

Interconnected Layers of Gendered Bureaucracy: How Bureaucrats' Patriarchal Attitudes Shape Institutions And Outcomes In Bangladesh Civil Service

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Abstract: This paper examines the gendered bureaucracy of the Bangladesh Civil Service through the lens of Staudt's framework on layers of gendered bureaucracy. The analysis focuses on the gendered attitudes and behaviours of bureaucrats, the gendered structure and culture of the BCS, and the gendered outcomes of three selected programmes. Findings reveal that the bureaucrats, institutions and the policy and programme outcomes generated by the bureaucrats through BCS are deeply interconnected, with bureaucrats occupying a central role. The study underscores how the interrelationship between bureaucrats, institutions, and outcomes perpetuates systemic gender bias within the BCS.

Keywords: Gender, Bureaucracy, Bangladesh

1.0 Introduction

Civil service is the foundation and a primary tool through which governments plan, develop and implement their policies and programmes. In a perfect world, civil services would follow ideal bureaucratic structures and be driven by accountability, neutrality, justice and equality to promote feminist agendas (UNDP, 2014). However, throughout much of the world, bureaucratic structures of the civil services remain patriarchal, masculine and perpetuate gender-biased traditions, beliefs, and behaviours. Despite efforts to adapt feminist agendas to development initiatives, bureaucracies have persistently failed to address women's needs and interests (Goetz, 1992).

In the traditional view of bureaucracy, bureaucratic organisations operate as gender-neutral (Goetz, 1992). However, feminist scholars have challenged this position and argue that the patriarchal, masculine nature of bureaucracies fails to respond to the needs of women, rather reinforces and reproduces gender differentials (Staudt, 1990; Stevens, 2009). Such institutions embody a "*deeply embedded culture of masculinity*" (Lovenduski, 2005:48) and the policies, programmes, and practices formulated by them reproduce the norm that is often disguised as "*gender-neutral*" but in reality, "*systemically disadvantage women*" (Shaw, 2000 as cited in Lombardo et al., 2017:8). Bureaucrats are directly connected to development and to the achievement of SDGs through planning, regulating, and managing policies and programmes and quality of service delivery (Paskov, 2020; United Nations, n.d.). Research shows that a female beneficiary's satisfaction with a public service delivery tends to be higher when the service provider is a woman because a female bureaucrat would

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have a better understanding of the needs, represent the interests and preferences in policymaking and offer just treatment (Baniamin and Jamil, 2021).

Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS), the administrative body of the Government of Bangladesh, is inherently bureaucratic in structure with patriarchal attitudes and practices embedded within it, which result in not just barriers for women working within the system but also in weak policy instruments and programmes that do not promote the interests of women (Khair et al., 2019). In BCS, on paper, it is a gender-egalitarian system where men and women receive equal pay, allowances, pensions and other monetary benefits; however, working conditions and culture, recruitment, promotion, postings and transfers are not gender-responsive (UNDP, 2014).

While extensive scholarship exists on the relationship between bureaucracy and gender in Bangladesh, predominantly focusing on the barriers and constraints faced by female officials (Ahmed and Jahan, 2018; Arafunnesa, 2011; Begum and Ahmed, 2002; Ferdous, 2014; Jahan, 2010; Kabir, 2013; Karim, 2019; Khair et al., 2019; Zafarullah, 2000) and representation and participation (Baniamin and Jamil, 2021; Jahan, 2007; Kabir, 2008), a comprehensive analysis of how bureaucrats, the institutions they serve, and the policies and programmes they formulate perpetuate stereotypical gender assumptions against women has been lacking. Addressing this research gap, this paper aims to present a critical analysis of BCS through a gender lens using Staudt's (1990) seminal work on layers of gendered bureaucracy. While Staudt outlines how the gendered realities of bureaucracy exist at different levels, the interrelationship and reinforcement among these levels remain unexplored. This paper builds upon Staudt's (1990) work using BCS as a case and argues that the three layers (bureaucratic outcomes, institutions, and bureaucrats) do not act in isolation, but rather are interconnected, with bureaucrats occupying a central role and shaping the subsequent layers.

