Socio-economic Factors influencing Job Preferences of Civil Servants with an Emphasis on Women Professionals: A Study at the Managerial level of the Ministry of Public Administration in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this paper is to identity and analyze the socio-economic factors that influence in choosing jobs of civil servants women in particular. Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) is highly competitive where women started entering in the early 1980s after enacting the law with an option for women. The participation of women that gradually increases is greatly influenced by social, familial, organizational and personal factors. Traditionally women in Bangladesh are home-centered. The study found that women in civil service came from educated family whose parents were highly educated and rich. Parental status served as positive effect on them. There were some other issues such as self-dependency, financial crisis, better bride also important factors to join the service. More or less the similar factors served for males professionals with some difference of personal experiences. Social and familial factors greatly influenced the first entry to job. Changing job to civil service was influenced by their practical experience of realizing limitations of the first job and luminous attraction of civil service. This paper employed qualitative research on the civil servants at the managerial level of Ministry of Public Administration in Bangladesh. Thirty-one participants including 17 women were purposively selected and interviewed based on the checklist.

KEYWORDS-Job Preference; Professional; Family issues; Social factors

I. INTRODUCTION

There has been a remarkable increase of women's participation in employment in the public sector of Bangladesh through competitive examination conducted by different government agencies including Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC). BPSC has been recruiting personnel since 1973 where first woman was recruited in 1982 after the enactment of law favoring them and gradually it increases the number from 2 in 1982 to 3068 in 2008 (Afroza, 2008; Mahtab, 2007; MoPA, 2014). Only 18.43 percent women professionals (WPs) are currently working in the civil service, it increases over the recent years as it was found 32.96 percent in the 26th BCS batch in 2006 (MoPA, 2014). Women are entering in formal employment sector following social norms and practices. Traditionally women are home centred and have the responsibilities of household activities such as giving birth to children, caring them, cooking and managing house, taking care of elderly people even young siblings (Rimi, 2014; Jahan, 2010; Ward, Rahman, Islam, Akhter and Kamal, 2004; Zafarullah, 2000). Women are sent to their husband's houses after getting married and parents try to get their daughters married as early as possible after passing the minimum age. This picture is different in educated family or big family.

Professionals need to cross the family border and enter the work through negotiating family and social issues (Clark, 2000). The attractions and benefits of organization and jobs influence them to choose the job or switch from one job to another one. The issues of working hour, stress in the service, and behaviour of colleagues, authority and power dictate professionals in selecting the civil service (Clark, 2000; Crompton, 2006; Gurney, 2010; Hofsteded and Hofstede, 2005). Job preference is influenced by the family desires and individual choices and motivation particularly for women (Hakim, 2000; Hakim, 2006). Women are usually 'home-centred' and prefer household activities to official jobs for which their job preference is guided by family members (Hakim, 2000).

Jobs have positive effects as these empower to womeneconomically andprovide scope of enjoying freedom, decision making power, movement in public sphere, opportunity to lead a better life (Kabeer, 2004). These have become more challenging because of huge workload, citizen demand, vacant posts, less number of employees in office, different working culture, leadership style of organization head, male dominated working environment, lack of women-friendly policies (Zafarullah, 2000). It is important to examine what are the factors influencing women to enter the civil service. This research has two major objectives which are to identity the reasons why professionals, women in particular choose their career in the socio-economic context of Bangladesh and gender difference in selecting the job.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is an excerpt of a larger research on factor influencing work-life balance of civil servants in Bangladesh. This study took qualitative research approach within the context of socio-economic condition of professionals particularly women (Creswell, 2013). It was conducted among the civil servants of Ministry of Public Administration (MoPA) following an in-depth interview. Data triangulation was maintained following the primary and secondary source (Patton, 1978; Creswell, 2013).

Thirty-one civil servants including 17 women were interviewed on an open-ended questionnaire. The main questions were 'what are socio-economic factors that forced professionals to choose jobs in the civil service and why?' and 'how does the preference differ across the gender?' Respondents were selected purposively and snowball technique was followed to select the research participants (Babbie, 2013). It has merit in this research that qualitative sampling is "very different from conventional sampling. It is based on informational, not statistical, considerations. Its purpose is to maximize information, not facilitate generalization." (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 in Eliason, 2006:10). The sampling covered all ranks i.e. Assistant Secretary (AS), Senior Assistant Secretary (SAS), Deputy Secretary (DS), Joint Secretary (JS), Additional Secretary in order to provide holistic picture. Access to the respondents was gained through the gate-keeper i.e. Senior Secretary of MoPA.

