



Career Preferences of Bangladeshi Public University Business Students: A Policy Recommendation

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ABSTRACT

Planning a career can be defined as a sequence of processes that build up a career. Choosing the right career is essential for business graduates, especially in this competitive age. This study aims to identify the career preferences of business background students of Public Universities in Bangladesh and the factors that influence their career choice, which will help the business policy maker. Both the structured and the semi-structured questions containing pre-coded and open-ended questions were used to development of the questionnaire. Likert scale and multiple-choice were also used in the questionnaire. For this study, we have 97 respondents as our sample size. We have done frequency analysis, ratio analysis, percentages, and means to reach our objective. The result shows that most business students prefer Government/Public sector jobs, especially Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS). Teaching is the second choicest profession for graduates. The key factors that influence career choice are authority and power, social recognition, job security, mental satisfaction, and payment. The most common constraints graduates face when choosing a career are a lack of practical education, subject-specialized jobs, practical education systems, unfair hiring process, and experience needed at an entry-level position. However, the findings of our study will help both students and policy maker about career-related issues. Furthermore, the in-depth extracted policies are recommended to bring more insight into the matter.

Keywords: Career Preferences, Business Graduates, Policy Maker, Public Sector Job, Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS)

INTRODUCTION

Choosing a career is one of the most crucial decisions for business students, especially those completing graduation (Igere, 2017). Career choice is highly influenced by economic value, social status, personal identification, self-satisfaction, challenges (Choo et al., 2012; Abd Rahman et al., 2020), globalization, socioeconomic background (Shahzad et al., 2014), social support, information and financial resources (Najar & Yousuf, 2019), living environment (Igere, 2017), and education achievement (Igere, 2017; Ahmed et al., 2016; Rahman et al., 2020). Career management extends the improvement of various skills, including labor market awareness and investigation, connection with employers in one's chosen occupation, and effectively searching and applying for appropriate positions (Bridgstock, 2009). Possession of these capabilities will well empower an undergraduate to successfully organize their careers and make informed career choices both during and after their educations (Roulin & Bangarter, 2013).

The proper choice of career is significantly associated with not only individuals well-being but also educational and job outcome (Gati et al., 2012), while a poor choice of career has a negative impact both in academic and work performance (Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Kacmar et al., 2006). However, Higher education helps to gather various skills and competencies, which enhance graduate employment opportunities (van der Heijden, 2002). Hence, over the last few decades, it has been observing how higher education contributes to graduate's employability as well as to the social and national economy (Confederation of British Industry, 2009)

Career has multiple definitions as different experts have different views. For example, Arnold (1997) said, "The series of employees positions, roles, functions, skills, and experiences come across by a person," while Hall (2002) defined it as "the individually perceived series of attitudes and behaviors related with professional experiences and actions throughout the person's life ."According to Mugonzibwa, et al. (2000), a career is. Career is "the occupational positions a person has had over many years"

(Dessler, 2009, p. 236) or "the sequence of work-related experiences one has throughout one's working lifetime" (Adamson et al., 1998). An outline of one's occupational undertakings held throughout a person's lifetime.

There is a conflict between the expectations and real-life scenarios. In formal education, graduates are told they will have safe, standard-paying, and satisfying jobs. Nevertheless, owners seem to have other ideas where they have high expectations of different skills like management experience, outstanding marks, superior presentation and communication skills, optimistic attitude, and even expecting entry-level graduates to have done charity and volunteer work (Perrone & Vickers, 2003). Every organization wants to recruit skilled and knowledgeable people to ensure higher work performance, reduce employee turnover, and save hiring expenditures (Evers et al., 2008; Rahman et al., 2017). However, the graduates find that actual work conditions differ from expectations (Perrone & Vickers, 2003). The above situation indicates that career planning is vital for employment (Gunn et al., 2010), still significant portion of students are not as focused as they should be (Greenbank, 2011) for which they are suffering in early career (Greenbank, 2009). A less secure situation for career development allows persons to pledge career modification as preferred and to guard against occupation danger. The impact of enterprise, therefore, has been perceived to move away from interventionist occupation management to the facilitation of ongoing professional improvement and empowering people to organize their careers successfully (Najar & Yousuf, 2019).