2.0 Review Of Literature

2.1 Bureaucracy And Feminist Debates

Weber's theory of bureaucracy (1947, 1968, 1978) describes an "ideal" type of organisation created for administrations to reach the goals of efficiency and effectiveness through a system of rationality. Staudt (1990) states that this "ideal" type of Weberian bureaucracy is commonly believed to be neutral, or gender-neutral, meaning that bureaucratic practices should operate on merit-based principles and be impartial to gender. However, the ideal type of bureaucracy as presented by Weber himself excludes women as suitable participants (Martin and Knopoff, 1997), which has led some feminist scholars to label it as "anti-feminist" (Viswanath and Samanta, 2022). Allen (1987), Franzway et al. (1989), Lane and Wolf (1990), and Stivers (1995, 2002) argue that bureaucracies are not gender-neutral, meaning that their hierarchical nature favours men. Ashcraft (2001), Ferguson (1984) argue that the bureaucratic system itself is at odds with feminist principles, reinforcing patriarchal power dynamics that benefit men employed within bureaucratic hierarchies while discounting the experiences and needs of women. Martin (2013) highlights that the association of bureaucracy with traditionally masculine characteristics such as aggression, competition, domination, control, and pursuit of success

reinforces patriarchal notions, and hinders the advancement of women in bureaucratic institutions. Moreover, research has shown that bureaucratic programmes often emphasise patriarchal gender roles that designate men as breadwinners and women as domestics, rather than appreciating women as independent actors (Staudt, 1990). Pringle (1989) argues that by ignoring the gender and sexual orientation of bureaucrats, bureaucracies replace traditional patriarchy with a new rational patriarchy that is not gender-neutral. Stivers (2002) echoes this by noting that bureaucracy prioritises rationality in achieving organisational goals, often disregarding the gender, sex, and emotions of female bureaucrats and clients. Moreover, Ashcraft (2006) and Calás and Smircich (1999) go on to state that bureaucracies are extensions of male dominance and by nature oppress women (as cited in Eyben, 2013).

Goetz (1992), Keiser et al. (2002), and Staudt (1990) raise the question of whether an increase in the number of female bureaucrats would result in a more effective response to women's needs in policy formulation and implementation, the underlying assumption being enhanced access to positions of power (passive representation), will lead to the formulation of policies that positively impact the lives of women beyond the confines of the organisation (active representation). Both Goetz (1992) and Keiser et al. (2002) state that there is a scarcity of empirical research that establishes a definitive answer to that. Furthermore, Goetz (1992:13-14) state that studies by Mueller (1982), Hale and Kelly (1989), Dahlerup (1988) show that women in high-level positions in development institutions have rather been found to be "*highly ambivalent*" to their identity as feminists. According to Eyben (2013), the capacity of feminist officials to facilitate social transformative action hinges on their possession of both a feminist commitment and motivation, as well as the political aptitude to strategically navigate within and beyond the boundaries of the bureaucratic system.

2.2 Staudt's Layers Of Gendered Bureaucracy

Staudt (1990) posits that the gendered nature of bureaucratic systems operates at three levels: a) bureaucratic outcomes, b) institutions and c) bureaucrats.

First, *bureaucratic outcomes* refer to the actual projects, programmes, and policies that bureaucracies produce, provide, or oversee. These outcomes turn out to be gendered in the sense that they promote the interests of men and show gender differentials. For example, women are often targeted for programmes related to their reproductive or social functions, such as family planning and community management services. However, when it comes to development sectors like industry, agriculture, and infrastructure, women are often excluded altogether (Goetz, 1992).

Second, *institutions* refer to the means through which bureaucratic outcomes are produced. Staudt stresses that structures, incentives, monitoring systems and culture that comprise these institutions are gendered, thereby leading to gendered outcomes that marginalise women. To illustrate, women bureaucrats are often found on the periphery of the civil service, such as departments like nursing, community care, nursery and primary education, which are often modelled after as an extension of women's domestic work (Goetz, 1992). She further states that in fields where women are often expected to work due to gender stereotypes, such as nursing or primary education, they still struggle to advance to higher