Interviews were conducted between August and October 2014 and the duration of interview was minimum 15 to maximum70 minutes. Interview took place in the office area of MoPA and also in other suitable places of respondents. I took notes while interview was going on and interviews were also recorded which later transcribed verbatim. Pertinent quotes were written down and marked matching with the objectives. Interviews were carreid on mother tongue (Bengali) and later translated into English which I took quite much time to keep its real sense. Data analysis consisted of examining the responses of civil servants with the intention of identifying common themes suitable for this research. I also provided the summarization and interpretation of responses linking with the theories. It followed the inductive methods scaled down few themes from variety of information. Analysis adopts the social constructivism approach (Creswell, 2013).

All professionals were ranged between 28 and 58 years with the average age of 49 for male and 41 for female. Male professionals (MPs) had more experience in the service as they had on average 22 years of service whereas women had on average 14 years of service. All respondents had their minimum a Master degree from a university with one exception who had Ph.D. degree from a foreign university.

Respondents were requested to provide information about their social, familial, organizational issues that encouraged them to join the service. This paper covers the factors that force them in selecting job either first time or second time. Whereas the main research was also noted their impediments arose in the organization which will not be discussed in this paper. I disclosed my identity and assured them that confidentiality would be maintained and no name would be used in the analysis. After the interviews, they were briefed and the summary information was verified with them.

III. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Professionals both male and female have identified several factors associated with the socio-economic issues of individuals that dictate them to choose the public service. These factors came before entering the job and after entering private or non-cadre jobs. Factors before entering job were emerged from the society, family and surrounding environment where respondents were not practically experienced whereas they also changed their jobs and joined the civil service being experienced with the limitations and problems of previous jobs (Jehan, 2011).

3.1 Family Background

The patterns of family carry two dimensions. Eight MPs were from big family, two from farmer family, and two from business family. On the other hand, eight WPs were from highly educated family, two from big family and one from ethnic minority. It depicts two different socio-economic backgrounds.

Big family consists of more than six members of a family including parents and grandparents. In Bangladesh context, there is a culture of extended family that extends beyond the immediate family. In this research big family indicates both immediate families with more siblings and extended family. In a big family culture, everybody shares with each other. It is a platform to learn to live together and help each other when necessary. The family members, siblings particularly exchange their day to day life necessary things which includes from sharing food to usable clothes, reading materials. This sharing helps keeping the relation amongst siblings.

Most of the MPs (8 out 13) came from big family whereas only two female respondents were from this type of family. As a member of big family, everybody desires to be self-dependent doing a job particularly in the public sector.

Highly educated family: There is a strong positive relationship between big family and highly educated family as highly educated family couples tend to have two or three children whereas less educated people have more children. Highly educated family means parents having at least university graduate.

Ethnic minority and farmer family: Ethnic minority is not a part of mainstream people and has indigenous culture. They are marginalized group living away from the city area. They are privileged group. The main occupation of majority of Bangladeshis is agriculture from which two MPs came.

Highly educated family members are encouraged to enter government job infused by their parents, status and power whereas big family member are motivated by financial scarcity and the visible power of the educated group. This factor signifies the preference theory that most women choose their profession not by their own understanding rather they influenced by others and only minority women are 'work-centred' who prefer career (Hakim, 2000; Hakim, 2006). Different structure of family background has different type of socio-economic background. Educated family is social elite who has control over the society that is also followed by big family in the rural area if they are affluent, or business family. A WP (JS, age 48) mentioned:

My father was an enlightened person. He was law graduate from Dhaka University in 1952 and was advocate in the High Court. He was expert in different five languages, Benglai, English, Urdu, Arabic, Hindi. Although the whole society was not progressive like today and female education was not much highlighted, he encouraged us to study as spent for our education.

