

Gender Differences in Career Choice among Selected Adolescents of Bangladesh

M. Nurul Islam

Inter Services Selection Board, Dhaka, Bangladesh

*Corresponding Author: nuru8448@gmail.com, Tel.: +880-1717304338

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Abstract – The study was conducted under the research project of Inter Services Selection Board of Bangladesh to understand the job preferences especially preference on military profession of the adolescent youths of Bangladesh. However, this particular study is focused to find the gender difference in career choice among the Higher Secondary College level adolescents only. A total of 2916 adolescents of different colleges participated voluntarily in response to the predesigned questionnaire of this study. Gender differences in career choice were found through statistical analysis among the selected adolescent sample. The significant difference was found in seven professions out of thirteen chosen professions between male and female adolescent students of the country. Further in-depth study might be carried out to understand the basic causes of these differences. The present findings of this segmented study might be helpful for the educators, researchers and enthusiasts for career counseling of the adolescent youths/ young adults of college students.

Keywords: Career Choice, Adolescent Youth, Students, Gender Differences

I. INTRODUCTION

A career is the job or profession that someone does for a long period of life. It is simply the profession, career or occupation to be chosen for life. Choosing career is a major part of the lives of adolescent youths. An adolescent thinks about career strongly while finishing school life or at the beginning of entering higher education. Choosing desirable career or occupation is very important in one's lifetime. Choice of desired career perceivably ensures someone's hopes, aspirations, expectations and various needs. But it is being influenced by many factors. The factors may be economic standings of families, educational attainments, socio-cultural backgrounds and environmental conditions. All influencing factors are relatively different from one adolescent to another. Due to influence of such factors, choosing a right career is a difficult choice and comparatively a major decision for adolescent youths. It appears more difficult for Bangladeshi adolescent students since the rate of unemployment is much higher here in comparison to increasing number of educated youths. However, the decision on career choice is of great concern for the adolescents according to Powlette and Young (1996) either in Bangladesh or anywhere [1].

Career or occupational choice is likely to have a profound effect in life. The terms profession, occupation and career are used here simultaneously with the intention of meaning only choosing future job or occupation. Considering the effects over choice of profession, it is likely that male and female adolescents differ in choosing particular career or profession. Males and females have different interests,

motivation and aspirations. Career related vocational interest is important for career development in later life despite any gender. Trice and McClellan (1993) found that occupations are apparently chosen at an early age [2]. But adolescent period and early adulthood are the important period to make decision to choose a particular career as per Jepson's (1975) study [3]. Due to influence of culture, socio-economic and other factors, gender differences are likely to be observed in choosing a career. Generally men are perceived more competent than women found in one North American study by Correll (2001). Thus, in the process of career orientation, gender plays a substantial role found in this study [4]. Even in today's era of empowerment of women, gender still is a determining factor to choose particular occupation as socially acceptable one both for male and female. This idea is more applicable for the country like Bangladesh. Traditionally men choose harder jobs than woman here. Still women are normally expected to do household works more even the rate of education is increasing among them. As a result, preference of choosing profession is gradually diluted due to the influence of technology, easy access to information, economic progression and educational developments. It is now very difficult to pinpoint 'men only' or 'women only' white collar job in the world. Despite this, gender difference is presumably found a factor in the career choice of Bangladeshi adolescent youths [5]. Considering all, the rationale of the present study is to investigate gender difference in career choice among the adolescent youths in order to understand its underlying causes and to facilitate the concerned educators for better career counseling to the

adolescent boys and girls at the Higher Secondary level and beyond.

II. RELATED WORK

According to a recent report published in 'The Daily Star' written by Byron (2019), Bangladesh is tremendously rising with economic growth. But matching with this growth, proportionate job opportunities are not created comparing the immediate past decade. As a result, this is a question to be raised about the significance of growth for the large segment of population especially adolescents and young adults seeking jobs in the market. It is astonishingly observed that employment elasticity has been declined between the fiscal year 2005-2006 and 2017-2018 referred by the same author [6]. However, the economy is apparently in the growth momentum. Despite this momentum, economy is unable to generate sufficient employment opportunities in the process of this growth. Thus it is observed that increasing rate of unemployment for employable population in order to achieve so called 'demographic dividend' utilizing approximately 65% working-age people of Bangladesh. As per the survey of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2017 and 2018), the present rate of unemployment is 4.2% (predicted for 2019) whereas national literacy rate is 73.9% (2018) for the people of age 15 and above. The survey says that the country has 81.4 million men and 81.3 million women among the total 164.7 million people. Population growth rate is more than the economic growth rate found by Haider (2019) in the economic study [7].