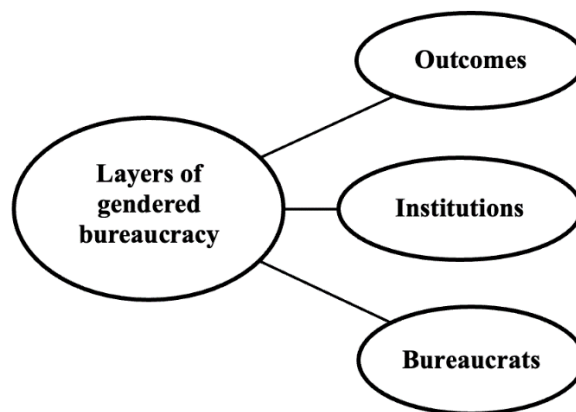
positions of authority. Moreover, in areas where power and control are more centralised, such as the judiciary, economic affairs, or defence, women are almost absent from leadership and decision-making roles. Additionally, certain features of the structure and culture do not accommodate women. The working day may be organised around a schedule that does not consider their childcare demands. Performance reviews may punish women for taking time out for childbearing. Since women cannot guarantee the same quantity of time, emotional, and physical energy to the organisation as men can, they are often excluded from promotional opportunities.

Finally, *bureaucrats* are the people themselves, their gender balance or lack of it, ideologies, attitudes, behaviours, professional demeanour, discourse and elitism or egalitarianism.

Arising from the review of literature, this paper uses Staudt (1990) layers of gendered bureaucracy as its conceptual framework (Figure 1). The scope of this paper is limited to assessing gendered bureaucracy to the extent of cisgender women-specific differentials only.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Source: Adapted from Staudt (1990)

3.0 Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative research design and uses Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) as an illustrative case to analyse how gendered dynamics operate across bureaucratic outcomes, institutions, and bureaucrats. Staudt's (1990) framework of gendered bureaucracy guides the analysis.

The objective of the paper is to critically investigate the gendered patterns embedded within the bureaucratic structures and outcomes, and to achieve that, this study relies on secondary qualitative data. This approach is suitable because the issues under examination (e.g., structures, programme outcomes) are extensively documented in existing research, government reports, policy evaluations, and scholarship on gender and bureaucracy in

Bangladesh. To strengthen analytical rigour, the study employs data triangulation by integrating multiple categories of sources, including peer-reviewed academic literature, empirical studies on gender and bureaucracy in Bangladesh context, government documents such as policy papers, and reports from multilateral organisations. Triangulating across these sources allows for cross-verification of patterns and themes related to gendered attitudes, institutional practices, and programme outcomes.

4.0 Discussion and analysis: layers of gendered bureaucracy in bangladesh civil service

4.1 bureaucrats

Over the years, the participation of women in BCS has slowly been increasing. As a form of affirmative action, a 10 percent quota was reserved for women for many years (Sowell, 2004; Zafarullah, 2010). However, the system failed to achieve its intended purpose and led to negative reactions from male bureaucrats (Jahan, 2018), ranging from lack of deference to outright violence, as discovered by Goetz (1992). These negative responses have taken different forms, including negative stereotypes (Kabir, 2013; Khair et al., 2019), sexual innuendo and harassment (Ahmed and Jahan, 2018), and misbehaviour and misconduct (Ahmed and Jahan, 2018; Rezaul, 2008). Additionally, women have been excluded from both formal and informal networks, leading to the undermining of their legitimate authority through non-cooperation (Goetz, 1992).

Stereotypical gendered assumptions of women being weak and submissive are implicit in the behaviour of male bureaucrats. For example, male colleagues (seniors, juniors, and peers) may resort to harassment to exert control over their female colleagues or seek revenge for personal grievances (Ahmed and Jahan, 2018). Moreover, harassment is also employed as a tool for seeking revenge against women with whom they have encountered any form of conflict. The authors' findings indicate that approximately one-third of the respondents they interviewed acknowledged experiencing at least one incident of sexual harassment in their workplaces. Sexual harassment can take several forms, such as suggestive comments or jokes, use of foul language, conditioning work-related benefits on sexual favours, and leering or staring (Ahmed and Jahan, 2018). Female officers also experience verbal abuse, negative comments about their competence and looks, and mockery (Ahmed and Jahan, 2018). These forms of harassment create a gendered and hostile environment for women and impede their career advancement, often leading to emotional distress and mental trauma. Previous BCS examinations have shown that during recruitment interviews, women were given poorer marks (Rezaul, 2008). The author further states that certain members of the PSC have shown blatant disregard and hostility towards female interviewees.

Kabir (2020) highlights that women experience significant barriers in advancing through the ranks and in senior management roles. At this stage, they often confront what has been described as the "glass cliff," where women are appointed to leadership roles during moments of institutional crisis or organisational decline (Billah and Kabir, 2024). In such cases, failure is more likely, and when it occurs, women leaders are disproportionately subjected to criticism and heightened scrutiny (Billah and Kabir, 2024).

