



## FACTORS AFFECTING CAREER CHOICE OF THE FEMALE SECONDARY STUDENTS IN KHULNA DISTRICT OF BANGLADESH

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KUS:17/06: 141117

Manuscript submitted: November 14, 2017

Accepted: September 26, 2018

**Abstract:** Career choice is a growing issue all over the world as secondary students usually face with a dilemma in making an appropriate career choice decision in their lives. For this reason, the study aimed to explore the factors that influence the career choices among female secondary students in Bangladesh. Following survey research design a semi-structured questionnaire was administered to collect data from 181 randomly selected female students of class six to ten from two secondary schools of Chalna Pourashava under Dacope Upazila in Khulna District of Bangladesh. Findings reveal that majority of the students aspire to be doctor which is influenced by parents' expectation and self-efficacy or the belief in their ability to succeed. In addition, socio-demographic status of students, such as, age, year of schooling and academic achievement influences their career choices. Moreover, living status, occupation and monthly income of father are contributing factors of students' career choices but fathers' level of education has no impact on it. Furthermore, living status, education and occupation of mother are associated with students' career choices but monthly income of the mother has no impact on it. The study recommends that parents should motivate their daughters regarding career choices which might help them to expose their potentialities in right track.

**Keywords:** Socioeconomic and demographic status, career choice, secondary students.

### Introduction

Career choice is a strong feeling of working in a dream occupation or an arena of passion (Eccles, 2007). More simply it is stated that career choices are expressed career-related goals or choices that provide important motivational momentum for career-related behaviors and future educational and career success (Rojewski, 2005). But decision making concerning appropriate occupational preference is one of the most critical tasks that might have been facing many students at secondary schools in Bangladesh. Most of the secondary students, who are in their adolescence period are inexperienced, ignorant and immature and some of them are not well guided at this phase to relate their occupations suited their interests, values, abilities, skills, aptitudes and personality (Petters, Asuquo & Eyo 2015). It is evident that students all over the world usually face with a dilemma in making a career choice

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53808/KUS.2018.15.1and2.1706-S>

decision in their lives (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli 2001; Issa & Nwalo, 2008; Watson, McMahon, Foxcroft & Els, 2010).

Secondary education is the baseline education as it prepares the students for higher education and also for the world of work (Das & Bhagabati, 2016). Kinanee (2004) opines that the most complex problem confronting youth today involves choosing a realistic and appropriate occupation, preparing for it, liking it and keeping it. Most of the students in secondary schools in Bangladesh do not have accurate information about their occupational opportunities that could help them to make appropriate career choices. Some of the students at this stage rely on traditional gender stereotyped beliefs. These beliefs are so ingrained among the female students even males that they are extended to vocational choices (Valiante, 1996).

Bangladesh, in South Asian countries, has improved school enrolment with spectacular success in the past 25 years and today girls are more likely to go to school than boys (Asadullah & Wahhaj, 2016). Their net enrollment rate at the secondary level of education has increased from 45 percent in 2000 to around 54 percent in 2015 (World Bank, 2016). Girls' enrolment has surpassed the number of boys at secondary level of education. In 1995 girls' enrolment rate was 46.9 percent which has significantly increased to 53 percent in 2015 (Bangladesh Bureau of Education Information and Statistics, 2015). So, it is evident that despite the improvement of female literacy rate, they have been still lagging behind in selecting their occupations as well as under-represented in various employment sectors (Das & Bhagabati, 2016). In most of the cases females represent their involvement in workforce as low-paid jobs and remain clustered in a limited number of conventional careers (Tinklin, Croxford, Ducklin & Frame 2005). Low-paid female works include administrative support, sales service, nursing, teaching, social work, clerical jobs and so on that reflect society's persistent attitudes toward stereotyped occupational roles for males and females (Rainey & Borders, 1997, 1999; Stephenson & Burge, 1997). Petters et al. (2015) reported that certain occupations are designated for females and more females seem to have preferences for nursing, teaching, home economics, and management, cosmetology and weaving technology.

