Professional Development and Literacy in the Context of the Perceptions of the Secondary High School Teachers of Bangladesh about Their Job Challenges, Accommodation Problems, and Workload in Their Professional Life

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ABSTRACT

Secondary education in Bangladesh faces numerous challenges, with teachers, as key stakeholders, bearing much of the pressure. This study explores the educational system in Bangladesh and examines various issues faced by teachers in their profession. A semi-structured interview method was employed to gather data, with participants selected from the northern region of Bangladesh to provide a comprehensive view of the problems within secondary schools. The findings revealed that the majority of teachers identified administrative challenges, inadequate infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, lack of professional development opportunities, and excessive workloads as common issues in their profession. The study's implications aim to shed light on these challenges, urging authorities to take necessary steps to address and resolve them.

Key words: Workload, Infrastructure, Administrative Issues, Governing Body, Outside Duties, Engaged Classroom, Burn Out, Proper Feedback

INTRODUCTION

The secondary education system in Bangladesh has been undergoing a transitional period in recent years, as the government is actively working to reform various sectors by implementing several reformative measures (Hossain et al., 2019, p.89). The government introduced a new education Policy in 2010, revised the curriculum in 2022 (NCTB), and launched a new teacher recruitment policy. However, despite these efforts, the education system has yet to achieve its desired success due to numerous challenges that persist across the sector (Nur, 2018). If these issues are not adequately addressed and appropriate measures are not taken, the goal of ensuring quality education for the nation will remain unattainable.

The secondary education stage is crucial for the intellectual and physical development of students, as it marks a transformative period in their growth (Sawyer et al., 2018). Failure to provide quality education at this stage would hinder the nation's ability to emerge as a strong global force. Teachers play a central role in delivering education and instilling motivation in students, along with providing the necessary support (Jagtap, 2016). They are responsible for managing classrooms and facilitating effective learning (Hossain & Al Younus, 2025). Therefore, addressing the issues faced by teachers must be prioritized before addressing other concerns.

There are numerous challenges that teachers face, and classroom management for effective and fruitful learning is one of the most significant (Rahman et.al. 2018). Teachers often become exhausted and feel fatigued from conducting multiple classes throughout the day at both the primary and secondary school levels. Although teachers begin their classes with enthusiasm, their interest and energy tend to diminish over time as they are required to teach several consecutive sessions (Masoom, 2021). In the context of Bangladesh, a teacher is often tasked with teaching four to five classes in a single day, with some even exceeding this number. During the day, teachers are allotted a brief interval, with a short 25-minute break known as the tiffin break (DSHE, Bangladesh). However, this tiffin break is generally considered ineffective and insufficient in providing the necessary rest and energy boost for both teachers and students. The long duration of consecutive classes can create barriers to effective learning and teaching (Hossain, 2021).

In addition to these classroom-related challenges, teachers also face other difficulties such as accommodation problems (Alam & Kabir, 2015; Ara & Hossain, 2016), and limited opportunities for professional development and training. However, this study will focus on addressing the most pressing issues that need to be resolved in the current context.

Purpose Statement

This study examines the perceptions of job challenges, and accommodation issues and workload of the teachers in

Secondary High Schools, Bangladesh, for their daily classroom activities as a teacher. It aims to address the challenging issues that hinder the quality education in secondary high schools in the contexts of Bangladesh and have an endeavor to recommend some potential solutions. These challenges have a negative impact on learning outcomes of the students. The study will explore the problems and will pave the way for potential solutions.

Research Questions

1. How do the teachers describe their challenges in continuing classes along with other activities in secondary school levels of Bangladesh?
2. How do the teachers feel about conducting classes in a large class at the secondary levels?
3. What kind of activities are teachers involved in in their profession as secondary high school teachers?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers cannot pay attention to the classroom activities if there are so numerous challenges in the teaching profession. Large classroom size is one of the challenges that prevent a teacher from conducting the class appropriately and properly (Alam, & Kabir, 2015, Ara & Hossain, 2016). There substantial empirical research and evidence behind this regarding the problems of the teachers. Heppner (2007) views large classes as a small business which should be set up and handled carefully. Besides, many researchers believe that large classes offer few opportunities to teachers to employ quality teaching and learning environment for learners (Blatchford et al., 2002). There are some other findings and among them one finding was also allocated by Yu (2004) who conducted a study on college students as well studying in large classes. The study showed that individuals' variant that a student's phenomenology is neglected in a large class and in this classroom anxiety always dominates. The researcher, Harmer (2000) postulated that large classes bring difficulties to the teaching and learning process in general and to teachers and students in particular as with the big number, teachers find it difficult to organize effective and creative activities, pay attention or contact with all individuals especially those who tend to hide by sitting at the back.