The process of promotions within BCS is overseen by the Superior Selection Board (SSB), which predominantly consists of male bureaucrats (Zareen, 2022). This gendered composition and subsequent gender bias pose limitations for female officials, as the members of the SSB do not recognise the accomplishments objectively, instead attribute to notions of “*seduction*” and “*honey trapping*” (Zareen, 2022:52). The author further reveals that following promotions, women are subjected to “*dirty gossip*” initiated by their male colleagues, which often leads to negative performance evaluations. The author mentions that female officials also sometimes participate in spreading rumours and gossip against fellow female colleagues, signalling the deeply internalised sexism. Gossip and controversies have minimal to no impact on the career progress of male officials, whereas for women, they significantly hinder their professional advancement. Additionally, women encounter difficulties in task delegation and management of subordinates (Zareen, 2022). The pervasive stereotype that perceives women as secondary to men remains deeply ingrained, resulting in male bureaucrats displaying disregard, disobedience, and non-cooperation when working under a female bureaucrat (Zareen, 2022).

4.2 Institutions

BCS, as a bureaucracy, has a strong gendered organisational structure and masculinised culture. Table 1 shows that women only make up 26 percent of all civil service officers (as of 2021). Considering that Class I is the highest level of decision-making, women only hold up 20 percent of this level (Table 2).

Table 1 : Women in Civil Service, 2016-2021

Year	Women (Percentage of total)
2016	27%
2017	29%
2018	27%
2019	28%
2020	28%
2021	26%

Source: Adapted from Statistics and Research Cell (2022)

Table 2 : Women in Civil Service by Class, 2021

Class Category	Women (no/percentage of total)
Class I	39,787 (20%)
Class II	48,704 (29%)
Class III	2,88,933 (30%)
Class IV	27,167 (12%)

Source: Adapted from Statistics and Research Cell (2022)

The bureaucratic structure of BCS reinforces gender differentials by limiting women to work in certain ministries, departments and positions with few opportunities for decision-making. For example, the highest number of women are placed in the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (2,14,219) followed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

(81,446) (Statistics and Research Cell, 2022). Among them, the majority are working at the Class III level at the Directorate of Primary Education and the Directorate of Nursing, respectively. Table 3 shows that women are mostly placed in departments and directorates (31 percent), which involve lesser authority and “*female caregiver*” roles of direct service delivery, such as teachers, health and family planning assistants, nurses, etc. Goetz (1992) terms this as “*gendered ghettoisation and stigmatisation*” where women are clustered in traditionally “*feminine*” and “*caregiving*” roles. Drawing on her experience of studying state rural development administrations in Bangladesh, Goetz highlights how senior male officials often justify ghettoed and stigmatised placements for women civil servants. They argue that women’s care responsibilities and mobility limitations make them ineligible for promotions that require relocation. Additionally, cultural norms are cited as a barrier that prevents women from working in roles that involve interacting with men or working in rural areas. These justifications reflect the gendered ideals of the male bureaucrats (who are the majority in number and hold higher-level positions and authority) and serve to reinforce the gendered division of labour and restrict women’s career advancement.

Table 3 : Women in Civil Service by Office, 2021

Office	Women (no/percentage of total)
Ministries and divisions	2,473 (19%)
Departments and directorates	3,55,868 (31%)
Divisional and deputy commissioner offices	3,908 (12%)
Autonomous bodies and corporations	42,347 (12%)

Source: Adapted from Statistics and Research Cell (2022)

In BCS, roles such as Secretary, Joint Secretary, Deputy Secretary, District Commissioner (DC), and Upazilla Nirbahi Officer (UNO) are considered highly lucrative positions as these come with the highest levels of decision-making authority. Women, however, are less likely to be posted or promoted to these positions in lieu of care responsibilities, mobility requirements and working in extremely demanding and challenging positions – arguing that women are incompetent for handling challenging roles. Table 4 shows that only 13 percent of women are in Secretary positions, 17 percent in Additional Secretary, 19 percent in Joint Secretary, 22 percent in Deputy Secretary, 16 percent in DC and 34 percent in UNO positions. Karim (2019:49) quotes “*[Usually] woman is not placed as the secretary, and you will find very negligible number of women as secretaries. You will not find any woman in the most powerful ministries like the Ministry of Home, MoPA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Defense. If they are promoted and posted, they are in some less powerful ministries*”.

