



Policy and Politics of Preference of Admin Cadre in the Bangladesh Civil Service: Consequences

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ABSTRACT

Bangladesh's administrative cadre implements government policies and projects, giving them significant power. Administrative cadre preference throughout several sectors depletes specialised expertise in education, healthcare, construction, agriculture, and livestock. This study aims to improve understanding of the Bangladesh Civil Services (BCS) administrative and technical cadres' differing concerns and their societal and national ramifications. The researcher conducted a qualitative interview-based study to address these concerns. Compared to the administrative cadre, the technical cadre is demotivated by long promotion processes, limited fringe benefits, lost status, and poor working conditions. This study suggests that the BCS admin cadre's dominance hurts public administration efficiency and effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

The Civil Service plays a fundamental role in the administrative framework of every nation, including Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) is responsible for the execution of government policies, projects, and programmes, as well as the provision of public services, with the aim of upholding the principles of the rule of law. Since its inception, the BCS has implemented a policy that favours the administrative cadre, which carries significant policy and political ramifications. This predisposition is evident in the processes of promotion, deputation, and recruiting, as well as the distribution of resources within the civil service. As a result, the administrative cadre is widely regarded as the preeminent and influential faction within the civil service. Typically, those within the administrative cadre ascend to higher positions within the organisational hierarchy, resulting in the development of a perception of superiority and privilege. In the present scenario, experts may perceive a sense of undervaluation and neglect, although their substantial contributions towards the execution of governmental initiatives.

The civil service system of Bangladesh was directly inherited from Pakistan, which in turn succeeded the Indian Civil Service during the British colonial period (Obaidullah, 2016). The cadre system was dissolved with the independence of Bangladesh, facilitated by the Administrative and Services Reorganisation Committee (ASRC). Subsequently, in the year 1980, the government at that time promulgated the Bangladesh Civil Service (Reorganisation) order, which aimed to establish 28 distinct cadres (Aminuzzaman, 2013). In 1985, an additional two cadres were established, resulting in a cumulative total of 30 cadres. Subsequently, in the years 2007 and 2008, the cadres known as judicial and telecommunication were eliminated. Later, two cadres (Secretariat in 1992 and Economic in 2018) were merged into Administration Cadre. At present, the Bangladesh Civil Service comprises a total of 26 cadres responsible for the administration and execution of various governmental functions.

The cadre service in Bangladesh is often regarded as a highly esteemed government position, necessitating admission through a rigorous and arduous competitive selection

procedure. The Bangladesh Civil Service comprises two distinct categories of cadres, namely general cadres and technical or professional cadres. The Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) offers various cadres, including BCS (Administration), BCS (Police), BCS (Foreign), and BCS (Taxation), which fall under the category of general cadres. On the other hand, BCS (Health), BCS (Public Works), BCS (Agriculture), BCS (Fisheries), BCS (Livestock) and similar cadres are considered professional or technical cadres (BPSC, 2018). Each cadre adheres to its own distinct organisation and set of regulations. Therefore, it establishes a clear and distinct organisational structure, with a hierarchical framework and delineated roles and responsibilities for each member of the cadre. However, the main attributes of the rules and regulations are more or less uniform for all cadres but they do not enjoy the same opportunity while functioning in the field.

Within the realm of civil service, the administrative cadre upholds the longstanding legacy of elitism, which is further reinforced by prevailing political conditions. Within the framework of the governmental structure, individuals belonging to the administrative cadre occupy crucial positions and wield significant power and responsibility in the realm of policy formulation. According to Zafarullah and Khan (2007), the administrative cadre is the only one among the general cadres that is deployed in several higher posts and positions across numerous departments. Additionally, it is noted that the administrative cadre receives superior amenities compared to other cadres, including the technical cadres. The government of Bangladesh frequently develops and revises policies with the aim of improving conditions for employees. It is observed that a significant number of these regulations have been favourable for the administrative cadre.

Civil servants are essential in the provision of services to citizens, the execution of policies, and the oversight of the economy. Regrettably, the civil service in Bangladesh has been unable to effectively provide services due to corruption, adherence to a traditional service delivery structure, and the ineffectiveness of bureaucrats (Islam, 2020). Civil servants rely on the minister, members of parliament, local politicians, and powerful elite to manage the administration. As a

result, patron-client relationships and quasi-federal procedures are present in all government sectors. Ahmed & Tasnim (2003) accurately observe that the generalist-specialist conflict is a significant issue in the public service, both in central administration and field administration. Zafarullah (2007) observed that a politically influenced group inside the administration oversees the process of hiring and assigning individuals in the civil service. Additionally, the administrative cadre is responsible for maintaining control over training activities. The efforts to restructure the civil service were likewise futile due to the opposition from the elitist group. In a study conducted by Debnath, Burmon, and Biswas (2011), it was shown that administrative cadre officials exhibit higher levels of motivation compared to personnel in technical cadres. The studies also indicated that the level of employee motivation directly influences their performance. Personal factors such as education, job experience, and money do not significantly impact motivation. Sahling, et. al., (2019) demonstrated that the career system of Bangladesh's Civil Service is much more restrictive than that of Nepal. The majority of civil servants exhibit contentment in their profession, possess a strong drive to serve the public good, demonstrate unwavering dedication to operating within the government sector, and place trust in their colleagues.

