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Job Satisfaction and Professional Challenges among Social Welfare Graduates in Bangladesh

Abstract

This study examines job satisfaction, professional challenges, and career experiences among social welfare graduates in Bangladesh, with particular attention to the factors shaping their occupational choices and engagement with professional social work. Despite the expansion of social work education, the profession continues to face challenges related to institutional recognition, employment opportunities, professional regulation, and career progression. These conditions may contribute to graduates' movement into diverse occupational sectors, including government service, banking, academia, NGOs, and corporate organizations. The study employed a mixed-methods design, combining a questionnaire survey of 200 social welfare graduates of the Institute of Social Welfare and Research, University of Dhaka, with 10 in-depth interviews. The findings indicate that limited professional recognition, inadequate job security, unsatisfactory remuneration, and restricted career advancement opportunities are major factors influencing graduates' avoidance of professional social work positions. The findings also reveal challenges in professional identity, particularly among graduates employed outside social work-related occupations. In contrast, graduates employed in government, banking, and academic sectors reported comparatively higher job satisfaction, associated with greater employment security, stability, and perceived social status. The study highlights the need for stronger institutional recognition and regulation of social work, expanded employment opportunities, curriculum reform, professional licensing, and stronger institutional support. These measures could contribute to strengthening the professional standing of social work and improving the career prospects and job satisfaction of social welfare graduates in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Social Work Education; Social Welfare Graduates; Job Satisfaction; Professional Identity; Career Mobility; Occupational Challenges; Bangladesh.

1. Introduction

Social work is a professional and academic discipline focused on social justice, human rights, social change, empowerment and the welfare of people, families, groups and communities. It encompasses a variety of social issues, such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, family disruption, violence, disability, mental health issues, social marginalization and more. Gradually, social problems become more complex because of globalization, modernization, demographic change, and technological advancement, social workers in this regard play more significant roles **[1,2,3]**. Social work is thus recognized as a profession in many countries, with the development of professional education, training and institutional structures further strengthening the profession **[4].**

The institutionalization of social work education started in Bangladesh in the Pakistan era. The College of Social Welfare was founded in 1953 after a United Nations sponsored training programme for social welfare and became the Institute of Social Welfare and Research (ISWR) in 1973 when it was incorporated under the University of Dhaka**[16,19].** Since then, the social welfare education has spread out from the universities and higher education institutions in the country. Graduates of social welfare have taken up a variety of professions such as in government and civil service, teaching, banking, NGO, healthcare, research, business and private organizations. Thus, social welfare education has contributed to developing graduates with knowledge and skills applicable to diverse professional settings.

However, the role of social work in Bangladesh is still a matter of concern. Social work has not attained an acceptable level of professional recognition, regulation, licensing and employment structures as compared to some professions. Social welfare graduates may also be constrained professional identity and career

opportunities due to limited awareness and lack of institutional recognition. Consequently, graduates may find it to be challenging to launch careers that align with their schooling and expectations. The multiplicity of the job opportunities also poses some questions about the integration of social welfare education with the occupational experiences of graduates.

In this context, job satisfaction is an important aspect of graduates' professional experiences. It provides an indication of how employees perceive and evaluate their jobs and working environments and is relevant to employee motivation, organizational commitment, performance, and retention **[5]**. Job satisfaction may also be related to professional recognition, job security, compensation, and promotion for social welfare graduates, workplace environment, and being able to apply a professional knowledge and skills.

In spite of a significant development in social welfare education in Bangladesh, there is a need to have more empirical information on employment experiences of the graduates and the professional challenges faced in different occupational fields. Thus, this study examines job satisfaction and professional challenges among social welfare graduates in Bangladesh. It aims to explore their experiences at work, their satisfaction with their jobs, key work challenges and aspects of their working lives. The results could be helpful inputs for advising better social welfare education, better employment and institutional structures, better professional development and better recognition of the social work profession in Bangladesh.

2. Literature review

2.1 Social Work as a Profession

As stated by the International Federation of Social Workers and International Association of Schools of Social Work, social work is an applied profession and an

academic discipline that helps social change, social cohesion, and the empowerment of people based on the principles of collective responsibility and valuing diversity. Social work has gained significant professional status in developed nations such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom through professional licensing schemes, professional credentialing programs, and welfare service provision [4]. Social workers in these countries are recruited social services sectors. The growing intricacy of global social problems related to migration, aging, and economic inequality has increased the scope of professional social work across the globe[2].However, the professional standing of social work varies greatly in the case of developed versus developing nations. In particular, within developing nations such as Bangladesh, social work has not yet succeeded in obtaining its professional standing due to inadequate policies, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of information on professional social work among the general public [6,19,20].

2.2 Career Opportunities of Social Work Graduates

There are many opportunities for social workers in various fields as compared to other disciplines. Studies reveal that social work graduates find jobs in health care services, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, correction services, rehabilitation services, disaster management, corporate social responsibility, and policy institutes **[6].** Social work graduates, in countries where there is professional recognition of social work, experience job stability and advancement of their careers. Studies reveal that social work graduates have a number of transferable skills such as communication skills, leadership, counseling skills, critical thinking, teamwork, and community organizing, which make them employable in various fields **[7].** Some of the qualities that employers consider while hiring university graduates are adaptability, ethical dedication, communication skills,

and problem-solving skills. This is especially true for social work graduates working in multidisciplinary fields.Findings from recent studies conducted worldwide suggest that social work graduates are choosing non-conventional occupations such as those in corporations, development consultation, policy analysis, and international organizations **[8].**These developments reflect the changes being made by the field of social work in response to current employment trends.