Table 4: Women in senior, middle, and field level administration, 2023

Position	Women (no./percentage of total)
Secretary	10 (13%)
Additional Secretary	55 (17%)
Joint Secretary	164 (19%)
Deputy Secretary	370 (22%)
District Commissioner (DC)	10 (16%)
Upazilla Nirbahi Officer (UNO)	164 (34%)

Source: Adapted from Ahmed (2023)

In addition to placement and posting, the promotion system in BCS is heavily underscored by political connections where promotions are based on political affiliations rather than merit, granting individuals with powerful relatives or friends an easier time moving up the career ladder (Mahtab, 2011). Women, who generally occupy lower rungs of the hierarchy, are often excluded from such opportunities. Consequently, men benefit more from this system, and women are left behind in their career growth. Furthermore, gendered work environment features such as lack of daycare centres, the absence of private rooms to work, limited access to separate restrooms and toilet facilities, inadequate transportation facilities, and scarcity of residential accommodation obstruct women from moving to upper positions (Sultana and Ferdous, 2017).

4.3 Outcomes

To understand the gender differentials reproduced through bureaucratic outcomes, I looked at examples of two social safety net programmes developed and delivered by the Directorate of Social Services (DSS) under the Ministry of Social Welfare: Old Age Allowances Programme and Allowances for the Widow and Husband Deserted Women. Additionally, I assessed the gender responsiveness of the agricultural extension services delivered by the Department of Agricultural Extension (DEA) under the Ministry of Agriculture. The choice of these programmes is rooted in the reasoning that these target women as primary beneficiaries, and for the agricultural extension services, women constitute 63.1 percent of the labour force working in the agricultural sector (BBS, 2017), making them the primary contributors. Despite targeting women, these programs fail to account for gendered barriers and rather reinforce them.

4.3.1 Old Age Allowances Programme (Ooa)

Introduced in 1998, the OOA Programme is an unconditional cash transfer programme to offer old age support for the poor elderly (sixty-five years and above and sixty-two years and above for men and women, respectively). It is one of the largest social safety net programmes in Bangladesh (Anwar et al., 2016b).

Even though the programme covers both men and women, the design and delivery make it more advantageous for men than women. For example, the programme's eligibility criteria only allow for a single benefit per household (Anwar et al., 2016b). Considering the patriarchal society of Bangladesh, this can lead to men becoming the sole beneficiaries in the household instead of women.

The implementation strategy of the programme exacerbates these gendered outcomes. Women in Bangladesh are subject to purdah, which creates barriers to accessing government offices and applying for the programme. Additionally, the documentation procedures involved in applying for the programme are complex, requiring a national identification number or a birth registration certificate that many low-income women lack access to. These challenges result in women being excluded from the programme, as they are unable to meet the eligibility criteria.

If a woman manages to overcome these challenges and applies for the programme, the service delivery point creates further barriers for her. For example, beneficiaries must have

a bank account to receive their allowance, but financial literacy and access to financial services are low for women in Bangladesh. Furthermore, opening a bank account requires extensive documentation, which can be an additional barrier. If a woman does manage to apply for the programme, she may use a male family member's bank account to receive her allowance, thereby losing access to the money and benefiting men.

Service delivery also creates gendered outcomes. For instance, beneficiaries are required to go to the bank branch in person to receive their cash and bring their passbooks with them. However, if a beneficiary is unable to do so, such as when they are sick, have a disability, or when cultural restrictions apply to female beneficiaries, an authorised nominee can collect the payment on their behalf. Women who become beneficiaries face challenges in accessing the allowance, as they may not have enough decision-making power in the household to choose to travel to the bank. Furthermore, banks only issue payments on specific days every quarter, and long queues can result in beneficiaries waiting for several hours with little or no food or rest (Anwar et al., 2016b). This is particularly burdensome for elderly women, who may face additional financial and physical costs in travelling to the bank. In such cases, they might appoint a male family member to collect the payment, further limiting their access to the allowance and becoming dependent on men.

Finally, the implementation manual for the programme mentions running promotional and awareness campaigns in public spaces, but it does not specify any activities targeting women or creating awareness about the programme among them (Ministry of Social Welfare, 2013). This lack of gendered promotion and awareness campaigns further disadvantages women from accessing the programme.

