

**PROBLEMS OF WORKING AT THE FIELD LEVEL:  
A STUDY OF WOMEN CIVIL SERVANTS OF  
BANGLADESH**

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**Dedicated to....**

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**Meedawry Faizah Abedin, my daughter**

## **ABSTRACT**

This is an exploratory study to examine the problems faced by women civil servants working at the field levels. A mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods was used for the study that collected data through questionnaire survey, secondary sources, in-depth interviews and case studies. The cultural theory of Geert Hofstede (Hofstede 2005) was used as a theoretical framework. Most research participants (69%) were young, aged 30-35 years and had less than 5 years experience (61%). Among them, 25.5% lived alone in their workplace; 81% said they faced more problems than men. It was reported that working in the field office is more troublesome than working in the headquarters (84%). Dual responsibility of job and household chore (95%), housing (84%), safety at duty station (67%) and uncongenial working environment (47%) were the major problems being faced by women at the field. In addition to difficulties, there are some common barriers that seriously inhibit women to carry out duties spontaneously. The results revealed that one of the major problems is the negative attitude towards them from the community, colleagues and the authority. Society perceived women as soft and not fit for taking challenges. Respondents noted that they have to face sexist comments, even threats of stigma. Their ability as civil servants is constantly put in question, and they have to put extra effort to prove their competence.

The reasons behind most of the problems they face are: male domination, patriarchal mentality and perceived lower social status of women. Other problems are related to conservative view, lack of education among people and underdevelopment of the country. Consequences of these problems are: reduced performance, mental and physical stress, problem in the family, negative effect on children, disturbance in family life, impaired career development and weakened initiative and innovativeness. Support from the family is very important for their functioning at the field level.

To observe the relationships between dependent and independent variables, a correlation test has been performed. Therefore, all the variables (problems being faced by the field level women civil servants: as dependent variable) and indicators (facility at the field office, loyalty and group belongingness, dual responsibility, use of discretion and attitude towards creativity, innovation and change, etc), taken in this study have been found to be significantly correlated.

The study revealed that the women working in the field are in disadvantageous position compared to their male colleagues as well as compared to the officials of head offices. Though women civil servants are part of very powerful, respected and sometimes feared organizations; because of their gender identity they have to bear most of the problems those other women in the society experience. It is coherent with Bangladesh's characteristics as a large power distance, masculine, collectivist and high uncertainty averse society. To overcome this situation and to make women the true human capital, the study, therefore, made some recommendations—to organize preferential housing arrangements, to provide security, adequate logistic and official resources, social awareness initiative, etc. It is expected that if the problems of women at the field are reduced, they can perform better. If they can perform freely and comfortably, they will excel in their career which in the long run will put women in the mainstream of the upper echelon of the civil service.

# CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Contents	iii
List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
List of Abbreviation	vii
Acknowledgement	viii

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1	Background	1
1.2	Statement of the Problem	2
1.3	Review of Existing Literature	3
1.4	Objectives	8
1.5	Research Questions	8
1.6	Significance of the Research	8
1.7	Scope of the Study	9
1.8	Methodology	9
1.9	Sources of Data	10
1.10	Description of the Study Population	11
1.11	Area Covered	13
1.12	Techniques of Data collection	15
1.12	(a) Primary Data	15
	(b) Secondary Data	15
1.13	Validation of Data	16
1.14	Data Processing and Analysis	16
1.15	Operational Definitions of Different Concepts Used in the Study	17
1.16	Problems of Data Collection	18

## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1	Cultural Theory – Geert Hofstede	19
2.2	Management Culture of Bangladesh: Hofstede’s Framework	20
2.3	Cultural Theory—A Framework	21
2.4	Operational Definition of Variables and Indicators	25

## CHAPTER 3: WOMEN IN BANGLADESH CIVIL SERVICE: AN OVERVIEW

3.1	Women in Civil Service of Bangladesh	28
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## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

4.1	Problems Faced by the Women Civil Servants at the Field Level	33
4.2	Reasons Behind the Problems	43
4.3	Statistical Correlation of the Dependent and Independent Variables	59
4.4	Consequences of the Problems	61

## CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1	Recommendations	63
5.2	Conclusion	65

BIBLIOGRAPHY	69
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## APPENDIX

Questionnaire	77
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## LIST OF TABLES

Table: 1	Cadre Wise Distribution of Sample	11
Table: 2	Age of the Respondents	11
Table: 3	Profession of Husband	12
Table: 4	Arrangement of Accommodation in Field	13
Table: 5	Four Dimensions of Management Culture of Sampled Managers	21
Table: 6	Representation of Women at Different Levels of Civil Service	29
Table: 7	Representation of Women at Different Levels of Civil Service in 2007	30
Table: 8	Representation of Women at Different Levels of Civil Service in 2009	30
Table: 9	Percentage of Women Selected in BCS	31
Table: 10	Perception of Safety at Work in the Field	34
Table: 11	Age Wise Distribution of Perception of Problem of Field	35
Table: 12	Perception of Housing Problem at Field	36
Table: 13	Perception of Working Environment	37
Table: 14	Perception of Problem in Initiating New Idea	41
Table: 15	Perceptions of Different Cadres on Problem of Working Women	
	Working at the Field Level	42
Table: 16	Social Perception of Power of Male and women Civil Servants	43
Table 17:	Perception of Power of other Women Working at the Field	44
Table: 18	Perception of Power in Relation to Age	46
Table: 19	Perception of Adequate Attention on Field Offices	47
Table: 20	Perception of Difficulties at the Field	48
Table: 21	Perception of Society about Women's Work	49
Table: 22	Perception of Family: Man as Main Earning Member	51
Table: 23	Perception of Consequences of Family Pressure on Performance	51

Table: 24	Perception of Dual Responsibilities of Job and Household Chore	52
Table: 25	Perception of Dual Responsibility in Relation to Marital Status	52
Table: 26	Role of Family Members During Posting at Field	53
Table: 27	Type of Influence that Family Members Played During Posting at Field	54
Table: 28	New Plan Initiated by Women	57
Table 29:	Perception of Barrier in Carrying Duties Spontaneously	58
Table 30:	Correlation Matrix of Dependent Variables (Problems) and Selected Independent Variables	59

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:	Experience of the Respondents in Year	12
Figure 2:	Study Area	14
Figure 3:	Influence of Different Components of Culture on the Problems of Women Civil Servants Working at the Field	24
Figure 4:	Representation of Women in General Cadres in BCS Examinations and Years	31
Figure 5:	Representation of Women in Professional Cadres in BCS Examinations and Years	32
Figure 6:	Perception of Problem of Working at Field Compared to Head Office	33
Figure 7:	Perception of Problem of Working at Field Compared to Male	34
Figure 8:	Perception of Power of Women Civil Servants Working at Field	44
Figure 9:	Perception on Priority Between Family and Career	55
Figure10:	Consequences of problems on the Field-Level Women Civil Servants	62



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC Land	:	Assistant Commissioner of Land
ACR	:	Annual Confidential Report
BCS	:	Bangladesh Civil Service
DC	:	District Commissioner
MP	:	Member of Parliament
NGO	:	Non-governmental Organization
UNO	:	Upazila Nirbahi Officer
UP	:	Upazila Parishod

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Bangladesh has been trying to extend support to women as they constitute nearly half of its population and half of the potential. The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees certain rights and privileges to women. These are articulated in Article 27, 28(I, ii, iii, and IV), and Article 29(i). Serious attempts of mainstreaming women had been made during the 1980s. These attempts include ensuring women's rights, empowerment and participation as labor-force. In addition to fulfilling the Constitutional obligation, the government took several measures to uphold women's interest. These include enacting various women-specific and women-related laws; ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The government also announced National Policy for the Advancement of Women and National Action Plan. Particular emphasis has also been given on women in the Fifth Five-year Plan and in the Poverty Alleviation Strategy Paper (PRSP). Women's movement, women's organization and NGOs engaged in the enforcement of women's rights and empowerment thrived during the 1980s. Women's participation in the labor-market has been increasing since the mid-1980s. (Mahtab, 2007: 54). A 10% quota was reserved for women towards ensuring women's participation in the Bangladesh civil service.

These are the initiatives taken so far to encourage women to come forward but the reality is different. Women have so far joined in the civil service in a limited number. The total strength of women in public service is only 10 percent, and it is a meager 8 percent in both class I and class II positions (Jahan, 2007). The presence of women in the higher positions of administration and policy formulation is not significant. In most cases, women in the higher positions were posted in the less challenging areas of jobs. Patriarchal values and stereotype attitudes are responsible for undermining women's capability as a whole. Women civil servants are surrounded by various kinds of problems which primarily come from their family and from the broader spectrum of the society as well. The problem is more acute in the field level. In the field, women officials communicate with people who are more conservative and prefer working with male counterparts in general. It is alleged that the field level offices generally have less logistic support than the central office. Therefore, it can be said that some

of these problems are practical, some are imposed, and some are superficial. These problems generally limit their engagement in challenging areas of job and hinder exposure of their talents. As a result, the competence and potential of women officials remain unaddressed. So, the government is only benefited from the services of almost half of its total strength. This study will help explore the causes and consequences of the problems and will find a way out to break the glass-ceiling with special focus on women civil servants working at field offices of Bangladesh civil service.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Women have been regularly appearing in the Bangladesh civil service examination since 1982 but the number of women in 28 cadres is still trifling. The number of women holding class 1 positions in ministries/divisions, departments/directorates and autonomous bodies/corporations are only 5,066 compared to 73,619 men. This means that only 6.44% women are occupying class 1 positions compared to 93.56% men (Mahtab, 2007). An insignificant number of the total officers are working at field offices, and most of them are facing numerous challenges in performing their duties and responsibilities. These problems affect their efficiency, performance and contribution. So, the government has to look into it very seriously to utilize the services of its total work-force.

The proposed research has, however, some implications in terms of different aspects, like social, political, economic, and cultural and so on.

Most women civil servants who are working in the field do not take the family with them to their work stations because all the districts do not have good schools and hospitals. They stay alone and they fail to provide enough time to their children. The children get deprived and sometimes this affects their children negatively, and they underperform academically and socially. All these ultimately have a negative impact on their image. Authority and the clients think that women officers are incompetent. In addition, the government always intends to take input from the field level for any policy formulation. If the field-level women officers are not able to devote their full potential in the service, they would fail to give appropriate policy input. As a result, policy does not reflect the need of the grassroots people as well as the gender sensitivity.

As women officials are facing numerous problems, it is perceived that a significant portion of their working hours is being spent in dealing with less productive issues. This certainly affects negatively in their performance, and it has negative implication in our national economy as well. In addition, many eligible women are not interested to join in Bangladesh civil service as field-level posting is not attractive to them. So, the Government is deprived from their services from both ends--who are working in civil service as well as who are not in the government service.

Additionally, all political governments express strong commitment to women's empowerment. Employment of women is an important tool for women's empowerment. In Bangladesh, the government is the biggest employer. Women officials working in the field level employed by the government seem to suffer for various reasons. Therefore, it is the prime obligation of the government to make the working environment of field officers more women-friendly. Otherwise, women in general may lose faith on the government, and it can hamper government's credibility.

Culturally, women are seen to be confined to their household activities; those who work outside should consider domestic work as the primary and career as a secondary function. This cultural mindset hinders their efficiency. Professional skill is accelerated through sharing of ideas and building network. Cultural barriers restrict women to work with outside agencies, especially after office hours. This makes their knowledge confined, and they lag behind as competent workers.

### **1.3 Review of Existing Literature**

Literature on women in Bangladesh became available since the 1980s. Prior to that, it was difficult to get data on women. Rounaq Jahan in her study "Women in Bangladesh" expressed the fact in this way: "Little published material is available on women. Statistical data are outdated, only preliminary figures are available from the 1974 census. As women are non-visible and unorganized, their problems are not articulated and hence, they fail to draw the attention of researchers (Jahan, 1975: 08)."

The situation has been changing gradually. Women's participation in the labor-market has increased during the mid-1980s (Mahtab, 2007). From that period, various studies are being conducted on different aspects of working women engaged in different professions. Least of them speak about women civil servants and none of these studies focused exclusively on field-level officials. This section reviews some relevant literature on working women, their problems, with special focus on women civil servants.

Islam, (1975) observed that women have been permitted to go out of their homes and seek employment partly due to western influence and partly due to economic pressure. Families (specially the fathers) with progressive outlook and education allow and encourage their female children to study. The study found that most of the working women are from the upper echelons of society, who are brought up in a congenial atmosphere of education and learning. They are not self-made; rather they are the products of the environment at home. Most women consider earning money (for necessity, comfort and luxury) as their primary motive for work. The number of women who primarily desire a higher social status through occupational career is negligible. The main reason is many people have reservations against women to have a service career. The main challenges that working women are facing are: good time management and adjustment between career and domestic work. The major finding of that study was the working women do not evade their domestic responsibilities; rather, they combine the traditional household duties with their out-of-home obligations.

A research undertaken by Hoq and Bala, (1988), was based on the general information of women of Bangladesh civil service. In fact, this is the first research conducted on the women civil servants of Bangladesh which provided very generic type of information about them. The study highlighted the socio-economic background of the women officers, their age, family income and status, arrangements regarding look after their children during their absence, housing settlement, training, performance of women officers, etc. Attitudes of male colleagues and authority towards women officials were also heightened in the study. Review of quota system, effect of women's employment on society, attitudes of and friends and relatives towards them were the other areas that have been spotlighted. The study also focused shortly on the problems of women civil servants. At the end this study tried to draw some recommendations which include special training for women civil servant to make them congruent with their new position, proper utilization of quota system, to provide posting of

women officers to the nearest place of their husband (when both of them are government employees), transport facility, congenial working environment and so on. The study participants were consisted of, among others, male officers, general people, representatives from women organizations and high officials of different ministries.

Islam, (1997) in her study observed that working women have to encounter a number of problems. The major difficulties come from their families. Women have to seek permission from male members of their families for working outside. They do not have any choice about their job. Thus an indifferent attitude develops among women about their career. Similarly, at workplace they are treated as 'women', as if they do not have adequate skill to do a job like a man. Male colleagues do not cooperate; subordinates do not like to accept them as a boss. Women are considered as mentally weak, inexperienced, unskilled, physically unfit, soft and submissive. So they are not capable of taking decisions, making policies and visiting field offices alone. Some other problems such as lack of separate rest room, place for prayer, separate canteen and inadequate transportation facilities makes their job harder.

A study undertaken by Zafarullah, (2000) identified that the disparity between male and female representation in public administration is wide. Both systematic and attitudinal constraints are faced by women in Bangladesh to enter and make career in the civil service. Civil laws mostly originated from religious prescriptions have been discriminatory towards women. The personnel management regime in government is largely dominated by men and is guided by a male bias. This leads to persistent discrimination against women in recruitment, placement, advancement, mobility and training. Ineffective administration of quota system has been a major problem in establishing balanced distribution of women between urban and rural positions. The majority representing the rural areas are left out due to procedural flaws. The study found that most of the women came to civil service at their own will (77.78%). 28.11% women encountered family obstacles regarding their decision to enter the civil service. The study also showed that most women were extremely committed and always enthusiastic about their work; they were keen to advance their career. The problem that they are facing is for dual responsibility. They have to look after their families as well as be responsive to their jobs. Women civil servants therefore, face difficulties to serve in the rural areas due to family responsibilities. Men, who serve in similar positions, are able to work in the field positions that influence their promotion prospects. Men see

themselves as superior officers and they have negative attitudes towards women; therefore, the survey found that women civil servants perceive a higher degree of discrimination.

A study undertaken by Begum and Ahmed, (2002) recognized that women are few in numbers in civil service but their performance is good. The total respondents of that study were 102, comprising female and male civil servants, and some members of civil society. Among them 30 women had field experience and 26 (86%) of them opined that they can work in field very efficiently. But the study did not give any explanation of that statement. The study reveals that women civil servants consider absence of congenial working environment is the main problem at their workplaces.