2.3 Professional Recognition and Challenges

Professional recognition is another essential element for career development. A profession is a specialized form of employment characterized by distinctive training, a code of ethics, institutional recognition, certification, and official sanctioning**[9]**. The field of social work has emerged as a profession in Western countries. Nevertheless, social work has not yet reached the level of professionalism in developing countries owing to structural reasons. Indeed, Hossain &Mathbor **[10]** noted that there were various barriers to practicing social work in Bangladesh, including the non-existence of a licensing process, limited public sector jobs, insufficient institutional support, and ignorance of the profession of social work. This issue has a detrimental effect on the professional identity and job security of social welfare graduates. Moreover, there was a mismatch between the occupation of social workers and their skillsets due to labor market demands. Another problem is the lack of career opportunities for social welfare graduates. Social welfare education gives students knowledge about counseling, rehabilitation, social policy, community organization, and development projects. Recent studies from the global context show that social workers face problems such as emotional exhaustion, excessive workload, occupational stress, and poor remuneration, particularly in developing countries where welfare services are poorly developed **[11].**

2.4 Job Satisfaction and Career Mobility

There is a high level of correlation between job satisfaction, organizational commitment, motivation, productivity, and psychological wellbeing. Based on Herzberg's Two Factor Theory, motivators such as recognition, achievement, advancement, and self-development lead to higher levels of job satisfaction while dissatisfaction results from insufficient remuneration, insecurity, and a negative work environment **[12]**. In like manner, there is an escalating tendency for social welfare graduates to engage in diversified careers in NGOs, banks, teaching, governmental administration, and private organizations. Although this shows adaptability and employability, career changes may cause identity crises for the graduates who fail to secure jobs in sectors relevant to their qualifications**[8]**. The existing literature further shows that professional autonomy and acceptance are significant factors that influence the job satisfaction of social workers. In cases where social work is not institutionally accepted and socially esteemed, the graduates experience uncertainty in terms of career development and professional identity.

2.5 Bangladesh Context

The country has witnessed considerable socio-economic change in recent times due to its rapid urbanization, globalization, growing influence of NGOs, modernization, and stiff labor market competition. As a result, job trends amongst university graduates, including social welfare graduates, have changed considerably. Social welfare graduates are now working in a variety of fields such as government bureaucracy, NGOs, banking, educational institutions, health care management, and private enterprises**[13]**.However, despite all these positive developments, the field of social work is still not well-known as a professional field in the country. While there are several social issues in Bangladesh that need professional intervention by social

workers, the profession itself does not have adequate policy support, institutional recognition, and employment opportunities. Moreover, lack of licensing procedures and governmental recruiting schemes also make practicing social work difficult.In addition, studies conducted in Bangladesh on the issue of graduate employability suggest that there is significant mismatch in employment opportunities among graduates due to rising competition in the job market and lack of institutional support **[10]**. The problem of mismatch is even more acute for social welfare graduates as employers fail to comprehend the significance of social work education. In addition, current studies reveal that graduates opt for careers outside their field of study mostly due to economic stability, social prestige, and lucrative careers. This issue raises important concerns about professional identity, relevancy of the curriculum, and future prospects for the development of social work as a profession in Bangladesh.

2.6 Research Gap

It is observed from the literature review that there exist several studies on the subject of social work as a discipline, social work profession, employability, and job satisfaction. However, these studies are mostly concerned about the developed countries wherein social work has gained the status of a profession.In Bangladesh, studies on graduate employability, job satisfaction, and social work as a profession have been scarce compared with those carried out in relation to social welfare policies, social development projects, and general graduate employability issues.While some researches have been performed regarding graduate employability and occupational preferences in Bangladesh, little empirical knowledge has been created on how the social welfare graduates perceive their job satisfaction, professional challenges, and career development in Bangladesh's dynamic labor

market. It is worth noting that the association of lack of professional recognition with career diversification of social welfare graduates needs to be analyzed more thoroughly. Thus, the purpose of the current study is to investigate job satisfaction, professional challenges, and career development of social welfare graduates employed in diverse sectors in Bangladesh.

3. Theoretical Framework

The present study is based on the Professionalization Theory that outlines the process of the transformation of an occupation to a profession. It is characterized by specialized education, professional training, legitimacy, codes of ethics, licensing system, and societal recognition of professionalization. According to Professionalization theory, a profession becomes legitimate when its specialized knowledge base and occupational status get acknowledged and validated by society and government**[9].** Though social work graduates are specialists in areas like counseling, community development, rehabilitation, social policy, welfare management, the profession does not have a solid institutional structure or licensing system or even a defined occupational identity in Bangladesh. Professionalization is not only about achieving proficiency in technical skills but also gaining social status and occupational authority in addition to institutional credibility[9]. In those countries where social work profession is more professionalized, social workers get better job security, professional autonomy, career opportunities, and respect from the society. On the other hand, in developing nations, there can be a lack of professionalization of social work profession due to inadequate institutional framework, poor policies, and a lack of awareness regarding the profession.

The role of non-professionalization of social workers' profession in terms of career mobility and occupational diversification is quite evident from this theoretical discussion. Lack of professionalization leads social workers' graduates to pursue career opportunities in other occupational areas for the sake of earning and social status and reputation. In the case of Bangladesh, the theory of career mobility and occupational diversification becomes highly relevant as many social welfare graduates take up careers in the fields like BCS, banking, teaching, NGO, business, and corporate sectors. Professionalization Theory can also shed light on the connection between professional identity and job satisfaction. Studies indicate that professionals who enjoy professional acknowledgment, autonomy at work, and organizational backing are more prone to experience greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment [5]. On the other hand, failure to gain professional recognition, lower occupational status, job insecurity, and ambiguity about career prospects commonly lead to dissatisfaction and uncertainty among professionals.

Regarding the current research, Professionalization Theory is useful in analyzing:

- Professional status in social work in Bangladesh,
- Employment trends of social welfare graduates,
- Reasons behind career diversification,
- Professional identity issues,
- Connection between professional acknowledgment and job satisfaction, and
- Occupational experiences of social welfare graduates.

In this way, the theory can be applied to examining the impacts of structural and institutional constraints on the career experiences and satisfaction of social welfare graduates in Bangladesh.

Based on the Professionalization Theory, the conceptual framework was created and presented in figure 1. It illustrates how the limited institutional recognition and professionalization of social work in Bangladesh may contribute to professional insecurity and challenges in occupational identity among social welfare graduates. This is why social welfare graduates pursue diverse professions like working in government departments, banks, academia, non-governmental organizations, and even private businesses rather than professional social work. The framework also reveals how occupational mobility impacts job satisfaction and professional fulfillment of social welfare graduates. The framework further illustrates how occupational mobility may shape job satisfaction and professional fulfilment, considering contextual factors such as labour market structures, policy environments, educational qualifications, and social perceptions.