Teachers' training is also very important for a quality education (Hossain, 2021). Because the untrained teachers lacking pedagogical knowledge apply the traditional teaching methods, making lessons incomprehensible and dull to the students. (Mia.et.al.2003). Many teachers were recruited long ago and they are accustomed to teaching in the old instead of the modern one.

Teacher-student ratio is a vital problem for Bangladesh. As of 2008 the average number of teachers was amazingly less than 5 in all types of schools. The teacher-student ratio in public schools was 54, in private schools, 35 and madrasahs, 45 (Prodhan, 2016). This is the same scenario where students exceed 200 sometimes and pose challenges for the teachers (Das, 2025). Teachers find difficulties delivering their contents in a large class and there is a good relation between teachers' efficiency and content delivery (Haque, 2025). In Bangladesh the average ratio is very high, and this ratio reaches a much more appalling figure in the non-urban schools due to the disinterest among teachers to go outside the urban areas (Prodhan, 2016). In the village area teachers don't want to keep up their jobs rather they try to get posts in the city area.

It can be asserted that in the context of Bangladesh, there are many problems in the teaching profession, and teachers are not fully committed to their jobs; rather, they are waiting for an opportunity to switch to other professions. This is a common issue in Bangladesh. When teachers enter the profession, they often do not focus on teaching and instead become involved in money-making activities elsewhere. Roughly 20-30% of teachers report dissatisfaction with their jobs (Mertler, 2016). According to Canrinus et al. (2012), "relationship satisfaction and satisfaction with salary were both significantly ($p<.01$) related to affective occupational commitment as well as to each other" (p. 124). Here, salary emerges as a strong factor influencing job satisfaction and motivation.

Liu and Meyer (2005) found a direct link between teachers' job satisfaction and teacher turnover. Their findings also indicate that teachers' perceptions of their job show varying degrees of satisfaction with different aspects of their work, and these perceptions consequently impact their decision to stay in teaching, leave the profession, or transfer to another school. Liu and Meyer (2005) found that "low compensation was the leading cause of teachers' unhappiness with their profession" (p. 997). Sirima and Poipoi (2010) reported that public secondary school teachers with high levels of job satisfaction tend to have a positive social and psychological atmosphere in the classroom. This, in turn, leads to high job performance and a greater willingness to stay longer, which helps create a meaningful classroom environment (Hossain, 2024).

In the context of professional development and literacy, secondary high school teachers in Bangladesh face a range of challenges that significantly impact their job satisfaction and performance. Hossain and Al Younus (2025) discussed the integration of ChatGPT in EFL writing instruction, suggesting that such technological tools could offer teachers innovative ways to enhance writing skills and address workload pressures by providing efficient feedback mechanisms. Moreover, Hossain and Al Younus (2024) explored the use of Kahoot in the classroom, which not only motivated students but also reduced teachers' workload by making the teaching process more interactive and engaging. Teachers in Bangladesh, as Hossain (2020) points out, often struggle with classroom dynamics, but group work has been identified as an effective strategy for overcoming these challenges and promoting collaborative learning. Also, Hossain (2021) emphasized that peer observation, a form of professional development, plays a crucial role in enhancing teacher performance, offering opportunities for self-reflection and professional growth. However, despite these innovations, Hossain (2024) highlighted that many teachers still face substantial challenges related to accommodation and job satisfaction, which directly affect their willingness to remain

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in the profession. These studies underline the importance of addressing both professional development needs and the external factors contributing to job dissatisfaction to improve the overall teaching environment in Bangladesh.

METHODOLOGY

Interview methods were applied in qualitative research for data collection. Focusing on the phenomenological aspect of qualitative research, the current study sought to capture the meaning of the experiences that people ascribe to their live experiences and thus constructed for a rich and thick illustration. The data were collected from multiple sources i.e. from multiple institutions to ensure triangulation (Denzin, 1978) as well as to 'view policy holistically and comprehensively, to study it in its complexity and to study it in its context' (Punch, 2000, p. 18). Findings elicited from these multi-sources data strengthened the study's robustness and credibility by fostering a critical understanding of personnel experiences of secondary school teachers (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008; Patton, 2015).

RESEARCH SETTING

The target population was Bangladeshi teachers from secondary schools across various regions (See Appendix 1). Twenty teachers were interviewed through a combination of different subjects they are teaching now. They also assess and evaluate the public exams and the internal exam answer scripts. The participating teachers were chosen from different backgrounds, such as urban and rural backgrounds. There was a set of questions about their experiences as a teacher, their workload, their perceived challenges and issues related accommodation. After conducting the interviews, responses were transcribed and analyzed to identify common themes related to the teachers' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in their profession.