It is evident that females have more restricted occupational aspirations (Furlong, 1986; Phillips, Cooper & Johnson, 1995). On the other hand, some studies examined that the females are willing to pursue a wider variety of occupational choices (Leung, Conoley & Scheel, 1994; Mendez & Crawford, 2002). Other studies reported that females are more likely to aspire toward male dominated occupations (Alpert & Breen, 1989; Davey & Stoppard, 1993; Francis, 2002). A few studies revealed that females choose such occupations in the line with male dominated occupations like doctor, lawyer, nursing, teacher, accountant and so on (Obura & Ajowi, 2012; Tan, 1988).

Career choice among females is influenced by multifaceted factors. These include interest, self perception, personality, cultural identity, role model and available resources (Echebe, 2009). Many youngsters are likely to be influenced for careers by their parents favor or their religious orientations. Others follow their careers based on their education fields and prospects. A few females choose their interest and passion regardless of the

outcome. Yet some youths are observed to go into occupations that are prestigious with high income while some prefer occupation with job security and some are influenced by teachers and peers. By and large, it is observed that young people today aspire to be attached to prestigious jobs while others are influenced by parental and peer groups which do not reflect their needs, interests and abilities (Petters et al., 2015). So, realistic occupational choice depends largely on the quality and quantity of occupational information available to the youths, especially, at the secondary level of education (Asuquo, 2007).

Career choices and its influencing factors are widely studied in many countries of the world, particularly, in the west. But it has not been adequately examined in Bangladesh. Thus, the present study attempts to explore the factors that have been influencing the career choices of female secondary students in Khulna district of Bangladesh.

### **Materials and Methods**

Present study is exploratory in nature which was carried out following survey research design. Two secondary schools, namely, Abul Hossain Girls' High School and Chalna Government Girls' High School at Chalna Pourashava under Dacope Upazilla in Khulna District of Bangladesh were selected purposively as the area of study. The unit of analysis was the students of junior secondary (class VI, VII and VIII) and secondary (class IX and X) schools (177 students from Abul Hossain Girls' High School and 186 students from Chalna Government Girls' High School). The population size of the study was 363 female secondary students. Considering 95 percent level of confidence and 5.2 percent confidence interval a sample of 181 students were randomly selected following proportionate stratified random sampling. Each class (VI to X) was treated as a stratum for this study.

A semi-structured questionnaire in *Bangla* containing both open ended and close ended questions was used for data collection. The questionnaire had five sections relating to career choices. First section contained socio-demographic and academic information of the respondents, second and third sections explored information about socioeconomic status of parents and family, fourth section focused on career choices and fifth section covered influencing factors of career choices of the students. Data were collected from the field during March to April 2016.

Students were asked to indicate their career choices which they aspire among 18 careers which have been identified in this study, such as, teacher, doctor, nurse, engineer, banker, BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service) cadre, government job, non-government job, business, researcher, politician, journalist, entrepreneur, lawyer, scientist, police, army officer and clerk. Factors influencing students' career choice were categorized into four headings, e.g. personal factors (self-efficacy or the belief in ability to succeed [Bandura, 1997], desire to contribute in family and social service activities in society), external factors (peer group influence, social status and high social ambition), familial factors (influence of parents, siblings, and family tradition), and job related factors (salary, job security and facilities as well as promotion prospects). Likert scale (highly unimportant=1, unimportant=2, Neutral=3, important=4 and highly important=5) was used to measure the influencing factors of their career choices.

The researchers administered the questionnaire assisted by the class teachers of the selected schools. After completion of data collection, data were processed according to its quality and quantity. Afterwards data were tabulated on the basis of similarities, attributes and intervals by using the software of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). For analyzing career choices of the respondents, eleven careers were explored from eighteen enlisted careers related to different fields and the rest (BCS cadre, entrepreneur, clerical job, researcher, scientist and politician) were excluded due to non-response. Eleven careers were further categorized into two categories e.g. professional (doctor, nurse, engineer, journalist, lawyer, banker and teacher) and non-professional (army officer, police, government job and business) for measuring association using inferential statistics (e.g. Pearson's Chi Square Test).