Mahtab, (2007) in her study identified various problems of women working in diverse occupations. Her work stated that women are working mostly at the bottom of the hierarchy. The study finds that gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the working environment are the two major problems that every working women faces in Bangladesh. Institutional culture is male biased and it restrains women to participate in decision making. In addition, supportive mechanism among women is also lacking. There is no congenial atmosphere for women to work together as a group for common interest. The study identified another constraint faced by professional women is the “maternal wall.” Career opportunities become limited for them after having children. Low paid working women suffer from health hazards due to stressful and unhealthy working environment. Career women also experience health problems. This is due to stress from overload, work-family-conflict, child rearing, etc. All these adversities lead women to lower level of performance, poor satisfaction with job and life, which ultimately affect their career prospects.

Jahan’s research (2007) pointed out that gender mainstreaming in Bangladesh civil service is already included in our policy agenda. Still women in Bangladesh are facing problems. Collecting data from 22 women government officials the research pointed out some problems of women civil servants:

- Women do not like transferable job, because they want to stay with their families.
- Cultural heritage of Bangladesh persuades or supports that women should give priority to family responsibilities than career.



- Lack of child care facility, non-cooperation of male colleagues and family members, absence of appropriate and supportive environment in the workplace, superiority complex and negative attitudes of the male colleagues and lack of security are the other problems that women civil servants of Bangladesh generally face.

Therefore, the researcher made some recommendations to ensure equitable representation of women in Bangladesh civil service. These are - full utilization of women's' quota, enforcement of women's' quota at the lateral entry level, putting more emphasis on quality female education, transfer of women civil servants considering their spouses' working stations, establishment of working women's hostel, establishment of day care centre in or around workplace, providing residential and transport facilities, extension of maternity leave from four month to six months, bringing attitudinal change among the superior authority, colleagues and family members and to create cooperative attitude towards women.

We can summarize the main observations of these researches as,

- The presence of women at the higher level is low.
- General attitude of the society is that, women are suitable only for certain stereotype jobs.
- Performance of women in their services is good.
- Absence of friendly working environment is a common problem.
- Working women have to play dual role; job and household chore.
- Gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the working environment are the two major problems of working women.
- Lack of cooperation from family and colleagues are the other areas of concern.
- Quota reserved for women is not being utilized properly.
- Finally, the problems and challenges of working women are deep-rooted in the traditional image of women.

So far, no serious and in-depth study has been undertaken to assess and examine the social, operational and functional problems of women working at the field level. This study, therefore, would attempt to fill in a significant gap in the literature of field level administrative issues.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Research**

The main objective of this study is to examine the problems faced by the field level women civil servants of Bangladesh. In this regard the study concentrates on the natures and types of the problems that woman officials are facing; the causes and the consequences of such problems. Based on the empirical findings, the study attempted to propose some policy or operational guidelines.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

This study aims to answer some questions regarding the problems of women civil servants engaged in the field administration. The answers of these questions will expose the reality in the field administration and will open up the way of addressing the same. These questions are:

1. What types of problems women civil servants are facing at the field level?
2. What are the reasons and the consequences of such problems?

#### **1.6 Significance of the Research**

There is no significant study conducted in Bangladesh highlighting the problems of field level women civil servants of Bangladesh which is the prime area of this study. Lack of attention in this area is a major driving force to conduct this study. It is anticipated that it will give some policy inputs to make field level working environment women friendly. In addition, the future researchers will obtain some idea to carry out research in this field.

The research findings will be useful in following ways:

- It will provide way to understand societal values and attitudes towards career women with special focus on their family members and the rural people of the field level.
- It will be helpful to identify the nature of problems, their influence and consequences.

It will bridge the knowledge gaps of government initiatives and existing reality to ensure mainstreaming of women in Bangladesh civil service.

## **1.7 Scope of the Study**

The study was designed to investigate the problems faced by women civil servants working in the field. Therefore, the study population was the women civil servants, working at the field level. Besides, some experts on the issues related to women and women's rights activists and some ex-UNOs were also interviewed. The women civil servants were interviewed using a questionnaire as well as in-depth interviews were conducted on selected issues. Though the study focused on the problems of the field level women civil servants, the issue was approached from a point of view of cultural theory of Hofstede (Hofstede, 2005). He categorizes cultures according to their level of power distance, masculinity-femininity, and individualism-collectivism and uncertainty avoidance. Therefore, the problems were analyzed using those indicators in the context of cultural environment of Bangladesh. It was a limited scale academic study to explore the situation of women civil servants at the field using very limited resources. Therefore, its policy implication is also limited but it is expected that it will shed light on some unexplored areas that will lead to more intensive and in-depth research. Then it will come up with policy recommendations.

## **1.8 Methodology**

A combination of content analysis, survey and case study method was used in this study to take advantage of their respective strengths and overcome limitations of others. It also helped to reduce bias of any single method. Combination of these three methods was expected to be a reliable tool for the study.

“Content analysis method critically and objectively reviews the published or printed facts, figures, opinions, observations, generalizations in the light of its content value (Aminuzzaman, 1991:35).” Therefore, it is helpful to give good insight about the research topic from the secondary sources. Content analysis acts as a base and directs the research in a proper direction.

The case study helps to examine the complex situation and combination of factors involved in that situation so as to identify the causal factors operating (Gopal, 1964). “It enables us to explore, unravel and understand problems, issues and relationships (Aminuzzaman, 1991: 43).” The problems faced by women public servants are not isolated issues; those are derived

from complex interplay of factors – historical, cultural, soci-economic, administrative and attitudinal (Jahan, 2007). So, “... through study of cases it became possible to abstract the properties which are common to, or typical of, many cases from those which are peculiar only to the exceptional cases (Aminuzzaman, 1991:43),” with special focus on women civil servants. The use of case study method provides an opportunity for relating facts and concepts, reality and hypothesis (Wievioka, 1992). Another reason for choosing it is that “it is a holistic approach” in which cases are studied as wholes (Regin, 1987).

The reason behind using survey method was that “it is probably the best method available to the social scientists interested in collecting original data and this enables the researcher to identify not only the variables which are related to each other but also how these relationships change over time ( Aminuzzaman, 1991:39).” The topic is intensely related to social values, norms, culture and tradition and people’s attitude towards women professionals. Indeed, these phenomena are not fixed and those vary from person to person, cadre to cadre and from region to region. So survey helped to reach a larger sample with limited resource and time and facilitated reliable generalization for this exploratory research. In addition, as the sample was highly educated, it was expected that questionnaire survey will be very useful to generate high quality data.

### **1.9 Sources of Data**

The study was carried out with the women civil servants working in the field levels; that means at the upazila or lower levels of administrative units apart from the headquarters. It is notable that among 28 cadres of Bangladesh civil service, some services do not have any field posting; where as in some services there is no women at the upazila level. Respondents were selected from different upazilas and different cadres where women officials had field experiences. Civil servants from 7 cadres: education, administration, health, family planning, agriculture, fisheries and one from postal department were selected for the study. The woman who belonged to postal cadre was posted at district level, but purposively included in the sample because she worked in most of the districts (61) and almost 80 upazilas of Bangladesh. As a result, she had outstanding experiences about the field. Total 64 samples constituted the study population. Purposive sampling was used to select officials from different regions.

### 1.10 Description of the Study Population

For the analysis of the research questions, a sample survey was drawn in addition to interviews, review of contents and secondary information. The population was drawn from the members of 7 different cadres. Table 1 shows the distribution.

**Table 1: Cadre wise Distribution of Sample**

Cadre	Frequency	Percent
Education	27	42.19
Administration	15	23.44
Health	9	14.06
Family Planning	8	12.5
Agriculture	3	4.67
Fisheries	1	1.56
Postal	1	1.56

Source: Field Survey

*n=64*

It is found from Table 1 that most of the respondents (42%) were from education cadre, followed by administration 23%, health 14.5%, family planning 12.9% and agriculture 5%. Largest numbers of women in the sample were Lecturers (39%), followed by Upazila Family Planning Officers (13%), Assistant Commissioners, (10%), UNOs (8%), Assistant Surgeons (6.5%), etc.

**Table 2: Age of the Respondents**

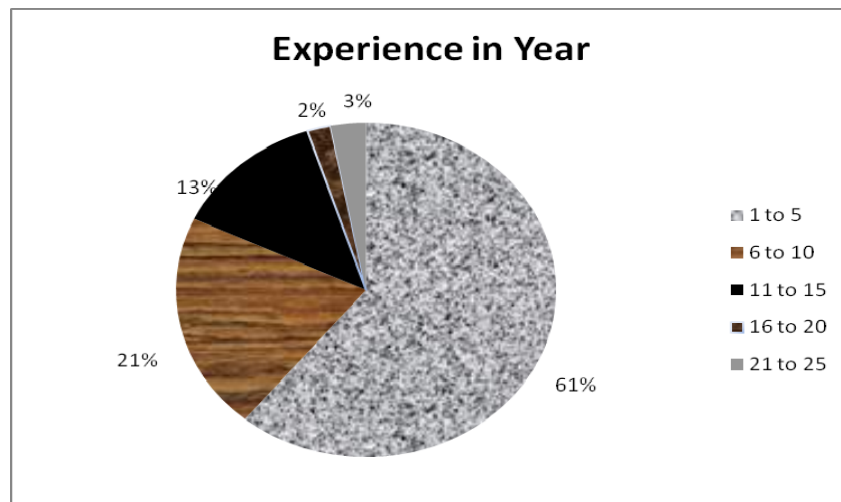
Age	Frequency	Percent
Below 30	4	6.3
30~35	44	68.8
36~40	8	12.5
41~45	4	6.3
46~50	2	3.1
Above 50	2	3.1

Source: Field Survey.

*n= 64*

Table 2 expresses the ages of the respondents. The maximum numbers of respondents (69%) were in the 30 -35 years age group. 12.5% respondents were from 36~40 age group.

**Figure 1: Experience of the Respondents in year**



Source: Field Survey

*n* = 64

Figure 1 shows that among all the samples 61% had 1-5 years experience in the civil service; 21% have 6-10 years, 13 % have 11-15 years and 5% have more than 15 years service length. Average experience/ length of service of the sample were 79.6 months equivalent to 6 years 7 months.

**Table 3: Profession of Husband**

Profession of Husband	Frequency	Percent
Govt. Service	11	17.19
Service (Banking, NGO, Private Service)	28	43.75
Doctor	6	9.34
Teacher	8	12.5
Engineer	1	1.56
Business	3	4.69
PhD student	1	1.56
Did not Response	1	1.56
Not Applicable	5	7.81

Source: Field Survey

*n* = 64

Background of the respondents reveals that as many as 44% of their husbands were from service holders of which 17% were from government employees. Others are teachers, (12.5%), doctors (9%), etc.

**Table 4: Arrangement of Accommodation in Field**

Accommodation	Frequency	Percent
With husband and children	26	44.1
With children	10	16.9
With someone from father's house	3	5.1
Alone	15	25.4
With female colleagues	5	8.5

Source: Field Survey

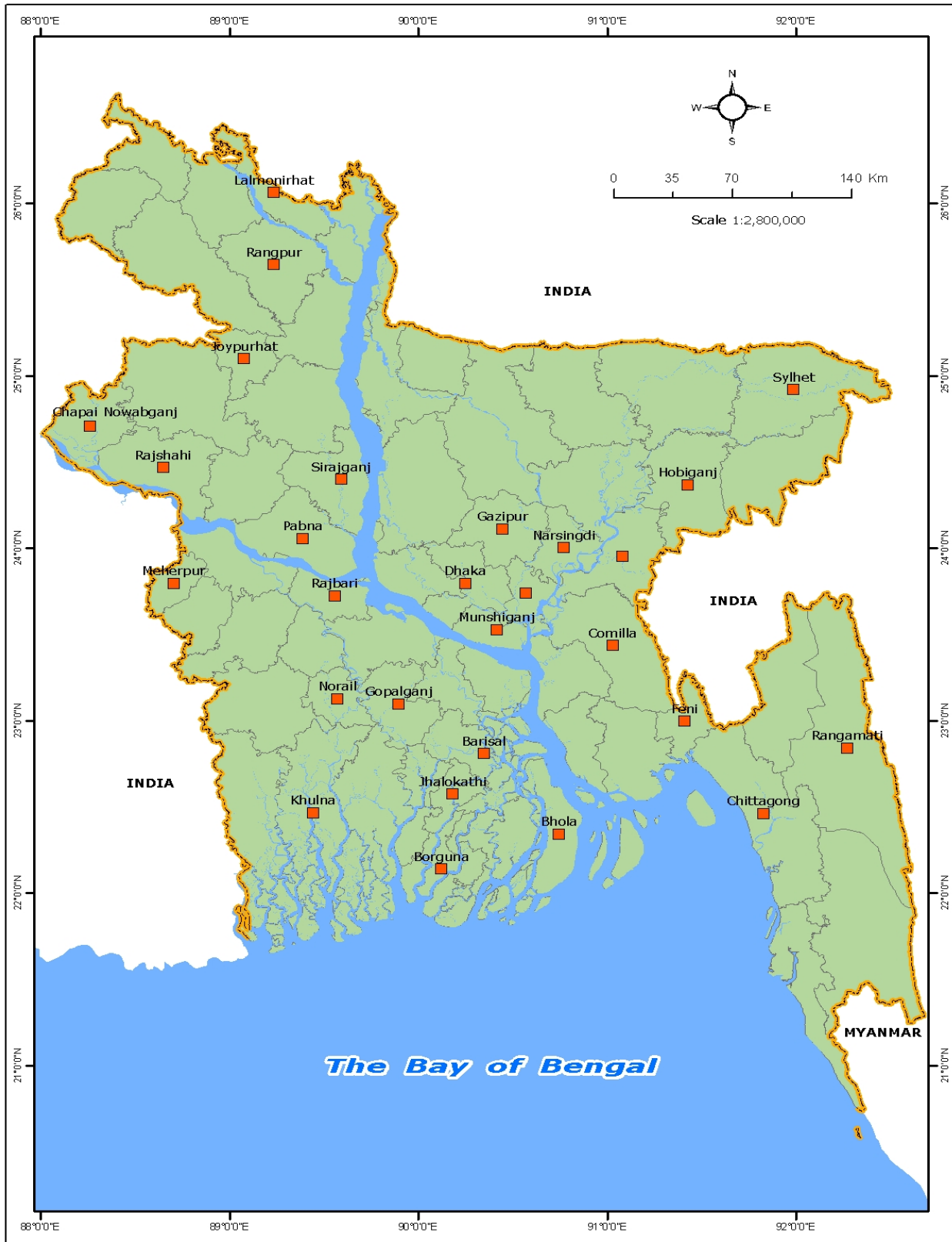
*n=64*

Table 4 presents the arrangements of accommodation of the respondents. Only 44% women civil servants lived with their family including husband and children and about 17% were living with children only. 25% of them lived alone and 8.5% lived with their female colleagues. It is to be noted that out of 64 respondents 59 (92%) were married. 4 of them were single and one was a widow.

#### **1.11 Area Covered:**

The respondents of this study were scattered over a geographical area of 48 upazilas in 28 districts. At the district level Brahmonbaria and Narayanganj shared the leading position with 15.3% of total respondents from there. The next positions were taken by Dhaka 10.2%, Comilla got 6.8%, and Rajshahi 5.1%. Figure 2 shows the study area:

Figure 2: Study Area





## **1.12 Techniques of Data Collection**

Data were collected during February—March 2010. Both primary and secondary methods of data collection were used.

**1.12 (a) Primary Data:** Two methods were used to collect primary data. These are: questionnaire survey and in-depth interview.