In Bangladesh, teachers at the secondary level usually have to conduct 4-5 classes in a row. Sometimes, they have to take an extra class if any teacher is on leave. Thus, they feel exhausted from taking a lot of classes at a stretch. This long-hour (50 minutes) of teaching schedule psychologically affects the performance of the teachers. And that's why, even though they begin their teaching with a lot of enthusiasm at the very beginning, they tend to become tired and less energetic gradually and consequently the classes become less effective in their instructional activities after two to three hours.

Classroom size is extremely large in terms of student numbers in almost all areas of Bangladesh with some exceptions. However, the major scenario is that the physical space of classrooms is unsuitable for the large number of students. In a small classroom students sit in a congested manner while a teacher delivers the lecture from a long distance but with a loud voice. This in fact contributes to a lot of chaos in the classroom because very often in the teacher-based classroom students don't pay attention to teachers' lecture. Long hours of teacher-centered instruction and chaotic environment make the students bored in their learning.

Yes, they do feel monotonous in the class due to several reasons. First, the number of students is between 60 and 70 and sometimes it goes up to more than 80. Therefore, classroom management becomes a burning issue for the teachers. Besides, classroom teaching is predominantly teacher-centered, for which teachers become tired and exhausted. A teacher has to manage a big class with a lot of effort from the very beginning of the class. All these issues make the teachers monotonous in the class.

The weather is another crucial factor that impacts the classroom activities. In the summer the weather is very hot and full of humidity. Most often the students as well as teachers sweat and it remains a clumsy atmosphere. There are no air conditioning systems in the schools and all of the lose interest in the class and even if it is for a longer duration obviously there is the possibility of exhaustion. In the morning the weather in summer is to some extent moderate but as the goes on close to noon the temperature gets extremely hot and usually classroom activities become tougher.

A break after four consecutive classes has both positive and negative impact on the learners as well as the teachers. For the students, it provides them with an opportunity to refresh themselves and engage in classroom learning again. Nevertheless, some escape classes and do not come back. For the teachers, it acts as a stress reliefer and allows them to prepare physically and psychologically for another two-three hours of instruction.

The authority has taken some steps to mitigate the problems created from the longer period of classes. Generally harder subjects for the students start earlier of the day, for example science, math etc. But it is a tradition and necessary too that language subjects such Bangla and English start in the beginning of the day then comes other subjects like Physical Education, Art and Drawing, Physics, Chemistry, Biology etc. Some science subjects like Physics, Chemistry, Higher Mathematics, Biology for 9-10 grades cannot be started earlier because common subjects like Bangla and English need to be started as a combined class for all group students science, arts and commerce. It should be mentioned here that there are some compulsory subjects like Bangla, English and general math that are taught to all group students and then students are divided and take their classes accordingly. For dividing the students into different groups common subjects cannot taken later rather hard subjects are taken and that is why students lose interest and enthusiasm to the class and creates pressure on the teacher for a better classroom management effective classroom.

Considering all the issues stated above this current project was conducted.

DATA COLLECTION

Interviews were taken and the interviews were recorded and after that the recordings were transcribed for collecting data from the transcription. The interviews were normally more than one hour long. Some open-ended questions were designed to elicit detailed descriptions of the teachers' experiences. There were 22 questions that were asked to the participants. Appendix 2 shows the interview questions in

the current study. Thematic analysis was used to elicit the information from transcripts. Transcribed data were coded and then used to identify initial themes and develop relationships between themes and the three basic needs. The data were reviewed and used to analyze the coded data to understand teachers' experiences and how they connect to the three basic needs.

However, the data collection procedure followed two major steps**.** Firstly, one of the government secondary schools was targeted to secure the consent as interview participants. Finally, 4 teachers offered their consents. A list of potential schools was also collected, and 8 schools were purposively selected based on practical concerns in terms of access, cost and time. The schools were located in three districts: Natore, Rajshahi and Naogaon. Since the realities of gaining access, cost and time, along with the challenges of an unknown site exists for all researchers (Maxwell, 2012), therefore, the selection of research sites from these near districts enabled me "to dismiss these problems.

Secondly, the selected schools were contacted to secure approval from the concerned authority, i.e. the school headmasters to grant or deny permission to conduct research with the teachers in his/her institution. Upon their verbal consents, then participants' signed consent forms were obtained prior to commencing the interview sessions. Finally, face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 20 individuals were conducted on the agreed date and time. Table 1 provides the demographic description of the study participants. Most of the participants used English while some of them preferred to be interviewed in Bangla. Each of these interviews was digitally recorded, transcribed and translated into English for next analysis.