4.3.2 Allowances To The Husband Deserted Destitute Women And The Widow (Wa)

This unconditional cash transfer programme aimed at vulnerable women, known as the WA programme (Anwar et al., 2016a), has been in place in Bangladesh since 1998. Although it is a key cash transfer programme in the country, there are different versions of its title. The implementation manual refers to the programme as “*Allowances to the Husband Deserted Destitute Women and the Widow*”, while the Ministry of Finance and the World Bank refer to it as “*Allowances for the Widow, Deserted and Destitute Women*”. Both titles, however, perpetuate the notion of dependence on men, a narrative that is further reinforced using the term “*oshohay*” in its Bengali title, which means “*helpless*”. In the patriarchal social context of Bangladesh, where poor women are more vulnerable to exploitation and isolation, the use of such wording legitimises and reinforces the dependence narrative.

Like the OOA programme, the programme design and delivery strategies of the WA programme perpetuate gendered outcomes. First, eligibility criteria for the WA programme require either a national identity number or a birth registration certificate, which low-income women lack access to. Additionally, the programme prioritises women who are “*detached from family and/or have no children*” (Ministry of Social Welfare, 2013:6), perpetuating the notion that such women are helpless and in need of aid. The application process also poses challenges as it requires prospective beneficiaries to travel to designated offices, which is often difficult for women due to social and religious norms and care responsibilities.

Furthermore, the outreach strategies for the programme include announcements through local mosques and public gatherings, and community vetting. However, the implementation manual does not mention specific outreach strategies to address the needs of women whose movement is restricted by conservative social norms and care duties. Moreover, community vetting involves having social capital and networking within the community, which women may lack (Anwar et al., 2016a).

Finally, the conditions of disqualification from the beneficiary list state that if women remarry or reconcile with their husbands, they would be replaced, thereby further reproducing the patriarchal norms. There is an assumption that if a widow or a separated woman remarries or reconciles with her husband, she will no longer need an allowance, which further deepens the dependence narrative and does not see women as independent economic agents.

4.3.3 Agricultural Extension Services (Aes)

Although the New Agricultural Extension Policy mentions specific extension activities for female farmers and other females in the household (Ministry of Agriculture, 1996), its bureaucratic efforts are heavily gendered. First, the marketing materials and messaging imply masculine imagery with the idea of farmers being male. For example, the imagery used in the cover of the Agricultural Extension Manual (Department of Agricultural Extension, 2018) depicts a masculine image, where several male farmers can be seen performing agricultural activities while women are absent, even though they make up most of the agricultural labour force.

Second, the outreach efforts lack the initiative to include women. Compared to their male counterparts, female farmers tend to have limited mobility and are typically responsible for performing household tasks and engaging in agricultural activities within their homes (Mamun-ur-Rashid et al., 2017). Consequently, to effectively reach female clients, extension workers must be able to visit them at their residences, which necessitates a high level of mobility. However, in Bangladesh, extension workers face significant constraints concerning their mobility capacity, which may hinder their ability to effectively serve female farmers.

Third, according to Manfre et al. (2013), female extension workers play a significant role in encouraging the involvement of women farmers. However, the scarcity of female extension agents in Bangladesh is a major concern. DAE has only 7 percent female staff (Malone et al., 2013), resulting in male extension agents leading most training and extension activities. Unfortunately, societal norms and customs in Bangladesh discourage women from participating in such programs due to the restriction on socialising with men outside the family (Shelly & Costa, 2002).

Finally, the selection criteria for farmers are also gendered. Usually, farmers are selected based on land size, excluding many women who actively participate in agricultural production but have limited ownership of land. Another criterion, male or female-headed households, is also gendered, as there are many women in male-headed households who actively participate in agricultural production activities. Additionally, the schedule and location of extension programmes can be a hindrance for women in rural areas. The training

programmes are usually arranged in Upazila Extension Offices, which are difficult for many rural women to reach, and the locally arranged extension programs are often scheduled at times when women are busy with care obligations (Mamun-ur-Rashid et al., 2017).

In conclusion, the design and delivery of the programmes and services discussed above do not account for the gendered barriers and constraints that women face in accessing the benefits. In doing so, bureaucratic outcomes become heavily gendered and disadvantage women.