The performance of civil service employees is a critical determinant of the efficacy and efficiency of the civil service. However, the performance and sincerity of an employee can be greatly influenced by factors such as motivation, working circumstances, the extent of promotional opportunities, and the overall climate of the workplace (Hazra, 2018). The motivation of employees significantly impacts their level of production. The prevalence of the administrative cadre within the civil service yields two adverse consequences, namely: Technical cadre officers perceive a sense of neglect, which has the potential to adversely impact their performance. Technical graduates, such as doctors, engineers, or agriculturists may experience a decrease in motivation towards pursuing careers in their respective fields. To analyze the above-mentioned problem, the study will address the following questions–

1. What are the disparity issues between admin cadre and technical cadre officers?
2. What is the state of inter-cadre communication at the field level?
3. Why do technical graduates want to be administrators and give up their line of specialized education?
4. How do these trends affect the society as well as the country?

Objectives of the study

While technical cadre officers struggle for equal opportunity among the cadres, the generalist cadre, especially admin cadre officers, fight to keep their superiority in the administrative set-up. Given the aforementioned complexities, the primary focus of the present investigation is to elucidate the subsequent aims:

- To compare and assess the level of opportunity for BCS administrative cadre officials and technical cadres;
- To examine the dispiriting issues among the BCS Cadres in the Bangladesh Civil Service;
- To find out the reason behind the policy of dominance of the admin cadre in the civil service;
- To illustrate how admin cadre dominance in every sector impacts other cadre officers' job satisfaction and performance as well as job seekers.

Conceptual Analysis

In the early nineteenth century, the term “Civil service” has been used to mean “non-military” service in the context of the British Civil Service (Ali, 2011). Morgan and Perry defined “Civil service as a system of mediating institutions for mobilizing human resources in the service of the affairs of the State in a given territory” (Morgan & Perry, 1988). The Bangladesh Civil Service can be defined as the “collective body of government employees in Bangladesh” that are recruited, and appointed through a painstaking competitive examination process and placed in the governmental departments based on their qualifications, merits, and skills. The BCS is responsible for implementing different administrative, managerial, and policymaking activities of the government. The BCS is a system that covers extensive government departments, and agencies, accommodating individuals who

provide the administrative backbone of the nation.

Bangladesh civil service has two tiers of civil servants: central and local. Both are classified into two broad categories: 1) the cadre and 2) the non-cadre. Cadre services are those services, which are constituted under the law with several positions or structures and recruitment and promotion rules (Quddusi, 2002). To become a cadre officer, candidates must undergo several competitive exam processes conducted by the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC). The successful candidates are selected for various cadres, including administration, police, customs and excise, foreign affairs, taxation, and more, on the basis of their performance, vacancies, and preferences of candidates.

In the professional arena, the terms "generalist" and "specialist" are often used to depict individuals with different fields of expertise and skill sets. These concepts have implications for career goals, job responsibilities, and organizational structures. A generalist can be defined as a public servant who possesses a wide range of knowledge and skills across various fields or disciplines. They have no specialized background and are transferable to any department or agency of government without difficulty. They put emphasis on superiority rather than expertise. Generalists have a comprehensive understanding of organizational processes and can grip varied responsibilities effectively. Generally, generalist officers are dealing with law and order, revenue, and general administration. He belongs to the decision-making group and is well-known about rules, regulations, and processes of administration. As they have knowledge of different areas, it privileged them to understand and deal with various aspects of a particular situation or problem. A specialist is generally meant an individual who possesses special knowledge, expertise, and skills in a particular field or discipline e.g., medicine, engineering, agriculture, etc. They focus on a narrow area, often contributing considerable time and endeavoring to expand a high level of skill and mastery within their field. They are allocating them to investigate intensely complex issues and give specialized solutions. Specialists or technical cadre officials get hold of advanced technical skills and capabilities within their explicit domain and turn

into subject matter experts. Specialists give discreet attention to detail within their area, ensuring accuracy in their work. Technocrat engineers and agriculturists or scientists used to be posted in the technical departments, but generalist administrators who called themselves Management Specialists could be posted almost anywhere (Alam, 1997).