*Questionnaire survey:* Data were collected through questionnaire from 64 women civil servants having field experience. The questions were both open and close ended. Some parts of it were designed to get opinions and comments on specific issues from the research participants. Close ended questions were used to save time and open ended questions to get in-depth knowledge and insight; as well as personal experiences and observations.

*Interview:* Primary data were also collected through interview. Interviews were taken by the researcher. Interviews of some experienced persons were taken. For example, former civil servants, especially with field experience, experts like gender specialist, academician working on women issue, etc. Interviews were based on an interview guide. But a number of issues popped up during interview and were discussed. The participants were encouraged to tell their own story and experiences, which allowed further understanding of the phenomenon. As the respondents had high prestige and power in the society, an open but formal approach was maintained.

### **1.12 (b) Secondary Data:**

Secondary data were used for the reanalysis of previously collected and analyzed data. “There are some clear advantages to working with an existing body of data, including cost, time and making difficult populations accessible (Punch, 1998: 107).” In this study, the use of books, journals, reports, some official’s records and documents were some of the most important sources of data.

The books and published documents relevant to the study collected from various sources are - Mohila Parishod (A Human Rights Organization); Library, Women for Women, (Research Organization ); Central Library, Dhaka University; Library, Nari Grantha Probortona ( A

Women Organization) ; Seminar, Department of Women Studies, Dhaka University; Central Library, Dhaka University; Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre; Ministry of Women and Children Affairs; Resource Centre, Master in Public Policy and Governance (MPPG) Program, Department of General and Continuing Education, North South University, etc.

### **1.13 Validation of Data**

130 questionnaires were distributed but some of the participants did not return those. From the returned questionnaires only 64 were found useful for the study after scrutiny and selected for analysis.

The researcher distributed and collected the questionnaire from the respondents personally by visiting fields. Some of the questionnaires were also distributed by mail. Whenever needed, responses were cross-checked with the respondents over telephone. Interviews and discussions were conducted by the researcher as well. In case of content analysis, principle of authenticity and objectivity was maintained. So data were credible and reliable as possible.

### **1.14 Data Processing and Analysis**

The data were processed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Quantitative analysis was done using statistical tools such as SPSS. Quantitative method was used to generalize and identify prevalence from the data provided by the respondents. Qualitative method was used to explain the significant phenomena, causalities, social realities and experiences. But it was not intended to test any theory. This is the best way to get the insiders perspectives, the actor's definition of the situation and the meanings people attach to things and events. They are well able to deal with the complexity of social phenomena (Punch, 1998). Therefore, both methods complemented each-other in the research.

### **1.15 Operational Definitions of Different Concepts Used in the Study**

Different concepts have been used in the study, following are the operational definitions.

*Problem:* In simple term problem is deviation from standard, which have a common and regular trend and which has effects in normal course of activity. In the proposed study the word problem has been used to mean the difficulties and adverse situations those women officers face during their stay in the field. These problems may arise from both internal and external sources in their workplaces.

*Field:* Generally field means places outside the (administrative) centers that is closer to the community. There are four units in the field administration in Bangladesh namely division, district, upazila, and union. Divisions are the apex units in field administration consist of several districts. Currently there are seven administrative divisions in Bangladesh Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet and Rangpur. Districts consist of several upazilas and there are 64 districts in Bangladesh. Upazilas are composed of several unions and there are 490 upazilas and at the lowest, unions are composed of several villages. By ‘field level’ the study attempts to specify the workplace which is situated at upazila and where women officers have direct relationship and communication with the people from the community.

*Women civil servant:* All the respondents of this study are the women who belong to the Bangladesh civil service, working at upazila. Generally, any citizen with a minimum of graduation degree of 21 to 30 years is eligible for entering in the Bangladesh civil service. The age limit is relaxed from 21 to 32 years for Freedom Fighter's Children and Health cadre and also for tribal candidates (for only general education cadre) (<http://www.bpsc.gov.bd/index.php?pid=1039>). And the length of service is till 57 years of an officer's age.

Consequently, the age limit of women cadre officers of this study mainly ranges from that level. All of them are graduates and citizen of Bangladesh according to the service rules.

### **1.16 Problems of Data Collection**

- All the respondents were very busy. It was quite difficult to collect data from them. Specially for taking interviews, schedules have been changed several times.
- The documentation system of the government is not systematic. It took huge time to get relevant data. It was also very difficult to get permission to enter into the secretariat and collect information. Getting relevant information was a very tough job. Use of informal connections was helpful in this regard.
- Some of the questions were related to the personal experiences; so, it was not very easy to get answers for those. To convince the respondents to get adequate response was a big challenge.
- It was found that some of the respondents were very reluctant to talk. However, some others were very cordial; they spend much time on entertainment than giving answer that was also counterproductive. Several respondents could not respond because of their engagement in household affairs and workload; while some of them still managed enough time though they were very busy.
- Time to conduct the research was very limited because the research was conducted only on the women civil servants working at upazila. Some remote places were not included due to time constraints. To visit all the places were also not possible. So the researcher had to depend on mail and telephone. Resources were also limited.

However, the overall period of data collection was a memorable one. It gave the researcher an opportunity to visit many parts of Bangladesh and know about the problems of field-level women civil servants irrespective of their cadre, position, age and peoples attitude towards professional women. It was a privilege for the researcher that the population was qualified and the researcher did not face communication problem in collecting information from the sample. The data collection period, therefore, was interesting.

## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the study. Initially it tries to provide a theoretical base of the research topic and then gives operational definitions of the variables and indicators.

### 2.1 Cultural Theory – Geert Hofstede

The research topic can be illustrated in the light of Geert Hofstede's (Hofstede, 2005) "cultural theory". According to cultural theory there are four dimensions of culture, as – power distance, collectivism versus individualism, masculinity versus femininity and uncertainty avoidance.

#### *Power distance*

Power distance can be defined as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. (Hofstede, 2005: 46)." In small power distance countries there is limited dependence of subordinate on superiors and there is a preference for consultation. On the contrary, in large power distance countries, there is dependent relationship among superior-subordinates. Superiors can impose their opinion on subordinates. Common belief here is that, powerful should get extra privilege.

#### *Collectivism versus individualism*

To explain collectivism versus individualism, Hofstede mentioned that the vast majority of people in our world live in societies in which the interest of the group prevails over the interests of the individual. These societies are termed as collectivist. Individualist society is, in which the interest of individual prevail over the interests of the groups. "Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose; everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's life time continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 2005:76)."

According to Hofstede, power distance and individualism is negatively correlated. The large power distance societies are more collectivist and small power distance societies are individualist.

#### *Masculinity versus femininity*

“A society is called masculine when gender roles are clearly distinct: men are supposed to be decisive, tough, and focused on material success, where as women are supposed to be modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life (Hofstede, 2005:120).” The predominant pattern is for men to be more assertive and for women to be nurturing. Careers are compulsory for men and optional for women. Thus, there is a lower share of working women in professional jobs. In a feminine society both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life.

#### *Uncertainty avoidance*

“Uncertainty avoidance is defined as the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations (Hofstede, 2005: 167).” A weak uncertainty avoidance culture belief that uncertainty is a normal course of life and each day is accepted as it comes. On the contrary, uncertainty avoiding cultures shun ambiguous situation. This feeling is, among other things, expressed through nervous stress and a need for predictability. This dimension admits that, what is different is dangerous. Uncertainty can be minimized through technology, rules and religion. All the dimension of culture is deeply rooted in all members of the society.

## **2.2 Management Culture of Bangladesh: Hofstede’s Framework**

A study undertaken by (Aminuzzaman, 1993) observed that in Bangladesh public bureaucracy is perceived as a highly specialized and powerful institution. It is the backbone of government services and plays key role in the policy making and delivery of programme. Very aware about its power and influence, the bureaucracy, in fact, venture far beyond its legitimate authority. Culturally, Bangladeshi society shows features of a conservative society. Behavior and culture of individuals and institutes here are governed by traditional values. Living in such a society, “The management behavior and attitude of the senior managers of Bangladesh public administration system is merely reactive rather than pro-active. It is also

observed that managers are risk averse and to a large extent subjective in their attitude (Aminuzzaman, 1993:103-104).” This was reflected in a study conducted in Bangladesh.

**Table 5: Four Dimensions of Management Culture of Sampled Managers**

Dimensions	Score		Mean	Remarks
	Ministries	Public Corporations		
Power Distance	75	65	70	High Power Distance
Individualism	24	26	25	Low Individualism
Uncertainty Avoidance	72	68	68	High Uncertainty Avoidance
Masculinity	42	54	48	Moderate Masculinity

Source: Aminuzzaman, 1993

It was evident in the survey that on an average, Bangladeshi Managers scored high on power distance and uncertainty avoidance index. On the other hand they scored moderately in masculinity index and a relatively low on individualism index. On the other hand, they have registered a moderate score on masculinity index and a relatively a low score individualism index.

It appears from the table that managers from the ministries show a relatively higher index score of power distance and uncertainty avoidance as against the managers of the public corporations. There are also slight variations in scores between these two groups of managers in terms of individualism and masculinity index. It can be generally concluded from that study that managers in ministries tend to maintain a relatively high power distance and have a tendency to avoid uncertainty as compared to the managers of the public corporations.

### **2.3 Cultural Theory—A Framework**

The cultural theory is highly relevant and comparable to explain the phenomena in extensive manner. It is mentioned in the literature review part that the previous researches

recommended that the causes of the problems that faced by women civil servants are deeply rooted in the mind set of the people.

The cultural theory is related to the proposed study in the following ways:

Women civil servants of the field are entrusted with power and authority; still it does not always help to feel them empowered. Deep-rooted mindset sometimes compels women officials to assume that they belong to powerless group. “.... because of social taboos about the role of women in society, women generally perceive that they have only a limited role to play in government and administration (Zafarullah, 2000).” “Prejudicial attitude of employers and co-workers makes women shun challenging careers (Khan, 1988:67).” Additionally, Bangladesh does not have glorious history of decentralization. The following paragraph depicts this claim evidently.

“Bangladesh is a country with a tradition of over 100 years of decentralized local government structure. Surprisingly, it could not achieve the expected level of decentralization and people’s participation despite her 100-year’s effort.” (Ahmed: 1987:1)

Consequently, while working at the periphery, the field level officers believe they do not possess power and authority like central ministries. Moreover, field offices lack logistic support and manpower as well. So field level women civil servants tend to depend on the centre; follow their decisions without questioning. So, Power distance has become rule of the game in Bangladesh civil service.

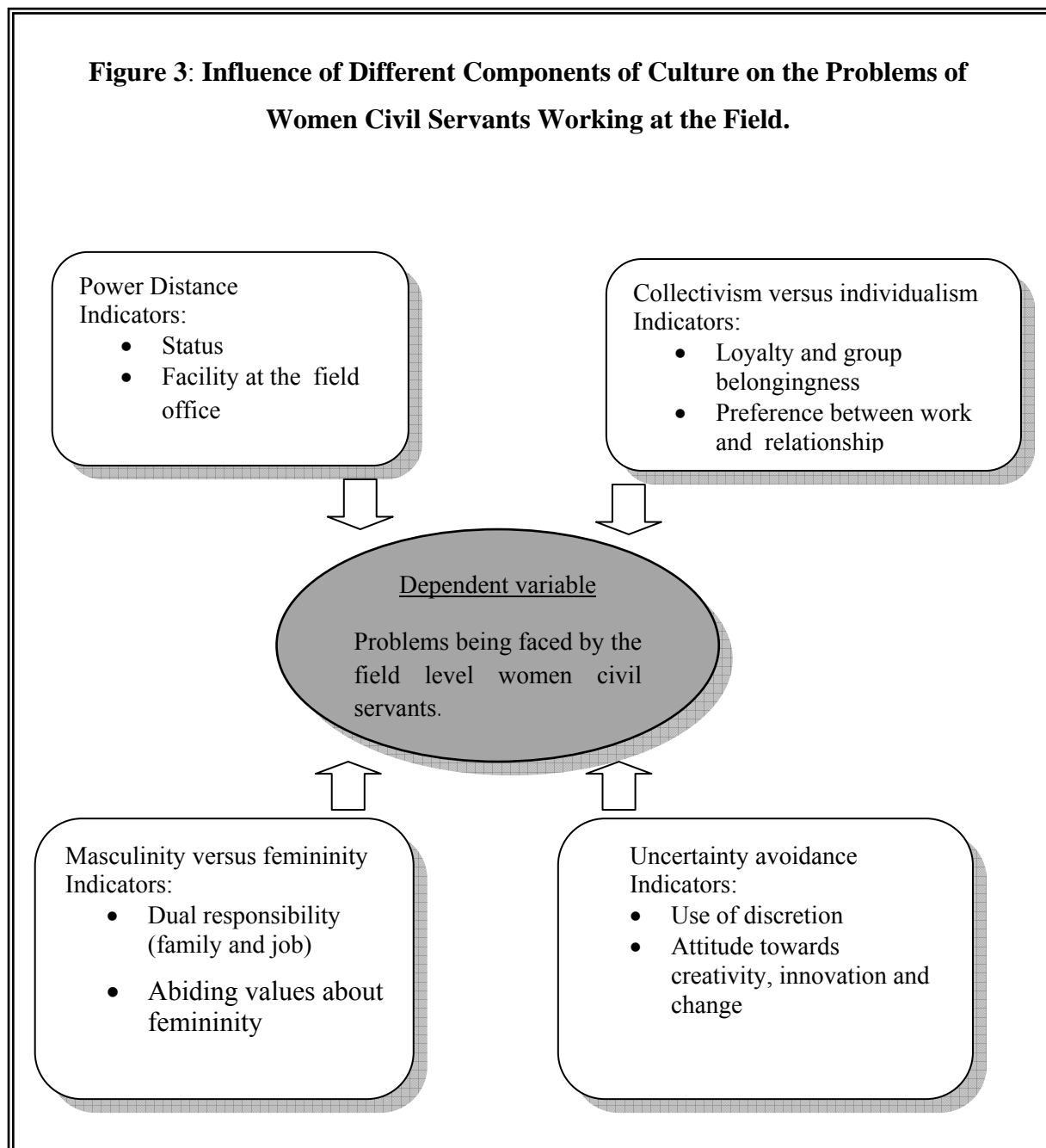
Women working at the field mostly live without their families. In a collective society like Bangladesh there is a belief that members of a society will protect each other. Staying alone in a remote place, leaving family, friends and colleagues, women may consider that there is nobody to protect them. Such sense of insecurity is a big challenge. In addition, as a member of collectivist society women have to compromise with career for the sake of family; for example, they sometimes forgo promotion or in extreme case, leave job to avoid field level posting. Glen and Walter (1966) suggested that the attitudes of the employed women’s husband, children, and friends also influenced their plan for participation in employment. As women civil servants are the members of large power distance and masculine society, they accept subordination of their male family members to maintain harmony.



Masculine culture is very much prevalent in Bangladesh. Women are portrayed as soft-hearted, and humble. The people in general expect they should consider domestic work as their primary duty, and career as secondary. Thus women officials working at the field, failed to discharge all the household activities expected by their families. “Women receive the message that home and family are of paramount importance and jobs are secondary to home and family obligations regardless of occupational qualifications. They are socialized to abandon careers if conflict with family needs arise (Ilays, 1997: 39).” Therefore, women civil servants who are posted in remote areas face problems in two different ways, firstly, they need to make good time management to satisfy their family members, and secondly, they have to take prompt decision in office to prove their competence.

Tendency of uncertainty avoidance implies, a person feel threatened by unknown situation. It is, more or less accepted that the bureaucratic culture is rule bound. Bangladesh is not an exception to this. Potency to go against the wind is rare here. Most of the members look for certainty and security. A study conducted by Ferdaus Jahan (2006) pointed out that job security is the most important factor to encourage people to join the civil service. Women working at the grass root belong to the same bureaucratic culture. Field level office environment, people, as well as the region all are unknown to the women civil servants; which make them insecure and scary. Therefore, they feel endangered to face unpredictable problems and are likely to maintain status quo, which stand on the way to be innovative and creative.