All the data were collected from secondary school teachers who shared their life experiences through interviews because only in an interview can one go deep into the lived experience of someone else. "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 2006, p. 9). Thus, the interview method was selected for data collection, and the interviews were conducted online via the Zoom app. The interviews were recorded, and the recordings were transcribed for data collection from the transcriptions. Some open-ended questions were asked to allow interviewees to express themselves freely about their life experiences and thoughts on their profession as teachers. I first tried to set up good rapport with the interviewees. "Rapport implies getting along with each other, a harmony with, a conformity to, an affinity for one another" (Seidman, 2006, p. 102). The interviews typically lasted longer than one hour.

Some open-ended questions were designed to elicit detailed descriptions of the teachers' experiences, and follow-up questions were asked to gather additional information. In total, 22 questions were posed to the participants, and other relevant questions were asked based on the situations and the participants' interests. Afterward, thematic analysis was used to extract information from the transcripts. Transcribed data were coded and then used to identify initial themes and develop relationships between the themes and the three basic needs.

I also wrote analytical memos after each transcript, or after every interview, to develop my interviewing skills for the next interview. I also shared my shortcomings and the interviewing process with peer workers. This process continued after every interview, and eventually, I developed several techniques for conducting interviews. Finally, I coded the data, reviewed the sub-themes, and drew conclusions to understand the teachers' experiences as a whole. "Ongoing coding uncovers real or potential sources of bias and surfaces incomplete or equivocal data that can be clarified next time" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 188). While coding and making themes, I aimed to present them clearly so that others could easily understand and deepen their comprehension of the issues. "The researchers' task is to present the experience of the people they interview in compelling enough detail and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects" (Seidman, 2006, p. 57). I combined and tried to create a coherent narrative to discuss the teachers' experiences in the context of my research question for the current project. To summarize the process, it can be outlined as follows.

The data collection was conducted in the following way:
1. Four secondary school teachers were selected from different regions of Bangladesh to have an overall idea of the teachers' life experiences
2. All the teachers were interviewed online via zoom.
3. Transcription: All interviews were transcribed.
4. Coding: Coding was used to identify initial themes and develop relationships between themes and the three basic needs.
5. Refine and Analyze: Codes were reviewed and used to analyze the coded data to understand teachers' experiences on certain themes for a comprehensive report. "The idea in coding is to link what the respondent says in his or her interview to the concepts and categories that will appear in the report" (Weiss, 1995, p. 155).

RESEARCHER ROLE

I have been working as a teacher in a government high school since 2010. Therefore, I am an insider here and I know the ins and outs of the sector because I have personally experienced the situation. I have observed with my own eyes the terrible situation that the teachers are undergoing. I have the fellow feelings for them. I have a good familiarity with teaching and learning process of secondary sectors. I was a part of it because I belong to the northern part of Bangladesh but luckily, I was a teacher at a government high school which is thought to be a very prestigious school in our country. So if our condition is struggling what will be the others? I have taken interviews with secondary school teachers from government and from non-government schools. I have a good understanding of them, and I have also full trust in them.

DATA ANALYSIS

The nature of qualitative research located an author "in a more fluid and more humanistic position" to conduct "a continuous, iterative enterprise" of data analysis (Miles, et.al. 2014,

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p.p. 13-14). Thematic analysis was used for data analysis to focus on the research questions to understand the actual feelings of the teachers regarding their job challenges, accommodation issues, and workloads. This type of analysis also helped gain more intuitive and holistic understandings and insights emerging from the diverse, complex, and nuanced set of data (Holloway & Todres, 2003). It was also used because, in the interview, participants described experiences in response to the open-ended questions. Their responses were made concise through coding and then categorized into particular themes with necessary interpretations. There are three layers of thematic analysis systems. "In a thematic analysis, three levels of codes are usually recognized … These are 1st, 2nd, and 3rd level (or order) codes … Most people begin with a very basic descriptive level of coding and work upwards in a systematic manner towards a more interpretative level" (Williams & Moser, 2019).

According to Terry, there are six phases of the analysis (Terry et al., 2017). First, we need to familiarize ourselves with the data. In the second phase, we generate codes. After coding, we need to construct themes, and in the fifth phase, we name the themes. Finally, we produce a report with some interpretations. Writing the report offers the final opportunity to make changes that strengthen the analysis and effectively communicate the analyst's story of the data (Terry et al., 2017).

Thematic analysis is not just summarizing the obtained data; rather, it goes beyond merely summarizing the data. It involves interpretation to understand the meaning of the themes. It is a powerful tool for researchers to make sense of qualitative data and gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the interviewees. Thus, thematic analysis (TA) can be used to analyze data from 'traditional' face-to-face data collection methods such as interviews and focus groups. It can also be used with textual data from qualitative surveys (Terry et al., 2017).

FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of the teachers from a specific region of Bangladesh, providing a general understanding of the conditions of the Bangladeshi secondary school teachers regarding their workload, various challenges, daily class schedules, accommodation facilities and overall perceptions of their professional life. From the study it has been revealed that teachers are facing many challenges, problems and other critical issues of the profession as a teacher, sometimes they have found some rewarding issues in the profession too.

The teachers joined their profession in the hope of a good learning and teaching environment. They were motivated to be teachers either by their professional background or previous knowledge or by their family members who were also teachers. But after joining the profession they encountered harsh realities of the, the struggle of life as a teacher. Sometimes their basic needs are not met. Teachers are thought to be the builders of a nation and reasonably if their needs are not met the target for a good quality education may be a far cry. The study may address some critical issues and may suggest some potential solutions thereby.

The data that was elicited from the interviews have many themes and reports that are connected with the challenges of the teachers in the context of Bangladesh's secondary education sector. The study revealed how the teachers are struggling in their day-to-day life for survival and for quality education. Teachers have many issues that they deal with in their profession. The following themes and interpretations that are elicited from the conversation are discussed in the lens of the teaching profession, and pseudonyms are used.

CHALLENGES

There are various challenges that the teachers are facing from different corners of the society, sometimes from their own institution or sometimes from other sources. As a teacher, the main challenge is for them to conduct the class effectively and to manage the class effectively. But there are challenges too, for example administrative challenges that come from the authority i.e. headmasters and others and the other is outside challenges which come from the outer source. Most of the institutions of Bangladesh are non-government school which are run by the combination of local and govt. authority. There is a local committee for every non-govt. high who are locally selected, and they monitor and supervise the schools. *"R.M.: Most of the committees or committee members. They are not well educated because there is no rules and regulations for being the member. Okay, if they have political powers, so they can use that one and to become members."* The other participant in the interview also expressed the same opinion on how the local authority try to show their power to the teacher, as stated here, *"A. A.: found this school. We are the founders of this school. We did it, we did it, they show many examples. But so this school is ours, not yours. They're trying to show this to towards us."*

The administrative challenges are those that come from the headmasters. Sometimes, headmasters assign different works to the teachers outside of their daily class routine activities. Assistant teachers have to join different government programs. But when teachers request for emergency leave frequently the headmasters deny it. *"A. K: I find him actually very ruthless. He is very ruthless towards us, especially. We have to take a lot of classes."*

To implement the new curriculum frequently in the classes is a new challenge for the teachers. In 2022 a new syllabus and new curriculum has been launched countrywide for primary and secondary schools. Everything new in education is challenging because at first teachers have to be familiarized with content of the new syllabus then they have to deliver in the class. Traditional ways of teaching has been changed and modern and imported from the foreign world have been launched. So teachers are facing a lot of problems coping with the new curriculum. *"P K: and you know that recently a new curriculum has been launched in our country so new things are there, and new things are always challenging."* A new curriculum is challenging for other several reasons. In every reformation, some new concepts and some new books are added with the syllabus with which teachers as well as students are familiar. Teachers have to go under a lot

of training and students who are promoted to the next class may not have connection with the new syllabus from the previous one. Besides, guardians also face trouble instructing their children. So there are lot of challenges and issues that originate from curriculum change in Bangladesh.

Teaching in extra classes beside the assigned classes is also sometimes a big challenge for the teachers because teachers are recruited according to the subjects in secondary school, for example, if one's background or major is Bangla Language, he is recruited as Bangla teacher or if he studied Mathematics he recruited as math teacher. But in many time if someone goes on leave the other teacher conducts the classes who may not have proper knowledge about the subject area. Consequently, the class does not become effective, and the students don't feel interested in the class either. *"M.: So, I feel really depressing. However, I need to take the class, as whenever I am asked to do that. So, once I was asked to take a chemistry class, you know chemistry. I'm an English language teacher, but I was asked to take."*

Teachers' training is a good event for creating rapport and good understanding among the teachers. It creates good bondage and belongingness among the teachers. It also opens the door of knowledge to the teachers. *"M: After returning from each training session, I feel really in an energetic to conduct classes, because I get a lot of new ideas during my I mean, I gain some knowledge on some particular ideas."* But the teachers of Bangladesh in secondary school sectors don't have enough opportunity to train themselves. They are deprived from both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. They continue the profession somehow only to ensure their livelihood which is evident from the interview of the participants.