There are approximately 32 million adolescents in Bangladesh (targeted age range 10 to 19 years) as per the report of United States Agency for International Development made in 2017 [8]. However, for the convenience of this writing, the age ranges of 15 to 19 years have been considered as early employable age. This age group may be called as adolescent or young adults who are completing their Higher Secondary School or just completed. Around 9.8% populations possess the age from 15 to 19 as per the Gender Statistics of Bangladesh-2018 report [9]. They are the real adolescents looking for career or have say on their choice of profession. But unfortunately respectable career prospects at this age are very limited. Most adolescents of this age group dream to become engineer, doctor, banker, civil servants, military officer or what not. Since entry to become professional like doctor, engineer, banker etc requires further education and competence; to be established having early career is open in military only as the white collar job. Lot of youths (adolescents) mostly from middle class backgrounds desire to join armed forces as officer due to unavailability of jobs with similar status outside at this stage. But every year around 78% of this early age group completes their Higher Secondary School examinations every year in Bangladesh. Therefore, unemployment among them is likely to prevail statistically even somebody strongly feel to engage somewhere else. The agricultural sector is the large section of this country to create employment opportunities. But it

is observed that life is gradually urbanized. Moreover, due to less growth in industrial sector, adolescent people are running towards service sectors although the growth of this sector is shrinking. Therefore, at this stage of adolescent lives, the young boys and girls develop values and skills to become independent. The potentials of adolescents are improving day by day but many of them seem to be quite unused in the community due to lacking of employment opportunities [9]. It is also observed that a large number of youths involve in low-paid jobs due to wide angle unemployment. However, there is a need to capitalize the strength of adolescent youth population for the positive social growth and economic development of Bangladesh.

It is true that adolescents face number of challenges during this age (15 to 19 years). Among all challenges, choice of profession is one of the most important one. But their sense of stickiness to the choice of profession gradually fades away due to the reality of life and the continued pressure upon them. However, they manage their developmental related challenges like sexual desires, forming new relationships, planning for academic excellence and occupational urges. In one study, Galambos et al (2009) found that girls and boys are different in their achievement context. Girls choose easier tasks avoiding competition than boys. Generally they have lower expectations than boys [10]. But the girls' enrollment rate in colleges of Bangladesh is found more than the boys according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics report (2018) mentioned previously. The same study found that girls' job preference is quite different than boys. Girls prefer people-oriented occupation such as teacher or social worker jobs whereas boys prefer object oriented occupations like mechanic or engineer jobs etc according to Galambos et al (2009) study [10]. Thus adolescent young girls and boys are different in their choice of career or professional likings.

There are gender differences found in the personality pattern of adolescent boys and girls. They differ in their self-concepts, social relationships, aggressiveness and managing depression and life stresses. Girls are more neurotic, agreeable, warmth and open whereas boys are more assertive, idealistic and instrumental in nature found by Costa, Terracciano and McCrae study conducted in 2001 [11]. Beliefs on one competence are also different between girls and boys. According to the survey by Hyde (2005) and Harter (2006), boys feel that they are more competent on mathematics, computer and sports than girls. But girls feel that they are more competent on language, music, art and social studies than the boys [12, 13]. This assumption may be applicable in Bangladesh but the real difference in abilities may be altogether dissimilar since there are influences of stereotypical attitudes. Both boys and girls are different in body structure but they differentiate themselves in body image. Girls invest more time and energy to become thin, beautiful and idealistic but boys focus more to become athletic and muscular. It is found that over consciousness on body image creates some psychological problems like eating disorders,

compulsiveness and some health issues found by Ricciardelli and McCabe (2004) research study [14].

Girls and boys are different in their expected social relationships. Boys like to involve in more friendly competition, having excitement and do risky activities. On the other, girls prefer to have same-sex friendship with greater intimacy, having self-disclosure, caring and relationship repair. These different styles of social relationship tend girls to be more vulnerable on depression and boys just opposite to be more aggressive according to Parker, Low, Walker and Gamm (2005) and Rose, Carison and Waller (2007). Girls and boys normally mix with same-sex groups but gradually this thinking pattern changes. As they grow more, they prefer to mix with mixed-sex groups [15, 16].