## Results

**Background information of the respondents:** Table 1 reveals that around 57 percent of the respondents were in the age group of 14 to 17 years and the highest percentage of the respondents belonged to *Sanatan* religion. Almost 70 percent of the respondents lived in Chalna *Pourashava* and the rest lived in rural areas. Around 96 percent of the respondents lived with their parents. Nearly 50 percent of them were the first and second offspring of their parents. Around 67 percent of the students had been studying at junior secondary levels (class VI to VIII) and the rest studied at secondary levels of education (class IX to X). About half of them (49.2%) studied in Business Studies Section, 39 percent studied in Arts and Humanities Section and rest (11.9%) studied in Science Section. Around 50 percent of the respondents obtained 'A' grade in their previous examination.

**Socioeconomic status of the parents:** Table 2 illustrates that 53 percent of the respondents' father belonged to the age group of 41 to 50 years and almost 98 percent of the fathers were alive. About 46 percent of the fathers had secondary level of education and the average year of schooling of them was 8 years (up to class eight). Almost 38 percent of the fathers were involved in business, 20.4 percent were self-employed, 17.1 percent were farmer, 13.3 percent belonged to the professional group (doctor, teacher, service holder) and 11 percent of them were labor. Majority of the fathers (62.4%) earned BDT 1,000 to 9,999 per month and their average monthly income was BDT 9,045. On the other hand, nearly 61 percent of the respondents' mother belonged to the age group of 31 to 39 years and 99 percent of them were alive. 52.5 percent of them had secondary level of education and the average year of schooling of the mothers was 7 years (up to class seven). Most of the mothers (87.3%) were housewives who were not involved in any income generating activity. A small portion (12.7%) of the mothers earned a few (on an average BDT 5,304 monthly).

Table 1: Background profile of respondents (n = 181)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Number of Respondents</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Mean &amp; Std. Deviation</i>
<b>Age Composition (in Year)</b>			
10-13	78	43.1	13.61 & 1.44
14-17	103	56.9	
<b>Religion</b>			
Islam	76	42.0	
Sanatan Hindu	105	58.0	
<b>Place of Residence</b>			
Municipality	127	70.2	
Rural	54	29.8	
<b>Living Arrangement</b>			
Parents	174	96.1	
Kin	7	3.9	
<b>Order of Birth</b>			
1-2	145	80.1	1.80 & 0.99
3-4	33	18.2	
5-6	3	1.7	
<b>Level of Study</b>			
Junior Secondary (VI-VIII)	122	67.4	7.76 & 1.3
Secondary (IX-X)	59	32.6	
<b>Area of Study</b>			
Arts and Humanities	23	39.0	
Science	7	11.9	
Business Studies	29	49.2	
<b>Type of School</b>			
Government School	93	51.4	
Non-government School	88	48.6	
<b>Academic Achievement (GPA in Previous Year)</b>			
A+ (5.00)	17	9.4	4.10 & 0.62
A (4.00-4.99)	90	49.7	
A- (3.50-3.99)	41	22.7	
B (3.00-3.49)	28	15.5	
C (2.25-2.99)	5	2.8	

Table 2: Socioeconomic status of parents (n = 181)