ACCOMMODATION PROBLEMS

The accommodation problem is one of the biggest problems for the teacher to accommodate themselves as well as the students in many of the institutions in Bangladesh. In a small classroom a lot of students sit in the class congested and take their lesson. There are lot of students sometimes even 60-80 learners in a single classroom. A teacher cannot make it fruitful because in a big classroom a teacher cannot pay attention to every student and not only that they have to exert more effort to draw the attention of the students while delivering the lessons. Apart from this, a teacher cannot provide feedback to the students to find out the grey area of them. Consequently, the class becomes full of noise and disengaging resulting in ineffectiveness. *"A.K.: or could I? I cannot pay attention to all the students equally and many students. I see their faces they do not understand."* R.M, another teacher consented in the same way. A teacher cannot contact the students be it an eye contact or direct verbal contact. Very often it is seen that backbenchers cannot hear the teachers' voice and cannot see either properly. *"Rajon Mahmood: as I have mentioned, we have a very large classroom. So, it is really challenging for me to contact the class, not only me for all the teachers."*

However, the teachers try to make the classroom effective by employing some classroom strategies and techniques. Again, in managing and conducting classes, teachers use their teaching strategies and pedagogical approach that seems appropriate. Most often teachers apply group work methods to engage a lot of students in their study. *"R.M.: So at the very beginning of the year I put the theme a different groups, and sometimes I just shuffle the groups. So I through the group activities. They learn more."* Sometimes, they use audio-lingual methods, group work, individual task and even use technological devices such as projector, video, laptop etc. *"A.K: Present multimedia classes. and I always try to do that. Try to conduct my classes with a projector. Yeah. So I find most of the time that they are very much interested or eager to participate in the classroom activities."* But in terms of using the technological devices there are some problems too because most of the teachers cannot handle the technological devices and most of the schools don't have equipment like multimedia projectors, laptop and other devices. Students are also not familiar with the devices because those are available in their homes. But, it is a matter of hope that the govt. is trying to implement some steps to develop the secondary sectors by providing the schools with some technological equipment, establishing some computer lab and by including ICT as a compulsory subject.

WORKLOAD

When the schools run in full swing teachers become so busy. Secondary school teachers are vigorously involved in different activities in their daily professional life. While describing the experiences as a teacher, teachers informed that they chose their profession according to their own choice as their future career, but after joining the job, they encountered some situations which thwarted their feelings of interest in their experiences as a teacher. For example, as a human being no one can continue anything or any job all the time i.e. he or she needs some leave from the job for a certain period of time and so they claim some occasional leaves called 'casual leave' when necessary, immensely. But the teachers frequently were denied their casual leave when requested by the employees to the authority. Teachers may feel sick or ill and they need to leave their job for a short time. Due to the shortage of teachers headmasters did not agree to issue casual leave for the assistant teachers as stated hereby, *"R.M: and authority knew that I don't take, schedule leave. But I was. I was denied, and because of the shortage of the teacher."*

Again, Bangladesh is a land of six seasons where in the summer seasons it is very hot and full of humidity when conducting classes becomes very tardy and tiresome. Teachers as well students become very exhausted very quickly during classroom activities. In the early the morning temperature remains moderate, but it proceeds to noon gradually becomes hot. So there is a tendency to attend classes early in the morning. There are some time preferences both for teachers and students. Teachers like to conduct the classes early in the morning because in this time students are more attentive to the classes but teachers are also scheduled later in the day when teachers are exhausted and feel reluctant to conduct the classes. *"R.M: at the very beginning of the I mean beginning of the first class, I mean, which is in the early in the morning at 10 during the summer. They feel, I mean from the first 3 classes. They feel really energetic.".*

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A tight class schedule is another factor that creates a problem for the teachers to be exhausted. A teacher teaches 5-6 periods in a day. Again if a teacher goes on leave the other teachers bear the responsibility of the absent teacher. In this regard, if a science teacher goes on leave, the other teacher who does not teach science teaches the class. *"R.M: There are 6 classes we contact every day. If I get 5 classes and even another extra classes, so I don't get enough time to prepare myself."* In the tight schedule, there is a short break that is called a "tiffin period" which only lasts for only 30 minutes. Within the short time a teacher goes on meditation and lunch. *"R.M: There is only 30 min break. and during the break you need to take what you need to complete. I mean, you need to take your lunch and pray."*

Apart from conducting classes, a teacher has to execute another responsibility, for example, examining the answer scripts of the internal examinations and some of public examinations. Some other events like elections and job test also take place in the schools and teachers become involved into it. There are some public examinations in secondary school certificate (SSC) and Junior School Certificate (JSC) where thousands of students participate in the examination and those answer scripts are examined by the teacher which are their additional duties beside teaching. *"R.M: okay, the classroom assessment beside the classroom assessment. We get some extra papers like half your exam and final exam. Even we get. We need to check some copies, I mean, answer script off from the board every year every year."*