The administration cadre is one of the top most influential cadres within the Bangladesh civil service. It includes positions such as assistant secretary, deputy secretary, joint secretary, and additional secretary, who are responsible for policy implementation, and executive functions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study is exploratory, and the qualitative research approach has been used. This approach is helpful to find out the cause and effects of any issues. The researchers employed the purposive sampling technique in order to determine the sample areas. In this method, certain units were selected purposively for judgment by the researchers. To achieve the research objectives, information about the state of communication, motivating factors, de-motivating factors, etc. was collected from both administrative cadres and technical cadres who were serving at the Upazila level offices. The study was conducted in two upazilas (Cumilla Adarsha Sadar and Cumilla Sadar South) under the Cumilla District. The Cumilla district was selected because it has a reasonable growth rate, is the oldest city, and has a semi-cosmopolitan nature, which is generally representative. Moreover, it was useful for the researcher to observe the activities of these two upazilas as the researcher's working place is in Cumilla. Moreover, a lot of technical and administrative cadre officers are working in the two upazilas.

The study administered three sets of questionnaires: one for the admin cadre, one for the specialist cadre, and the other for the technical graduates who want to be administrators. In the case of qualitative research, it is expected that the validity of the questionnaires will be judged by putting them to a test. In this case, the formulated questions were pre-tested at the field level. The pre-testing found the questionnaires valid with some structural adjustments and modifications.

My question was touched upon from different angles on varied issues. Thus, the sample involved

people purposively from the admin cadre, technical cadre, and technical graduate. Among the technical cadre, BCS (Health), BCS (Livestock), BCS (Fisheries), and BCS (Agriculture) were considered for interview. The BCS (Administration) officials, Assistant Commissioner, and Upazila Nirbahi Officer were selected for an interview. The reason behind the selection of these officers is that they are directly involved in implementing government policy. Thus, the researcher took purposeful interviews with four administrative cadre officers, 10 officers from the technical cadres, and 25 prospective technical candidates who were tentatively trying to enter the Bangladesh civil service. The study involved conducting in-depth interviews and observations with the aim of gathering information pertaining to the different government departments involved in field administration. Interviews were intended to look at facts and opinions regarding inter-cadre disparity issues through open-ended questionnaires. The interviews were conducted in the native language, Bangla, and subsequently translated into English by the researcher.

Secondary sources such as books, articles, newspaper articles, working papers, and various reports like the World Bank and administrative reforms report were generally analyzed for writing an overview of the Bangladesh Civil Service, the background of the civil service, and inter-cadre conflicting issues.

Factors affecting Inter-cadre disparity

Inter-cadre rivalry and resentments among government employees are pervasive issues observed globally. The debate around generalist's vs. specialists is very prevalent across several contexts. There exist multiple levels of disparities in terms of opportunities within the BCS cadre. The factors influencing individuals' decisions might vary, encompassing elements such as promotional opportunities, fringe benefits, access to training resources, as well as considerations of power and authority.

Promotion Preferences

Despite the existence of 26 cadres within the civil service who do not receive promotions, it is noteworthy that all cadres consistently adhere to punctuality. In general, there is a lack of difference among the cadres with respect to their

hierarchical rank, whether it be superior or inferior. However, in practical terms, a significant gap is found within the upper echelons of the hierarchy in terms of the proportion of promoted officers among the BCS cadres. Specialist cadre officers assert that the absence of sanctioned positions poses a challenge to their career advancement prospects. Consequently, the longevity of officials in their respective positions has resulted in a distortion of the interaction between administrative cadre officials and technical cadre officials. Most of the technical cadre respondents are dissatisfied due to lengthy promotion scope. One of the respondents claims that "for second promotion they have to wait 10 to 15 years, but admin cadre can get it within 5-6 years". Most of the senior posts are usually fulfilled by the admin cadre in the civil service. As one of the Livestock officer said that "Members from our cadre can get promotion up to the post of Director General (DG) and the next senior level posts are filled by the admin cadre official." Moreover, other cadre officers have the opportunity to advance their careers within the administrative cadre at a later stage, albeit being promoted alongside the junior cohort of administrative cadre officers.

According to Zafarullah (2007), the Ministry of Public Administration (MoPA) has established a policy whereby 75 percent of Deputy Secretary and above positions are allocated for individuals from the administrative cadre. This group of individuals is also granted preferences when it comes to the promotion of positions such as joint secretary, additional secretary, and secretary. The presence of distinct administrative biases in the promotion to higher posts leads to feelings of sadness among officials from different cadres, ultimately resulting in inter-cadre conflicts such as the generalist-specialist divide. Occasionally, a quarrel of this nature may escalate into a strike or have a demoralizing effect on fellow cadre officers, thereby hindering the functioning of the civil service. Consequently, the bureaucracy failed to effectively retain specialized expertise pertaining to policy formation.