However, farmers have little impact on the society as they are the working class. Family members from educated family are brought up in such way who need not struggle much whereas ethnic minority and farmer family have to reach the desired goal through social ups and downs. As one woman is from ethnic minority that also indicates the fewer number representation in the civil service. However, Bangladesh represents the big family culture with a high densely populated country. The civil service does not represent the mainstream group of the country as it is the agriculture based economy. The opportunities are captured by the groups who are advanced in socially and in terms of education.

Professionals, as they are highly educated and have planned family structure of having mostly two children. Spouses of MPs were mostly housewives whereas WPs have their service holder spouses. One WP is exception of this general trend as she had four daughters. The main reason was second marriage as her husband died after their second daughter and then she got married with another person whose wife also died after they had one daughter. They took another child that counts to four children. She did not get remarried with a single or unmarried male fearing the social consequence. Second exception has been found also for woman who is widow and did not get married a second time because of her autistic baby fearing that she might not get support from the husband or her daughter would not be taken care of well. Third case, one WP became widow at the age of 32 and did not get remarried thinking the future of her son. This does not happen for male as their wives usually do not work at office for example on male official whose son is autistic and they took second son and his wife assists at home.

Professionals' business, their careers inhibit to take more children which are applicable for WPs as 5 out of 17 married women had only one child each either son or daughter. On the contrary, none of the married MPs found with one child. This indicates professional women are afraid of having more children because of time, late in marriage, business with career, professional training and lack of encouraging policies. Ultimately country will get fewer children from highly educated mothers and result in potential human resources in future.

Keeping family size small i.e. fewer number of children is also determined by the cost of living, cost of educating children, taking care of them in these busy days. Professionals had the family background of big family whereas they maintained the small family. Government also encourages public employees to have two children even emphasizing in the policies to provide benefits.

3.2 Reason for Choosing Civil Service

Socio-economic background of employees, social demand, opportunity of jobs, financial issue of a family, experience of one's primary job play a great vital role for choosing the civil service. It covers wide range of reasons from family to organization.

Social status and social value: Educated, service holder particularly civil servants are highly valued in the Bangladeshi society. Being a member of BCS (Administration) is a dream of many families. Lower middle class people encourage their children to be civil servant. This ensemble plays important role in social change as the change agent. They are honored and given value in the society, familial decision. In the family issue, a civil servant holding a higher position is emphasized. His/her decision is considered. Some positions serve as the key person within the jurisdiction such as Divisional Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, UpazillaNirbahi Officer. They have the hold and acceptable access to general people which a private job holder and business family cannot achieve. The image¹ of private job is pictured as jobless or underemployment. It also links to the power and authority. Most of the professionals mentioned social value about the public service as the guiding reason for choosing the job. It was the general reason for entering the public service. However, those who came from the educated family and had the experience to be in touch with the civil servants, they were directly encouraged to enter the civil service. It has the comparative social value. A MP mentioned,

From the social perspective it has been chosen as it has great value in the society. If it is told from the family perspective, it can be said that my relative, maternal uncle was in the civil service. That worked as the inspiration to enter the job. And in the context of Bangladesh, it is compared with private sector, when we joined the service, joining the civil service was logically acceptable during that time. It is all about status in the society.

Another MP also emphasized social status with other benefits that he needed the secured job. He freely expressed his views,

It is mainly because of social aspect. Society demands. In the society, you will find a good job holder person is widely accepted, honored even an expected bridegroom in our culture... Particularly public job.they have power, authority, facilities of getting various benefits. So far I knew from my friends, village people. It is a secured job. If it is government job, it is highly

¹Mr. Helal was a student of Bangla and his girlfriend studied the same. After completing university study, he got a job in a renowned English medium school in Dhaka city. His girl-friend shelly was trying to get job. Helal is smart and good student who capitalized this teaching profession and was earning much. It was about 70-80 thousand including the arrangement of special study for the students. They got married and started to prepare for civil service. Both of them appeared the civil service examination and luckily Ms. Shelly obtained job in the civil service , a technical cadre i.e. as lecturer in a government college. She was then posted in remote upazilla. However, Helal remained in English medium school. This is a private school. His father-in-law was shocked as his son-in-law did not get the government job and he remarked 'his daughter got the job, but his son-in-law does not do job'. Although teaching in an English medium school in Dhaka is far better than a lecturer in many colleges of Bangladesh, at least lecturer of a rural area where civic rights are rarely materialized. Mr. Helal expressed grief that his father-in-law died with that dissatisfaction as he later got the job in the civil service as a member of BCS (Administration). In the society private jobs are not considered as job although they have higher salary, good compensation package, good accommodation, education facility of children.

secured job in terms of salary, pension, and gratuity and if a person enter the job, it never goes. It is like a proverb that it is difficult to get a job in the public sector, but it is more difficult to quit.