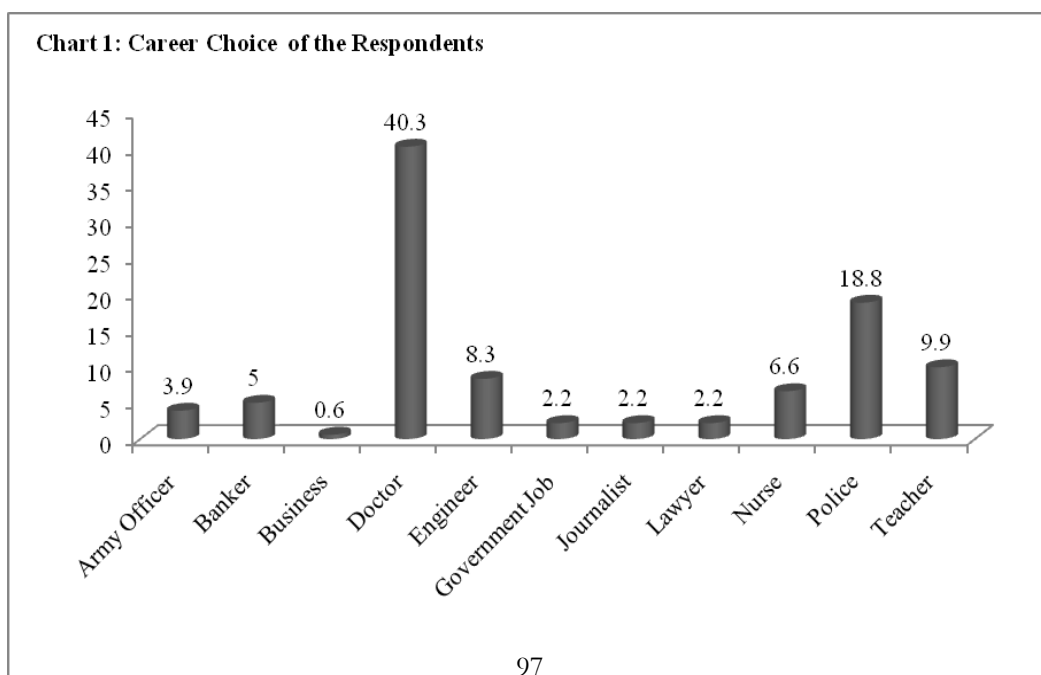
<i>Variables</i>	<i>Father</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mother</i>	<i>Statistics (Mean &amp; Std. Deviation)</i>	
	<i>Number and Percent</i>		<i>Number and Percent</i>	<i>Father</i>	<i>Mother</i>
<i>Age composition (in year) (n=181)</i>		<i>Age Composition (in Year)</i>			
31-40	69 (38.1)	22-30	31 (17.1)	44.33	35.86
41-50	96 (53.0)	31-39	110 (60.8)	& 7.56	& 5.46
51 and above	16 (8.8)	40 and Above	40 (22.1)		
<i>Living Status</i>		<i>Living Status</i>			
Alive	177 (97.8)	Alive	179 (98.9)		
Deceased	4 (2.2)	Deceased	2 (1.1)		
<i>Education</i>		<i>Education</i>			
Illiterate (0)	22 (12.2)	Illiterate (0)	24 (13.3)		
Primary (1-5)	31 (17.1)	Primary (1-5)	35 (19.3)		
Secondary (6-10)	83 (45.9)	Secondary (6-10)	95 (52.5)	8.52 &	7.52 &
Higher Secondary (11-12)	21 (11.6)	Higher Secondary (11-12)	17 (9.4)	4.79	4.3
Tertiary (13-18)	24 (13.3)	Tertiary (13-18)	10 (5.5)		
<i>Occupation</i>		<i>Occupation</i>			
Labor	20 (11.0)	Housewife	158 (87.3)		
Farmer	31 (17.1)	Labor	3 (1.7)		
Self-employed	37 (20.4)	Self-employed	8 (4.4)		
Business	69 (38.1)	Business	2 (1.1)		
Professional	24 (13.3)	Professional	10 (5.5)		
<i>Having Income</i>		<i>Having Income</i>			
Have	181 (100.0)	Have	23 (12.7)		
Have Not	0 (0.0)	Have Not	158 (87.3)		
<i>Monthly Income</i>		<i>Monthly</i>			
1000-9999	113 (62.4)	1000-9999	18 (78.3)	9045.3	5304.35
10000-19999	42 (23.2)	10000 and above	5 (21.7)	&	&
20000 and Above	26 (14.4)			8537.02	5644.26

**Family information:** Table 3 discloses that around three-quarter of the respondents (74.6%) belonged to nuclear family and the rest lived in extended family. Most of the families (88.4%) had single income earner and a small portion of the families (11.6%) had dual income earners. More than 70 percent of the families were consisted of 3 to 5 members. On an average their monthly household income was BDT 10,744.

