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Exploring institutional challenges to entrepreneurial development: Insights from Northern and Southern BSCIC Zones in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Entrepreneurial development is essential for industrialization, employment generation, poverty reduction, and sustainable economic growth. Despite the institutional support provided by the BSCIC, entrepreneurs continue to face significant barriers to business establishment, operation, and expansion. This study explores the institutional challenges affecting entrepreneurial development in the Northern and Southern BSCIC Zones of Bangladesh. A qualitative research approach was employed, using purposive sampling to collect data through 55 IDIs, 13 KIIs, and six FGDs, involving 74 participants across ten districts. Data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring challenges and contextual differences. The findings reveal six major themes: misalignment of services, bureaucratic delays, credit access challenges, lack of regional focus, weak monitoring systems, and unawareness of entrepreneurs. Inadequate financial assistance, restrictive collateral requirements, administrative complexities, insufficient infrastructure, weak institutional coordination, limited market access, and inadequate entrepreneurial capabilities emerged as critical barriers. The findings also highlight the need for region-specific interventions, transparent administrative procedures, improved infrastructure, accessible financing, stronger monitoring mechanisms, and demand-oriented entrepreneurial training. The study contributes contextual insights into institutional barriers affecting entrepreneurial development within BSCIC industrial estates and among entrepreneurs operating outside them. The cross-sectional design, purposive sampling, and geographically bounded study limit statistical generalizability and may not capture all the experiences of entrepreneurs and other stakeholders across Bangladesh. It recommends coordinated policy interventions and enhanced institutional responsiveness to promote inclusive industrialization, employment generation, and balanced regional development in Bangladesh.

***Keywords*:** Entrepreneur, BSCIC, MSMCIs, SCIs, Northern Bangladesh

JEL Classification: D24, L26, M11

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1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a crucial force of economic development, fostering job creation and shifting mindsets toward self-employment. Entrepreneurs are instrumental in economic growth, contributing significantly to employment and overall prosperity of a country. They possess the potential to reshape the way people live in and work through their innovative ideas and ventures. Hagstrom (2026) and Johnson (2020) purported that *s*omeone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago. The person who planted the tree is the entrepreneur. An entrepreneur is an individual who creates something new for the consumption of a society. And so entrepreneurship development is a must for the growth and development of a country. In addition, Harrison (2023) and Schumpeter et al. (2003) defines an entrepreneur as a leader in economic and social domains, focusing on new technologies to meet societal needs rather than pursuing solely financial gain.

The economic prosperity of a nation largely depends on industrialization. The more industrialized a country is, the more prosperous it tends to be. The EPSIC was established in 1957 to foster industrial development. After Bangladesh's independence, EPSIC became BSCIC, which now plays a vital role in supporting the development of MSMCIs. The mission of BSCIC includes generating employment, alleviating poverty, developing entrepreneurship, training a skilled workforce, and promoting eco-friendly industrial estates and it is the center of implementing government-driven development programs (Rashid, 2023; Stoica et al., 2020). BSCIC has made significant strides in fostering industrial growth, particularly in Northern and Southern Bangladesh, which includes Rajshahi, Rangpur and Barishal divisions. Through its initiatives, BSCIC has contributed to the industrialization and economic growth of this nation, with a vision to create an industrially advanced Bangladesh. The corporation supports entrepreneurs through services such as training, financial assistance, entrepreneurship development, and product marketing. BSCIC operates a network of four regional offices namely Chattogram, Dhaka, Khulna, and Rajshahi and industrial estates nationwide, accommodating specialized zones for various industries like tannery, pharmaceuticals, and garments (Rashid et al., 2023).

Despite the aforesaid efforts, challenges still remain. BSCIC has struggled to adapt to the evolving needs of entrepreneurs, particularly in Northern and Southern Bangladesh, which remains less industrialized compared to other regions. This discrepancy raises important questions: Why has industrial development in Northern and Southern Bangladesh lagged despite the extensive programs of BSCIC? Understanding the obstacles faced by entrepreneurs in BSCIC industrial estates in Bogura, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Rangpur, Barishal, Jhalokati, and Patuakhali districts is essential for addressing these disparities and strengthening the industrial growth of these two regions. Entrepreneurs in Northern and Southern Bangladesh encounter significant challenges, including limited market access, inadequate infrastructure, weak institutional support, and fierce competition. Additionally, the lack of coordination among BSCIC,

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banks, and other financial institutions further hampers growth. These challenges are exacerbated by the relative underdevelopment of these regions, despite the efforts of various organizations working to cultivate an entrepreneurial development, including ASA, BASIC Bank PLC, Bangladesh Development Bank PLC, BIDA, BKB, BRAC, BSCIC, Department of Youth Development, Jatiyo Mohila Sangstha, MIDAS, Proshika, and TMSS.