The unsystematic formation of supernumerary posts for Deputy Secretary, Joint Secretary, and Additional Secretary and their appointments creates a chaotic situation in the secretariat of Bangladesh (Mazumder, 2013). The national secretariat possesses a surplus that exceeds its

necessary capacity by more than double. The table-1 demonstrates that the administrative cadre holds the majority of senior-level positions. The admin cadre held 91.28% of the secretary positions, while the remaining cadres held only 9.72% of the positions.

Table 1: Discrimination between authorized posts and present Staff in Bangladesh Secretariat

Secretariat Position	Sanctioned Post	Existing staff
Deputy Secretary	1,324	1,969
Joint Secretary	502	595
Additional Secretary	212	504

Sources: The Daily Observer, 13 October 2021

There exists an additional claim asserting that, as a result of political motivations, the promotion of junior and less competent officers has taken precedence over the advancement of more qualified and senior authorities. The World Bank (2002, p. 71) asserts that a considerable proportion of individuals of admin cadre are rehired as officials subsequent to their retirement, primarily as a result of their political affiliations rather than their demonstrated experience and expertise.

The administrative cadre officials have been granted supernumerary positions, whereas the remaining 25 cadre officials have not been afforded the same privilege. Some officers get the chance to pursue their careers in the admin cadre later, but they get promoted with the junior batch of admin cadre officers. Consequently, a sense of discontent has arisen among cadre officials due to the fact that many of their peers in the administrative cadre enjoy the privilege of attaining higher ranks. These discrepancies contribute to a perceived disconnect between the administrative cadre and other cadres.

Table 2: Sharing of higher level positions amongst BCS Admin and other cadres

Sl No	Positions	BCS Administration	Other Cadres	Total
1	Secretary	65 (91.28%)	7 (9.72%)	72
2	Additional Secretary	209 (84.28%)	39 (15.72%)	248

3	Joint Secretary	511(82.03%)	112(17.97%)	623
4	Deputy Secretary	1415(85.04%)	249(14.96%)	1664

Sources: Ministry of Public Administration and www. MOPA.gov.bd/ Obaidullah, A.T.M. (2016)

In addition, it is required for health cadre officers in the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) to have an additional degree in order to be eligible for promotion, while it is not obligatory for other cadre officials.

Fringe Benefits

Employee satisfaction is contingent upon various factors, including financial rewards and additional incentives such as engagement in prestigious roles, opportunities for international training and further education, assignment to particular responsibilities, and provision of transportation facilities, among others. As per the provisions outlined in the Services (Reorganisation and Conditions) Act of 1975, government officials of the same grade shall receive equitable benefits and remuneration scales. In actuality, a significant disparity exists among the cadres. According to Islam (2018), an example of differential treatment within the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) is observed in the provision of car loans and financial help. Specifically, BCS admin cadre officials, who hold positions equivalent to Deputy Secretary and above, are eligible for a car loan of Tk. 3 million without interest. Additionally, they receive a monthly financial assistance of Tk. 50,000 for car upkeep. In contrast, technical cadre officials within the BCS do not have access to these privileges. According to technical cadre officers, they contend that the action in question was in violation of the law. The individual holding the position of Deputy Director (Agriculture) possesses a motor vehicle commonly referred to as a Double Cabin Pickup. In relation to transportation amenities, it is observed that a majority of 90% of technical cadre officers express dissatisfaction, while a minority of 10% report partial satisfaction with the existing system. It is noteworthy that certain administrative cadre

officials hold the belief that car loan facilities should be expanded to encompass other BCS cadre officials as well. One of them responded with remarks regarding the car loan facilities - "Though I am working with similar qualifications, even with a longer duration of job experience and higher grade, I am not eligible to have car loan facilities that my fellow colleagues of BCS (Administration) cadre of the same workplace enjoy. I am an official of the BCS 22th batch while the officials of 27th batch of BCS (Administration) cadre get these car loan facilities." (Interview data, 2023).

One of the Fisheries officers mentioned:

The UNO is entitled to a four-wheel drive vehicle; besides this, a duplex house is allocated for his accommodation that is modernized whenever a new UNO is deployed. The UNO has at least two personal bearers, a gatekeeper to oversee his complex, and a gunman for his security. On the other hand, other cadre officers who work in upazila generally get a motorcycle and have to share a building for their accommodation containing four to six flats. Even the building was not renovated for a long time. Whenever he said to a responsible officer to renovate it, he refused due to a funding crisis.

The variability in professional skill development possibilities is also observed across different cadres. The training and development possibilities available to administrative cadre officials surpass those provided to technical cadre officials. The majority of possibilities for international training and higher education are typically allocated to individuals within the administrative cadre, despite the fact that these opportunities do not have clear practical repercussions for their respective tours and training. The absence of adequate avenues for the enhancement of professional skills contributes to a sense of stagnation and disconnection experienced by technical cadre officials. One of the Livestock officer said that "Occasionally, technical officers have the opportunity to participate in international training as part of a project. The inclusion of some names of administrative cadre officers is necessary in the aforementioned list. Otherwise, the approval of such a participant list will not be granted."