The figure below expresses how the problems of field level women civil servants (as dependent variable) are influenced by components of cultural theory. (As independent variables).



## **2.4 Operational Definition of Dependent Variable and Indicators**

### *Dependent variable (problems):*

Dependant variables are variables dependant on other variables for its value. If the values of those variables change, the value of dependant variable also changes. In this study, dependant variable is problems faced by the women at the field level. It is dependent on the level of power distance, masculinity or femininity, individualism or collectivism and tendency to face uncertainty in the society. These independent variables are measurable by the following indicators.

All the indicators that have been used in the research are coherent with Hofstede's cultural indicators. However, for better understanding, an attempt has been made here to give operational definitions of the indicators.

### *Status:*

Status generally means a person's position in the social life. As Bangladesh is a large power distance society, here social status comes from family, land, caste, property etc. Status is not related to performance; rather it depends on family background. It is said that, "skills, wealth, power and status should go together" and "Power is based on tradition or family, charisma, and the ability to use force (Hofstede, 2005:67)." Here women belong to lower status than men. Islam (1997) in her study mentioned that when an unmarried woman gets a job decision comes from her father or brother. In absence of male members mostly sister's husband gives final decision. In case of married women, husband is the sole person to take decision. So, the general belief is that men are privileged than women. And centre is superior to field. This entrenched outlook is a major reason to consider field level women civil servant as lower status officials.

### *Facility at the field office:*

Public sector in Bangladesh is strictly hierarchic; power is centralized. Decisions are generally taken centrally and imposed on the field. The field offices suffer from acute shortage of manpower, logistics and other working conditions.

*Loyalty and group belongingness:*

Unquestioning loyalty and consensus to the decisions of extended family, in-group relationship, is considered as an important factor in a collectivist society like Bangladesh. Collective interests prevail over individual interest and private life is ignored by groups. Accordingly, women are sometimes compelled to sacrifice their career for the sake of their families. All these are to uphold collective interest and to maintain harmony with their social group.

*Preference between work and relationship:*

Opinions are predetermined by groups. Women sometimes try to take posting in places previously known to them and their family members. Using informal relationship to get posting in convenient locations and using social networks to know about the environment of the local area is also not unusual. As working areas are selected within the coverage of social networks, they are surrounded by relatives, friends and acquaintances. This may create impediment on their way to be professional. Heginbotham (1975) in his book pointed out that public officials of this subcontinent maintain strong ties of interest with family or caste to maintain abuses.

*Dual responsibility:*

In Bangladesh context, socio-culturally, women's first priority is domestic responsibility. Those, who are allowed to work outside, it is assumed that they will also fulfill their responsibility to their families. So, women working outside, holding important positions, are expected to do the household chores as well. If they fail to give adequate time and attention that is expected by their family members, it is considered as negligence. Therefore, they always have to put extra effort to maintain both domestic and professional responsibilities. This makes their work more stressful.

*Abiding the values about femininity:*

The existing gender values are that: the women are tender and modest. They are not tough like men (Hofstede, 2005). At job they are usually not given challenging assignments they deserve; as well as logistic support they need. They are sometimes underestimated or in extreme cases exploited. It is expected that they will not raise their voices. If raise, they could be managed in one way or other. They can be easily instructed. They will not go for any

confrontation. Sometimes some unofficial instructions or unfair remarks or proposals are given to them expecting that they will not protest and will not be arrogant.

*Use of discretion:*

Use of Discretion in this study implies, exercise of delegated power that is usable only in exceptional circumstances. Bureaucracy is over developed in South Asian region (Alavi, 1972). This overdeveloped bureaucracy is rule bound, over-centralized, and inefficient (Zafarullah, 1998). Therefore, risk taking and use of discretion is found very unusual. Women civil servants, as a member of that rule bound bureaucracy, feel unconfident to exercise discretionary power to meet exceptional circumstances at the field.

*Attitude towards change, innovation, creativity:*

Jahan's study (2006) brought up that, the civil servants found the job environment too rigid to allow anyone to do something creative. "Taking initiative and coming up with creative ideas is not well appreciated (Jahan, 2006: 21)." Being a large power distance society, the field offices are dependent on the center and to some extent are neglected. Consequently, the field officers, specifically women officers always expect directions and accordingly unwilling to take innovative steps.

## **CHAPTER 3: WOMEN IN BANGLADESH CIVIL SERVICE: AN OVERVIEW**

This chapter presents the situation of women in civil service of Bangladesh. It looks at the present scenario, as well as at the history of Bangladesh civil service and its inclusion of women.

### **3.1 Women in Civil Service of Bangladesh**

Bangladesh Civil service is the direct inheritor of the British colonial administration. It was started in 1601 as merchant service in British East-India Company; later turned into the state administration but there is no clear date of this transition (Emazuddin, 1994). The company staffs who were not involved in military affairs were classified as Civil Servants (Malley, 1931). By 1765 the designation “Civil Servant” was well established. From around 1878 the civil Service of India was established and employees started to use the ICS designation (Phinstone, 1989). The Indian civil Service was not the exact service that worked for the state and king in Europe; rather it was an elite colonial cadre that served as an extension of colonial rule in India. So, they did not only work in administration but also in judiciary and government policy making at the highest level. Bangladesh civil Service derived from the Indian civil service through Pakistan civil Service. Till 1935 there was no woman serving in the Indian Civil Service (Begum and Ahmed, 2002).

Situation did not change much in Pakistan Civil Service, only few cadres like audit and accounts, income tax and postal service were open for women; yet they had to give undertaking during appointment that they will resign from the post if they marry or remarry. Civil Service was only for single women. They were not eligible for all Pakistan service or Central Superior Service. Most of the important services in Pakistan did not have any woman employee (Haque and Bala, 1988).

There were negative attitudes against the preferential treatment of the women in Civil Service in Pakistan period. The 1970 reform commission criticized the idea of quota system on the ground that it will “restrict the range of selection to mediocres in preference to the brighter ones” (Zafarullah, 2000: 104).

After liberation in 1971 Bangladesh civil service was born. In 1980 reform, there were 14 cadres and 22 sub-cadres. It was changed into 30 cadres in 1987 and very recently it is rearranged as 28 cadres. It opened the service for the women. But till 1980 there were no woman in administration, judicial, postal and communication cadre; only 1 woman was in revenue department of finance division, 4 women were in the Foreign Service and 6 women were in information department but by 1986 it reached at 1417 (Haque and Bala, 1988). Data from 1994 to 2002 shows that there were only 2 Joint Secretaries, 8 Deputy Secretaries in the civil service (Mahtab, 2007).

**Table 6: Representations of Women at Different Levels of Civil Service**

Position	Male	Female
Secretary	53	0
Additional Secretary	59	0
Joint Secretary	257	2
Deputy Secretary	658	8
Assistant Secretary	594	23

Ministry of Establishment, 1998-2002; adapted from N. Mahtab, 2007; page- 59.

Women have been regularly recruited in all cadres of the Bangladesh Civil Service since 1982. The quota system was fully operationalized in the 1980s (Kabir, 2008). Initially, 10% of entry level positions were reserved for women; this was later increased to 15%. The first military regime in Bangladesh in 1976 stressed the need to increase the intake of women in the public sector and carried out executive orders in that direction (Zafarullah, 2000). However, the participation of women in Bangladesh civil service is still very poor. Only 6.44% women are working in the civil service (Mahtab, 2007). Presence of women at the higher level of civil service is negligible. The presence of women at the levels of Secretary, Additional Secretary, Joint Secretary and Deputy Secretary is very rare. The Ministry of Establishment data in 2009 shows only 2 secretary, 13 Additional Secretary, 35 Joint Secretary and 169 Deputy Secretary, are working in the civil service. The following tables show a brighter trend for women in the civil service in Bangladesh; where it is evident that

not only the number of women in the service but also the number of women at the higher positions has been increasing significantly.

**Table 7: Representation of Women at Different Levels of Civil Service in 2007**

Position	Male (%)	Female (%)
Secretary	100	0
Additional Secretary	99.08	0.92
Joint Secretary	93.26	6.74
Deputy Secretary	88.39	11.61
Senior Assistant Secretary	84.43	15.57
Assistant Secretary	77.23	22.77

Source: Kabir, 2008.

**Table 8: Representation of Women at Different Levels of Civil Service in 2009**

Position	Male	Female	Male %	Female %
Secretary	52	2	96.3	3.7
Additional Secretary	162	13	92.6	7.4
Joint Secretary	995	35	96.6	3.4
Deputy Secretary	1245	169	88.0	12.0
Senior Assistant Secretary	1210	268	81.9	18.1
Assistant Secretary	716	249	74.2	25.8
Total	4380	736	85.6	14.4

Source: Ministry of Establishment, 2009; Field Work, 2010.

Women are also underrepresented in the BCS selection process. Despite the quota system, numbers of women selected in BCS are very low. Data from 1986 to 1990 shows that it has never touched 17% mark and there is no definite upward trend.



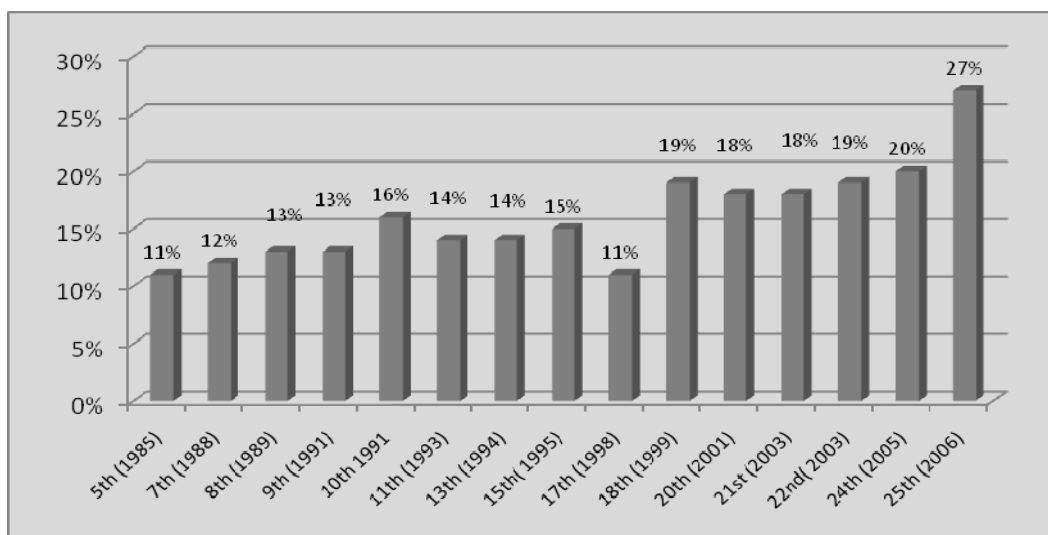
**Table 9: Percentage of Women Selected in BCS**

Year	Total candidate	Total selected	Percent of female selected
1986	33504	2117	14.55
1988	37348	1166	16.30
1989	28419	1022	11.35
1990	30677	995	13.38

Source: World Bank, 1996.

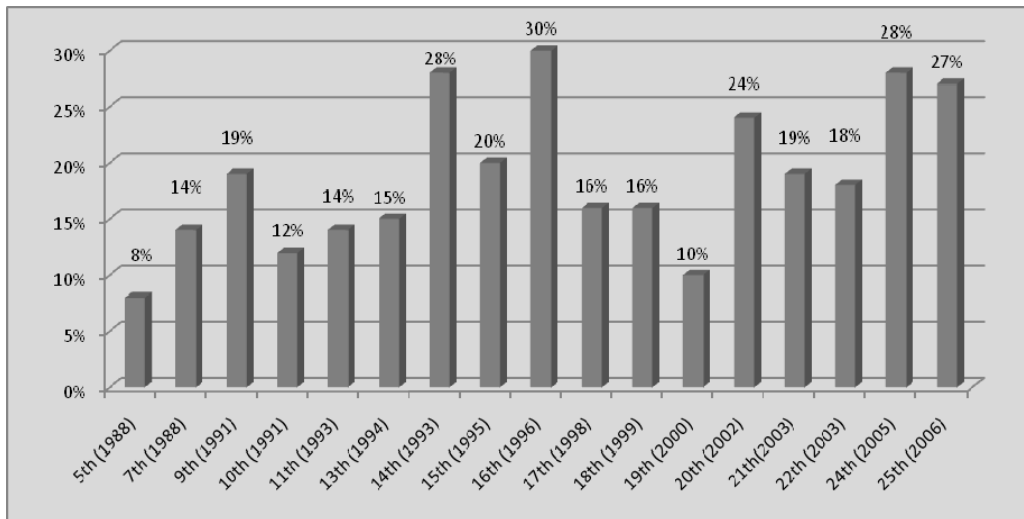
If we consider the cadre-wise distribution of men and women, then the situation will appear as even bleaker. Because most of the women are working in two cadres: general education and health (Kabir, 2008). Women started to join in other cadres just in the nineteen- nineties. “Since 18<sup>th</sup> BCS in 1998 participation of women in the examination and recruitment in the service both has increased significantly. In 18<sup>th</sup> BCS women were recruited in all the cadre services of Bangladesh civil service” (Begum & Ahmed, 2002: 67). In addition, a gradual upward trend in inclusion of women in Bangladesh civil service is visible; the figure 4 and 5 show the scenario.

**Figure 4: Representation of Women in General Cadres in BCS Exams and Years**



Source: Karim, 2007

**Figure 5: Representation of Women in Professional Cadres in BCS Exams and Years**



Source: Karim, 2007

Therefore, it is evident that women are late starters in the civil service but it was not their choice rather it was determined by the patriarchal society. Despite very late start, they are coming forward steadily and in recent years their participation in the service has been increasing gradually. Hopefully this trend will remain strong and lead to a gender parity in the service.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

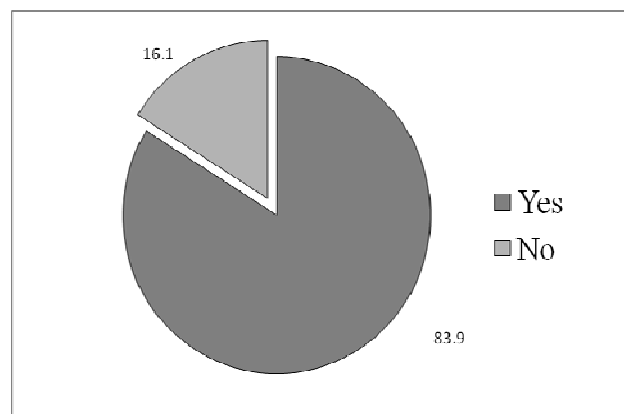
This chapter discusses the problems faced by the women civil servants during their stay at field and reasons behind those problems as well as the consequences on the basis of the study. It also examines how the cultural theory of Hofstede (Hofstede, 2005), is applicable in the context of women civil servants working in the field in Bangladesh. It is the theoretical framework that guided the investigation and find out its relevance in this context.

### 4.1 Problems Faced by the Women Civil Servants at the Field Level

It was found that the women civil servants working in the field face different problems. Some are common but many problems are unique in nature. During the study, most of the respondents (84%) noted, they face more problems when they are in the field, not in the headquarters.

**Figure 6: Perception of Problem of Working at Field Compared to Head Office**

(Q. Do you think women officials at the field-level face more problems than those at headquarters?)