A study by Wadud (2018) indicates that despite the existence of numerous government and non-government institutions focused on entrepreneurship development, there are still barriers to effective business creation and growth in Northern and Southern Bangladesh. International research on entrepreneurship has highlighted factors like market access in India, business growth in China, and government roles in countries like Italy and Nigeria, but there is a lack of research focused on the specific challenges faced by entrepreneurs in BSCIC industrial estates in Northern and Southern Bangladesh. To unlock the economic potential of SCIs, it is essential to address these challenges. The government and institutions like BSCIC must focus on improving infrastructure, streamlining access to financial resources, and fostering a more supportive business environment. Entrepreneurs should be given access to market information, advanced training, and technology to stay competitive. The promotion of trade-based training, improvements in power supply, and the development of industrial banks can also help address the financial needs of entrepreneurs. This study aims to explore the challenges faced by entrepreneurs operating under the institutional supervision and support of the BSCIC in Northern and Southern Bangladesh. By evaluating the effectiveness of BSCIC's institutional support services and identifying areas requiring improvement, this study seeks to inform evidence-based policy-making and contribute to the formulation of more effective industrial development policies. The goal is to enhance MSMCIs growth, boost industrial production, improve distribution channels, reduce poverty, and create employment opportunities.

Furthermore, addressing the institutional challenges faced by entrepreneurs operating under BSCIC's supervision in Northern and Southern Bangladesh is crucial to fostering sustainable economic growth and promoting regional industrial development. This study provides valuable insights into how BSCIC can better support entrepreneurs and contribute to the industrialization of these regions. By identifying key obstacles and suggesting improvements, this research aims to unlock the full potential of MSMCIs, thereby fostering economic growth, employment creation, and poverty reduction in Bangladesh.

2. Literature Review

Bangladesh urgently requires rapid industrialization to alleviate poverty and achieve SDGs. Specifically, SDG one focuses on 'No Poverty', SDG nine highlights 'Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure', and SDG 12 promotes 'Responsible Consumption and Production'. Furthermore, Article 16 of the Constitution of Bangladesh, under 'Rural Development and Agricultural Revolution', emphasizes the need to develop cottage and other industries to reduce disparities in

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living standards between urban and rural areas (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 2011). The following literature review examines key challenges and factors affecting entrepreneurial performance in different environmental contexts.

In India, food-producing entrepreneurs are adapting to changing consumer preferences, which increasingly favor healthier and sustainable food options. Entrepreneurs are diversifying their offerings using alternative ingredients like millets, but market accessibility remains a significant challenge (Shah et al., 2023). In China, business growth depends on various entrepreneurial activities, both at individual and team levels, and is influenced by factors such as institutional quality and market competition (Wei and Duan, 2024). In tourism and hospitality, the role of nascent entrepreneurship is crucial, and researchers have focused on how government support, human capital, and incubators can aid entrepreneurial success (Dias et al., 2023).

In Peru, business school models emphasize social responsibility and sustainability, which contribute to SME growth, benefiting micro-entrepreneurs and stakeholders across the business ecosystem (Lozano et al., 2023). Migrant entrepreneurs in Germany have faced unique challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, as the crisis disrupted enterprise operations and forced adaptation strategies based on transnational networks (Harima, 2022). In Oman, female entrepreneurs encounter multiple barriers to success, including the need for enhanced skills and stronger policy support from public and private sectors (Hammami et al., 2022). Entrepreneurial mental health is also a growing area of concern. A review of depression among entrepreneurs revealed that those experiencing business failures often suffer from feelings of stigma and shame, which prevent them from seeking necessary support (Cubbon et al., 2021). Research also highlights the unpredictability of entrepreneurship, requiring flexibility in decision-making, given the heterogeneity and complexity of enterprise environments (Müller et al., 2023). The COVID-19 crisis significantly impacted entrepreneurship, with three primary perspectives emerging: uncertainty, resilience, and opportunity. These factors must be considered together to understand the crisis's full effects on industry (Kuckertz and Brändle, 2022). Women's participation in STEM entrepreneurship remains limited, yet increasing attention is being given to fostering female entrepreneurs as role models to inspire more women to enter these fields (Poggesi et al., 2020). Research on entrepreneurial decision-making suggests that personal cognitive frameworks, influenced by psychological traits and external variables, play a critical role in shaping enterprise outcomes (Acharya and Berry, 2023). Digital innovation and government roles significantly impact entrepreneurship sustainability, particularly in developing economies (Kreiterling, 2023). In Nigeria, structural barriers like theft, weak legal systems, and inadequate policy support negatively affect lean entrepreneurship practices (Ufua et al., 2022).