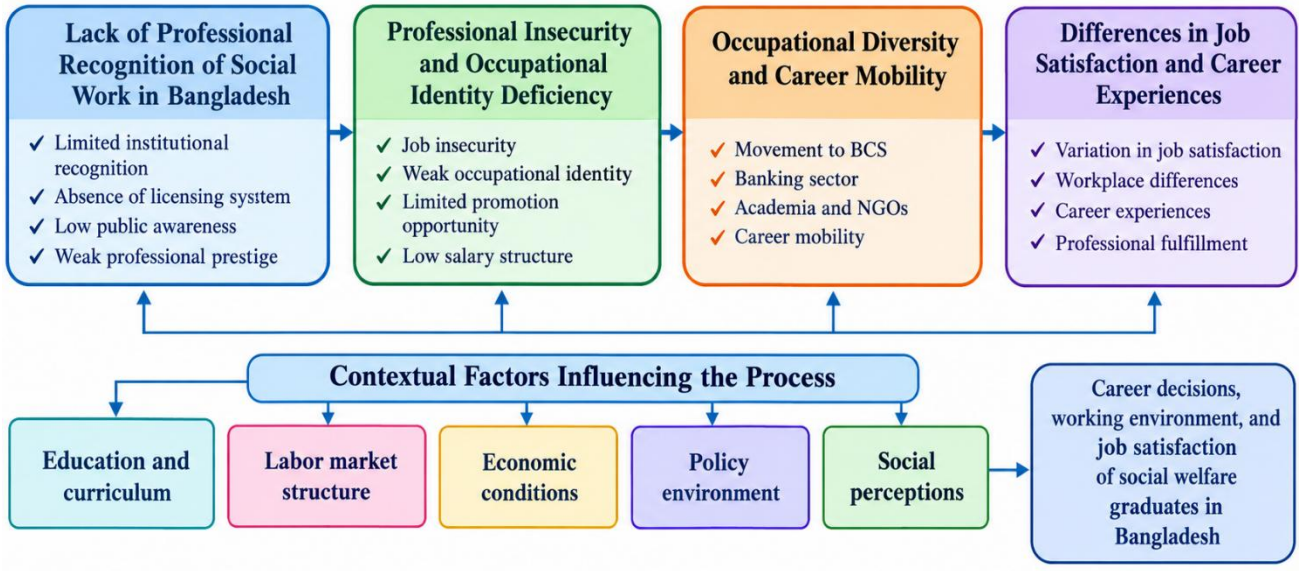


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study, Source: Created by the authors based on Professionalization Theory

4. Research Objectives

General Objectives

The primary objective of the present study is to explore the job satisfaction of social welfare graduates who have taken up employment across various fields in Bangladesh.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine the nature of employment sectors where social welfare graduates are employed.
2. To evaluating the level of job satisfaction among social welfare graduates.
3. To analyzing the link between social work education and professional success of the graduates.
4. To suggest some ways for improving professional recognition and job satisfaction of social welfare graduates in Bangladesh.

5. Methodology

A mixed-method research design has been adopted for conducting this study in which both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used for investigating the issues related to job satisfaction, professional problems, and career experiences of social welfare graduates in Bangladesh. This study has been carried out in Dhaka City, Bangladesh, where a large number of graduates of the Institute of Social Welfare and Research (ISWR), University of Dhaka are working in different professions. The population of this study included all the social welfare graduates who have passed their graduation/post-graduation degree program from ISWR and are currently engaged in professional fields such as government service, NGOs, banks, teaching, healthcare management, developmental organizations, and private firms.

A total of 200 respondents were purposively selected for the quantitative survey. The reason for employing purposive sampling is that the research needs participants that meet certain requirements such as being graduates of ISWR and currently working in various professional fields. In order to conduct qualitative research, 10 In-depth Interviews (IDIs) were conducted with selected social welfare graduates from the previous fields. The participants of these IDIs were purposively chosen in order to learn about their experience in the professional field, career progression, problems at work, and perception of the profession of social work, among others.

Primary as well as secondary sources of data have been considered for this research. In case of primary data, information was gathered using survey interviews and in-depth interviews. Survey interviews used a questionnaire which contained questions about the demographic details of respondents, their employment status, their professional experience, workplace issues, career expectations, and level of job satisfaction. In order to ensure ease in accessing data and encouraging greater number of participants, data was collected from face-to-face interviews. In regard to the second type of data collection method, namely in-depth interviews, an interview guideline was followed. Issues that were discussed in these interviews included professional recognition, occupational identity, career-related problems and challenges, job security, future prospects of social work profession in Bangladesh, etc. Quantitative data collected were subjected to editing, coding, classification, and systematic processing prior to analysis. Various statistical analyses including frequency distribution, percentages, mean, standard deviation, cross-tabulation, and chi-square test were employed to interpret the survey data. Results were shown through the use of tables, charts, and graphics.

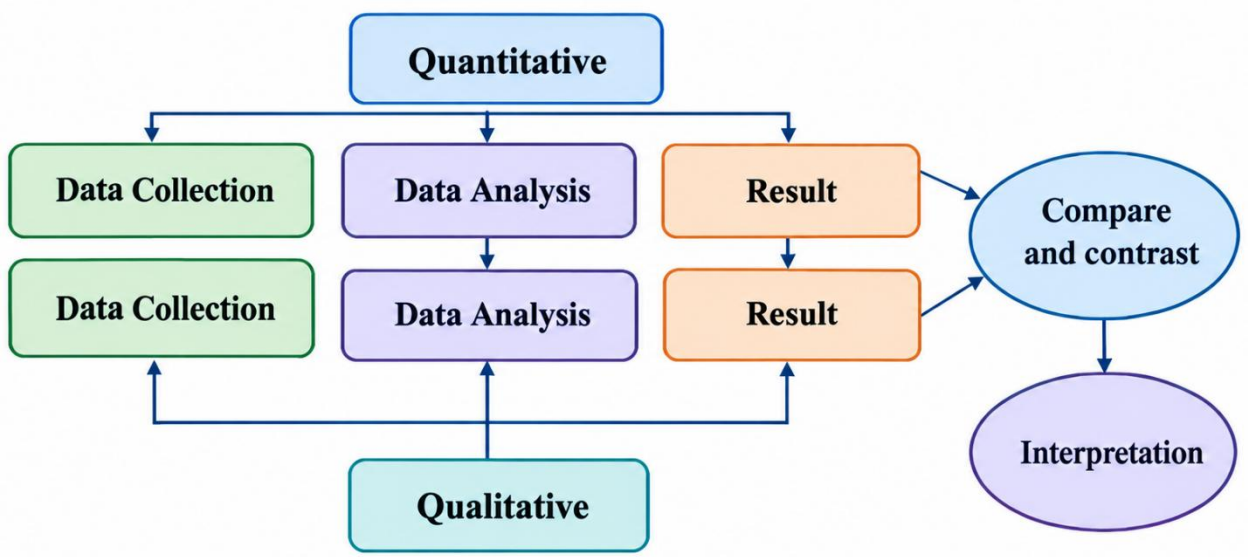


Figure 2: Flow chart of triangulation of mixed method approach and data analysis, Source: Created by the authors

Qualitative data gathered from in-depth interview were transcribed, coded, and subjected to themes. Thematic analysis was done to identify common patterns, experiences, and perceptions of the respondents on the subject matter (Fig.**2**). Quotations/verbatim from respondents were included in the discussion of results. Ethical considerations were ensured throughout the entire research process. Participation in the research was completely voluntary. Informed consent was secured from all respondents prior to the data gathering process. Respondents were made aware of the goals and objectives of the study conducted. Data collected were kept confidential and anonymous.