There was a study among medical students of Bangladesh about their career choice within the medical professions done by Ahmed et al (2011). This survey study found that most male students chose surgical specialists whereas females preferred medical specialties. Males and females chose to practice in major cities more found among 90% participated samples [17]. A similar study was done on choice of engineering as major profession of the students especially choosing high-tech engineering. Interestingly found that females are gradually more interested to enroll in engineering arenas found by Saifuddin et al (2011). The researchers found that the causes of this trend of gender differences are self-efficacy beliefs, socio-economic status and many other personal reasons [18]. Contrarily majority of the business graduates prefer jobs in banking and multinational sectors found by Hossain and Siddique (2012); though the study was done within private universities of Bangladesh. It was revealed that male student respondents were highly influenced by financial benefit, social status and good opportunities to choose such professions and the female participants identified almost the same as male [19]. In addition, they prefer job security as their prime concern while choosing such professions. Wesarat et al (2016) did a study to know the gender differences in the choice of career among the youths of Thailand. They found that gender differences in perceptions and cultural beliefs on gender are important factors that influence career choice but the influence of gender on the career choice may differ from country to country [20].

III. METHODOLOGY

Adolescents of every country are going through a transitional phase of life: neither are they considered as child nor fully adult. Bangladesh is not an exception to this. The girls and boys are different in many areas including choosing their professions. With this backdrop, this study is needed to identify the gender difference of career choice among the adolescent youths.

The main study was conducted with the aim to understand job preferences towards the military profession. As a

derivative of this study, the present study intends to find out gender difference in career choice of selected adolescents. Thus the specific objectives of this study are:

- To find out the gender difference in career choice of adolescents.
- To understand the motivational aspects of the different choices.

The study was conducted using a survey research approach. A large number of sample (total 6075 including teachers, parents and students) was considered applying a convenience random method in different selected colleges popularly perceived as good colleges of the country. For the convenience of this segment of study, only student samples (total 2916: male 1709 and female 1207) of those colleges were segregated to understand the difference of their career choice. The age range of the sample students were 15 to 20 years. However, the majority of the students' falls in between the age of 16 to 19 years while studying at Higher Secondary level. A questionnaire based survey was conducted to know the gender difference in career choice of those adolescents.

Total 26 colleges were selected purposively on the basis of popular perception as good colleges from 4 prominent districts of Bangladesh. There were 10 colleges in Dhaka city, 4 colleges in Rajshahi, 2 colleges in Chittagong, 7 colleges in Khulna and 3 colleges in Sylhet. Most of the colleges were in city level. Selection of districts was pre-determined as the greater divisional districts of Bangladesh. The number of student sample in each district/college was not set previously. Therefore, data were collected basing on availability of students willing to participate in the study. Thus a convenience random sampling technique was used for this questionnaire based survey on selected 2916 adolescents (male: 1709 and female: 1207).

Data Collection – Entire data were collected from July to September 2019 through different sets of questionnaires (for parents, teachers and students) – one of the questionnaires was dedicated for adolescent student sample. The close ended pre-set questionnaire was designed to explore job preference of young generation adolescents. Students were asked after obtaining their consent to indicate their job preference on the supplied questionnaire without any influence. Total 13 professional job categories (Civil Service Job, Doctor, Engineer, Banker, Business, Defense Officer, Police Officer, Private Service, Teaching, Journalist, Corporate Job, Media and Immigration) were named in the provided questionnaire to choose any one or more as their own choice of profession/occupation.

Data Analysis – The job preference of students over 13 occupation areas were prioritized with frequencies. The patterns of male and female responses were observed. The responses were numerically coded and valued for analysis in Statistical Package for Social Science. Then the data

were analyzed with group statistics and student's t-test to find the gender difference between male and female. This inferential statistical procedure was followed to determine the significant difference between means of male and female group of adolescent students in their career choices.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 2916 Higher Secondary level students of 26 colleges from 4 districts of Bangladesh willingly took part in this part of study. They comprised of 59% male students and 41% female students. While selecting job preference, adolescents value their own choice first then the choice of parents. They mostly rate those jobs or career where respects are ensured as most desired value. Male student respondents comparatively prefer high salary in the preferred jobs than the female sample. Today's students believe in deeds instead of relying on fate for progress. The group statistics according to set professions and the results of independent sample t-test are enumerated below:

