages to entering BCS: the preliminary test, the written test, and the viva voce, and passing all three consecutive stages is extremely challenging and competitive.

“A student must navigate through several intricate stages to successfully qualify for the BCS exam, each crucial phase in the journey toward becoming a Bangladesh civil servant. The BCS exam comprises three main phases: preliminary, Written, and viva voce. The exam commences

with the Preliminary stage, followed by the written stage, and upon successful completion, candidates proceed to the viva voce. Success in the viva voce marks the achievement of becoming a cadre member.”

Lengthy Process

Participants reported that BCS is a lengthy process. From preliminary to final recruitment, it takes 3 to 3.5 years.

“It takes 3 to 3.5 years to recruit after a preliminary examination. So, the time from preliminary to final employment in the workplace is challenging to overcome.”

Respondents think that delaying the scrutinization of written papers and preparing the final results is the main reason BCS is a lengthy process.

“Compared to other job examination papers, the Bangladesh Public Service Commission takes an extended time to scrutinize written examination papers, which results in protracted time to have the final result of the written test.”

Financial Support

Financial hardship is one of the obstacles for BCS candidates to becoming cadres, as most public university students stem from impoverished families. Additionally, as BCS is a long process, ranging from three years to four years, participants who do not have an alternative income source within the timeframe find it difficult to bear their costs. Some participants also feel embarrassed to ask for money from family at such a stage of student life.

“My father aided me financially for a long time. As he is advanced, he cannot give me economic support. As a result, I cannot have sufficient resources for BCS.”

Other participants whose time is spent on tuition cannot afford to take adequate BCS preparation.

“I am struggling with an economic crisis after completing my post-graduation due to poverty in my family. I am also unable to wait for a long time to become a BCS cadre. Overall, I am in a distressing situation. Moreover, while a BCS candidate needs to study more than 15 hours, I cannot study even 10 hours because of my tuition. This results in lagging badly in my BCS preparation.”

Maintaining Consistency in the Studies

Most participants argued that maintaining consistency in the studies is challenging for them. They reported that as they age, maintaining consistency in study, looking after family members, and paying close attention to study become challenging tasks.

“Preparing for BCS and academic study is difficult because of the lack of consistency. Moreover, I cannot focus on studying at an increasing age. I cannot study constantly because a 14-to-16-hour study is required for BCS.”

Some participants have reported that they cannot maintain continuity in their BCS studies due to the use of social media.

“Although I am highly interested in the study, using multiple social media, such as YouTube and Facebook, impedes my attentiveness because most social media consume much time.”

Marriage

Female respondents stated that marriage is the main barrier to becoming a BCS cadre. Marrying before completing the study and nurturing children make it difficult for them to study uninterrupted. As a result, the long-cherished dream of BCS eludes them.

“I was married in honor's 2nd year. Now, I am a mother and a child. It is quite challenging for me to take care of my child and prepare for BCS.”

DISCUSSION:

Limited opportunities in academic sectors lead many students to pursue the BCS cadre, which is perceived as a more promising career path than academic research or teaching professions. Given the absence of preferable or feasible alternatives in business or academia, numerous individuals opt for a career in BCS (Das & Islam, 2024). Job security (Manik, 2024; Das & Islam, 2024; Jalal, 2021; Prachi, 2021) is a significant factor motivating students to choose the BCS cadre, as it offers more excellent stability compared to the private sector, where layoffs are more common. Transparency and fairness in the BCS recruitment process and the absence of political influence make it an attractive option for students seeking merit-based career opportunities. The attractive salary and benefits associated with the BCS cadre make it a desirable career choice, especially considering Bangladesh's rising cost of living. The desire for power and social status also

influences students' decisions to pursue the BCS cadre, as it offers opportunities for career advancement and societal recognition. Many students perceive serving the nation as motivating them to join the BCS cadre, although personal benefits often outweigh patriotic aspirations. The comprehensive syllabus of the BCS exam and its alignment with other job examinations make it a convenient choice for students preparing for various career paths. Social trends and media portrayals contribute to the popularity of the BCS cadre among students, who view it as a prestigious and socially acceptable career option. Family pressure plays a significant role in students' decisions to pursue the BCS cadre, with many feelings obligated to fulfill their parents' or relatives' wishes. Peer influence, particularly among those without familial connections to the BCS cadre, also shapes students' career choices, with shared study resources and support networks playing a crucial role in preparation. Individuals whose parents work in the public sector are more likely to choose jobs in the public sector (Fischer & Schott, 2022).

The highly competitive nature of the BCS exam, with limited vacancies and rigorous selection criteria, poses a significant challenge for aspiring candidates. The challenge and diligence required to surmount this fiercely competitive examination are widely acknowledged by all (Prachi, 2021). The lengthy process of BCS recruitment, spanning several years from preliminary exams to final employment, tests candidates' patience and perseverance. To enter the Bangladesh civil service, a job applicant must undergo an extensive examination process lasting three to four years (Hossain, 2023). Financial constraints hinder many students from adequately preparing for the BCS exam, especially those from impoverished backgrounds or with limited financial support. Maintaining consistency in studies amidst other responsibilities, such as family obligations and social media distractions, presents a challenge for BCS aspirants. Marriage and family responsibilities, particularly for female candidates, can significantly impact their ability to pursue a career in the BCS cadre, often leading to abandoning their aspirations.

CONCLUSION:

The prevailing prominence of the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) exam ingrains and perpetuates a narrow-minded perspective among students, who view BCS as the sole yardstick for measuring

individual career success. Those passionate about research often shift their focus to BCS, channeling all their energy and commitment into exam preparation. This shift hampers their ability to develop their intellectual capacities and exploratory nature. Consequently, this negative trend adversely impacts the national education system. Moreover, while BCS is often seen as a pathway to a prestigious career, failure to secure a cadre position can lead to depression and embarrassment for students. Such shortcomings can subject students to unprecedented emotional turmoil.

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