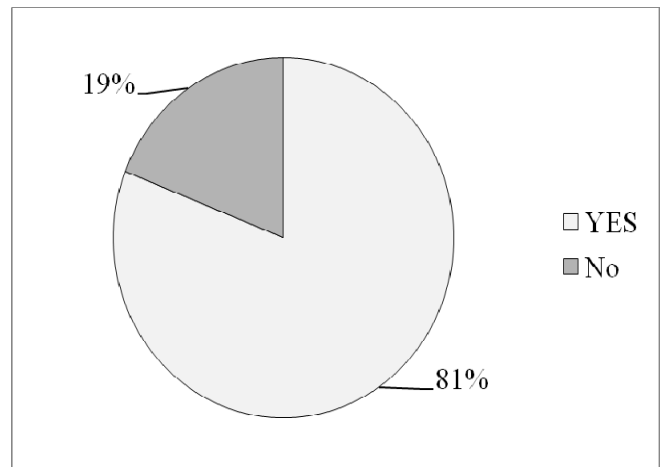
Source: Field Survey

*n=64*

Similarly, 81% of the respondents said women who are posted at the field level face more problems compared to the male officers of the field. Only 19% of them disagreed with this opinion.

**Figure 7: Perception of Problem of Working at Field Compared to Male**

(Q. Do you think women officials face more problems than men while performing duties at field?)



Source: Field Survey

n= 64

Among these problems insecurity, housing, family interference in the profession, unfriendly work place and dual responsibility of job and household chore are the most common and serious problems as noted by the respondents.

**Table 10: Perception of Safety at Work in the Field**

Do women civil servants face security problem at field?	Very much (%)	Moderately (%)	Not that much (%)	Not at all (%)
	67.2	20.3	10.9	1.6

Source: Field Survey

n=64

Women civil servants while posted in the remote places their family and friends feel unsecured. 67% of the respondents said that they feel highly unsecured during their field postings. One of the reasons is that the young ladies join in the service are not allowed by their families to move alone freely during their student life due to lack of security. That feeling of insecurity stays in their mind when they work in the field and live alone. Because, even after joining the civil service social situation does not change much to them as women. The data in the following table shows that relatively larger number of younger officers said they have more problems than the men. 81% of the respondents aged below 36 years said

that they face more problem than men. But 75% of the female civil servants older than 40 years said they face more problem.

**Table 11: Age Wise Distribution of Perception of Problem of Field**

Do women face more problems compared to the male officers of the field?	Age	Yes (%)	No (%)
	Below 30	100	-
	30~35	81.34	18.60
	36~40	62.5	37.5
	41~45	75	25
	46~50	100	-
	Above 50	100	-

Source: Field Survey

*n=64*

The issue of housing is related to the security but itself is a big issue. In the field often there is no suitable accommodation facility from the government. Finding a safe and comfortable, decent place to rent for living is even tougher. Condition of the house, distance from and communication with workplace, surrounding environment all are related to housing and sense of security for a women civil servant. Almost 84% of the sample said that they have housing problem in the field. Housing problem is acute in the field. Number of government quarters are insufficient; even the existing quarters are old and in very bad shape because of poor maintenance. There is also serious shortage of dormitories or guest houses. Existing guesthouse and dormitories lack privacy and are not suitable for women. One respondent said that she was given a room in the circuit house next to the UNO, who is male, it not considered decent for a women to live like this in our culture; so she had to leave for home every weekend. A rented house is not also an easy option. Problems such as, insecurity, lack of privacy, high rent, quality of house, increase of family income, distance, makes it impossible to find a good house. If the officer is woman and single most of the landlords are unwilling to rent house to them. If they get a house curiosity of local people becomes a nuisance. “Sometimes house is far from workplace, it becomes difficult to reach office in time and we have to face embarrassing situation or accident.” said one respondent.

**Table 12: Perception of Housing Problem at Field**

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Do women officials at the field-level experience accommodation problem?	84.1	15.9

Source: Field Survey

*n* = 64

Another very serious problem for the women civil servants is the interference of the family members in their professional life and professional decisions. A large number of respondents mentioned that they have more family responsibilities. Husband and other family members like to see them as a full time house wife. Therefore, family members of the women civil servants try to interfere in the professional matters ranging from posting to whether they will continue their job or not. The other reasons are that the surroundings and people are unfamiliar, sometimes unfriendly; they are worried that they can not get the support of their family and friends there. All these create a sense of insecurity in their mind. One respondent said, “family members of a women officer always want them in a familiar place, ----- and it is also very necessary in our societal context.”

Unfriendly work place is another problem for them. Respondent said that still our society is not ready to accept a women officer as an office chief. Women officer’s acceptability to colleagues, subordinates, authority, local people (upazila) is low. That’s why, male colleagues do not cooperate, subordinates try to evade the orders and local people try to take advantage of gender ideology. They are not ready to cooperate with women as an office chief. So, according to most of the respondents, women officials have to put extra effort to prove their competence. Almost half of the research participants (47.4%) said that they have problem with their working environment in the field.

**Table 13: Perception of Working Environment**

Do you have any problem(s) regarding working environment at your workplace?	Yes (%)	No (%)
	47.4	52.6

Source: Field Survey

*n=64*

Besides, in many field offices, privacy is a serious problem. There is no separate room for women officers; they do not have a separate prayer room, or not even a separate toilet; in some places they have to use a common toilet or toilets are in public /distance places, which is very uncomfortable for them. One respondent said, “When these field offices were established, nobody thought that one day women will work here.”

It was evident from the study that in civil service being women and being posted in the field both are disadvantageous. Both positions invite extra troubles. It is to be noted that among 64 respondents 77% commonly agreed that there is more problem for women and at field level posting. It indicates that women civil servants posted in the field have to endure greater problems. Only 11% said there is no added problem at field or being women in the civil service. In their case, they mentioned, they get enough family support to deal successfully with most of these problems. So, getting necessary support from the family is an important factor for women officials’ career. One respondent said that women can face all sorts of problems by their potentiality. Genetically they are more capable than male. Other respondent opinion “Yes, women face more problems comparing with male, but this was not happening with me and I am telling about myself.”

The other difficulties women civil servants faces in the field are negative attitude towards them, discrimination against them and unwanted situations at workplaces. 75% of the women civil servants believe that society considers that women officers as flexible in nature, and 46% opined that authority think themselves more resilient than male officers. Negative comment and behavior of male officers of different departments, non-cooperation of subordinates and people: who dishonor them, create trouble and try to get unethical facilities,

lack of proper evaluation, are big barriers for women to exercise the full authority of their position. Sometimes they have to endure negative comments from their bosses. Another civil servant said, “Even the junior officers do not greet/address the lady officers properly.” Besides, “... subordinate staff are posted in their own areas and allowed to work in the same place for a long period; they build their own syndicates there. They tend to disobey the female officers and create huge trouble for them.” The following case study supplements these observations.

### **Case Study 1**

She was working as AC land. She found that a piece of land belonged to the District Council was occupied by local people and transferred several times among different parties. She wanted to get it back for the District Council. She knew that there were two ways to proceed with the matter; one is calling the parties for hearing and another file a case on the matter. She decided that if she calls for hearing the chance to recover the land will be slim, so she filed a case and serve a notice on it. Local lawyers did not like it. There is a provision that if the decision of the AC land does not satisfy any party they can launch a case in the court. But a lawyer without following those procedures started to shout in the office. He even said that women should not be given with the responsibility of an AC Land, as well as threatened her referring to a local influential. She believes that he dared to do so because she was a woman. She overcame the situation with prudence and professionalism. Poor mentality of the so called influential local people could not bother her. But she was surprised when she discovered that the same mentality was possessed by her superior. In a formal meeting he openly told the same thing about field level women officers. She became vocal and expressed her disagreement. The result was terrible. He took it seriously and became hostile to her. He sent her to visit remote areas in vulnerable physical conditions during pregnancy, though there was scope of alternative arrangements. Still she carried out all her duties sincerely. Those pressures could not do any harm to her baby though there was serious risk of that. But during that period she was in serious mental pressure.

The situation become even challenging as women have to bear the “double burden” of professional responsibilities as a government officer along with the expectations of the family members. Their family members expect that their primary responsibility as women is to take care of the family and to fulfill the domestic and social obligations regardless of their official workloads. So, usually they have to take dual responsibilities at home and at office as well as



double workloads. Some of the respondents refused promotion because after promotion they had to go to the upazila. One of them said that it will have serious implication in her career but her mother in law is sick, son will attend secondary examination. So, it is very important for her to stay at home. Her husband could not maintain the household.

The women at the field are also subjected to discrimination against their male colleagues. They often get less important desk job that does not allow achieving their potentials. Their seniors and colleagues give them less importance in work place; they have limited opportunity of active participation; and they are dominated by the male officers who are usually more connected with the authority. One College Lecturer who belongs to Education cadre said, “They do not give opportunity of active participation, dishonor us rather; create trouble and try to get unethical facilities. Due to adverse circumstances women officers failed to flourish.”

Women have to face some unwanted situations that male officers need not. One widow officer were being followed by a man and eventually forced to take a transfer to another place under a difficult condition. She had to request the authority for that. Some other officers experienced aggressive and outrageous comment and behavior from different quarters with obvious sexist tone that do not happen to a male officer. Additionally, a ‘*Madrasha*’ (religious school) teacher did not cooperate with a female magistrate as she is a woman. As many as 30% of the respondents faced unwanted situation while working at the field.

There are some other barriers that field level women civil servants have to encounter. Though the women officers are recruited through the same process, they are considered as less skilled professionals and always put under scrutiny. A male officer never faces such situation; their quality is proven as they pass the examinations. But the ability of a women civil servant is always questioned. These attitudes make the women civil servants put “double effort” to prove their competence in an already difficult situation. An UNO said, “Working in field is very challenging. Many unpredictable situations emerge. When a woman fails to tackle an emergency situation, it is said that there was a women officer in that place. But if a male officer fails to handle the situation, nobody says that the failure was due to his gender identity.” Another trouble they have to endure is the interference of locally influential people

and politicians. Often these vested interest groups try to make the women officers do things in their own favor. When they are not allowed to do so, these people turn against the civil servants and their retaliatory measures range from threats, spreading scandals to exerting undue pressure by the superiors. The case study presented here depicts this scenario.

### Case Study 2

Generally, posting of BCS postal cadre is at the divisional level. But at the beginning of the career they are placed in the field levels in remote areas. She took that challenge and worked in 61 districts in around 80 upazilas of Bangladesh. She has both good and bad experiences from the field. Once she was posted in Brahmanbaria district. It was 2007; one person came and claimed the ownership of an account. He wants to draw 10 lakh (0.1 million) taka deposited in the account. The account was opened in 1980, during that time authority did not ask for photographs during opening an account. So there was no photograph to identify the owner, only was to verify the signature given in the form by the account holder. She found the behavior of the man suspicious. The signature was not also same as the client put his signature earlier. But her subordinate wrote note in favor of that person. Yet she was not convinced, she challenged the person. He became annoyed and threatened her that he is a journalist and he can spoil her life. He said, "You are an unmarried woman. Tomorrow you will see some news in the newspaper against you. That will spoil your career and make your life miserable." She remained firm in the decision. At one stage he left the place. She said with grievance, "I did not give him money but could not punish the person as well."

Women civil servant face problem in taking radical step to meet emergency situation. 65% of the respondents said that the civil servants working in the field are more careful about using discretionary power compared to head office. They opined, the officers of head office are privileged group. Some respondents said that the faults in the field are readily visible. "Water falls downward; it is bit unsafe for a field officer to use discretionary power. Sometimes the superiors of head office may misunderstand and career may be spoiled. So nobody should take that risk." One respondent said. Besides, in taking innovative steps, field level women civil servants are also in an unfavorable situation. More than 88% of the respondents believe that officers working in the headquarters are in better position in proposing new plans. More

than half of the respondents in this study (57%) strongly believe that women officers working at the field face more problems in this regard.

**Table 14: Perception of Problem in Initiating New Idea**

Women civil servants at field face more problems in initiating new idea--how far is it true?	Very much (%)	Moderately (%)	Not that much (%)	Not at all (%)	Don't know (%)
	57.1	8.2	2.0	16.3	16.3

Source: Field Survey

*n=64*

A women academician in an interview with the researcher said that from child hood women are grown up within some society imposed barriers. While go to the field, they go with that mind set. Attitude of the local people and environment of the workplace reinforce this idea. So, women become more conscious, more concerned about security and acceptability. Additionally, some women are very anxious for their family. All these make them shaky; they do not want to take any exceptional step.”

One respondent noted, “My superior is a person with old mentality. He does not like to rely on women officers, openly shows doubt on the capability of women. In such a situation sharing creative idea is a far cry.” Similarly another Assistant Commissioner observed that, “Officers working in head offices are privileged group and women in the field are doubly disadvantaged”.

However, some respondents disagreed with this view and said there is lack of supervision in the field. And field officers are at liberty in performing duties compared to the officials of head office. Some of them said “Use of discretionary power or tendency to be innovative depends on the personal traits of an individual; the question of field office and head office or men and women is immaterial here.”

Women officials at field level face problems not only within the organization from their colleagues and authority but also from the society because of conservative attitude of local people. They are also burdened with the anxiety of the family members.

Yet, problems do not affect the women working in the civil service equally. It seems women in some cadres face fewer problems than others. The study shows that women in the administration cadre, which is considered most powerful, face fewer problems than others.

**Table 15: Perception of Different Cadres on Problem of Women Working at the Field Level**

Cadre	Yes (%)	No (%)
Education	92	8
Agriculture	100	-
Administration	57.14	42.86
Health	100	-
Postal	100	-
Fisheries	100	-
Family Planning	71.43	28.57

Source: Field Survey

(Chi-Square 11.781 Significance at .067)

It can be seen from the above table, those who said “no”, most of them are from the administration cadre (43%). Education, health, family planning and other cadres face more problems in the field. The general assumption is that administration cadre, due to their nature of service, possess visible power and authority. On the contrary the officials of the other cadres are doing more service providing jobs and perceived as less powerful. Indeed all the cadres are appointed through same administrative procedure and they are in the same salary structure. But as the member of administration cadre are perceived as superior and more powerful; they face fewer problems than other women officers working at field.

## 4.2 Reasons Behind the Problems

The security problem is derived from the overall situation in the community. The security situation is generally poor in Bangladesh. Especially the women are subjected to harassment, repression. Violence against women and sexual assaults are not uncommon. Often the perpetrators escape justice; even if they are punished, their actions are enough to ruin the reputation and prospect of a women. Though the victim women are not responsible for the act of the offenders they are stigmatized. This stigma does not only affect the individual but the whole family. Therefore it is taken very seriously. As a result, there is a tendency among the people to hide the incidents of sexual assaults and violence against women. Even the powerful civil servants, who are women, are also fearful of that stigma. Therefore, they are very cautious about their image and security. Another reason behind this sense of insecurity is that the women civil servants are seen as less powerful than the male. It is the view of the society but a lot of civil servants also share this view.

**Table 16: Social Perception of Power of Male and Women Civil Servants**

Women officials are less powerful than men officials"--Does this idea prevail in society?	Yes (%)	No (%)
	85.2	14.8

Source: Field Survey.

*n=64*

85% of the respondents said that the dominant social perception is that the male civil servants are more powerful than the women government officers. Most of the respondents answered, "Yes, Our society treat boys and girls in indifferent manner that embed the idea in girls mind that they are less powerful than boys." One respondent had separate experience. She has grown up in a different environment where she could identify her spirit. Another respondent said that the clients and subordinates of the field level cannot rely on the women officials. Because they know male officers are the ultimate power holder. So, they have less faith towards women officers. Women officers are treated as a "women", not as an officer. "...women officials are seemed to be less powerful in men dominated society, but it's a

stereotypical idea only,” said one respondent. Some respondent said that our society has such concepts but now things are changing gradually. One respondent, who has the experience of working at 80 upazilas in sixty one districts in Bangladesh, had a mixed experience; she said that women officers can change this concept through their own capability.