Choosing the public or private sector is a dilemma for fresh graduates not only in Bangladesh but also around the world. Every individual has own mindset for selecting their job area, but the choice is highly influenced by financial benefits, job safety, benefits, work-life balance, and job characteristics (Zareen et al., 2019). The public sector means jobs offered by the government or government representatives. Meanwhile, private sector jobs are provided by individuals, groups of individuals, or organizations. These two sectors have different purposes; the public sector is formed to maximize the welfare of the citizens. This area focuses on the services rendered by the government to ensure social welfare.

On the contrary, the private sector works to maximize profit. Thus, the jobs offered within this sector focus on producing and selling goods and services, intending to earn a profit (Abd Rahman et al., 2020). In Bangladesh, female and Muslim students prefer public jobs over private whereas business graduates prefer private jobs (Suhi et al., 2021). Matin et al. (2018) survey revealed that a government job had become a central life goal for most young, educated people in Bangladesh. Increasing financial benefits along with job security, secure retirement facilities, disappointment at the non-government sector job facilities, long working hours, and unhappy working environments are highly influencing the growing demand for government jobs in Bangladesh (Byron,

2019; Hossain, 2019 and Faruque, 2018; Rahman et al., 2021; Cho et al., 2010; Danzer, 2019).

In contrast to our nation, people in developed and newly industrialized countries are more interested in private sectors (Cho et al., 2010; Danzer, 2019) because these sectors offer higher financial and other benefits than the government sector (Cho et al., 2010; Hasan et al., 2020).

The objective of the study

This study aims to identify the career preferences of business background students of Public Universities in Bangladesh and the factors that influence their career choice.

METHODOLOGY

Data sources

Currently, Bangladesh has 53 public universities for higher study (Wikipedia). The University of Dhaka is the first and is considered the number one university in Bangladesh. Considering the employment ratio, this university also stands in the first position in this country. That is why we choose graduates of this university.

Questionnaire Development

A questionnaire has been prepared using Google Docs (Google Forms) due to the convenience of online data collection. Both structured and semi-structured questions containing pre-coded and open-ended questions are used to develop the questionnaire. Likert scale and multiple-choice were also used in the questionnaire development process. Influencing factors are added based on the available related literature, and some other standard factors potentially influence the career preferences of the respondents.

Data Collection Techniques

To follow the Covid- 19 health guidelines, data are managed using the online questionnaire method by Google Forms without physically interacting with the respondents. Primary data is collected through the circulation of questionnaires to the respondents through email, social media, personal connections, and links.

Sample Size

Simple random sampling is used to select respondents. Business students who are about to graduate or recently graduated are also chosen randomly based on connection and availability on social media. A total of 97 students from the University of Dhaka have been recorded and selected for the study, and the actual sample size of this study is 97.

Data Analysis Tools

Data has been analyzed by using Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS 22.0

Statistical Analysis

We have done frequency analysis, ratio analysis, percentages, and means to find out our desired result.

ANALYSES AND FINDINGS

Table 1: Frequency of Gender of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Male	52	53.6
	Female	45	46.4
	Total	97	100.0

Source: Survey data

Table 1 shows that among the respondent, 53.6% is male, and 46.4 % is female.

Career planning scenario of the fresh business graduates

Respondents were asked whether they had planned their careers or not. Their responses to this specific question are shown in the following table:

Table 2: Frequency of respondents with and without career plans

Plans	Male	Female	Total Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	44	38	82	84.5
No	8	7	15	15.5
Total	52	45	97	100

Source: Survey data

In the table 2, it can be seen that 84.5 percent of respondents have a career plan, of which 44 are male and 38 are female students.