Shortage of teachers is another critical issue that secondary schools are suffering from. There are lot of students in every institution but there is enough teacher accordingly. Teacher-student relation is very high near about 40-50. The government is not regularly recruiting new teachers though new students are joining the school. So for infrastructural crisis and lack of teacher the other problems are arising. Even, the teachers don't have their personal rooms in the schools for their rest and recreation. *"T.M: So teacher is shortage. There is a teacher shortage. So you need to take some more extra classes, and which is a very common phenomenon, you know, in my country, you know it."*

However, though there are lot of problems and challenges, teachers are trying to ensure quality education within their limited source of teaching. Sometimes teachers feel very happy thinking that it is a noble profession, and they desire wholeheartedly for their students' success. The ultimate goal of the teaching profession is the students' success and so if they are successful a teacher feels relatedness with the profession. *"P.K: So, the students are the reward. I think if my students become successful.*

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study illuminate the multifaceted challenges faced by secondary school teachers in Bangladesh, aligning with and extending existing literature on educational workforce stressors. The primary issues administrative inefficiencies, overcrowded classrooms, excessive workloads, and insufficient professional development—resonate with global and local research on teacher burnout and systemic barriers to quality education.

Administrative Challenges and Institutional Governance

The administrative hurdles reported by participants, such as undue influence from unqualified committee members and inflexible leave policies, underscore a critical gap in institutional governance. These findings align with Rahman and Howlader's (2018) assertion that administrative inefficiencies in Bangladesh's education sector often stem from politicized local oversight. The lack of accountability among school committees exacerbates teachers' workloads, as noted in studies linking poor governance to low job satisfaction (Mertler, 2016; Canrinus et al., 2012). This study adds nuance by revealing how power dynamics between teachers and local authorities directly undermine classroom effectiveness, a dimension less explored in prior literature.

Overcrowded Classrooms and Pedagogical Strain

The struggle to manage large classes (60–80 students) mirrors global concerns about the adverse effects of high student-teacher ratios (Blatchford et al., 2002; Harmer, 2000). Teachers' reliance on teacher-centered methods due to overcrowding reflects a survival strategy rather than pedagogical preference, as creative or interactive approaches become logistically impractical. This finding corroborates Ara and Hossain's (2016) work on Bangladesh, where large classes hinder individualized attention. However, the study also highlights teachers' adaptive strategies, such as group work, which align with Hossain's (2020) advocacy for collaborative learning in resource-constrained settings.

Workload and Burnout

The excessive workload- teaching 5–6 consecutive classes daily, managing substitute roles, and grading exams echoes Liu and Meyer's (2005) findings on workload as a primary driver of teacher dissatisfaction. The denial of casual leave due to staff shortages further exacerbates burnout, a systemic issue tied to Bangladesh's chronic teacher recruitment gaps (Prodhan, 2016). The physical toll of teaching in extreme heat, compounded by inadequate infrastructure, adds a contextual layer to the global discourse on teacher well-being.

Curriculum Reforms and Professional Development

The 2022 curriculum overhaul introduced unfamiliar pedagogical demands, reflecting a broader trend of top-down reforms without adequate teacher preparation (Hossain et al., 2019). Participants' lack of training aligns with Mia et al.'s (2023) critique of Bangladesh's teacher appointment system, which often neglects ongoing professional development. While Hossain and Al Younus (2025) propose technological tools like ChatGPT as mitigators, this study reveals a disconnect: most teachers lack access to ICT resources or training, limiting their capacity to innovate.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings call for systemic reforms. First, decentralizing administrative authority and establishing merit-based school committees could reduce undue interference. Second, recruiting teachers to address staff shortages and revising leave policies would alleviate burnout. Third, investing in infrastructure such as expanding classrooms and providing cooling systems—could mitigate environmental stressors. Finally, phased curriculum implementation paired with hands-on teacher training, as suggested by Hossain (2021), would ease transitions and foster pedagogical adaptability.

Limitations and Future Research

This study's qualitative focus on northern Bangladesh limits generalizability. Future research could employ mixed methods to quantify challenges across regions. Longitudinal studies tracking the impact of interventions, such as ICT integration or policy reforms, would provide deeper insights. Moreover, comparative analyses of urban versus rural disparities in teacher experiences could inform targeted solutions.

CONCLUSION

Teachers today face numerous challenges that impact their ability to provide quality education. There are administrative challenges which come from the headmasters and school committee members. In some cases, committee members may lack proper qualifications and exert undue influence, while headmasters may assign excessive tasks or deny leave requests. Headmasters may assign excessive tasks or may deny leave requests. The recent curriculum change (2022) poses challenges due to teacher unfamiliarity and lack of training. Frequent change of curriculum makes it difficult for teachers and students to adapt to the curriculum. Large class sizes (over 60 students) make it hard to give students attention equally. A lack of substitute teachers adds to the burden, and demanding schedules with short breaks make teachers. Overcrowded classrooms with limited space make it difficult for teachers to manage large groups and create an engaging learning environment. Schools often lack basic resources like technology, and while the government aims to improve ICT sector, many teachers don't have the training to use it effectively. Students' lack of access to technology at home creates some educational problems. Teachers' leave requests due to illness or emergencies are often denied due to staff shortages, Classes held during the hottest part of the day can be physically hard for both teachers and students.