**Table 17: Perception of Power about other Women Working at the Field**

Some women officials at the field-level consider themselves ‘powerless’. How many of them think so?	Very Many (%)	Quite a good Number (%)	A few (%)	Not at all (%)	Don’t know (%)
		18.6	30.5	22.0	5.1

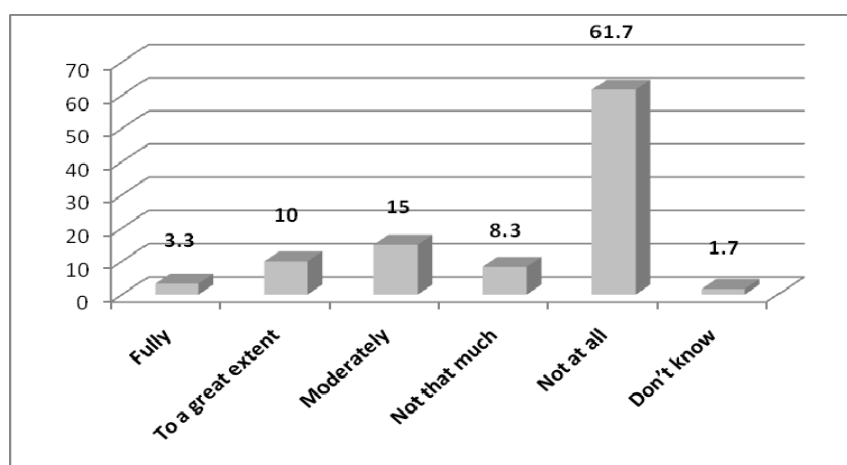
Source: Field Survey.

*n=64*

But half (49%) of the respondents (taking into account “very many” and “quite a good number”) said that some women civil servants think they are less powerful than their male colleagues. It is a very significant number of women civil servants who think other women officers perceive themselves as less powerful. Almost a quarter of the sample (24%) said that they do not know about it. It shows that even the women in civil service significantly share the notion of this unequal status.

**Figure 8: Perception of Power of Women Civil Servants Working at Field**

(Q. “Women officials are less powerful than men officials”- How far do you agree with the prevailing idea of society?)



Source: Field Survey.

*n= 64*

At least 28% (taking into account all the positive responses: “fully agree”, “agree to a great extent” and “moderately agree”) of the women civil servants showed general or strong agreement with the social perception that the male in the civil service are more powerful than the female one. But 62% of them said they do not agree with this notion at all.

They said, in performance, which is, amount of works performed, way of performing and leading, women officials are not far behind the male officials. Male and women officers are equally popular in the field. Some of them said, though male and women officers are equally powerful but society has negative attitude towards women in this region, so women officials exercise their power less than male. Some respondent disagreed with them; one of them said, “I lived in the upazila when I was unmarried. I took challenges, faced problems and overcome them with my capability.” Another woman said she never felt herself powerless than the male.

They said women have proved their capacity in various sectors. Those who agreed with the social attitude that women civil servants are less powerful than the male officers, said - According to the service rule women officials are not less powerful. But their senior and colleagues give less importance in the work place. Male officers dominate women. Male officers are usually more connected with the authority. But the women officers maintain a distance with the authority. Lack of confidence of some women officers strengthens the existing concept of the society. Curious eyes, doubt about capability and negative attitude of local people towards them force them to keep a low profile. Women officials need to maintain their family besides job, but male officials do not do that, it is another disadvantage for the women. A human rights activist in an interview stated, “When a women join in the civil service, she is capable to overcome problems, she is mentally ready to face challenges, but patriarchal values of society creates obstacles.”

Those who expressed very high (complete) agreement with the comment said that comment and behavior of male officers of different departments, negative attitude of the subordinates and people, lack of proper evaluation are big barriers for women to exercise the full authority of their position. Women officers often get less important desk job that does not allow achieving their potentials.

**Table 18: Perception of Power in Relation to Age**

Women officials are less powerful than men officials- how far you agree?	Age	Fully (%)	To a great extent (%)	Moderately (%)	Not that much (%)	Not at all (%)	Don't Know (%)
	Below 30	0	0	25	0	75	0
	31~35	4.87	7.31	12.20	12.20	63.41	0
	36~40	0	25	0	0	75	0
	41~45	0	33.33	33.33	0	33.33	0
	46-50	0	0	50	0	0	50
	Above 50	0	0	100	0	0	0

Source: Field Survey

Chi-Square: 44.427

Significant at .01

In fact, the women in Bangladesh civil service are not like the average women of Bangladesh. They join in BCS after qualifying a competitive examination. Generally they come from solvent families. They are educated, possess different outlook. So it is natural that they think themselves powerful. But this perception varies with the age. Chi-square test shows age has a significant relationship with this perception. In “not at all” category, 75% respondents are below 30 years and 63% are below 36 years of age. Whereas who are above 45 years, 50% belong to “moderately” and rest 50% is under “don’t know category”. Which express their helplessness. It means the younger women members of Bangladesh civil service are more likely to challenge the traditional views compared to the aged ones.

The problems of negative attitude, discrimination and unfriendly working environment are caused by the patriarchal and discriminatory values, misinterpretation of religion and traditional views about the women. A human rights activist in opined, “When a girl sees she does not have equal right in property, she can realize that she is less powerful than her brother. Discrimination starts from family. In many educated families the boy child is sent to the English medium and the girl to the Bangla medium”.

The existing patriarchal values and traditional views see women as subordinate to men. The discrimination starts from the birth where boy child is desirable, girl child is not. The upbringing process is also very unequal. From feeding to education, from attire to movement everything is different and designed to put the girls behind the boys. Girls are groomed to be



tender, soft, loving, submissive, home bound and introvert. When women work in professional arena, they are compared with the men and perceived as persons with lower quality. So, always they have to be keen to prove their competence. The following case study reflects this reality.

**Case Study 3**

An UNO has experienced different incidents due to common belief in society that women are soft in nature. One day a man came with his daughter at upazila office. He was telling that his daughter could not go to school due to eve teasing by some boys. He said that “madam please take immediate action against them. I am a helpless father.” She felt sorry for them and wanted to take action against the culprits. But as a judicious official, she had to look into the matter objectively and consider different aspects of it. Then she inquired into matter and found that the case was not genuine. That person had enmity with those boys and wanted “to teach them a lesson” by the UNO. The man thought as the officer is a woman; she will be very sympathetic on the matter as the victim is a girl and the issue is very sensitive to a women and she will take decision emotionally.

In another area during relief distribution, a lady came with her weeping child to the upazila office just to get undue advantage. All of them had a preconceived idea that women officers are more emotional and less professional.

Besides the unequal status along the gender lines there are differences between the headquarters and field offices that cause more problems for the women in the field offices. Table: 19 and 20 show how these affect their life and work.

**Table 19: Perception of Adequate Attention on Field Offices**

Do you think field offices are getting less attention compared to Head Office?	Yes (%)	No (%)
	92.1	7.9

Source: Field Survey

*n=64*

**Table 20: Perception of Difficulties at the Field**

(Q. What type(s) of adverse situation do you face in the field-level offices?)

Nature of difficulties	Percentage
Lack of logistic support	26.76
Lack of opportunity to contribute in decision making	17.76
Lack of opportunity to give input in policy making	15.83
Delayed communication from headquarters,	14.34
Lack of coordination	13.34
Lack of essential manpower	11.97

Source: Field Survey

*n* = 64

Most of the respondents (92%) stated that field offices get lesser attention than the headquarters. They said lack of logistic support (27%) is a common problem that field level staffs have to encounter. Lack of opportunity to contribute in decision making (18%), lack of opportunity to give input in policy making (16%), delayed communication (14%) from headquarters to field level, lack of essential manpower (12%) are the common problems that field offices have to encounter. Most of these problems affect women officials more than their male colleagues. It is really difficult for the women to perform their duties without logistic support and sufficient staff. One respondent noted, “Visiting remote areas become totally impossible because of transport constraint.”

An ex-UNO, while interviewed stated, during her posting in Manikgonj, she did not have official transport. Due to unavailability of transport she could not visit remote areas. Corrupt people wanted to take this chance. The contractors wanted to get the bills without doing the work properly. Sometimes UNOs had to take cars from NGOs. It made the scrutiny of NGOs by UNO difficult; neutrality of report might be compromised and questioned because of such interactions. It is very embarrassing. During her posting in Manikganj, the contractors ransacked her office. They wanted the bill without finishing the work. She said that, women officers are generally less corrupt. That is why their family members are always worried about them.

In Bangladesh civil service some of the power differences and inequalities are taken for granted. Men are considered more powerful and women are less powerful. Even in the same service, appointed through the same process of qualification, holding the same position and degree of authority, women are not considered as equals to the male. Similarly, centers are considered more powerful than the periphery. So, the field offices get less attention that causes more problems for them, and women at the field suffer most. These findings indicate that Bangladesh is a high power distance society.

In addition, society perceived women as tender and soft-hearted and not fit for challenging jobs. It is expected that they will avoid confrontation, be nice to all and be submissive. The ‘unpleasant’ task of tough decision making is considered to be in domain of men. This study also reflects the existence of such notion.

**Table 21: Perception of Society about Women’s Work**

Women are not suitable for challenging work rather they are more suited for service-oriented, repetitive and unchallenging work--do you think this idea prevails in the society?	Yes (%)	No (%)
	65.6	34.4

Source: Field Survey

*n=64*

66% of the women civil servants believe that society considers women as unsuitable for challenging tasks and best suited for routine unchallenging duties. Respondents said that this is a dominant attitude among the superior officers, clients, colleagues, and people; such ideas prevail even among the family members.

These attitudes are reflected during delegation of responsibilities. Sometimes they are not given a position considered challenging. They are given responsibility related to supervision of catering, receiving guests, or desk works. They are not given responsibility of visiting remote places, administering mobile court and maintaining law and order. They are also deprived of participating in important committees, presiding over contingency courts and overseas or important trainings.

In such situations, most of the time women civil servants keep quiet and let it go. Rarely do they share these issues with the authority. They think if they protest it could bring negative response and repercussions. The following case study represents this fact.

#### Case Study 4

She has been serving in the administration cadre for ten years. From the very beginning of her career she has been posted in remote areas and performing her duties with dignity. One of her superiors (DC) told her openly that women are not fit for the post of UNO. She protested the comment but the consequence was bad. The DC became hostile to her and started giving show-cause notices for silly matters. According to official procedure, she had to give answers of those show-causes. Whenever she gave a reply, he responded that the answer was not satisfactory. He kept her on duty during two Eid festivals. She carried out all the duties sincerely but did not get any recognition just because she was a woman and she objected to his male-chauvinist view about women officers. She was so embarrassed with the matter that once she decided to write an application to PM for redress of such harassments but resisted herself. Because she has just started her career, her boss is established in his position. As a woman she will have to work with the men in future whose mentality are not very different from that DC. The superiors evaluate them (the subordinates) yearly through ACR. She thinks that there must be a provision in the ACR so that the subordinates can also put some comments on superiors. This will reduce the autocratic tendency of the superiors.

Social norms and values also made this expectation legitimate that women will stay at home and do the household works. Looking after the household affairs and taking care of the family members, maintaining social relationships are their primary duty. They can work outside after finishing those properly. Negligence in these activities due to professional engagement is not desirable. Often the religious doctrines are purposively interpreted to support these views. Actually, women of Bangladesh are working outside recently. As a transitional society, (Riggs, 1964) it is being accepted gradually. It is accepted as long as the comforts of the family members are not hampered and safety of women is not questioned. While there is probability of any deviation from the patriarchal cultural norms, traditional mind set comes out.

**Table 22: Perception of Family: Man as Main Earning Member**

Man is the main earning member of the family—this idea becomes prominent when a woman official is posted far away from family. How far is this true?	Very much	Moderately	Not that much	Not at all
		75.0	16.7	1.7

Source: Field Survey

*n* = 64

75% of the respondents said that in Bangladesh notion of main earner of the family as a male is very profound. This notion becomes very much visible when a working woman goes out to work far from their family. The social norm of considering the males as bread winner and women as “in-charge” of the household activities make the family members dependant on the woman for household chores.

The patriarchal values have given rise of the dependence of male members of the family on women for their daily activities and household chores. Therefore, working women have to work double, at home and at office. Sharing of household chore is not very common in a patriarchal society like Bangladesh. One respondent said, “Husbands become proud to say that my wife is doing a prestigious job, but not ready to share domestic work.”

**Table 23: Perception of Consequences of Family Pressure on Performance**

Familial pressure creates obstacle in carrying out official duty-- how far is this true?	Very much (%)	Moderately (%)	Not that much (%)	Not at all (%)
		79.0	9.7	11.3

Source: Field Survey

*n* = 64

79% of the respondents said that their family pressure is a huge barrier to carry out their official responsibilities properly. Family pressure comes from two perspectives: Familial responsibility like taking care of husbands, in laws and children, another is resistance from husband, (or other family members) because many the husbands do not like to allow their wives to stay separately. One respondent said that the career for a woman is acceptable until

the family suffers for it. Many women have to quit the job because they are not allowed to live outside the family. A respondent said, “If more time is given in the office contention with the family is created; pressure comes to quit job.” Another participant in the study said, “... many women become physically and mentally sick to strike a balance between the family and workplace. Many of them have to give up job. In many cases, they are allowed to work according to the choice of the family only.”

**Table 24: Perception of Dual Responsibilities of Job and Household Chore**

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Dual responsibility of job and household chore is a common problem for the working women of Bangladesh. Women officials who live in the field sites face comparatively more problems in this regard. Do you agree?	95.3	4.7

Source: Field Survey

*n=64*

More than 95% of the respondents said that double burden of office and household work is a big problem for working women and aggravates the problems of the women civil servants working at the field level. One respondent said these put unbearable pressure on the women civil servants. Sometimes make the career impossible.

**Table 25: Perception of Dual Responsibility in Relation to Marital Status**

Marital Status	Yes (%)	No (%)
Married	94.92	5.08
Unmarried	100	-
Others	100	-

Source: Field Survey

The assumption was that unmarried women are less-burdened compared to married women. But Chi-Square test (.267 Significant at .875) shows that there is no significant relation with marital status and dual responsibility. It seems that women of all status (married or unmarried) have to play vital role for their families. Married women work for their husbands;

in laws and children where as unmarried women have to give support to their parents, brothers and sisters in domestic matter.

The level of education and cultural norms of rural people are also responsible for some problems of the women civil servants at duty stations. Both contribute to rigid patriarchal values and resistance towards change. Local cultural norms do not permit the people to accept a woman in an important position. A respondent commented- “curious eyes of local people are really embarrassing.” So, because of that discomfort local people either avoid or resist the women civil servants that make their work more difficult.

The research findings on the role of women show that Bangladesh is largely a masculine society. Here women are considered as suitable for unchallenging jobs. They are more likely to endure any unwanted situation, rather than being aggressive. Moreover, women have to take the double burden of professional work as well as the household and family responsibilities. As it is expected that women will prioritized their family over career, family members become dependent on them for those responsibilities. These impose extra pressure on the women, but they rarely go for any disagreement.

In Bangladesh, especially for women, major decisions in their life are taken collectively by the family members rather than themselves. These includes career choice and career decisions. The following table presents the prevalence of such influence.

**Table 26: Role of Family Members During Posting at Field**

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Have your family played any role during your posting at the field-level?	40.7	59.3

Source: Field Survey

*n* = 64

Respondents of this study said that when they are transferred to a field position their family members try to influence the posting in a place of their choice. Among them 41% said that their family had influence during their posting in the field. 43% of the participants said that

their family tried to change the posting area; 33% said that their family tried and were able to change the posing area in the field, 15% women civil servants were encouraged to join in a field posting and only 8% of them were not influenced by their family in any way during taking their position in the field.