In Asia, research indicates that many women enter entrepreneurship to improve family incomes. However, strict social roles and limited access to business resources hinder their success (Franzke et al., 2022). A systematic literature review finds that self-efficacy, conscientiousness, locus of

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control, need for achievement, and innovativeness are key personality traits that influence entrepreneurial success (Yangailo and Qutieshat, 2022). Informal Entrepreneurship has been analyzed through three pathways: reactive formalizing, proactive formalizing, and informalizing. Entrepreneurs navigate these pathways based on their regulatory environments (Salvi et al., 2023). A meta-analysis of entrepreneurship and well-being shows that entrepreneurs generally experience higher job and life satisfaction than employees. However, when institutional contexts lack strong legal frameworks, entrepreneurs face higher negative well-being compared to employees (Stephan et al., 2023).

Roy (2025) purported that the regression analysis depicts that investments in electricity infrastructural development, improved access to financial supports, and the acquisition of quality certifications enhance the performance of CMSMEs. Conversely, challenges such as power outages, delays in obtaining and renewal of licenses, anti-competitive practices, and stringent tax and labor force regulations negatively affect entrepreneurial performance in Bangladesh. Entrepreneurs need crucial support like infrastructure, training, guidance, promotion, and information to start and manage enterprises effectively and efficiently. Although many institutions in Bangladesh provide these services, their performance is not satisfactory. Most of the organizations are lacking in their technical, infrastructural, financial, managerial, and behavioral aspects (Islam, 2020). While global research provides extensive insights into entrepreneurial challenges, studies specifically focusing on SCIs within the industrial estates of the Northern and Southern Zones of Bangladesh remain scarce. BSCIC plays a pivotal role in fostering entrepreneurship, but regulatory inefficiencies, market access limitations, and inadequate financial support pose significant hurdles. Existing literature does not adequately address how entrepreneurs within BSCIC estates compare with those operating independently or in different regions of Bangladesh. Moreover, studies from various countries emphasize different dimensions of entrepreneurship, such as digital transformation (Italy), food industry trends (India), and the impact of COVID-19 on business resilience (Germany). However, there is a lack of studies that examine entrepreneurship development in Bangladesh under the supervision of BSCIC and the unique challenges faced by these entrepreneurs. Key barriers include regulatory frameworks, market competition, financial access, and institutional inefficiencies, which require more targeted research. To address this gap, this study explores the challenges faced by entrepreneurs operating under the institutional oversight and support of BSCIC in Northern and Southern Bangladesh, focusing on the factors that affect their entrepreneurial performance and sustainability. The findings provide policy-makers and stakeholders with essential insights to develop strategies that better support entrepreneurs, foster industrial growth, and contribute to the broader objectives of Bangladesh for poverty reduction and sustainable development.

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3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

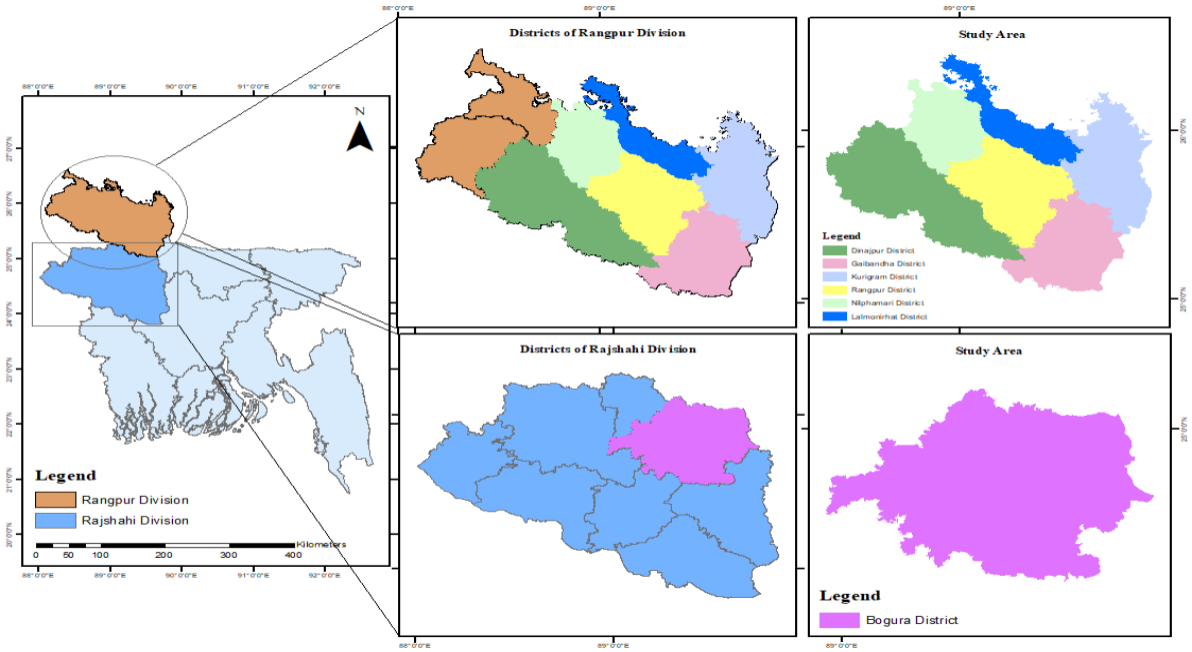
This study employs a qualitative approach to understand how entrepreneurs in the Northern Zone and Southern Zone of BSCIC cope with entrepreneurial challenges. A qualitative research method is appropriate for exploring phenomena from participants' perspectives, focusing on their interpretations, experiences, and innovations (Hillebrand, 2000). This research examines human ideas, innovations, and experiences through participant reports (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Inductive reasoning was used to explore how entrepreneurs perceive and respond to challenges in their industrial units. A semi-structured questionnaire, included in the supplementary profile, guided the research to ensure comprehensive insights.