(A MP, SAS, age 45 years)

A job in the civil service is highly valued in the society for which parents force their childrenenough to join the service. A MP who came from high class was influenced by his father and shared his experience,

It was because of my father. He was an advocate and a landlord in that area. He had huge lands. He thought if his sons would come to this service and become the member of BCS, it would dignify his family. It had social implication. For that reason he used to say to attend BCS exam. Everybody used to honor the member of BCS. He knew how the power a magistrate uses. This forced him to inspire me to be member of administration cadre.

The finding shows that MPs were influenced by the learning about power and authority having social value. Women did not come to job for the same reasons. Men prefer power and routine management whereas women emphasize their self-dependency, family and quality of working environment (Hofstede, 2005).

Seeking better groom or bride: A member of BCS (Administration) is a better choice for parents as the best bridegroom or bride. Man has more value comparing to woman. Family members take extra care of the civil servant son-in-law among other in-laws. The job serves as the one and only best criteria for groom which differs for bride. A job in the civil service serves as a strong point to get better bride but not as only criteria. This indicates the social discrimination against woman. Parents feel safe and secured handing over their daughters to the civil service also serves as the strong point for a female to get better groom where other social reasons come as secondary. It links to empowerment and better parenting.

However, the society reacts sometimes differently that contradicts with general assumption. The general assumption is about the beauty of girl serves as the main criteria for getting married which means black or less beautiful woman may get less importance and there should be reluctance for their marriage (Jahid, 2015). It was found that family members tried to arrange marriage for a WP to a groom sticking to the first general assumption that she might have been chosen by the groom and his family members because of her youth. The brothers were in fear they might not get better groom when their sister would be graduated and lose her beauty. The fear comes from the society and experience surrounds them. However, it proved wrong after her job in the BCS as she was offered to get married by many and finally she got married to civil servant. Interestingly the criterion of black complexion does not create any difference for MPs where the job is the principle criteria.

Jobs in the civil service have positive value to be selected as the bridegroom or bride. It creates impact on women and her family members. An unmarried female showed valid and practical reason from the sociological point of view. She pointed out,

Although service holder girl has much value in the society as a bride, it has problems as well. A service holder girl has created a demand of usually higher quality groom or at least equal. She further added thattwenty to twenty five years of age for girl is the most attractive age for marriage whereas a service holder lady usually crosses that age. Meeting with all requirements, it delays for getting married.

(An unmarried WP)

As the job of women creates demand of higher educational qualification, same or higher job status; it may increase the number of single women among the professionals.

3.3 Familial Financial Crisis

The financial crisis of a family serves as one of the most important factors of engaging service preferably in the civil service. This issue comes from the experience in the childhood, in the academic life and during the previous jobs that creates as a basis to obtain the job and, or leads to indulge in corruption in the service life.

Job preferably in the public service is deemed as the best option of leading a life of educated people. Those who were from lower middle class and brought up struggling amidst financial crisis and whose desires in early days could not be met because of financial crisis of parents, they were found obstinate to obtain civil service. The willpower, perseverance and determination help them reaching at the zenith of success. Although this comes from either male or female, it favors the MPs as they have to form the family and act as the breadwinner of the family (Zafarullah, 2000).

The childhood experience allows people to choose job that s/he comes to know from her or his relatives such as father, uncles. Later their desire is modified by the friends and environment during the academic life and also in jobs other than administration cadre.

3.4 Personal Reasons and motivation

Entering and changing jobs are also influenced by the personal reasons. Husband's death forced a WP to enter the job as she needed financial strength for herself and her daughters. This was a question of existence not charmed by the benefits of job or lucrative power. It reminds a woman how she is vulnerable in the society.