Despite these difficulties, teachers demonstrate dedication by employing various strategies, such as using group work, integrating different teaching methods, and adapting approaches based on available resources. Government efforts to provide schools with technology and teacher training are positive steps. However, further measures are needed to address these challenges, including:

1. Ensuring a strong teacher recruitment process
2. Providing adequate training and support for teachers to implement curriculum changes
3. Proper administrative procedures to reduce workload burdens.
4. Investing in infrastructure development to address large classrooms.
5. Implementing more flexible leave policies

By addressing these challenges, Bangladesh can create a more supportive environment for teachers, ultimately empowering them to deliver quality education and help students succeed.

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APPENDIX 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Table 1. Demographic information of the study participants

Name	Gender	Age	Designation	Institution Name	Job Experience	Institution Type
TR1	Male	51	Assistant Teacher	Natore Govt Girls High School	24 years	Government
TR2	Male	48	Assistant Teacher	Natore Govt Girls High School	20 years+	Government
TR3	Male	42	Assistant Teacher	Natore Govt Girls High School	15 years+	Government
TR4	Male	40	Assistant Teacher	Natore Govt Girls High School	13 years+	Government
TR5	Female	42	Assistant Teacher	Natore Govt Girls High School	15 years	Government
TR6	Male	58	Assistant Teacher	Natore Govt Boy's High School	28 years+	Government
TR7	Female	50	Assistant Teacher	Natore Govt Boy's High School	22 years+	Government
TR8	Male	42	Assistant Teacher	Natore Govt Boy's High School	15 years	Government
TR9	Male	43	Assistant Teacher	Natore Govt Boy's High School	15 years	Government
TR10	Male	52	Assistant Teacher	Puthimay High School, Natore	25 years	Non-government
TR11	Male	40	Assistant Teacher	Vanshigari High School, Rajshahi	12 years	Non-government
TR12	Male	50	Assistant Teacher	Mohonpur Govt High School, Rajshahi	24 years	Government
TR13	Male	42	Assistant Teacher	Naogaon Govt Girls High School, Naogaon	15 years	Government
TR14	Male	43	Assistant Teacher	Naogaon Govt Girls High School, Naogaon	17 years	Government
TR15	Male	43	Assistant Teacher	Bhawanigonj Govt High School, Rajshahi	15 years	Government
TR16	Female	30	Assistant Teacher	Bhawanigonj Govt High School, Rajshahi	03 years	Government
TR17	Female	50	Assistant Teacher	Bhawanigonj Govt High School, Rajshahi	25 years	Government
TR18	Male	44	Assistant Teacher	Rajshahi Collegiate School	16 years	Government
TR19	Male	48	Assistant Teacher	Rajshahi Collegiate School	22 years	Government
TR20	Male	47	Assistant Teacher	Rajshahi Collegiate School	22 years	Government

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following open-ended questions were asked while conducting the interviews of the secondary teachers:
1. Tell me about yourself. When did you start your profession as a teacher? What influenced you to be a teacher?
2. What is your background? What is your major? What subjects do you teach in your school?
3. Tell me a teaching process that you are very comfortable with while teaching your students?
4. Tell me about a time when you were very energetic to conduct the class activities well. Can you give me an example?
5. Tell me about an incident that you were reluctant to take classes of your daily schedule.
6. At what moment have you found that students are more attentive to study and what moment they are not?
7. Tell me about your experiences with trying to be a successful teacher.
8. What kind of challenges do you face as a teacher?
9. What is the reward in your profession?
10. What kind of classroom size do you prefer as a teacher?
11. How do you deal with the students when it is a big classroom?
12. What will be your suggestions to increase the accommodation facilities of your class?
13. What do you think about the class schedule of your daily routine? Can you explain it more?
14. What do you feel when you are asked to take extra classes beside your assigned schedule?
15. When do you prefer to take classes, before or after the break?
16. What kind of strategies do you apply if the classes are in the beginning or at the end of the daily schedule?
17. How will you distinguish between the first and last class of the day?
18. What experiences have you had at the last classes of the schedule?
19. How do you feel when you are asked to take classes outside of your own field?
20. How do you feel when your request for casual leave is denied by your headmaster?
21. What do you think about the workload that teachers are involved in? How do the teachers feel when they are asked to check the answer script of the public examinations?
22. What will be your suggestions if someone wants to be a teacher?