Admin cadre at the top

Throughout the Colonial period, the administrative cadre has consistently emerged as the prevailing group within the civil service. During that particular age, the British sovereign established a civil service in India that prioritized the cultivation of generalist administrative competencies. The primary objective of this system was to establish a cadre of bureaucrats who could be relied upon by the British Crown to uphold stability and governance inside the colonial state. During that period, officials were assigned the responsibility of upholding law and order as well as collecting revenue. Following the attainment of independence by Bangladesh, the government assumed control of the existing administrative framework and persisted in relying on the administrative cadre. The administrative cadre officers exert significant influence on the secretariat and hold the highest-ranking posts within the many government agencies. Despite possessing specific abilities in their respective roles, other cadre officers are not permitted to hold the aforementioned post. Consequently, the administrative cadre wields significant influence across several sectors. An illustration of this can be seen in the appointment of the secretary of the agriculture ministry, who is selected from the administrative cadre. However, it is imperative that the individual appointed as the secretary of the agricultural ministry possesses expertise in the field of agriculture, and so forth (Islam, 2018). Even administrative cadre personnel are assigned to independent and constitutional authorities such as the PSC and other such organizations (Monem & Kim, 2009). The leaders of Prokrichi, a platform consisting of engineers, have made allegations that while all cadre officers are permitted to serve as secretaries within the ministries, technical cadre officials are not being appointed to these positions. Within the 26 cadre services, a significant proportion of the prominent positions are occupied by members of the administrative cadre who have been appointed through the process of deputation. According to Professor Arslan, the Secretary of the Prokrichi-BCS Somonnoy Committee, "we demanded cancellation of the deputation of admin cadre officials to the posts of other cadres and the authorities have agreed to cancel the system," (Tusher, 2016). The appointment of administrative cadre officials to technical posts

resulted in increased difficulties and fostered resentment among the technical personnel.

It has been observed that administrative cadres tend to provide more favorable prospects for career advancement and leadership roles compared to technical cadres. The researcher discovered compelling evidence within a comment made by an Upazila Nirbahi Officer:

I used to summon as chief guests various programs organized by various departments in the upazila. In addition, I used to superintend over the ongoing national program upazila. Consequently, other cadre officials are envious of my position due to their inferiority complex. (Interview data, 2023).

Decision-Making Power

Within the realm of civil service, the administrative cadre has garnered acknowledgement for its intimate association with political leaders, thereby assuming a significant responsibility in the implementation of governmental policies and programs. In the Indian subcontinent, it has been a customary practice for the administrative cadre of the civil service to enjoy certain privileges that have facilitated their advancement to higher positions within the decision-making hierarchy. It is worth noting that there is a lack of designated positions for technical cadre officers at the policy-making level within ministries pertaining to engineering, medical, and agriculture services, specifically in relation to appointments, foreign training, and promotions. One of the academicians Mr. Tuhin said that “any job-related decision regarding the cadres is taken by the Secretariat but it is the administrative cadres who are responsible for taking those decisions” (Islam, 2018). Hence, it is not possible to guarantee the inclusion of technical cadre perspectives in the decision-making process. Furthermore, the administrative cadre possesses a significant degree of bureaucratic authority, enabling them to exercise discretion in matters pertaining to the allocation of financial resources and the selection of personnel. This authority enables individuals to formulate governmental policies and exert influence over the trajectory of the state. One of the respondents who wanted to be anonymous said that “a young officer belonging to the administrative cadre has the potential to occupy

a managerial position. Nevertheless, persons who hold occupations such as doctor, agriculturalist, or engineer frequently encounter situations where they are placed in entry-level roles, while possessing noteworthy merit and qualifications.” (Interview data, 2023). As admin cadre officers are policy experts, they can play a leading role in policy implementation and indirectly control the activities of other government departments.

The Fertilizer and Seeds Monitoring Committee, overseen by the Upazilla Nirbahi Officer, is comprised of members including the Agriculture Officer who serves as the committee's secretary. Despite the committee's affiliation with the field of agriculture, it is within the purview of the member secretary to refrain from intervening in any illicit activities conducted by the dealer. On the contrary, the agriculture officer has alleged that traders maintain favorable connections with UNO, so impeding our ability to exercise control over them. The approval of the committee is required even for dealers who have been selected by Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC).