**Table 27: Type of Influence that Family Member Played During Posting at the Field Level**

	Type of Influence or role	Percentage
What role or influence did your family members play during your posting at the field level?	They tried to change the posting area	43.5
	They were able to change the posting area	33.03
	Encouraged to join in field	15.2
	Discouraged to join in field	8.27

Source: Field Survey

*n*=26

Most of the women civil servants said that they want to maintain harmony and peace in the family. For the sake of harmony and betterment of the family they tend to sacrifice their career prospects. Even though they aspire to do well in the profession it is never at the cost of family interest as a whole.

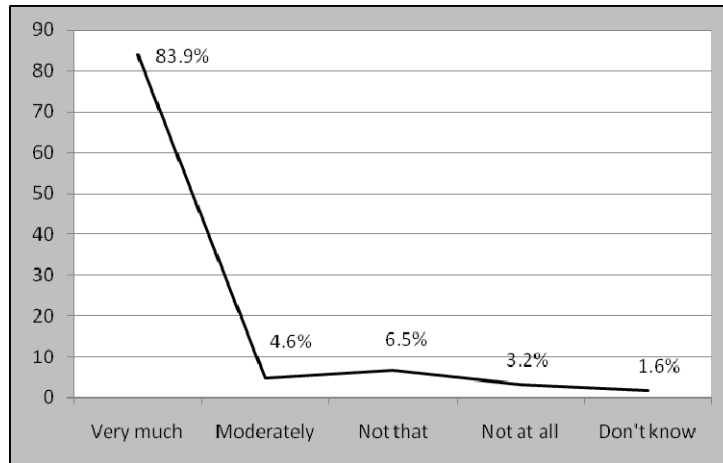
An officer applied to the authority not to give her posting as an UNO to avoid field posting. Her children were small; her husband could not look after them and do other family responsibilities without her. She said, “I know this will affect my career; may be I will never be promoted as a DC, which is the dream of our cadre, but I did it intentionally for the well being of my family. At first I am a mother and wife, then comes my job”- she added.

Table 9 shows, 84% of the study population said that family is the first priority to them, not the career. Therefore, they prioritize the responsibilities to the family over their employment. It is coherent with the social perception that the male are the bread winner of the family.



### Figure 9: Perception of Priority Between Family and Career

(Q. Family comes first, then service and career—How far is this true for you?)



Source: Field Survey

*n=64*

Regarding the compliance with the decisions taken by the family, 44% said they will try to avoid the posting if the family does not permit it because the family is the most important factor to them. Maintaining peace and stability of the family is of prime importance. They gave utmost importance to the wellbeing of their children. One lady said, “If I don’t agree with my husband’s view, harmony and peace of the family will be disturbed and it will affect children.” Yet, 32% said that they will go against the will of the family. One of them said, “I do care for my own judgment. I got the job by dint of my own quality and merit. If my family resists, I can overcome the situation.” Another respondent said, “I am obligated to the government that I have to accept posting in any place within Bangladesh, so I have to take that challenge.”

But 25% said they do not know what to decide. Considering the social norms, it could be said that very few of them will dare to defy the decisions of the family. One of them said, “Every person wants to reach at the peak of achievement. If my family members disagree, I will try my level best to convince them. If I fail, then I will accept their opinion.”

One of the respondents after qualifying in a BCS examination joined the job but she had to quit; because she was posted in a remote upazila and her husband did not like that. After resigning from job, she became very depressed; then she tried again and qualified. Now her

posing area is not very far from Dhaka, still she is struggling to continue the job. She is managing the situation taking study leave for time being and staying with the family. She is scared about what she will do when her study leave period will be over. She said, “I don’t want any disaster in my conjugal life.”

73% respondents said that their family members prefer familiar areas for their posting rather than unfamiliar areas. Most of them said their family members think it will be safer for them to work in a familiar area. The primary concern is about their security. They think during emergencies better support is available in familiar areas.

81% of them said that the people acquainted with them in familiar areas try to take undue advantages from them. 43.5% said they have to waste official time for unofficial purposes in familiar areas. 81.5% said that people in familiar areas try to avoid administrative system to get things done directly by them. 72% officers said that known people in the familiar areas try to cross the professional limits because of personal relationship. These hamper their professionalism and ideals of equal treatment for all, which is one of the most important ethics of government service. So, sometimes family interferences may lead to unethical steps. One doctor who is posted in her in-law’s area was approached by a relative to issue a false medical certificate, she refused to give that. Her professionalism hurts that person and her mother in law become annoyed with her. Her husband said that he looks after her in that remote place and she could give a second thought before refusing.

It is evident from the data presented above that the family members decide over the posting of the women civil servants. It was also found that known people in familiar areas try to take undue advantages from them and they have to waste significant amount of their official time attending people from acquaintance in the familiar areas. But women professionals, in many cases tolerate it, to maintain harmony and peace in family. These all are clear sign of a collectivist society.

Research findings showed, field officers, especially women face hurdle to use discretionary power. One respondent, said, “Generally women follow rules very strictly, they try to avoid risk by nature.” Another respondent noted, “... in field administration, no mercy for mistakes, no rewards for success. So, it is very risky to use discretionary power.”

An ex-UNO in interview said, “As a government employee we are rule bound. But to meet emergency in field, sometimes rules need to be explained in different ways or use of discretion becomes inevitable. But Women do not always have that courage. Various factors are responsible for that. Cooperation from the authority, atmosphere of the local area and own capability of that women, all are equally important to be courageous, innovative and creative.”

Furthermore, women at the field face difficulties to take new initiatives compared to the officials of the head office. The following table can help to understand the scope of field level officers, especially women in planning, innovation and creativity.

**Table 28: New Plan Initiated by Women**

Have you submitted any new plan to the authorities while working at the field-level?	Yes (%)	No (%)
	26.8	73.2

Source: Field Survey

*n=64*

73% research participants said that they have never placed any plan to the higher authority. Those who given plan to the authority (27%), 75% of them said that they have developed up to 5 plans and 25% said their submitted plans are more than 5 in numbers. The civil servants who have submitted new plans, 47% of them, said that their plans were accepted by the authority. But, most of those were not sustainable. Change of authority, posting in different area or changes of assignments were the reasons behind that.

The majority who have never developed a plan or taken new initiative explained their inactivities. Some of them said that the officers work in the field do not have any authority to propose plans. Few others said that they are interested to work as usual. Others argued that work load, pressure from the family, tension do not allow them to be innovative and creative.

Additionally, mind-set of local people, prejudiced attitude of colleagues also create problem for them. Data shows that conservative outlook of the local people (47%), colleague’s attitudinal problem (42%), are common barriers that seriously inhibit women to carry out duties spontaneously at the field.

**Table 29: Perception of Barrier in Carrying Duties Spontaneously.**

Spontaneity of work of the field-level officials is deterred by the following constraints, do you agree? (please mention the degree)	Nature of Constraints	Very much (%)	Moderately (%)	Somewhat Less (%)	Negligible (%)
	Conservative outlook of local people	47.46	28.81	10.17	13.56
	Attitudinal problem of Colleagues	42.37	20.34	13.56	23.73

Source: Field Survey

*n= 64*

Besides, many of the women working in the field are not interested to initiate new steps or plans because a large number of them (28%) believe that they are posted in the field for a short duration and it is only a transition period before going back to the headquarters again.

It is evident from the data that a large number of respondents said civil servants in the field are more cautious about following the rules and using discretionary power. And very few of them have ever proposed any plan to the authority. And those who have suggested new plans mentioned that 47% of their plans were accepted. So, numbers of actually accepted plans were not substantial and sustainable. Most of the respondents believe that officers working in the headquarters are in a better position in proposing new ideas or in using discretion. They also feel that stereotypical image of women as soft hearted is high and it seriously affect their performance. All these indicate low acceptance to change and risk evasiveness. It is the sign of a society that tends to avoid uncertainty in a higher degree.

Besides, underdevelopment of the rural areas is responsible for poor infrastructure and lack of facilities. Income level of the rural people is low; they also get lower attention from the government. As result quality housing, communication, education, healthcare, childcare and other facilities are absent in those areas. These deficiencies make it more difficult for the women civil servants to stay and work in the field.

### 4.3 Statistical Correlation of the Dependent and Independent Variables

A statistical correlation of the dependent with independent variables has been determined to observe the significance of relationship between the dependent variable (problems) and the independent variables (facility at the field office, loyalty and group belongingness, dual responsibility, use of discretion and attitude towards creativity, innovation and change, etc), based on the theoretical framework of the study.

**Table 30: Correlation Matrix of Dependent Variables (Problems) and Selected Independent Variables**

Independent Variables	“r”	“t”
Status	-.539	.001
Facility at the field office	-.408	.001
Loyalty and group belongingness	.640	.001
Preference between work and relationship	.622	.001
Dual Responsibility	.681	.001
Abiding values about femininity	.589	.001
Use of discretion	.446	.001
Attitude towards creativity, innovation and change	.403	.001

The correlation matrix presents interesting observations. “Status” seems to be a quite significant variable which creates problems for the women civil servants at the field. It indicates a strong negative correlation with problems. It implies women who work at the field are considered to be of lower status compared to their male counterparts because most of the local people (of upazila) possess traditional view that men are superior to women. This attitude creates trouble for the women civil servants in discharging duties. Such a relation indicates that the higher the status is, the lower the problem is or vice versa. Similarly, “facility at the field office” and problem at the field is also negatively correlated. It means: the lower the facility is, the higher the problem is. This denotes: if the facility of the field office is increased, problem of field-level women civil servants will be reduced.

A high and significant positive correlation is also visible between problem and “loyalty and group belongingness.” Commonly, women of Bangladesh are very loyal to their families; they are more likely to give priority to family over career. This reality creates more problems for the women civil servants working at field as they generally stay outside their homes and cannot always meet up all expectations of their family members.

Similarly, problem and “preference between work and relationship” also showed a strong positive correlation. In Bangladesh context, using informal relationship to get posting in convenient locations is not very unusual. Accordingly, women civil servants are sometimes posted at preferred locations where she is surrounded by relatives and friends. In such a situation “relationship prevails over task (Hofstede, 2005: 104).” Thus, informal network creates problem in performing duties with neutrality and professionalism.

It is also noted from the correlation matrix that there exists a high and positive correlation with “dual responsibility” with problems being faced. Such a relation implies: as women civil servants are over-burdened with job and domestic responsibilities, they face problem to carry out their duties competently at the field.

The correlation matrix also showed a significant positive relationship with “abiding values about femininity” and problems encountered by women. In the context of Bangladesh, women are considered as soft-hearted, resilient and not fit for taking challenges. Women at the field sometimes face unwanted situation and discrimination. They usually do not take any extreme position to challenge these circumstances. All these create problems. So, if the tendency of abiding values about femininity increases, the problems also increase.

The other variables “use of discretion” and “attitude towards creativity, innovation and change” also showed a positive correlation with problem being faced. It indicates that the women who work at the field are in unfavorable position compared to those in the head offices in using discretionary power. They are also in a disadvantageous situation in sharing innovative ideas with the authority. However, innovative idea and use of discretion are inevitable to meet emergency circumstances at the field. Absence of such scope creates obstacle to smooth functioning at the field, and women officials comparatively suffer more in this regard.

Therefore, correlation matrix indicates that all the variables and indicators taken in this study have been found to be significantly correlated—be it positively or negatively.

#### **4.4 Consequences of the Problems**

The consequences of the difficulties faced by women civil servants in the field are serious.

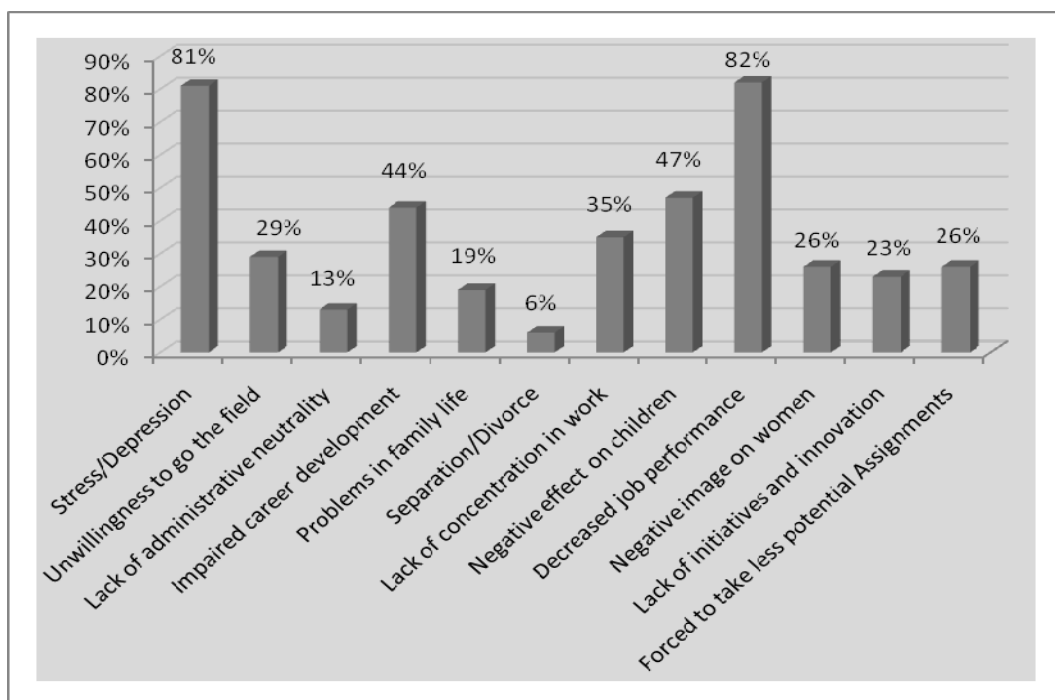
Many (80.64%) of these women said they suffer high level of stress, and this often leads to depression. Because of the resistance from family and uncongenial atmosphere of the field, several (29.32%) women civil servants feel discouraged to go to the field, which leads to increase ‘*Tadbir*’ (a culture of lobbying) in administration, which reduces neutrality of administration as found in 12.90% of cases. If they do not work in the field, they remain less experienced and cannot advance in their career. This was evident in 43.54% of cases. When they go to a field-level position they cannot perform well. Working in the field and staying separately create problems in their family-life (19%). Sometimes, this leads to separation or divorce (6%). Some said that these problems also increase their family expenditure substantially and make the profession economically less viable. Because of the family obligations and expectations, they have to leave the station frequently to meet the family members and cannot concentrate in work (35.48%).

Women with children have different problems. When they go to the office, there is no dependable close relative to take care of their children (46.77%). They have to rely mostly on housemaids for child-care. There are problems of education of the children as well. Usually, there are no good schools in the upazila level. Such difficult situations have negative impact on the children. Sometimes, children may lead to addiction, said one respondent mother.

All these difficulties affect the performance of the women civil servants working in the field (45%); the quality and quantity of work decreases (82.25%). When they cannot perform at optimal level, it creates negative image of a woman civil servant (25.80%) that reinforce the existing stereotypes of women as less efficient professionals. These also prevent them to realize their potentials for achieving high degree of professionalism and moving at the top of the hierarchy. Stress, overburden, subordination, doubtful attitude of superiors on the capability of women affect their new initiatives and innovations (22.58%). Sometimes, these

pressures become so unbearable that these women are forced to take posting in less potential positions (25.80%); or even quit the job (5.5%). Women fail to give appropriate policy input (5%) sought by government due to lack of attention in work or due to stress, or workload. As a result, policy does not reflect the need of the grassroots people or adhere to gender sensitivity. This situation impedes national development (6.45%). It can be visible through the following figure.