Importance of career planning

The respondents were asked to rate the statement about the importance of career planning. A structured question with options ranging from strongly agree to disagree strongly was shown in the questionnaire. The responses are presented in the following table 3 below:

Table 3: Importance of Career Planning

Career Planning is crucial	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	75	77.3
Agree	20	20.6
Neutral	1	1.0
Strongly Disagree	1	1.0
Total	97	100.0

Source: Survey data

Table 3 shows that 77.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that career planning is crucial, 20.6% of respondents agreed, and 1% strongly disagreed about the importance of career planning. None of the 97 respondents disagreed about the importance of career planning.

Preferences of job sectors for career

We develop six sectors as career choices for respondents from which they are asked to choose. Table 4 shows that more than half of the respondents (59.8 percent) go for the Government sector, 10.3 percent for private and MNC sectors, respectively, and 9.3 percent prefer self-employment.

Table 4: Job sector preferences

Sectors	Frequency	Percent
Private (Local/Domestic)	10	10.3
Government	58	59.8
Self-Employment	9	9.3
Multinational Jobs (MNC)	10	10.3
Career in abroad	8	8.2
Other	2	2.1
Total	97	100.0

Source: Survey data

Reasons behind sector preferences

All the respondents were required to choose one or more factors that are the reasons for their job sector preferences.

Table 5: Reasons for choosing specific job area over others

Reasons for job sector preferences	Responses	
	N	Percent
Pay	22	10.1%
Security	46	21.2%
Benefits	23	10.6%
Future Career Growth	31	14.3%
Career Development	28	12.9%
Opportunities	27	12.4%
Working Environment and Employment Conditions	36	16.6%
Other	4	1.8%
Total	217	100%

Source: Survey data

The main reason for choosing a particular job area over another was job security which is responsible for 21.2 percent following by working environment and employment conditions (16.6%), future career growth (14.3%), career development (12.9%), and opportunities (12.4%) respectively. However, salary or payment has less influence (Table 5).

Choosing a specific job as a career

Respondents were asked to select a job among the alternatives they preferred most for their careers. The options were Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS), self-Employment or business, freelancing or Information/Internet Technology, teaching, banking, marketing, managerial jobs, other government jobs, private jobs, and other jobs.

First preferred jobs

Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) is the first choice for the majority of respondents for a career in Bangladesh. 37.1 % of respondents chose BCS as their first job preference, while 16.5 % of respondents chose to teach teaching as their first preferred profession, followed by Managerial position and banking (10.3), respectively (Table-6).

Table 6: First preferred jobs

Specific Jobs	Frequency	Percent
BCS	36	37.1
Self-Employment/Business	8	8.2
Freelancing/IT	4	4.1
Teaching	16	16.5
Banking	10	10.3
Marketing	5	5.2
Managerial jobs	10	10.3
Other government jobs	3	3.1
Other	5	5.2
Total	97	100.0

Source: Survey data

The main reason graduates prefer BCS as their first job preference is authority and power, accounting for 33.9 percent, followed by social recognition (27.4%) and Job Security (22.4%) like job satisfaction, environment, etc.

On the other hand, social recognition is a key factor for choosing teaching as a profession, responsible for 55.3 percent, followed by high payment (12.7%) and other intrinsic rewards (10.4%). (Table 7).

Table 7: Reasons behind choosing BCS and Teaching as the first preference for a job

Reasons behind choosing	BCS as the first preferred job (Percent)	Teaching as the first preferred job (Percent)
Major Related Specialization	3.2%	6.5%
Authority and Power	33.9%	9.4%
High Payment	4.8%	12.7%
Social Recognition/Prestige	27.4%	55.3%
Job Security	22.4%	10.4%
Other Extrinsic Factors	5.1%	5.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Factors influencing overall career preferences

Some possible factors that can affect or influence the overall career preference of fresh graduates are shown in table 8. The results and responses from the respondents are summarized and presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Factors influencing overall career preferences