6. Findings

6.1 Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1: Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile of Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency (n=200)	Percentage
Gender	Male	118	59.0
	Female	82	41.0
Educational Qualification	BSS	52	26.0
	MSS	148	74.0
Monthly Income	Below 30,000 BDT	31	15.5
	30,000–50,000 BDT	79	39.5
	50,001–80,000 BDT	58	29.0
	Above 80,000 BDT	32	16.0

Source: Created by authors based on filed survey

From the demographic data on the respondents, it is clear that social welfare graduates are very active participants in different professional fields during the early and mid-career periods. From the 200 respondents, the male gender dominated the sample at 59.0%, while the female respondents comprised 41.0% of the total number (Tab. 1). Postgraduate education was prevalent amongst the respondents; most having attained an MSS degree qualification. The results indicated that social welfare professionals were working in diverse fields, with different salary patterns. Social welfare graduates who were engaged in governmental services, banks, and academic institutes were earning better salaries compared to those working for non-governmental organizations and project organizations.

6.2 Employment Sectors of Social Welfare Graduates

The result show that civil service and academia are the two professions that are

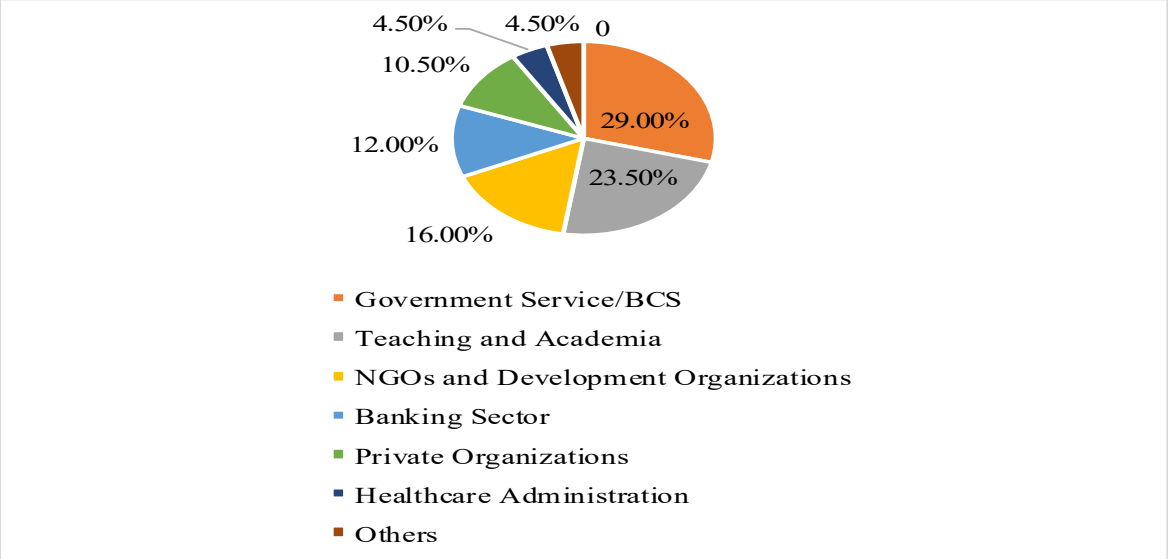


Figure 3: Employment sectors of social welfare graduates, Source**:** Created by authors based on filed survey

most favored by social welfare graduates that stood 29% and 23.5% respectively (Fig.**3**). The reasons for choosing these two areas were job security, social status, economic stability, and upward mobility compared to the social work profession. A government officer and A University Teacher noted that,

> *BCS is preferred by graduates due to social status, stability, and career security.*
>
> *Being a teacher is socially respected and graduates in social welfare can apply their communication and analysis skills well in academic settings.*

These results also show that fewer graduates actually join the professional social work sector like rehabilitation, counseling, psychiatric social work, and hospital social services.

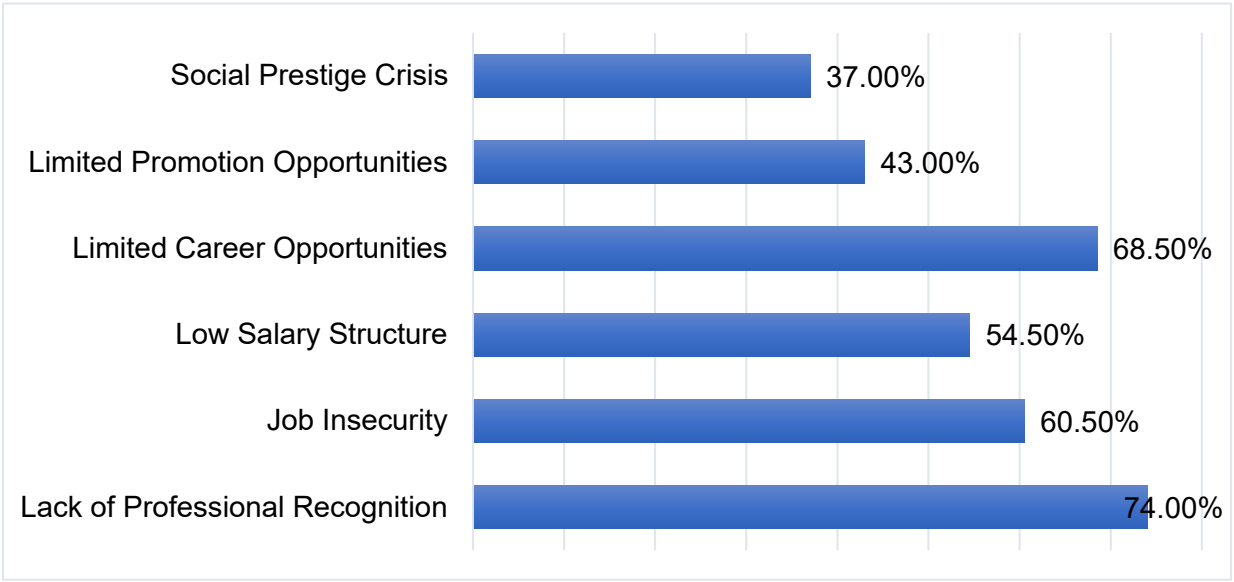


Figure 4: Reasons for Avoiding Professional Social Work Sector**,** Source**:** Created by authors based on filed survey