3.2 Study Area

3.2.1 Northern Zone

BSCIC has classified the districts into three categories based on their importance of industrial establishments and overall development: Category A, Category B, and Category C. Bogura, Dinajpur, and Rangpur are included in Category A. Gaibandha is included in Category B. Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, and Nilphamari are included in Category C. Panchagarh and Thakurgaon also fall under Category C and are very closed to homogenous industrial establishment relating to its own category, therefore, data were not collected from those two aforesaid districts.

Figure 3.1 Study Area



Source: Study Area Developed by the Researchers Using ArcGIS Software Version 10.8

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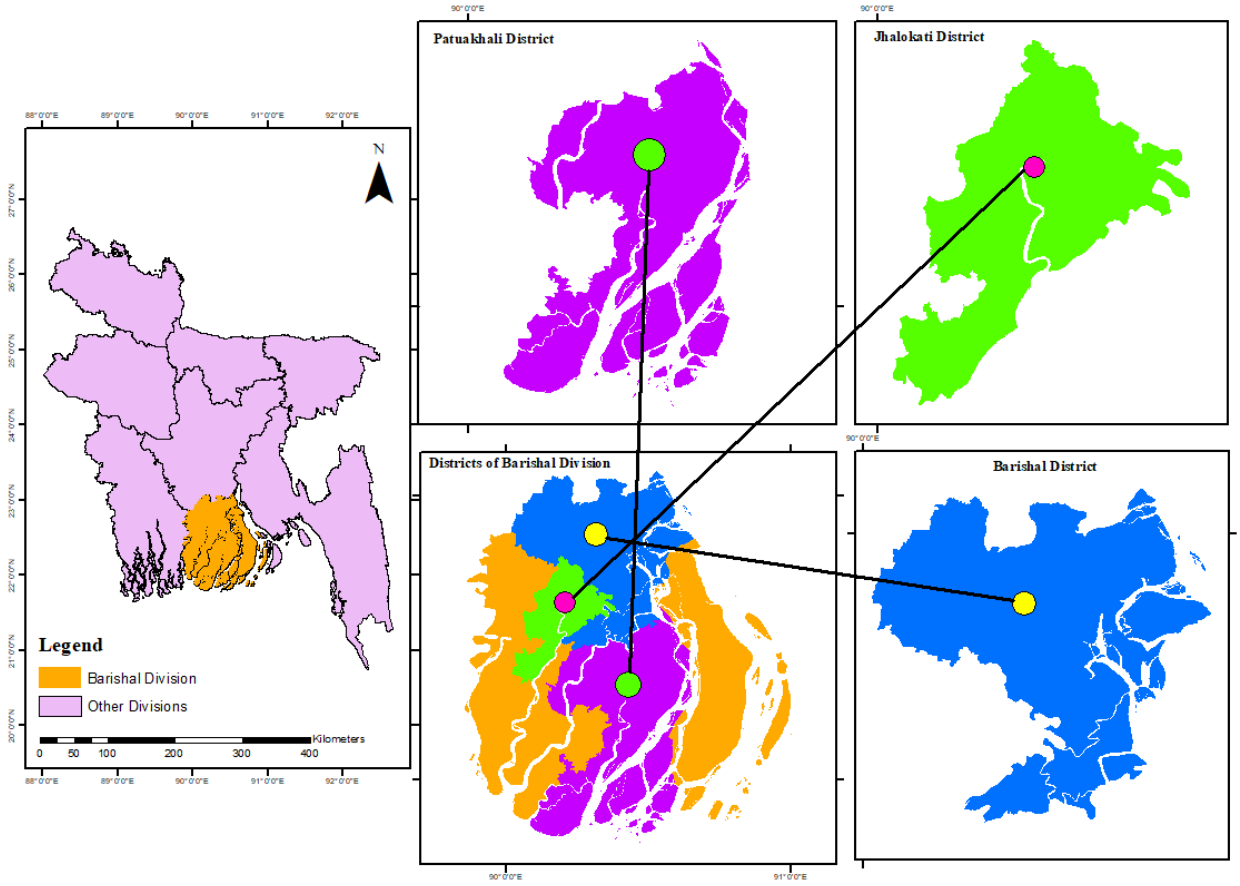
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Data were collected from seven districts namely Bogura, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, and Rangpur located in Rangpur and Rajshahi Division of Bangladesh and administered under the supervision of BSCIC. One district was selected in Rajshahi division that was Bogura because of its heterogeneity of industrial establishments relating to other districts of that division. All these districts are geographically close and facilitating comparative analysis. A purposive sampling technique was used for collecting data.