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
I choose the fields because I like the professions	47	48.5%	46	47.4%	3	3.1%	1	1.0%	0	0.0%
Inspiration and Expectations of parents	33	34.0%	32	33.0%	21	21.6%	10	10.3%	1	1.0%
Inspiration from relatives	15	15.5%	24	24.7%	38	39.2%	14	14.4%	6	6.2%
Inspiration and advice from teachers	19	19.6%	41	42.3%	25	25.8%	10	10.3%	2	2.1%
Working conditions suit me well	33	34.0%	50	51.5%	13	13.4%	1	1.0%	0	0.0%
I am confident that I will be able to give my best there	63	64.9%	32	33.0%	2	2.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
I feel that I have the required competencies to be successful	39	40.2%	48	49.5%	9	9.3%	0	0.0%	1	1.0%
I think that I can fulfill the merit requirements	41	42.3%	51	52.6%	3	3.1%	2	2.1%	0	0.0%
They meet my pay and recognition expectations	27	27.8%	53	54.6%	17	17.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

Academic studies versus job preparation

Besides, the respondents were asked about the importance of job preparation versus academic study. Among the two, which one is most important to them? They were asked to rate the statement, 'Job preparation is more important than academic study. The result of the responses is summarized in the table-9.

Table 9 shows that almost 70 percent of respondents agreed that job preparation is more important than academic study, while nearly 30 disagreed.

Table 9: Job preparation versus academic study

Job preparation is more important than academic study	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	30	30.93
Agree	37	38.14
Disagree	23	23.71
Strongly Disagree	7	7.22
Total	97	100.0

Source: Survey data

Constraints to the career choices in Bangladesh

Fresh business graduates face several constraints while setting their career preferences.

Table 10: Constraints to the career choices

Constraints to the career choices	Percent
Lack of Subject-Specific Jobs	16.1%
Lack of practical education system	17.5%
Unfair employment practices	10.7%
Lack of employment opportunities	9.0%
Lower pay and higher cost of living	7.3%
Lack of work-related practical education systems	15.5%
Inadequate technical training opportunities	9.3%
The age requirement for job entry	3.7%
Experience Requirement for job entry	10.7%
Other	0.3%
Total	100.0%

Source: Survey data

We asked the graduates about the constraints they face while choosing a career. Their responses are summarized in table 10, which showed that lack of practical education is the primary constraint to choosing a perfect preferred career, followed by a lack of subject-specific jobs, work-related practical education systems (Achar, 2019b), unfair means in the hiring process, and experience requirements for job entry respectively.

DISCUSSION

Our study shows that most business graduate students prefer Government jobs, among which BCS is their first. Authority and power, social recognition, and Job Security are the most influential factor in the choice. Our study is consistent with different studies. Rashid (2019) found that almost nine graduates out of ten chose public sector jobs, whereas Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) took the lead overwhelmingly. That study also showed that the reason for choosing government jobs was like an aspiration to exercise power, prestige and social status, job security, personal security, opportunities of the state, personal dream, and family influence were the prime motivating factors; the study revealed. Suhi et al. (2021) found that a government job is highly preferred by graduates of Bangladesh, predominantly female and Muslim students who prefer Government jobs most, while male students like private jobs. Gender, religion, educational background, and paternal profession were the influential critical factors. Ashraf (2019) claimed that a fair recruitment process, handsome salary, job security, social acceptance, pension, and other facilities are why graduates move toward public service.