From the findings, it is clear that insufficient professional recognition and few career prospects are the main reasons why graduates choose not to join professions related to social work. The majority of the participants indicated that despite gaining practical and analytical knowledge through social work studies, the social work profession lacks stable career prospects in Bangladesh(Fig.**4**).A banker and A development worker noted that,

> *There are very few professional social work jobs in Bangladesh. Graduates have no other choice but to pursue different kinds of jobs for survival.*
>
> *Low pay scales and unstable job security make NGO jobs unattractive to graduates in social work professions.*

6.3 Job Satisfaction among Social Welfare Graduates

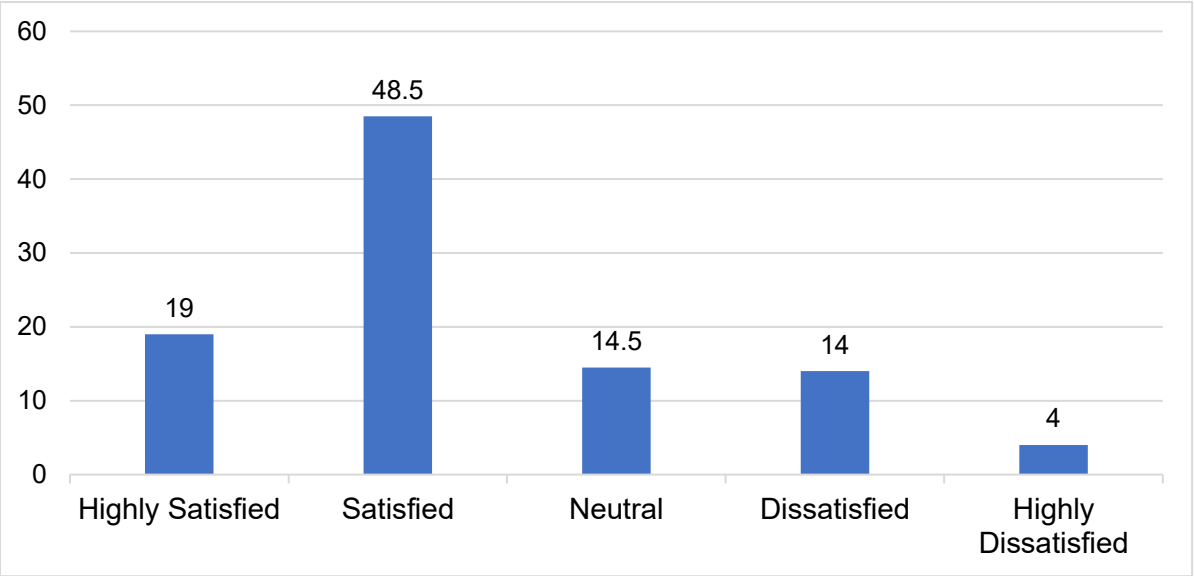


Figure 5: Overall Level of Job Satisfactions, Source: Created by authors based on filed survey

The results of the study show that most respondents were either satisfied (48.5%) or highly satisfied (19.0%) with their present careers. On the other hand, some respondents were either dissatisfied (14.0%) or highly dissatisfied (4.0%), while neutral views were held by 14.5% of the respondents(Fig.**5**). From the above findings, it can be seen that despite difficulties in the careers of many graduates, there was job satisfaction among most respondents. A government service officer noted that,

> *I am quite satisfied with my profession as it offers me financial stability and a good future as well. While my profession has no direct association with social work, yet the things that I learned academically assist me professionally.*

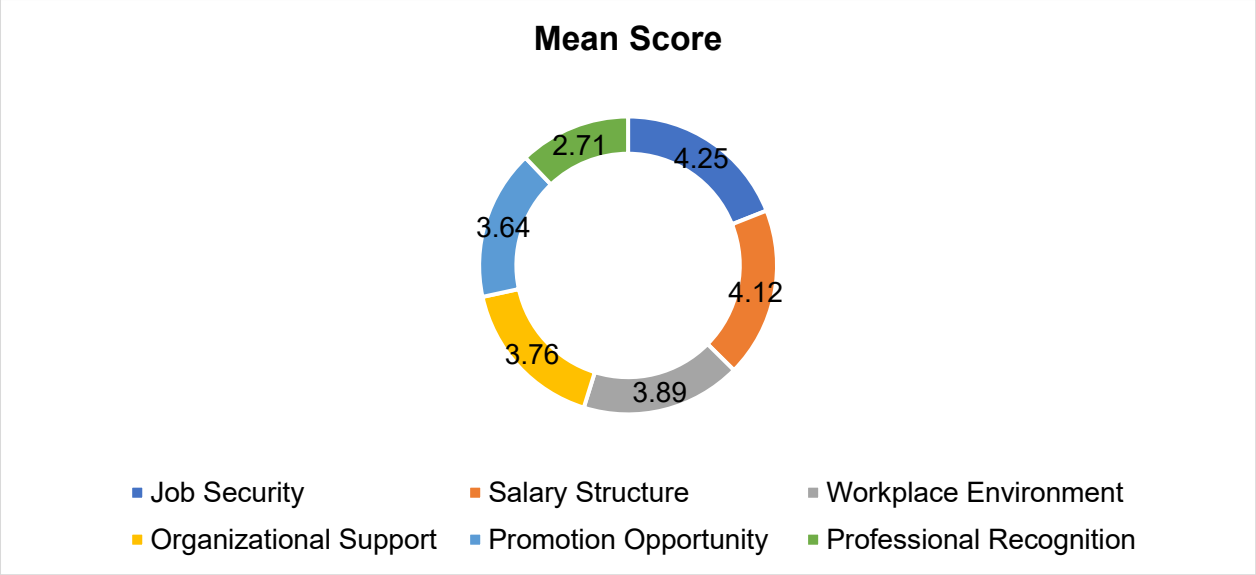


Figure 6: Mean Score of Factors Influencing Job Satisfaction, **Source:** Created by authors based on filed survey

The study results suggest that job security and salary scale have the greatest impact on the satisfaction level of graduates working in social welfare. Professional recognition had the least mean value, showing the dissatisfaction level regarding the social prestige of the profession (Fig.**6**).