3.2.2 Southern Zone

Barishal division was purposively selected for data collection in Southern Zone. There were six districts in Barishal division namely Barguna, Barishal, Bhola, Jhalokati, Patuakhali, and Pirojpur. Three districts namely Barishal, Jhalokati, and Patuakhali were randomly selected based on their geographical proximity and contextual homogeneity. Barishal is included in Category A whereas Patuakhali is included in Category B and Jhalokati is included in Category C respectively.

Figure 3.2 Study Area



Source: Study Area Developed by the Researchers Using ArcGIS Software Version 10.8

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Before conducting interviews, written informed consent was obtained from participants, ensuring confidentiality. The researchers adhered strictly to ethical guidelines to protect the safety and security of both entrepreneurs and other stakeholders involved in the study.

3.3 Sampling and Sample Size

Qualitative studies often consider 10-15 participants sufficient, though sample sizes may range from 10-50 depending on research objectives and data saturation (Fugard & Potts, 2015; Guest et al., 2014; Sandelowski, 1995). Following these guidelines, this study used semi-structured face-to-face interviews to explore the challenges of entrepreneurs through 28 IDIs, seven KIIs, and three FGDs involving a total of 38 participants (Adams & Cox, 2008). Data were collected proportionately from each district through four IDIs and one KII. In Category A, FGD was conducted in Rangpur district; in Category B, FGD was conducted in Gaibandha district; and considering Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, and Nilphamari under Category C, the FGD was conducted in Lalmonirhat district respectively.

Some participants who provided information as IDIs and KIIs also participated in the FGDs and provided information there as well shown in Table 3.1. Each FGD was conducted with six participants of those four were IDIs, one KII participant, and one new industrial entrepreneur across the selected districts in Northern Bangladesh. Again, in Barishal division semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted to explore the challenges of entrepreneurs through 27 IDIs, six KIIs, and three FGDs involving a total of 36 participants.

Table 3.1 District-wise distribution of IDIs, KIIs, and FGDs participants in Northern Bangladesh

District Name	District Category	Participants Number of IDI	Participants Number of KII	Participants Number of FGD (Excluding the Participants Number of IDI and KII)	Total Number of Participants
Bogura	A	4	1	-	5
Dinajpur	A	4	1	-	5
Gaibandha	B	4	1	1	6
Kurigram	C	4	1	-	5
Lalmonirhat	C	4	1	1	6

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Nilphamari	C	4	1	-	5
Rangpur	A	4	1	1	6
Total	-	28	7	3	38

Source: Field Study by the Researchers

Data were collected proportionately from each district through nine IDIs and two KIIs. In Category A, FGD was conducted in Barishal district; in Category B, FGD was conducted in Patuakhali district while under Category C, the FGD was conducted in Jhalokati district shown in Table 3.2. All participants who provided information as IDIs and KIIs also participated in the FGDs and provided information there as well. Each FGD was conducted with 12 participants of those nine were IDIs, two KIIs, and one new industrial entrepreneur at Barishal division in Southern Bangladesh.

Table 3.2 District-wise distribution of IDIs, KIIs, and FGDs participants in Southern Bangladesh

District Name	District Category	Participants Number of KII	Participants Number of FGD (Excluding the Participants Number of IDI and KII)	Total Number of Participants
Barisal	A	2	1	12
Jhalokati	C	2	1	12
Patuakhali	B	2	1	12
Total	-	6	3	36

Source: Field Study by the Researchers

The interview guide included five core and 16 probing questions developed from the literature review. IDIs provided in-depth insights into the experiences of participants, while KIIs involved experts and other relevant stakeholders. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevant knowledge and experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023). Data saturation was assessed through the iterative collection and analysis of data, while methodological triangulation across IDIs, KIIs, and FGDs enhanced the credibility, depth, and comprehensiveness of the findings by capturing diverse perspectives on entrepreneurial challenges across the Northern and Southern BSCIC zones.