A similar occurrence is observed throughout the fisheries and Livestock sectors. There exists a committee known as the “Macher Pona Ummoktokoran Committee”. The UNO serves as the convener, while the Upazila Livestock Officer assumes the role of the member secretary. “Our department is responsible for the completion of all tasks; yet, we currently lack tangible accomplishments. Annually, the relevant departments conduct two significant events, namely the “livestock fair” and the “fishing week.” At times, it is challenging to disclose our identity in the aforementioned fair due to the presence of numerous high-ranking administrative personnel, including the District Commissioner”.

Acute prestige crisis

The reason behind choosing the admin cadre has become more pragmatic. As society adopts an urban, capitalist framework and a power-driven disposition, its impact becomes evident in numerous institutions, with the family being particularly affected. This study discovered that the selection of individuals for administrative positions is significantly influenced by familial factors, namely pertaining to the social standing, social security, and recognition that such positions might offer. Furthermore, power holds

considerable symbolic value in Bangladeshi society, serving as an indicator of social rank. The administrative cadre possesses direct access to the authorities inside the governmental structure, hence enabling them to exert power. Individuals often experience apprehension towards those who possess authority and influence as a result of their vested interests. Administrative cadre officials are perceived to possess greater authority and influence compared to technical cadre experts, as they possess the capability to shape policy decisions and provide guidance for national development. Office responsibilities in certain service sectors, such as education, agriculture and social welfare, are often perceived as lacking prestige and are commonly regarded as occupying the lowest rung in the administrative hierarchy. As one of the technical cadre officer remarks:

The Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) holds the position of the chief executive officer at the upazila level, and is granted greater authority and resources in comparison to other entities. Consequently, a discernible social hierarchy has emerged in relation to him. Individuals express their respect and deference towards him by saluting and addressing him as "sir" on every occasion of his visitation. Furthermore, he is provided with a more advantageous position within a gathering. Despite my seniority in terms of job tenure, I am obligated to show respect towards him. This exemplifies his elevated status within both the realm of service and society. (Interview data, 2023).

Moreover, for not being timely promoted, they have to suffer more regarding prestige rather than financial whipping.

Confrontational Party Politics and Supremacy of the generalist class

From the Pakistan period to now, there has been a consistent pattern wherein governmental attempts to reduce the authority of the bureaucracy have been met with resistance from senior bureaucrats. For example, it was found that CSPs did not carry out the essential administrative reforms proposed by Rowland Egger, AR Cornelius, and Bernard Gladieux (Khan, 1980). In the context of Bangladesh, successive governments have strategically employed bureaucratic mechanisms, namely the

administrative cadre, to further their own interests and maintain a prolonged hold on state power. The majority of public service reforms in Bangladesh have been unsuccessful, mostly because the government heavily relies on senior generalists rather than functionalists or experts to implement these reform initiatives. The government is acutely aware that in order to effectively implement governmental objectives, maintain its authority over an extended period, and manage political opposition, it relies heavily on garnering support from the field administration, that is mostly controlled by generalists. As a result, it may be observed that the majority of policies tend to be biased towards the generalist administrative cadre. The government strategically places retired administrative cadre officials, who have affiliations with the ruling party, in key positions within the governmental hierarchy in order to strengthen its control over the administrative system (Zafarullah & Khan, 2007). The individuals commonly referred to as "super bureaucrats" establish and maintain strong and frequently amicable connections with the political executive (Campbell & Szablowski, 1979, p. 13). The potential influence of the institutionalized career bureaucracy may be constrained by the presence of partisan cells within the bureaucracy, which are bolstered by the cooptation of party loyalists into advisory bodies responsible for policy development and program administration (Peters, 1995).

It is evident that the administrative cadre in Bangladesh has traditionally held significant political influence. The prevalence of confrontational politics in Bangladesh has resulted in the elevation of the administrative cadre to a position of privilege, allowing them to thrive as super elite. The advancement of administrative cadre officials to higher positions is influenced by political involvement, resulting in party political considerations outweighing merit-based standards. In light of the alterations in the political system, the government has been granting promotions to a significant number of officials inside the secretariat that surpass the officially sanctioned positions, without adequately adhering to rigorous inspection and competitive examination protocols. After each successive election, it is perceptible that whoever was in power strived to handle the state machinery by their loyal people as much as possible, pushing

others on the sidelines as Officer on Special Duty (OSD), who was trustworthy to the previous government. The government's politicized approach leads to a projected lack of substance in the field administration and secretariat roles. The BCS administrative cadre capitalizes on this opportunity to address the resulting void.

Preference of Admin Cadre in the Bangladesh Civil Service: Consequences

Our administrative system is characterized by a preponderance of generalist administrators especially admin cadre officers over the technical specialists.