**Figure 10: Consequences of Problems**



Source: Field Survey

*n* = 64



## **CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Recommendations**

It was evident from the study that the women civil servants suffer from a lot of problems ranging from negative attitude in work place and family to logistic deficiencies. These hamper their performance and reduce their efficiency. It is, in the long run wasting the national resources and potentials. To make the women civil servants true human capital, certain measures should be taken into consideration. Therefore, following recommendations are made to reduce problems and to create a congenial atmosphere for the women at the field level--

1. There should be a comprehensive policy in the civil service to remove the obstacles that hinder the performance of women and to address their special needs for better functioning.
2. There is already a rule that allow spouses to work in the same or closer places. It should be fully implemented and further change should be made to ensure that husband and wife will be able to work in the same or closer places throughout their career in the civil service.
3. There should be preferential housing arrangements from the government for the women officers posted in the field.
4. There should be daycare facility in every field station to facilitate better childcare and reduce tension of the mothers working in the civil service.
5. They should be given adequate logistic support, such as transport, staff and so on. Such facilities should be evenly distributed among all cadres.
6. During distribution of responsibility women civil servants could be consulted about their preference if there are options. Besides, transport, night stay, accommodation, food, and child care such issues should be considered during assigning a woman for work.

7. There should be decent and separate toilet and prayer room in accordance with the social norms for the women civil servants.
8. The training and promotion should be based on performance; and women should be given preference or quota could be preserved for them.
9. Women should be transferred less frequently, if they prefer it.
10. It was found in the study that young officers face more problems; therefore, there should be proper training for the officers before posting them in their job. Training should include issues they may have to deal with. There should a system in the civil service to assist and guide young officers during these troubles.
11. There should be a campaign within and outside the civil service arena to eradicate sexist and discriminatory attitude and stereotypical ideas about women civil servants. It is the most important task because it will remove many other problems with itself. And it has to cover the wider society to solve the problems that arise from within their families.
12. There should be a social awareness initiative to reduce “double burden” of the working women. Men should be encouraged from childhood to share household work with women. Media could be mobilized on this regard.
13. There should be clear and effective rule and system to deal with the issues of sexual harassment in the civil service.

## 5.2 Conclusion

It was found in the study that the women civil servants transferred to the field positions face certain problems. The research questions in this study proved into the underlying social, administrative and familial factors causing these problems. The major problems they face are: lack of security, inadequate housing facility, dual responsibility of job and household chore, uncongenial working environment and family interference in the profession. Almost two-thirds of the respondents feel highly insecure during their stay at the field. Most of them also find the housing facilities inadequate; in fact, it is the number one problem to them. Dual responsibility of job and household chore is one of the biggest problems for them as noted by almost all of the respondents. Nearly half of them find the working environment uncongenial. Interference by the family is also an important problem for them.

It was evident the civil servants under 36 years of age face more problems in the field but there was no significant relationship between age and problems as were found in the analysis. Most of the respondents agreed that there are more problems in the field than in the head offices. And when women are posted in the field offices, they face greater problems.

Among the other difficulties, the major problem is negative attitude towards them from the community, colleagues and the authority. The society perceives women as soft and unfit for taking challenges. Male colleagues and superiors pass negative comments to them; subordinates do not cooperate. In many cases, they face hurdle to take radical step to meet emergency situation. They are often discriminated against their male colleagues by the authority. They are given less important desk-work and poorly evaluated. They have to face some unwanted situations that men usually do not face. Often they have to encounter some aggressive attitude from the people, and the professionals deal with them in a way that is unwanted. During these encounters, they have to endure sexist comments casting doubt on their ability and eligibility as civil servants. Sometimes, they are even threatened to be stigmatized during these episodes. They are more prone to undue influences from the local vested groups.

The reasons behind most of the problems they face are: male domination, patriarchal mentality and perceived lower social status for women. Other problems are related to traditional values, lack of education among people, lack of security, especially for women in the society and underdevelopment of the country. Consequences of those problems in their life are very serious. These range from reduced performance, mental and physical stress, problem in the family, negative effect on children, disturbance in family life, impaired career development and weakened initiative and innovativeness.

It was also found that the support from the family is very crucial for the career of a woman in Bangladesh. They can overcome many of the difficulties and shine in their professional career with the help of the family. Without the support of the family, they cannot even continue their profession, let alone excel.

The problems regularly disturb their proper functioning. Some of them try to compromise with the situation complying with people around and with existing norms and values; others take these challenges head on and beat their way out. Additionally, perception of problems varies with cadre. It was observed that women who belong to the administration cadre face fewer problems compared to other cadres.

To observe the relationships between dependent and independent variables, a correlation test has been performed. All the variables (problems being faced by the field-level women civil servants: as dependent variable) and indicators (facility at the field office, loyalty and group belongingness, dual responsibility, use of discretion and attitude towards creativity, innovation and change, etc), taken in this study have been found to be significantly correlated.

It was also found in accordance with the cultural theory of Hofstede (Hofstede, 2005), which is the theoretical framework of the study, that women are considered less powerful than male in the service; field offices than the headquarters. The women civil servants understand the reality and compromise with the situation to avoid further difficulties. Thus, social status here is unequal; less powerful group accepts and expects the inequality. Decision-making process follows a top-down approach. Superiors decide and order the subordinates to carry that out unquestionably. Additionally, field offices are neglected in terms of logistic support and

human resources. It is the indication of high power distance in the institutions. Both civil service and the society have large power distance. In Bangladesh, men are considered the main bread-winner for the family. Therefore, it is expected that women will concentrate principally on the welfare of the family than focusing on a career. They will be gentle and compromising. It is the sign of a masculine society.

Job-related decisions of the women civil servants are sometimes influenced by their family members. Almost half of the respondents in this study said that when they were transferred to a field position, their family members tried to influence the posting in a place of their choice. Three-quarters of them said that their families believe that they will remain safer in familiar place during their stay and functioning at the field. Compliance with these decisions indicates the loyalty to the groups they belong to. It was also found that known people in familiar areas try to take undue advantages from them, and the women civil servants have to waste significant amount of their official time attending people from acquaintances in the familiar areas. It indicates the dependence on social network and interference of relationship over professionalism. These are very strong signs of a collectivist society.

Women civil servants at the field levels are very cautious of consequences of any wrong doing. It was found in the study that they are very alert about using discretionary power. In addition, a few of them have ever developed a new plan for implementation. Most of the respondents mentioned that environment of the civil service is not conducive for field officers in sharing innovative and creative ideas. Some said that civil service is very unforgiving about the mistakes in the field. These show that the field-level women civil servants are very much habituated to evade risk and are resistant to change. These are the clear evidence of uncertainty avoiding tendency. This tendency is observed more among the women civil servants than their male counterparts.

The study revealed that the women working in the field are in disadvantageous position compared to their male colleagues as well as compared to the officials of head offices. Though women civil servants are part of a very powerful, respected and sometimes feared organizations; because of their gender identity they have to bear most of the problems those other women in the society experience. It is coherent with Bangladesh's characteristics as a large power distance, masculine, collectivist and high-uncertainty avoidance society.

Therefore, it is expected that if the suggested recommendations are implemented, it will create a congenial atmosphere for the women civil servants to work in the field, and they are likely to perform better. If they can perform freely and more comfortably, it is expected that they will excel in their career, and more women could be seen in the upper echelon of the civil service.

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APPENDIX—Questionnaire.

(The original questionnaire was in Bangla.)

Thesis Title: Problems of Working at the Field Level: A Study of Women Civil Servants of Bangladesh.

Position :

Cadre :

Present posting (field-level)/last : union..... upazila.....

posting at the field-level district..... division.....

Age (year) :  under 30  31-35  36-40  41-45  46-50  over 50

Length of service :

Religion :

Marital status :  married  unmarried  other

Father's/husband's occupation :

Father's/husband's work status during your posting at the field-level:

union..... upazila..... district.....

division.....

At your work station, you live/lived with;

husband and children  husband or children

someone from father's house  alone  other (please mention)

1. Do you think women officials face more problems than men while performing duties at field?

yes  no

2. Do you think women officials at the field-level face more problems than those at headquarters?

yes       no

3.a. Do you think the field-level offices are getting less attention in terms of human resources, logistic support, budget, etc.?

yes       no

b. How do you rank the shortages of official resources that exist at the field-level?

very much     much     moderately     not that much       not at all

c. What type(s) of shortage of official resources you face in the field-level offices?

Nature of problem	Too much	Much	Moderate	Not that much	Negligible
<input type="checkbox"/> logistic support					
<input type="checkbox"/> essential manpower					
<input type="checkbox"/> lack of opportunity to give input to policy-making					
<input type="checkbox"/> lack of opportunity to contribute in decision-making					
<input type="checkbox"/> other problem(s)					

d. These shortages (human resources, logistic support, budget, etc.) put women officials in a more difficult situation than men. How far is this is true?

very much     much     moderately     not that much       not at all       don't know

e. Some women officials at the field-level consider themselves 'powerless'. How many of them think so?

very many     many       quite a good number       a few     not at all       don't know



f. "Women officials are less powerful than men officials"--Does this idea prevail in the society?

yes       no

g. How far do you agree with this idea?

fully       to a great extent       Moderately       not that much       not at all

don't know

h. How do you rank your status (in terms of acceptability to the clients) while working at the field?

very much       much       moderately       not that much       not at all

i. Why do you think so?

j. Do women officials at the field-level experience accommodation problem?

yes       no

k. What kind(s) of problem do they face? Please mention

l. What are the impacts of these problems on their work?

m. Do you have/had any problem(s) regarding working environment at your workplace?

yes       no

n. What are the problems at your workplace?

4 a. Women are not suitable for challenging work rather they are more suited for service-oriented, repetitive and unchallenging work--do you think this idea prevails in the society?

yes       no

b. Dual responsibility of household chore and job is a common problem for the working women of Bangladesh. Women officials who live in the field sites face comparatively more problems in this regard. Do you agree?

yes       no

If the answer is 'yes', how much are the following reasons responsible for their problems?  
Please mention the level

too much     much       moderate     not that much

c. How much additional pressure is created on women officials at the field sites for too much dependence of family members on them?

very much     much       moderately     not that much       not at all     don't know

d. How do you rank the dependency of your family members on you?

very much     much     moderately     not that much       not at all

e. Family comes first, then service-career—this kind of idea may become prominent when women officers are posted outside Dhaka or far away from family. How far is this true for you?

very much     much             moderately     not that much             not at all     don't know

f. This kind of familial pressure can create obstacles in carrying out official duty. How far is this true?

very much     much             moderately     not that much             not at all     don't know

g. Absence of the following facilities creates problems for women officials working at the field sites:

Nature of problem	Too much	Much	Moderate	Not that much	Negligible
<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of good educational institutions					
<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of proper medical services					
<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of daycare centers for children					
<input type="checkbox"/> Shortage of reliable persons to take care of children					
<input type="checkbox"/> Insecurity of women officials					
<input type="checkbox"/> Other problems					

h. What are the impacts of the absence of these facilities on women's performance?

i. Man is the main earning member of the family—this idea becomes prominent when a woman official is posted outside Dhaka or far away from family. How far is this true in the context of Bangladesh?

very much    much    moderately    not that much    not at all    don't know

j. This kind of familial pressure may create obstacles on women's service-career. How far is this true?

very much    much    moderately    not that much    not at all    don't know

k. Please mention other problems stemming from familial pressure:

5a. . Have you ever faced any unwanted situation at the grassroots level?

yes    no

b. Please mention the experience

c. How did you respond to that situation?

d. How do you rank the acceptance of undue approaches at your workplace?

very much    much    moderately    not that much    not at all

e. Have you ever felt that you were given a responsibility at the field-level only because you are a woman?

yes    no

f. Please mention the experience

g. Have you ever experienced any situation where you were not given a challenging responsibility only because you are a woman?

yes    no

h. Please mention the experience

i. How did you respond to that situation?

6 a. Have your family played any role about your posting at the field-level?

yes    no

If the answer is 'yes', please answer the following:

b. What role did they play?

- they tried to change the area of posting
- they were successful to change the posting area
- they encouraged to join at the field site
- they encouraged to quit the job  Please mention if they had any other role

c. Will you try to avoid posting at the field-level if you fail to get permission from the family?

- yes
- no
- don't know

d. Why do you think so?

e. How do you rank your devotion or loyalty to your family?

- very much
- much
- moderately
- not that much
- not at all

f. Do your family members believe that posting at a well-known area is better than at an unknown area?

- yes
- no

g. Why do they think so?

h. "Women officials of the field are more resilient than male"—the idea remains established among:

- colleagues
- authorities/management
- women officials
- clients
- I do not agree
- I have not come across any situation that proves this but it is not unlikely that such an idea prevails at the field-level

i. If you have any other opinion about the issue, please mention:

j. What problems can arise in carrying out official duties in a place where people are well-known? (Please mention the frequency)

Nature of problem	Too many	Many	Moderate	Not that much	Negligible
The acquaintances want to take undue privileges					
Time is wasted in unofficial concerns					
Want to contact directly without maintaining the proper channel					
Want to cross the boundary between official and personal relationship					
Other problems					

None of the above is true

I have not faced any such problem but such problems might arise at the field-level

7 a. Are officials at the field-level more conscious and particular in following rules than officials at the head office?

yes             no

b. Are officials at the field-level more conscious in using discretionary power than officials at the head office?

yes             no

c. What are the reasons for such opinion of yours?

i.

ii.

iii.

d. How far can you propose your innovative ideas?

very much     much     moderately     not that much             not at all

e. Have you submitted any new development concept or proposal while working at the field-level to the higher authorities?

yes             no



f. How many proposals have you submitted to date?

less than 5    less than 10    numerous

g. Has that proposal/concept been accepted?

yes             no

h. Have you taken any new initiatives in any official matter?

yes             no

i. Has that initiative been successful?

yes             no

j. What is/are the reason (s) for not taking any new initiatives?

k. Do you think the officials at the head office are in a more advantageous position than those in the field-level in introducing any new rules or submitting any new proposal(s)/concepts(s)?

yes             no

l. How far is this true that women officials working at the field-level face more problems in this regard?

very much  much  moderately  not that much  not at all  don't know

8a. Women are softer in nature than men. So, it is not always possible for them to carry out their duties efficiently at the field-level. How much challenge can be generated by such ideas prevailing in the society for women officials at the field-level?

very much  much  moderately  not that much  not at all  don't know

b. How far does this idea obstruct their work?

very much  much  moderately  not that much  not at all  don't know

c. Many people think that performance of field-level officials is not properly assessed. As a result, they are afraid of taking any new initiatives and follow the old rules blindly. How much is this true in case of women?

very much  much  moderately  not that much  not at all  can't tell

d. Usually, it is thought that field-level postings are for a short period. This idea discourages women officials to take new initiatives and come up with new ideas. How far is this true?

very much  much  moderately  not that much  not at all  don't know

e. The tempo of work of the field-level officials is deterred by the following parameters(Please mention the level)

Parameter	Very Much	Much	Moderately	Somewhat Less	Negligible
<input type="checkbox"/> Due to conservative attitude of the local people					
<input type="checkbox"/> Due to attitudinal problems of colleagues at the workplace					
<input type="checkbox"/> Due to anxiety about family members					
<input type="checkbox"/> Due to the reason that women officials are in a less advantageous position compared to male in communication and networking with various organizations involved in the field-level activities					
<input type="checkbox"/> Other reasons					

9a. Can you mention any government rule(s) which is/are endorsed to serve the interest of women officials at the field-level?

yes       no

b. Please mention the rule(s)

c. Are these rules being followed?

yes    no    not followed entirely/properly    don't know

d. What are the reasons behind that?

10 a. So far, we have dealt with the challenges and problems women officials face at the field-level. What are the reasons behind these?

b. Please mention three reasons that you think most important (please mention in order of importance)

11 a. How do these problems influence your work, or what are the consequences of these problems?

b. Name three of the most important influences (please write in order of importance)

12. Women civil servants working at the field-level are facing various problems and challenges. If you believe so, what type of governmental/non-governmental/personal/familial/institutional steps, in your opinion, should be taken to overcome these challenges and problems?

Thank you for your cooperation.