6.4 Relationship between Educational Qualification and Job Satisfaction

A chi-square test was conducted to examine the relationship between educational qualification and job satisfaction. The results show that the level of job satisfaction among the MSS graduates is higher. The dissatisfied level among BSS and MSS graduates are 23.6% and 38.5% respectively (Fig. **7**).

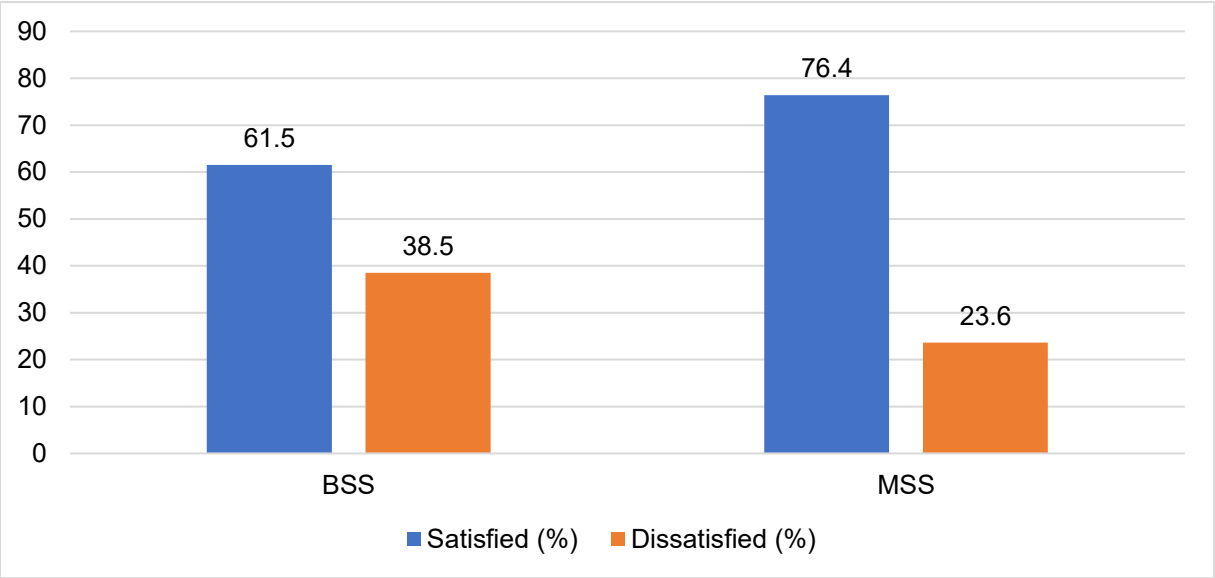


Figure 7: Relationship between Educational Qualification and Job Satisfaction, Source: Created by authors based on filed survey

Table 2: Chi-Square Test Result

Test	Value	Significance Level
Chi-Square	6.214	$p < 0.05$

Source: Created by authors based on filed survey

The table **2** illustrates that there is a statistically significant association between education and job satisfaction according to the chi-square test results. Those who have postgraduate education showed relatively more job satisfaction because of their good employment opportunities and upward movement within the career.

6.5 Career Expectations versus Professional Reality

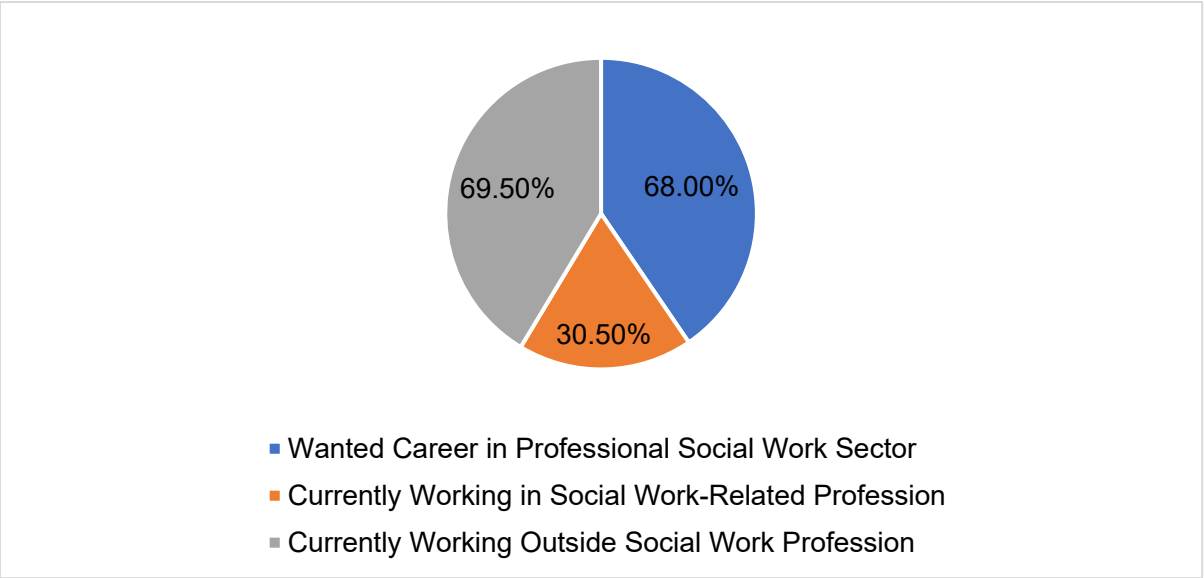


Figure 8: Career Expectations and Current Occupational Reality, Source: Created by authors based on filed survey

The results show that while most of the participants were initially interested in building careers in the social work sector, most ended up in different sectors like BCS, banks, academia, and the corporate sector(Fig.**8)**. An NGO Professional and A BCS Cadre noted that,

> *I wanted to build a career in counseling and rehabilitative services, but there was hardly any stable employment opportunity in the sector.*
>
> *"We study social work, but after graduation, we all gear ourselves towards preparing for BCS as the profession itself is not secure.*

These results highlight the discrepancy between academic orientation and labor market reality in Bangladesh.

6.7 Professional Identity Crisis

One of the strongest findings of the study is the existence of a professional identity crisis among social welfare graduates.