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3.4 Data Collection and Instruments

Participants were recruited with the assistance of the respective BSCIC office heads, who facilitated communication and coordination with relevant stakeholders to ensure the effective and efficient conduct of the research work. Semi-structured interviews were used to facilitate an in-depth exploration of entrepreneurial challenges (Van Burg et al., 2022). Prior to the main data collection, the questionnaire was pre-tested through ten pilot interviews, and necessary modifications were conducted to improve its clarity, reliability, and suitability (Bolton, 1993). Open-ended questions allowed participants to address detailed and flexible responses. BSCIC gave a formal approval for collecting the required data and information. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, interview procedures, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw at any stage. Informed consent was obtained before each interview, and personal identifiers and industrial establishment details were excluded from the reporting of findings. Interviews were conducted sensitively in participants' natural settings to ensure safety, comfort, and privacy, while appropriate measures were taken to safeguard their information and maintain the integrity of the entire research work. All interviews were conducted in Bangla languages, recorded using a smart mobile device with the consent of participants, and transcribed verbatim. Where participants expressed concerns about recording, responses were documented manually. These transcripts were subsequently reviewed by academic researchers to ensure accuracy and consistency.

3.5 Quality Assurance and Data Analysis

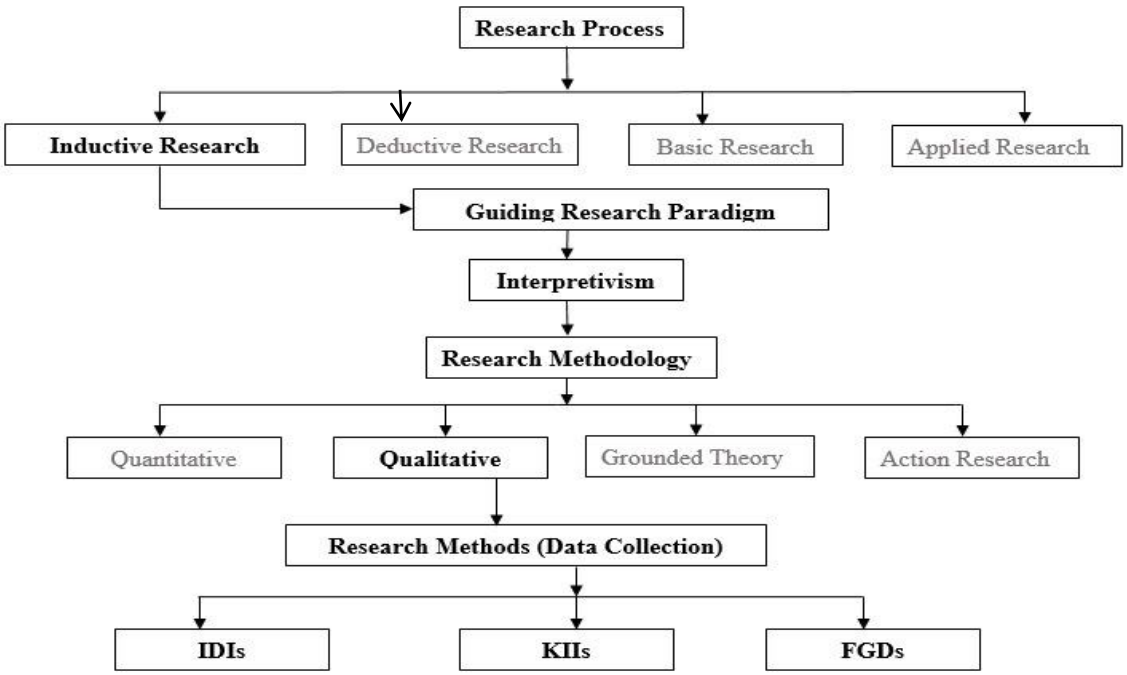
Data were analyzed thematically to identify key patterns and themes. Initially, interview data were transcribed, followed by coding to extract themes and sub-themes aligned with research objectives. Thematic analysis provided a structured approach to examining qualitative insights systematically. Ethical considerations were carefully addressed because the study involved entrepreneurs, BSCIC officials, and other stakeholders. Prior to data collection, BSCIC provided formal authorization, while participants received clear information regarding the objectives of the study, interview procedures, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institute of Biological Sciences, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh, in accordance with relevant ethical standards and institutional requirements. The approval was granted pursuant to Resolution No. of the 71st meeting of the Board of Governors of the Institute of Biological Sciences and Resolution No. 57 of the Syndicate of the University of Rajshahi (Memo No. 386/320(45)/IAMEBBC/IBSc, dated 13 August 2026). The approval confirmed that the study involved human research participants but did not include any animal experimentation. Informed consent was secured from all participants, and their identities and personal information were strictly protected throughout the research process. Interviews were conducted in natural settings of the participants to ensure comfort and privacy. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage of interview without consequence. These measures ensured compliance with

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established ethical principles and organizational requirements (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Glaser et al., 2013; Heath & Cowley, 2004).

Figure 3.3 Research Process



Source: (Almobarak, 2010)

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Demographic Profile of the Participants

Table 4.1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 38 participants involved in the qualitative enquiry of entrepreneurial challenges in Northern Bangladesh. The participants were 30 entrepreneurs and or industrial stakeholders, six BSCIC employees, and two the representatives of FBCCI, covering a diverse range of industrial sectors and organizational perspectives. Gender representation was predominantly male including 28 males and 10 females while female participants were particularly involved in boutique, tailoring, beautification, mushroom, pharmaceutical, and related activities. Educational attainment varied considerably, ranging from below SSC to postgraduate level, although graduates and postgraduates were the majority part.