According to our study, teaching is the second most preferred area for graduates, and social recognition is the main reason for this. Several studies also have shown the same result (Matin et al., 2018; Kewalramani & Phillipson,

2019; Achar, 2019a). Women prefer teaching most because of a secured career, handsome salary, less workload, and they can spend much time with family members (Matin et al., 2018; Amin & Rahman, 2018; Kewalramani & Phillipson, 2019). People want to be a teacher because they have tremendous respect for the teaching profession, wish to remain in an educational atmosphere, and can share knowledge. Besides, they can stay with family for much more time; have more opportunities for self-development. So, they dream of it in their student life (Wahiduzzaman & Raqib, 2010). Teaching is a noble profession; this belief immensely influences people to come to this profession (Jahan & Ahmed, 2018). Through this profession, one can contribute to a country's national development, which is also essential (Jahan & Ahmed, 2018). Several studies were also carried out in different developed countries to determine the reasons for choosing teaching as a profession. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2005) carried out studies independently in France, Australia, Belgium (French Community), Canada (Québec), Netherlands, Slovak Republic, and the United Kingdom and found that wish to work with youth, the potentiality of intellectual achievement, and the wish to make a social contribution were the most common motivating factors for choosing teaching as a career. Besides, the desire to work with children and youth has been recognized as an innermost factor in choosing teaching as a career in the United States, United Kingdom, and Europe (Joseph & Green, 1986; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). Extrinsic rewards like pay, job security, and career status are more influencing factors for preferring teaching as a career in Zimbabwe, Cameroon, the Caribbean, Jamaica, and Brunei (Richardson & Watt, 2014; Yong, 1995).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the findings of this study, the vast majority of business students already have a good concept of the career path they want to pursue after they have finished their education, as well as the credentials necessary to succeed in that field. The findings of the study can be helpful for educators in their efforts to orient students in career path planning, as well as for policymakers and practitioners attempting to comprehend the professional decisions made by graduates.

For business students to make informed decisions about their education and future careers, they require sufficient knowledge and guidance. Applicants to higher education are advised by careers guidance staff in schools, colleges, communities, and other organizations. These individuals are responsible for informing applicants about the relationship between prior qualifications, higher education courses, and career opportunities (Tania & Sultana, 2015). Courses at public universities might be designed to be more market-oriented, job-related, and practical. The institutions could also host more frequent workshops and

seminars in partnership with various specialists from various corporate disciplines (Azam, 2018; Achar, 2021). These students will be able to complete their deficiencies in their education with this help before they enter the highly competitive job market. It is essential for undergraduate business students to participate in well-planned academic and even non-academic activities geared toward enhancing their intellectual, technical, and communication skills (Hossain & Siddique, 2012).

Students in their final semester of school might receive guidance from a department specializing in career services regarding the field of study and employment opportunities they should pursue. In addition to this, the career aid program can organize periodic job fairs for its participants (Anas & Amin, 2017). The internship program at public universities should be the primary focus of public universities' ongoing collaborative partnerships with reputable industries, multinational corporations, and corporate business houses (Essa et al., 2022). The students will gain tremendously from this by connecting their theoretical information with the practical world (Khoo et al., 2015).

In addition, graduates of private universities have a competitive advantage in the job market because of the hands-on experience they gain during internships (Achar et al., 2022). A genuine collaboration between public universities, industries, trade groups, and other entities associated with trade and commerce can play a crucial role in the development of a need-based system for higher education (Achar, 2019c).

CONCLUSION

The study shows a clear understanding of career preferences with the reasons and the problems that business graduates face during career-related decisions. Government/public sector job is the primary preference for the graduates of Bangladesh, followed by teaching. The key factors influencing career choice are authority and power, social recognition, job security, and mental satisfaction. Besides, the most common constraints that graduates face while choosing a career are the lack of practical education, subject-specific jobs, work-related practical education systems, unfair means in the hiring process, and experience needed at entry-level jobs. This study's findings will help solve career-related problems for students and policymakers. Further in-depth study is recommended to bring more insight into the issue.

Unlike other studies, it is not out of limitation. The sample size is the main limitation of this study. Due to Covid-19, we needed to collect more data. However, the socioeconomic background also was not appropriately controlled. Regardless of these limitations, the study shows a clear picture of the career preference of Bangladeshi business graduates.

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