Table-1: Significance of T-test Results

Profession	Gender	Mean	Std Deviation	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Civil Service	Male	4.08	1.042	0.357	.721
	Female	4.07	1.067		
Doctor	Male	2.94	1.425	-2.921	.004*
	Female	3.10	1.501		
Engineer	Male	3.38	1.399	8.782	.000*
	Female	2.92	1.360		
Business	Male	3.24	1.198	7.328	.000*
	Female	2.91	1.198		
Defense Officer	Male	3.94	1.200	8.760	.000*
	Female	3.51	1.346		
Police Officer	Male	3.05	1.326	.664	.000*
	Female	2.64	1.245		
Immigrant	Male	3.34	1.186	.459	.507
	Female	3.31	1.190		
Private Service	Male	2.82	1.037	.458	.646
	Female	2.81	1.049		
Teaching	Male	3.19	1.164	-.059	.000*
	Female	3.37	1.221		
Journalist	Male	2.47	1.112	-5.504	.000*
	Female	2.71	1.214		
Banker	Male	2.80	1.252	-1.771	.000*
	Female	2.89	1.310		
Corporate Service	Male	2.54	1.111	-.550	.582
	Female	2.57	1.138		
Media	Male	2.40	1.135	1.439	.150
	Female	2.34	1.179		

*The results are significant at .05 level of confidence.

Considering 95% confidence interval, the above Table-1 shows that all pre-set professions are not significantly different between adolescent male and female students. No significant difference found in case of choice of profession in Civil Service, Immigrant, Private Service, Corporate Service and Media professions. But significant difference found between male and female participants while choosing career in Doctor, Engineer, Business, Defense,

Police, Teaching, Journalist and Banker. So, significant gender difference is prevailing in the choice of career among adolescents in some professions.

Choosing career is an appropriate task for an adolescent especially while studying at this stage. But this level of age is quite fragile. Adolescents start to face many challenges of life at this time. Choosing right profession is also a challenge for them. Male and female adolescents vary in choosing their right career. This is found in this study.

This study selected around three thousand sample of adolescent students at this level to understand the gender difference in their career choice. There were 13 professions pre-selected to study the adolescents' preferences on profession and to prove whether any gender difference prevailing between male and female in choosing such professions. It is proved that gender differences are prevailing and these differences are significant for some particular professions (Table-1). Differences are not found significant on 5 professions out of 13 such as Civil Service, Immigrant, Private, Corporate and Media.

There are many factors influence the career choice of adolescents. Culture, society, education and family are major contributing factors. It is very difficult to pin-down the exact underlying causes of choice difference in career. But some assumptions may be made. Male and female are differed in the sense of their competence as per Correll (2001). They are different in their achievement context also as per Galambos et al (2009). Their personality is also differed as per Harter (2006). They are different in relationship, self-concept, aspirations and values etc. Thus differences in choosing career are also relatively obvious and the reasons may be motivation, personality pattern, mental make-up, educational environment, economic standings and family background etc.

V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

Gender differences in career choice among adolescent youths have been proven in this study supported by previous research works mentioned by Correll (2001), Hossain & Siddique (2012) and Jepson (1975) in their works mentioned previously. But the underlying causes are tentative here. No clear-cut causes have been revealed here. Further study may be suggested in this regard in future. The study was done under the project of finding job preferences of young generations especially military profession conducted by Inter Services Selection Board. Data were collected through pre-designed questionnaire survey from the selected approximately 3000 adolescent students of Higher Secondary level in different colleges of the country. Collected data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and the significance test was done to observe gender difference in career choices. Significant difference of career choice was found on 7 professions such as Doctor, Engineer, Police, Teaching, Defense, Journalist and Banking out of 13. Male and female adolescents are varied in many aspects. Gender difference

in career choice is one of them. Therefore, it is certain that choice of profession is differed between male and female during the entrance of profession and it is found significant in nature on some particular occupations only.

To have better understanding on career choice of adolescent youths, further study may be taken into consideration to find the motivational causes. Consequently it may help the researcher for better prediction of the future trends and accordingly the counselors and the teachers can guide them to have better adjustment in the fields of competition and choosing higher education. Thus students should be taught ways to improve upon to choose better career at the early stage of adulthood or at the period of adolescents matching their desires with developments of society and technology. Educators might note the difference of career choice among adolescents for their better groom-up.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE

M Nurul Islam is a Psychologist at Inter Services Selection Board of Bangladesh. He served as psychologist more than 15 years. Being an officer of Bangladesh Air Force, he is very active in research writing both qualitatively and quantitatively. He is having Masters with graduation in Psychology from University of Dhaka. He is a graduate of Defence Services Command and Staff College of Bangladesh also. Later he obtained MPhil degree from Bangladesh University of Professionals. Presently he is pursuing PhD degree under the same university. He is a regular writer, a keen golfer and a traveler. He is a member of psychology alumni in Bangladesh and a regular contributor on psycho-social aspects in various journals nationally and internationally.