Specialists turn to other professions

One of the primary factors that may lead technical graduates to opt for the administrative cadre instead of their specialized sectors is the perception that administrative cadre officers hold a higher status and wield greater influence within society. A considerable proportion of medical and engineering professionals are opting for generalist positions, such as the BCS administration, as well as foreign cadres, in order to further their careers within the Bangladesh Civil Service, instead of pursuing roles within their respective specialty fields. Within the 1980 cohort of officers in the administrative, police, and foreign cadres, a total of 387 individuals have been identified as having backgrounds in engineering and doctors over the course of the past five years (Hossain and Sarker, 2022). According to a statement made by an administrative cadre officer who obtained a degree from an Engineering University, the decision to opt for the general cadre was motivated by the relatively limited resources and diminished authority associated with specialized cadre services. In addition to engineers, there has been an observed increase in the entrance rate of physicians and agriculturists within the general cadre. It has been observed that a significant proportion of graduates from general disciplines have been selected in the 17th to 34th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examinations. The circumstances have undergone a transformation since the 35th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination conducted in 2014. During this particular examination, candidates mostly hailing from medical, engineering, and agricultural disciplines predominantly opted for the general

cadres. It has been observed that only the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) inputted a total of 55 officers in the administrative cadre, out of a pool of 245 officers, during the 40th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination (Hossain and Sarker, 2022). The aforementioned pattern has persisted in the realm of civil service examinations up to the present time. The Prime minister instructed to remove inter-cadre discrimination; nevertheless, after the passage of a decade, no tangible progress has been made in implementing these directives. The potential long-term existence of this issue could pose a threat to both the medical and technical professions. The nation will see a shortage of skilled medical professionals and engineers.

Individuals who have completed their education in a technical field have recognized that being part of the BCS administrative cadre grants them the authority to wield power throughout the nation, and this privilege is more secure compared to other professions. Consequently, they are able to lead a life that is both secure and prosperous. Typically, it is expected that students prioritize their academic studies; but, regrettably, many students choose to engage with BCS materials as early as their first year of university. The excessive reliance on a certain cadre has adverse implications for anyone aspiring to pursue a profession in the civil service. The administrative cadre officer has the capacity to assume a prominent and powerful position within the civil service. The phenomenon described might result in a depletion of highly skilled individuals, since graduates with technical backgrounds may exhibit reduced interest in pursuing occupations that require specific knowledge or skills.

A notable finding from the survey indicates that 70% of technical graduates prioritize the generalist cadre as their first choice. Interestingly, an only 15% of respondents express a desire to work specifically within their individual areas of expertise. The majority of participants express a strong interest in the administrative cadre as their preferred option. The individual's subsequent preferences are police and foreign cadre civil service, in that order. Respondents prioritize the administrative cadre above the technical cadre due to the perceived advantages associated with the former, including higher social status, greater power, increased financial resources, enhanced

decision-making authority, and more prospects for career advancement.

A majority of the participants, specifically 65% of the respondents who were technical graduates, indicated their preference for the administrative cadre as it offered them the opportunity to exercise control and wield authority inside the organization. 15% of participants hold the belief that the administrative cadre possesses a higher level of social prestige compared to other cadres, leading them to select this particular cadre. A only 5% of participants expressed a desire to pursue a career in administration, primarily driven by the perception that this occupation offers lucrative financial prospects. The lack of alignment between the academic success of technical students and the career planning process within the sector raises concerns regarding the expenditure of resources and time.

The issue of inter-cadre conflict has persistently plagued the field of administration in Bangladesh for a considerable period of time. The manifestation of conflict is evident among several groups of government officials, namely between the administrative and technical cadres. The presence of inter-cadre dispute within the field administration of Bangladesh resulted in both inefficiencies and setbacks inside the decision-making mechanism. This conflict frequently gives rise to a deficiency in coordination and support among the cadres, resulting in setbacks in the implementation of government objectives and programs.

Coordination Problem

In the realm of field administration, it is evident that the presence of dual authority has given rise to a significant challenge in terms of coordination. The officers stationed at the upazila level are required to adhere to the instructions provided by the corresponding line authorities at the district level. Additionally, they carry out their duties under the guidance of the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), whose primary role is to coordinate the various activities taking place inside the upazila. A coordination difficulty arises when many authorities provide simultaneous instructions for comparable functions (Ahsan, 2010). In a situation, an officer might be puzzled to decide whom to follow. For instance, there is a committee named the Upazilla Agricultural Rehabilitation Implementation Committee, UNO,

is the chairman of that committee. Sometimes the government gives incentives to farmers through this committee. The Deputy Director of Agriculture is entrusted with preparing the stakeholder list and needs to get approval from the deputy commissioner. Most of the time, Deputy Commissioner changes the target group list. Karim rightly pointed out that officials become stuck in bewildering conditions at the upazila level (Karim, 1991). Consequently, administrative efficiency is strangled and the delivery of services is lingers subsequently. The delays caused by this disagreement can have ruthless consequences, mainly in areas such as disaster management, security, and public health that need expeditious attention. A monthly coordination meeting is convened by the Upazila Nirbahi Officer. The meeting was attended by all cadre officers in the upazila. As the UNO transitions into a junior cadre, technical cadre officers find themselves perplexed when it comes to matters of addressing. A similar issue also arises in the context of UNO. Even during the aforementioned meeting, there was a noticeable tendency among technical cadre officers to refrain from active participation. One of the officers made the statement that while we are physically present in the meeting, our mental engagement is lacking. Occasionally, the technical cadre officers have grouping trend in field administration.