Table 3: Family profile (n = 181)

Variables	Number of Respondents	Percent	Mean & Std. Deviation
<b>Type of family</b>			
Nuclear Family	135	74.6	
Extended Family	46	25.4	
<b>Earning members</b>			
Single Earner	160	88.4	
Dual Earners	21	11.6	
<b>Family size</b>			
3-5	128	70.7	5.09 & 1.5
6-8	46	25.4	
9-11	7	3.9	
<b>Monthly household income</b>			
≤10000	121	66.9	10743.64 &
10001-20000	41	22.7	0321.08
20000>	19	10.5	

**Career choice of respondents:** Majority of the students (40.3%) aspired to be doctor, 18.8 percent of them aspired to be police, 9.9 percent wanted to be teacher, 8.3 percent aspired to be engineer, 6.6 percent expected to be nurse and 5 percent wanted to be involved in banking sector (Chart 1).



**Factors influencing career choice:** Data, presented in Table 4, show that among the personal factors, nearly 83 percent of the respondents reported that self-efficacy was highly related to their career choices, followed by 70.7 percent desired to contribute in their family and 70.2 percent expected to contribute in social service activities. With regard to the external factors, 58 percent of the respondents reported social status and 48 percent thought that career choice was highly important for social demand. Among familial factors, influence of parents and siblings were highly important to career choice (80.7% and 32.6% respectively) but family tradition was highly unimportant (61.3%). Moreover, job incentives, job security and promotion were highly important to respondents' career choices (Table 4).

Table 4: Factors Influence Career Choice

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Highly Important</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Unimportant</i>	<i>Highly Unimportant</i>
<b>Personal factors</b>					
Self-Efficacy	150 (82.9)	29 (16.0)	1 (0.6)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.6)
Desire to Contribute in Family	128 (70.7)	44 (24.3)	6 (3.3)	3 (1.7)	0 (0.0)
Desire to Contribute in Social Service Activities	127 (70.2)	44 (24.3)	8 (4.4)	1 (0.6)	1 (0.6)
<b>External factors</b>					
Peer Group Influence	33 (18.2)	42 (23.2)	25 (13.8)	27 (14.9)	54 (29.8)
Social Status	105 (58.0)	50 (27.6)	14 (7.7)	5 (2.8)	7 (3.9)
High Social Demand	87 (48.1)	54 (29.8)	20 (11.0)	7 (3.9)	13 (7.2)
<b>Familial factors</b>					
Influence of Parents	146 (80.7)	19 (10.5)	4 (2.2)	5 (2.8)	7 (3.9)
Influence of Siblings	59 (32.6)	34 (18.8)	28 (15.5)	19 (10.5)	41 (22.7)
Family Tradition	8 (4.4)	2 (1.1)	9 (5.0)	51 (28.2)	111 (61.3)
<b>Job related factors</b>					
Salary	53 (29.3)	63 (34.8)	36 (19.9)	17 (9.4)	12 (6.6)
Job Security	93 (51.4)	71 (39.2)	10 (5.5)	2 (1.1)	5 (2.8)
Job Facilities	103 (56.9)	52 (28.7)	11 (6.1)	6 (3.3)	9 (5.0)
Promotion Prospects	89 (49.2)	60 (33.1)	24 (13.3)	5 (2.8)	3 (1.7)

**Socioeconomic status and career choice:** Findings (Table 5) reveal that among the personal characteristics of the respondents, age, year of schooling, academic achievements were associated with respondents' career choice but have no association with religion, type of educational institution, order of birth and place of residence. On the other hand, with reference to socioeconomic status of respondents' father, living status, occupation and monthly income of the father were associated with career choices of the respondents but education of father had no association in this regard. In case of socioeconomic status of mother, living status, education and occupation were associated with career choice of the students but monthly income of the mother has no association in this regard.