4.4 How The Layers Of Gendered Bureaucracy Shape And Reinforce One Another

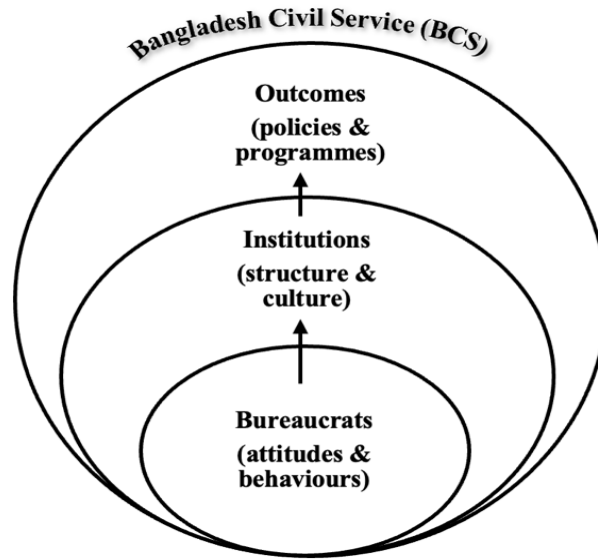
The people comprising an organisation are fundamental building blocks that significantly shape its functioning. Their attitudes and beliefs influence their behaviour, which in turn shapes the structures and cultures within the organisation. The combined influence of people, their behaviours, institutional structures, and cultures informs the outcomes produced by the organisation. In the case of BCS, the three layers of gendered bureaucracy are not independent entities but rather interconnected and mutually influential. The bureaucrats themselves are at the core of the outcomes that they generate through the institutions.

The presence of masculine and patriarchal attitudes among male bureaucrats leads to gendered behaviours that disadvantage women within BCS. An example of this can be seen in the hostility displayed by PSC members towards women during interviews, where the lack of disciplinary actions for such behaviour perpetuates a culture of impunity. As a result, many women choose to remain silent and refrain from reporting such incidents for fear of backlash. This indicates an institutional failure in terms of creating a safe working environment for women, both in terms of structure and culture.

The gendered structure and culture, coupled with the attitudes and behaviours of predominantly male bureaucrats, contribute to bureaucratic outcomes that are heavily gendered and predominantly advantageous to men. This is evident in various aspects, such as the social safety nets and agriculture extension services discussed previously, where the design and implementation of these programmes exhibit gender biases that favour men over women.

The patriarchal and masculine mindset prevalent among bureaucrats perpetuates the perception of women as solely caregivers, domestic and dependent on men. This, in turn, influences the masculine structure and culture of BCS. Women are often relegated to lower-level positions that lack significant decision-making authority, while also being confined to traditional caregiving roles. As a result, the bureaucrats and the institutions they represent contribute to bureaucratic outcomes that are gendered in nature. Services are planned and delivered in a manner that fails to adequately address the needs of women. Moreover, these services are designed in a way that ultimately benefits men, reinforcing and perpetuating patriarchal assumptions regarding women as primarily caregivers, domestic individuals, and neglecting their roles as independent economic agents. Figure 2 illustrates how the layers shape and reinforce one another.

Figure 2: Layers of Gendered Bureaucracy in Bangladesh Civil Service



Source: Author's own

5.0 Conclusion

This paper analysed the gendered bureaucracy of the Bangladesh Civil Service employing the layers of gendered bureaucracy proposed by Staudt (1990). The analysis focused on exploring the gendered attitudes and behaviours exhibited by bureaucrats, the gendered structure and culture prevailing within the BCS, as well as the gendered outcomes of three specific programmes. Findings show that the bureaucrats, the institution and the policy and programme outcomes generated by the bureaucrats through BCS are interrelated, and the bureaucrats are at the centre of it. The patriarchal and masculine attitude and behaviour of the bureaucrats create barriers for women in entering and progressing within the BCS. These attitudes and behaviours subsequently shape the structure and culture, where women are pushed to traditionally viewed feminine roles with limited authority. The bureaucrats and the institutional structure and culture then influence the policies and programmes they formulate, where the design and delivery of these create further barriers for women and predominantly benefit men, thus creating gendered outcomes.

It is important to note that this paper examined only three programmes as illustrative examples of gendered outcomes in BCS, which implies limitations in terms of generalisation. Future research could expand the scope of investigation within this domain, exploring a broader range of policies and programmes to provide more comprehensive insights into the gendered nature of BCS. Additionally, future research could incorporate interviews with stakeholders to deepen the empirical grounding.

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