Technical expertise being undervalued

The issue of the predominance of the administrative cadre has led to a dearth of technical expertise in the civil service of Bangladesh. The prevalence of administrative cadre in the decision-making procedures within the civil service might result in the marginalization or under appreciation of technical skills. Consequently, the aforementioned circumstances may lead to inefficiency and worse than ideal results in sectors that necessitate specialized expertise, such as agriculture, fisheries, infrastructural development, and healthcare. Despite several factors, technical graduates exhibit a lack of enthusiasm in their particular fields, which can be identified as one of the main factors contributing to this prevailing tendency. One problem arises from the potential long-term continuation of this trend, which could result in brain drain occurring within specialized disciplines. Consequently, the government may encounter a scarcity of professionals, leading to

imminent challenges in the realms of economic development and infrastructural sectors. Furthermore, the implementation of government policies in specialized domains poses significant challenges, resulting in inefficiency and adverse administrative effects.

Low morale and job dissatisfaction

The existence of unequal opportunities between administrative cadre officers and technical cadre officials within the civil service has resulted in a diminished level of motivation among civil servants. The persistent discord among personnel can give rise to diminished morale and job dissatisfaction, ultimately culminating in decreased productivity and performance. This can pose significant challenges in rural areas, where civil service officials frequently encounter harsh working conditions and insufficient resources. A significant majority, namely 85%, of technical cadre officials express dissatisfaction with the current system.

Furthermore, the adoption of a superior attitude towards administrative roles has adverse effects on the morale and job satisfaction of professionals in specialised sectors. There exists an alternative viewpoint among individuals regarding technical graduates, wherein specialised disciplines are perceived as being less prestigious compared to administrative positions. Consequently, a significant proportion of graduates choose to relocate abroad, resulting in the country experiencing a loss of skilled and knowledgeable workforce. Even those who are continuing their job in their specialized fields suffer lower morale and job satisfaction. One of the Agriculturists remarks:

Overreliance on the administrative cadre frequently results in the undervaluing of other specialized cadres. This causes frustration and dissatisfaction among these professionals, who believe that their skills and expertise are not being utilized or valued to their maximum potential. As a consequence, we (technical cadre officers) feel unmotivated and disinterested in our work, which ultimately results in a decline in performance and output. (Interview data, 2023).

Moreover, the dominant position of the administrative cadre may result in a dearth of

inventive and imaginative thinking inside the civil service. The administrative cadre has undergone extensive training both domestically and internationally in order to cultivate a comprehensive skill set that can be effectively utilised across various government departments and agencies. In contrast, specialised officers are afforded few opportunities, resulting in their dissatisfaction. Consequently, due to a scarcity of specialised expertise, the government has experienced a reduction in its ability to address complex issues and innovate novel solutions. As a result, the government may encounter challenges in implementing economic, social, and technological transformations at a quick pace, so impeding the overall growth of the nation.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the historical, political, and bureaucratic origins contribute to the dominant position of the administrative cadre within the civil service and governmental framework. There are numerous factors that contribute to the disinclination of technical cadre officers towards favouring their respective specialised domains. The factors contributing to this phenomenon encompass limited social status, absence of supplementary perks, and reduced potential for career progression and leadership prospects. The technical cadre officers possess legitimate justifications for experiencing demoralisation and dissatisfaction. However, this circumstance poses detrimental effects on the improvement of the civil service, society, and the nation, as it serves as a primary factor contributing to administrative inefficiency and the erosion of technical expertise. The administrative cadre holds a crucial position in the implementation of governmental policies and programmes. However, it is imperative to acknowledge the current need to rectify the existing disparities among different cadres and ensure that the specialised cadre receives the appropriate resources and recognition it merits. The issue of inter-cadre conflict within the field administration in Bangladesh is a longstanding concern that has resulted in various detrimental outcomes, including inefficiencies, a dearth of technical proficiency, diminished morale, a deficiency in holding individuals accountable, and a lack of diversity within the civil service. Resolving this matter necessitates a collective endeavour to foster collaboration and syncro-

nisation among diverse cadre, alongside the establishment of systems to effectively recognise and employ technical proficiency within the civil services. This will help the country respond to complex challenges and promote innovation and progress in critical areas.

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