Personally motivated to be self-dependent and earning to spend on their wish have forced WPs to enter job market. The desire is also expedited by their parents through encouragement to join the civil service. WPs gained experience from the society how employed women were honored and valued because of their jobs. They had honorable position among the people. They were different than other general people. They were smarter and economically empowered which gave women self-dependency. If a woman does nothing and fully depends on husband's income, she has to sacrifice many things such as freedom of choice, power of expenditure, movement in public domains. The economically insolvent women never think of breaking the relation with husband even in case of necessity as they do not have economic power to survive which Dr. Halima did not face when she was divorced. It encouraged Ms. 'A' to achieve such a job that would provide her economic power and honor in the society and she would be self-dependent. Dr. Halima's identity crisis forced her to do something so that she can be known by her own name. The realization regarding the Dr. Halima's identity forced Ms. 'A' to feel and decide. She explained in details how that affecter her life,

At the very beginning, I wanted to be doctor. I saw one lady doctor in our area. Her father was also doctor who my father took us to. I don't know.. I saw her doing her intern..then she became doctor, established a chamber. Then I thought is nice, here people can be served. She was smart and kept everything neat and clean. Her husband was also doctor. But sad .. She was introduced as either wife of Dr. Alam or Daughter of her Hasan . Then her name was used. Since we studied gender. I can tell you now..later she became Dr. Halima once her husband left her. Then she was known by her name. but she carried her husband name.. that means we used, we used to call her by her husband's name. patients would address her by her husband's name...(smile!).. now I can remember, she was known by her personal identity was suppressed. She used to run the chamber and provided the service in the community mainly for women. That might also be the reason.

Another WP holding the rank of SAS was also motivated from internal urge to be self-dependent and empowered. She expressed,

It was my desire, as a female, I must achieve a profession that would be respectable, helpful to lead a better life, prestigious life with self-esteemed. After my graduation, I attended the BCS and luckily got the chance.

(A WP, SAS) $\,$

Earnings have a power to encourage people to be self-reliant. Earnings in the childhood, for sake of fun, encouraged a WP to enter job to earn personally and spend. This happened to her when she faced financial crisis as her father could not send money regularly because of transferring problem as well as low-paid job. She could not meet up her demands in the childhood and experienced with the helplessness of her mother. She explained her reason why she opted for job,

One day, I would go to study to a teacher. it is far from my place. We did not have telephone, mobile like today to communicate. It was rainy day and stormy. This was just English and Maths for two months before final exam. I used to go even by bicycle. I was ready to go to teacher. Mother forbade me to go to read today because she did not have money. But I went on foot. I felt very sad. And I was thinking I would work, I will do job so that my children won't face any problem like this. Swear on God, on that I promised I must be service holder. And I was good student. It was the inspiration from that day. It was in childhood. I wanted to be airhostess as I was looking beautiful. But when I told my desire to my father, he abstain me saying that I wanted to do very good job that has honor, prestige. Then I stopped.. I then after my master, attended BCS and got the job.

(A WP, SAS, Age 45, interviewed on 11.09.2014)

The job what a person achieved was not usually achieved as desired. The scarcity of jobs in the market and change of studying subjects sometimes dictate the path of entering job. Ms 'A' wanted to be doctor. As she did not get chance in the medical colleges, she studied in a university and then attended BCS examination. The unsuccessfulness in one area sometimes brings better in the field of career.

3.5 Other Factors

Diversity of Work and placement, promotion prospect in the civil service were also the reason for choosing the civil service. Working in diversified job does not work before joining the service rather it plays a vital role when somebody starts career. Officials of MoPA have the scope of working in diverse nature of jobs and places which cover ministries, field administration, other autonomous organizations, corporations, philanthropic bodies, UN organizations, Embassies of Bangladesh abroad etc. As the diversity is absent in other cadres or services in terms of nature and place of work, lateral entry has become a popular issue among the other officials who opted to be members of MoPA. A professional can change her/his nature of job and place which brings the job satisfaction and reduce workplace boredom (Eliason, 2006). Another most important reason for choosing the civil service that it has good promotion prospect and there is a frequent and timely promotion. In the hierarchy of administration, top rank holders utilize more power and authority. Officials of MoPA enjoy more than any other cadre service and public service in Bangladesh. Promotion prospect in this Ministry attracts other cadre officials to switch over this service as lateral entry.