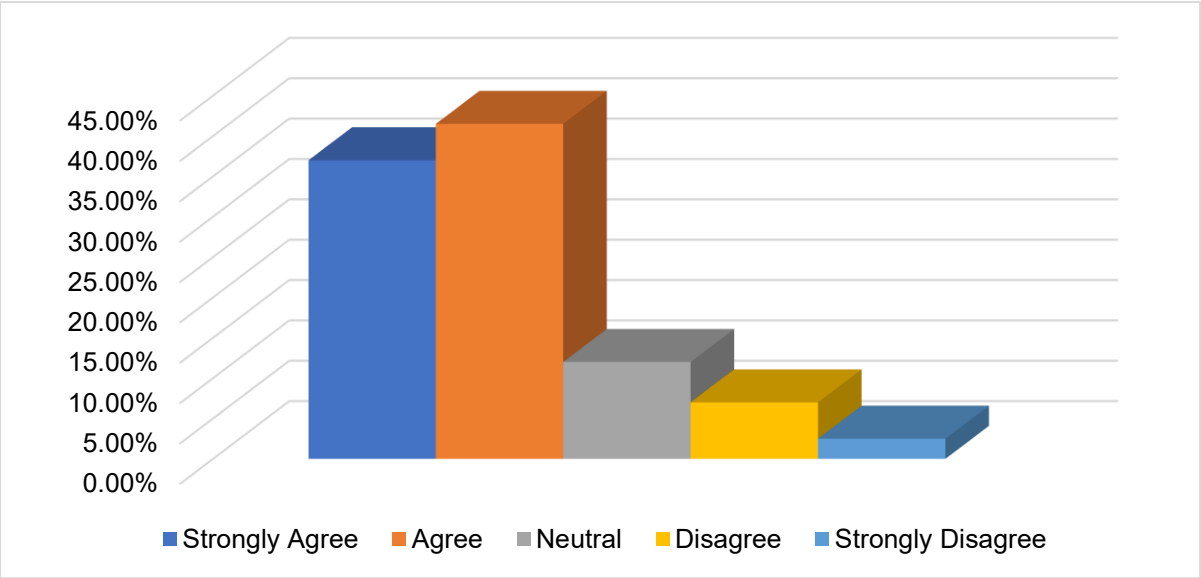


Figure 9: Respondents' Perception Regarding Professional Identity Crisis, Source: Created by authors based on filed survey

From the analysis of the results, it becomes clear that most of the participants feel confused about their professional identity because social work lacks institutional legitimacy and recognition in Bangladesh. Most of them agree and strongly agree that they feel serious identity crisis (Fig.**9)**. A Private Sector Worker and A Non-Governmental Organization Professional mentioned that,

> *We learn social work, but we end up working in other fields. This leads to confusion about our professional identity.*
>
> *The social work graduates are knowledgeable and skilled; however, our field is not recognized in society.*

Such confusion arises from the fact that graduates undergo specialized training in social work yet are forced to join professions other than social work because of certain constraints.

Professional Recognition Crisis of Social Work

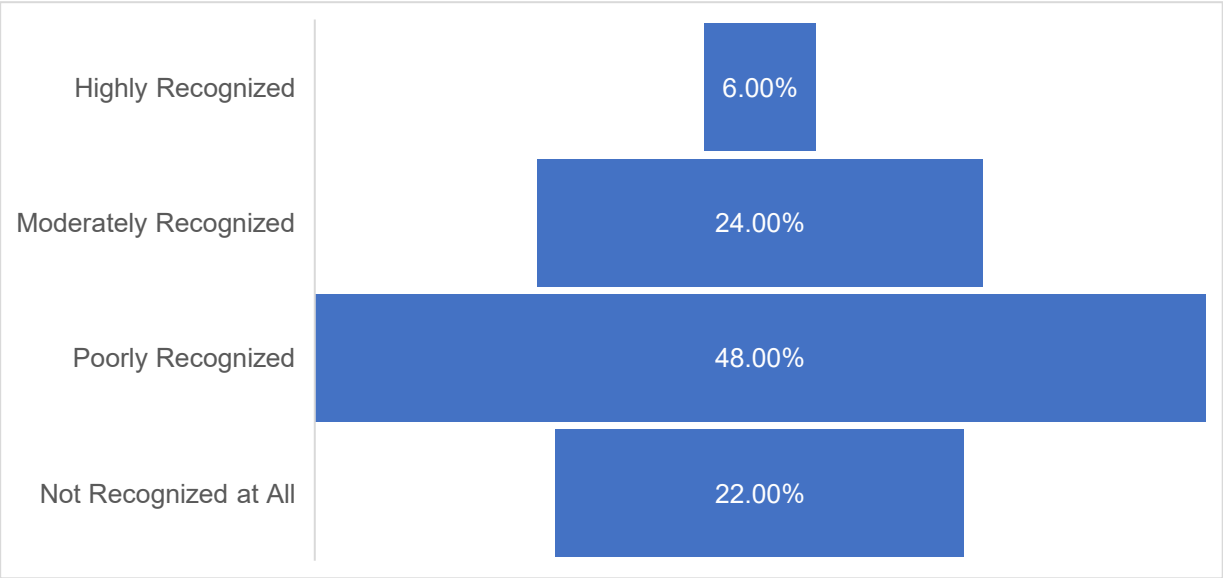


Figure 10: Respondents' Perception Regarding Professional Recognition of Social Work, Source: Created by authors based on filed survey

The results show that more than two-thirds of respondents perceived social work either as an undervalued or unrecognized profession within Bangladesh. Lack of government recognition, lack of licenses, poor recruitment prospects, and low public awareness were listed as the main factors responsible for this problem by the respondents (Fig.**10).** In this regard, An NGO Professional and An Academic Professional noted that,

> *People do not know what social work is and how it helps the people. Even most institutions do not give preference to the social work professionals in hiring.*
>
> *There is no professional body or licensing mechanism for social workers in Bangladesh, so our profession remains unprofessional.*

The results clearly provide strong support to the Professionalization Theory.