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Table 4.1 Demographic Profile of the Participants in Northern Bangladesh

Serial number	Participants' code	Participants' category	Gender	Industrial sector/profession	Education	Experience
1	$NEBDS_1$	IDI	M	Food Processing	Post Graduate	7 Years
2	$NEBDS_2$	IDI	M	Plastic Processing	SSC	8 Years
3	$NEBDS_3$	KII	M	Rice, Wood Processing	Graduate	25 Years
4	$NEBDS_4$	IDI	M	Food Processing	Graduate	19 Years
5	$NEBDS_5$	IDI, FGD	M	Food Processing	Graduate	13 Years
6	$NEBDS_6$	KII	M	Chemical Processing	Post Graduate	31 Years
7	$NEBDS_7$	IDI	M	Cold Storage	Graduate	8 Years
8	$NEBDS_8$	IDI, FGD	M	Agro Based	Graduate	7 Years
9	$NEBDS_9$	IDI	M	Chemical Processing	HSC	1 Years
10	$NEBDS_{10}$	KII, FGD	M	Aluminium	Post Graduate	21 Years
11	$NEBDS_{11}$	IDI	M	PVC Pipe	Graduate	6 Years
12	$NEBDS_{12}$	FGD	M	Plastic Processing	Graduate	5 Years
13	$NEBDS_{13}$	IDI, FGD	F	Pharmaceutical	Graduate	7 Years
14	$NEBDS_{14}$	IDI, FGD	F	Crop Seed Production	SSC	6 Years
15	$NEBIS_1$	IDI	M	Shoe Producer	Graduate	5 Years

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16	$NEBIS_2$	IDI	M	Shoe Producer	Post Graduate	4 Years
17	$NEBIS_3$	IDI, FGD	F	Boutique	HSC	8 Years
18	$NEBIS_4$	IDI	F	Mushroom	Graduate	4 Years
19	$NEBIS_5$	IDI, FGD	F	Cattle Farming	SSC	9 Years
20	$NEBIS_6$	IDI	F	Boutique	Post Graduate	7 Years
21	$NEBIS_7$	IDI, FGD	F	Beautification	HSC	4 Years
22	$NEBIS_8$	IDI, FGD	M	Parking Tiles	Graduate	7 Years
23	$NEBIS_9$	IDI	F	Tailoring	Under SSC	5 Years
24	$NEBIS_{10}$	IDI, FGD	M	Cork Sheet Designer	Under SSC	6 Years
25	$NEBIS_{11}$	IDI	F	Boutique	Graduate	6 Years
26	$NEBIS_{12}$	IDI, FGD	M	Fish Farming	SSC	8 Years
27	$NEBIS_{13}$	IDI, FGD	F	Tailoring	HSC	6 Years
28	$NEBIS_{14}$	IDI	M	Fish Farming	Post Graduate	2 Years
29	$NEBIS_{15}$	IDI, FGD	M	Agro Based	Graduate	3 Years
30	$NEBIS_{16}$	IDI, FGD	F	Beauty Parlor	Graduate	4 Years
31	NBA_1	IDI	M	BSCIC Employee	Post Graduate	10 Years
32	NBA_2	KII, FGD	M	BSCIC Employee	Graduate	16 Years
33	NBA_3	FGD	M	BSCIC Employee	Post Graduate	10 Years

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34	NBA_4	IDI	M	BSCIC Employee	Post Graduate	5 Years
35	NBA_5	FGD	M	BSCIC Employee	Post Graduate	5 Years
36	NBA_6	KII	M	BSCIC Employee	Graduate	14 Years
37	$NRFBCCI_1$	KII	M	FBCCI Representative	Post Graduate	27 Years
38	$NRFBCCI_2$	KII	M	FBCCI Representative	Graduate	18 Years

Source: Field Study by the Researchers from September 2024 to May 2025

Participants also demonstrated substantial practical experience, ranging from one to 31 years, indicating considerable exposure to entrepreneurial environments. The sample included participants from food processing, plastics, chemicals, agro-based productions, footwear, fisheries, agriculture, and other small and micro industries. Moreover, participants were engaged through IDIs, KIIs, and FGDs, enabling methodological triangulation and the incorporation of diverse experiential and organizational perspectives. Overall, the demographic profile represents substantial diversity in gender, education, sector, experience, and stakeholder category, supporting the depth and breadth of the qualitative investigation in the Northern Zone of Bangladesh.