IV. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The reasons for choosing civil service are the forces spawned in the childhood to get either a private or public job and to change the job to civil service. The first typed choice was based on other's experiences and the second one was on their real life experiences for which the second one was more of practical and matured enough compared to first one. The experiences and choices vary from men to women. The findings in this regard are as follows:

Family backgrounds, number of siblings, education and wealth of parents, rural-urban residence have effect on choosing the service. It is found that Bangladesh civil service has the less representation of the mainstream economic (Agriculture) group of the country. Family background played a positive vital role for women civil servants. Urban family members have the greater inclusion in this service because better education. Professional's choice of civil service is highly influenced by the others' choices. Family members especially father had the dominant influence over the job selection. As the effects of family background are prominent in the selecting the service, business in the service and career related training in the beginning influence in their own family structure. Married women face difficulties in their lives. A good number of them have only one child. It happens as their husbands are also busy persons with the jobs. However, it does not create negative effect on their children rather they are well educated in good academic institutions. The structured and disciplined life of professionals serves as the guidance for their children and parents become the best teacher, adviser and friend. Professionals emphasize on their children for their livelihood, schooling so much that they forgot or ignore their lives, their enjoyment. WPs are more 'home centred' than 'work centred' even ignoring the personal development (Hakim, 2000). MPs came from diverse family background and mostly from big and less educated family. Their choice of entering job was influenced by family members, friends, bureaucrats and teachers that differ from the highly educated family. MPs were found 'work-centred' as they had their housewives who used to spend more time with the children for which none of them was found with one children. They utilized their family support for their professional development.

- ✓ Civil service was treated as the most important vehicle for being established in life. It is seen as the source of respects, power in the society. Family members emphasize the social value. A civil servant is highly expected bridegroom in the society that suppresses other qualification while this job also serves as the best qualification for women to get a better bride. Organizational position, power and job security have value in Bangladesh society.
- ✓ MPs are the breadwinners for their family whereas WPs are the contributors in the family with their husbands' financial support (Kabeer, 2004; Rimi, 2014). Women are not found who had to think about the familial crisis while men had to find out other sources of income to lead their families. Job preferably in the public service is deemed as the best option of leading livelihood of educated people. Those who are from lower middle class and brought up struggling amidst financial crisis and whose desire in early days could not be met because of financial crisis of parents, they were obstinate to obtain civil service. The willpower, perseverance and determination help them reaching at the zenith of success.
- ✓ It is noticeable that personal reasons that forced them to achieve a job were not necessarily the civil service as desires were mostly seeded during their childhood or student life. However, surrounding environment guided their desire about job. Civil service was not the first achieved job who started with other jobs and later joined this service because it was difficult to achieve and limitation of the previous job forced them to change. Leaving jobs and joining civil service indicates its popularity and job insecurity in the previous jobs.
- ✓ Women were discriminated in some powerful jobs thinking that they would not be able compete with the challenges arose from the inside and outside of job as well as family responsibilities (Baumgartner and Schneider, 2010). It indicates the social perception about women and social insecurity. They also evade challenging jobs because of family activities as they have the socially assigned role of household activities. After forming the family and having children, WPs emphasizes home than career.
- ✓ Female members particularly mothers are the key person in playing the vital role in the household activities that professionals are experienced from their childhood. This has become the social norm and mothers do not have rest in their lives as they continue the caring service for their grandchildren. Both male and females got much help from their mothers or sisters. Male counterparts have also contribution when they are motivated and act against the social norm or the necessity demands. As household works are defined as the feminine jobs, helping by men in household works is still insignificant.
- ✓ WPs maintain household activities keeping paid domestic servants as both of them are service holders and they don't need to think the scarcity of financial issue like MPs.
- ✓ Choice of jobs is influenced by the different actors around the professionals that spawned in the childhood. The professionals who were close to a person either powerful or respected because of knowledge and job thought those persons as role models. Whatever the role and influence of various actors was, the main target was to get a job in the public sector because of its security and comparative advantage in the society.

V. CONCLUSION

The reasons of selecting jobs come from the society, family, individual and personal issues. It varies from men to women across the ranks. Job in the civil service served as the priority for which they tried to achieve leaving other private or government jobs. Leaving the previous jobs and joining the civil service depend on the status and power of civil service, financial and non-financial benefits of jobs.

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