Table 5: Socioeconomic status and career choice

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>Dependent variable</i>	<i>Pearson's <math>\chi^2</math> value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
<i>Socioeconomic and demographic status of students</i>			
Age	Career aspiration	5.533	0.019
Religion		0.056	0.813
Year of Schooling		10.758	0.001
Type of Educational Institution		2.507	0.113
Academic Achievement		12.244	0.016
Order of Birth		1.465	0.481
Place of Residence		2.546	0.111
<i>Socioeconomic status of father</i>			
Living Status		5.306	0.021
Education		4.042	0.400
Occupation		12.938	0.012
Monthly Income		8.145	0.017
<i>Socioeconomic status of mother</i>			
Living Status		5.892	0.015
Education		8.401	0.078
Occupation		10.741	0.030
Monthly Income		0.329	0.567

## Discussion

Females' career choices have evolved steadily during the twentieth century resulting in their increased participation in workforce. In adolescence, career preparation is an important precursor for successful career development across the life span and is closely related to adolescence adjustment and well-being (Skorikov, 2007). A multitude of factors influences and inhibits females' career choices and career development over the years (Nieva & Gutek, 1981), such as, personal characteristics, socioeconomic status of parents and parental expectations (Khallad, 2000).

Findings of the present study reveal that majority of the secondary students aspire to be doctor which is consistent with previous studies (Mapfumo, Chieshe & Peresuh, 2002; Obura & Ajowi, 2012). Findings also reveal that the least chosen career of the students is business. Career choice is influenced by multifaceted factors. Among these, self-efficacy is highly influential factor in career choice of the students. In making career related decisions, a person has to accept his/her capabilities, wellbeing, talent, and values to form a significant frame for life (Walsh and Osipow, 1988). Previous studies (Betz, Klein, and Taylor, 1996; Lent, Brown, Kevin and Larkin, 1986) found significant correlation between students' career choice and self-efficacy. Levy and Baumgardner (1991) stated that individuals who have a high level of self-esteem are more likely to choose challenging career compared to those who had low level of self-esteem. Social status and high social demand are also highly important factors in career choice. But influence of peer group is not so influential factor in career choice among the secondary students and it is inconsistent with the study of Ogutu, Odera, and Maragia (2017) who revealed significant influence of peer pressure on career decision making among students. On the other hand, influence of parents and siblings are highly important factors of choosing careers but family tradition is highly unimportant factor for influencing career choice.

It is examined that socio-demographic status of students, such as, age, year of schooling, academic achievement are associated with their career choices but have no association with religion, type of educational institution, order of birth and place of residence. Leung, Conoley and Scheel (1994) found that career choices of females actually go up with age. On the other hand, high achieving adolescent girls have been found to have higher career aspirations than their lower achieving counterparts (Fox & Zimmerman, 1985). With reference to socioeconomic status of father, living status, occupation and monthly income are associated with career choice of female secondary students but education of father has no impact on it. Socioeconomic status of mother, living status, education and occupation are associated with respondents' career choices but monthly income of mother has no impact on it. Mau & Bikos (2000) found that parents' education and income influence their offspring's career choices. Mickelson & Velasco (1998) suggested that mothers tend to have more influence on career choices of their children than fathers.

## **Conclusion**

Career choice is a growing issue all over the world and selecting an appropriate career is a big challenge for the students especially, at secondary level of education. In Bangladesh, generally, females are involved in unpaid or low-paid traditionally female-oriented jobs and they are not aware about their careers. It is evident from the study that female secondary students are more concerned to their careers and majority of them aspired to be doctor. Self-efficacy and influence of parents are highly contributing factors of female students' career choices. Their socio-demographic status, such as, age, year of schooling and academic achievement are highly contributing factors of their career choice. In addition,

socioeconomic status of parents, particularly, living status and occupation of both father and mother, year of schooling of mother and monthly income of their father are associated with their career choice. Thus, parents should motivate their daughters regarding career choices which might help them to expose their potentialities for their personal and social development. Further research related to career choice, such as, gender differences in career choice, impact of social capital on career development, effects of career choice on academic achievement and so on can be carried out to provide directions for the future generation who will build the nation with high motivation and development.

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