7. Discussion

From the research results obtained, it has been observed that graduates in social welfare in Bangladesh have been found to be working in various occupations, which

include government jobs, teaching, NGOs, banks, private sector jobs, and developmental agencies. However, what must be noted is that there is a very alarming situation wherein many of the graduates in social welfare are not working in any form of social work occupation. Thus, there is a clear mismatch between theory and practice. While social welfare students learn counseling, community development, rehabilitation, social welfare and policy, etc., the local job market does not provide adequate professional opportunities for them**[17]**.Social work is internationally considered to be a profession characterized by occupational positions, licensure systems, and institutionalization. In nations like the United States of America, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, social workers can be found in hospitals, educational facilities, prisons, mental health services, child welfare organizations, eldercare homes, rehabilitation clinics, and community development initiatives. Such countries have associations, accrediting systems, and boards that provide guidance on the roles, status, and ethics of social workers **[4,15].** However, Bangladesh is distinctive in terms of the fact that social work is viewed primarily as an academic field rather than a profession. The findings of the present study confirm previous studies conducted in Bangladesh, which claim that the development of social work profession in Bangladesh is yet to reach professional status in spite of its established educational history. Studies**[10,19,20]** highlighted, some of the problems associated with social work in Bangladesh include non-recognition by the government, no licensing system, poor recruitment, and lack of knowledge about the profession among the general public. The current study also revealed that the non-recognition of the profession, unemployment, low income, and career constraints deter graduates from becoming professionals. This situation can be explained by Professionalization Theory. According to Larson **[9],** an occupation reaches the

stage of professionalization if it develops specialized knowledge, receives legal recognition, has certain moral codes, occupational power and authority, and legitimacy. Based on Larson's theory, social work as a profession in Bangladesh is underdeveloped, despite having well-prepared graduates with special knowledge and abilities. Social work professionals lack the existence of licensing, a national council, formal recruitment process, and clear occupational boundaries. Consequently, social welfare graduates suffer from professional identity crises. A noteworthy fact revealed during my research is that many graduates wanted to join social work-related professions but eventually chose other careers such as BCS and government jobs, banking, academic institutions, NGOs, and private organizations. The change of career direction cannot be seen as an individual choice alone. Instead, it should be viewed as a reflection of structural problems within the Bangladeshi labor market. Graduates choose BCS and government occupations due to their job security, reputation, advancement opportunities, and economic stability that is linked to the SDGs. Bankers attract students for salary and career development. Academics attract for social status and research work. However, although NGO jobs are more closely related to social work ideals, many of these jobs do. Moreover, the study indicates that job satisfaction correlates with factors such as salary, job security, promotion, organizational climate, and professional recognition. Those who worked in governmental organizations, banks, and universities were more satisfied since these organizations provided job security and social recognition. At the same time, those who worked in NGOs and temporary project-based organizations were dissatisfied due to workload, salary, and unstable career prospectives. These results confirm the findings made in Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory that such factors as salary, job security, working conditions,

recognition, and promotion affect job satisfaction **[14, 18].**The lack of social work recognition in Bangladesh poses certain challenges for higher education institutions in terms of curriculum adjustment. Although universities have been training students on social work issues, the labor market has not provided sufficient space for utilizing this expertise. This causes a gap between higher education institutions' curricula and labor demands. Thus, social work education should be adjusted to labor market demands. In this regard, curriculum innovation, placement programs, career guidance, skills training, and cooperation with different social institutions such as hospitals, schools, NGOs, courthouses, detention centers, and governmental institutions will help to solve the problem. Consequently, the results may have some implications on the labor market and public policy. The country suffers from numerous social issues ranging from poverty to unemployment, domestic disputes, child abuse cases, need for old-age care services, disability concerns, mental health problems, drug addiction, sexual violence against women, disasters, etc. There is plenty to do in these areas for professionally trained social workers. However, due to a lack of professional status and proper channels of recruiting social workers, there is little that can be done by social welfare graduates to solve these problems. Therefore, the government needs to provide socially oriented professions with opportunities to practice in hospitals, schools, prisons, community clinics, mental institutions, rehabilitation facilities, municipalities, etc.

In summary, it may be concluded that the primary issue is not in the irrelevance of social work studies to contemporary realities, but in the lack of proper institutionalization of the profession within Bangladesh. Social welfare graduates possess certain skills, academic training, and practical experience in field activities. However, the lack of professional status, policies promoting social work, and career

development opportunities makes it hard for these graduates to contribute more to the process of building the nation.

8. Contributions, Limitations of the study, and Future Research Directions

This study is an important addition to the literature as it looks into the relationship between professional recognition, career mobility and job satisfaction among social welfare graduates in Bangladesh. There are several limitations to this study. It was mainly based on graduates of Institute of Social Welfare & Research, University of Dhaka that might restrict the generalizability of the result to other educational institutions. The study has also highlighted the urban respondents and was largely self-reported. Full statistical data was not possible to include because the data was collected in hard copies. Future studies should involve the graduates of various universities and locations and analyze gender differences, stress in the workplace, mental health, and career paths. Improving professional recognition is still a key component in improving career prospects and job satisfaction.

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- The government should formally recognize social work as a profession and establish appropriate professional standards and ethical guidelines.
- Professional social work positions should be expanded in hospitals, schools, correctional institutions, rehabilitation centers, mental health services, local government, and social welfare agencies.
- A national licensing system should be introduced to ensure professional accountability, service quality, and public trust.

- Social work curricula should be updated according to labour-market needs, with greater emphasis on practical, counselling, research, digital, and leadership skills.
- Universities should strengthen collaboration with government agencies, NGOs, hospitals, and development organizations to create internships, training, and employment opportunities.
- Alumni associations and career services should provide mentoring, networking, and employment support to graduates.
- Employers should ensure fair remuneration, job security, career advancement, and supportive working conditions to improve job satisfaction.

10. Conclusion

This study explored the issues related to job satisfaction, professional problems, job mobility and work experience of social welfare graduates in Bangladesh. The results indicate that graduates are working in government, education, NGOs, banking, private sector and development agencies but relatively few are in professional social work roles. Occupational identity challenges are linked to limited professional recognition, poor employment prospects, low compensation, insecure employment and lack of organizational support. Income, job security, opportunities for promotion, working conditions and professional recognition also affect job satisfaction. It is therefore crucial to support the legal recognition, increase job opportunities, update curricula, and strengthen the linkages between universities and the labour market for the betterment of graduates' career opportunities and professional well-being.

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Declarations

Ethics approval: The study was approved by the Institute of Social Welfare and Research, University of Dhaka, and it was performed according to the ethical standards laid down in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Consent to Participate and Consent to Publish: Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the use of pseudonyms. Consent to publish was not applicable, as no personally identifiable information was included in the manuscript.

Competing interests: The authors declare no competing interests.

Data Availability Statement: The data supporting the findings of this study are provided in supplementary files accompanying this article. These materials include the anonymized raw survey dataset, processed dataset, variable codebook, survey questionnaire, in-depth interview (IDI) guidelines, anonymized IDI responses, and qualitative coding files in Excel and PDF formats. These materials provide the data and supporting documentation used in the quantitative and qualitative analyses of job satisfaction and professional challenges among social welfare graduates in Bangladesh. Personally identifiable information has been removed to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the participants.

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