Table 4.2 presents the demographic characteristics of the 36 participants involved in the qualitative enquiry of the challenges of entrepreneurs in Southern Bangladesh. The participants were 24 entrepreneurs and or industrial stakeholders, five BSCIC employees, two representatives of the FBCCI, three representatives of the BSCIC Owners' Association, and two representatives of the NASCIB, incorporating diverse institutional and entrepreneurial perspectives. In this study, 27 participants were male and nine were female where female participants mainly engaged in restaurants, beauty services, tailoring, boutiques, cattle farming, and other small-scale industries. Educational affiliation ranged from below the SSC to the postgraduate level, with graduates and postgraduates constituting a substantial proportion of the participants. Entrepreneurial and professional experience varied markedly from two to 45 years, reflecting both relatively new and highly experienced participants involved in this research work. The industrial sectors represented included plastics, agro-based enterprises, food processing, poultry, pharmaceuticals, fisheries, furniture, tailoring, and other SMEs.

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Table 4.2 Demographic Profile of the Participants in Southern Bangladesh

Serial number	Participants' code	Participants' category	Gender	Industrial sector/profession	Education	Experience
1	$SEBDS_1$	KII, FGD	M	Plastic Processing	SSC	40 Years
2	$SEBDS_2$	IDI, FGD	M	Agro Based	HSC	2 Years
3	$SEBDS_3$	IDI, FGD	M	Plastic Processing	Under SSC	12 Years
4	$SEBDS_4$	IDI, FGD	M	Food Processing	SSC	5 Years
5	$SEBDS_5$	IDI, FGD	F	Restaurant	Under SSC	14 Years
6	$SEBDS_6$	IDI, FGD	M	Bakery	HSC	14 Years
7	$SEBDS_7$	IDI, FGD	M	Poultry	Under SSC	6 Years
8	$SEBDS_8$	KII, FGD	M	Plastic Processing	Post Graduate	25 Years
9	$SEBDS_9$	IDI, FGD	M	Poultry	Under SSC	22 Years
10	$SEBDS_{10}$	KII, FGD	M	Chemical Processing	Graduate	25 Years
11	$SEBDS_{11}$	IDI, FGD	M	Pharmaceutical	Graduate	20 Years
12	$SEBIS_1$	IDI, FGD	F	Beauty Parlor	SSC	9 Years
13	$SEBIS_2$	IDI, FGD	F	Tailoring	Graduate	2 Years
14	$SEBIS_3$	IDI, FGD	F	Boutique	HSC	2 Years
15	$SEBIS_4$	IDI, FGD	F	Cattle Farming	HSC	5 Years

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16	$SEBIS_5$	IDI, FGD	F	Tailoring	Graduate	14 Years
17	$SEBIS_6$	IDI, FGD	M	Bakery	Under SSC	45 Years
18	$SEBIS_7$	IDI, FGD	M	Fish Farming	SSC	7 Years
19	$SEBIS_8$	IDI, FGD	M	Fish Farming	Graduate	3 Years
20	$SEBIS_9$	IDI, FGD	M	Furniture	Post Graduate	12 Years
21	$SEBIS_{10}$	IDI, FGD	M	Food Processing	Graduate	3 Years
22	$SEBIS_{11}$	IDI, FGD	M	Pharmaceutical	Graduate	7 Years
23	$SEBIS_{12}$	IDI, FGD	M	Agro Based	Post Graduate	10 Years
24	$SEBIS_{13}$	IDI, FGD	F	Mosquito Coil	Graduate	11 Years
25	SBA_1	IDI, FGD	M	BSCIC Employee	Post Graduate	11 Years
26	SBA_2	KII, FGD	M	BSCIC Employee	Graduate	16 Years
27	SBA_3	IDI, FGD	M	BSCIC Employee	Post Graduate	5 Years
28	SBA_4	IDI, FGD	M	BSCIC Employee	Post Graduate	2 Years
29	SBA_5	FGD	M	BSCIC Employee	Post Graduate	7 Years
30	$SRFBCCI_1$	KII, FGD	M	FBCCI Representative	Post Graduate	26 Years
31	$SRFBCCI_2$	IDI, FGD	M	FBCCI Representative	Graduate	28 Years

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32	$SRBOA_1$	IDI, FGD	F	Representative of BSCIC Owners' Association	Graduate	13 Years
33	$SRBOA_2$	IDI, FGD	M	Representative of BSCIC Owners' Association	Graduate	2 Years
34	$SRBOA_3$	FGD	M	Representative of BSCIC Owners' Association	HSC	14 Years
35	$SRNASCIB_1$	KII, FGD	M	Representative of NASCIB	Post Graduate	25 Years
36	$SRNASCIB_2$	IDI, FGD	F	Representative of NASCIB	Graduate	8 Years

Source: Field Study by the Researchers from July to August 2026

The use of IDIs, KIIs, and FGDs further explained triangulation of perspectives and enriched the qualitative evidence. Overall, the profile demonstrates considerable diversity in participants' backgrounds, sectors, educational levels, and professional experience, strengthening the contextual depth and breadth of the study.

Furthermore, the application of multiple qualitative data collection methods, including IDIs, KIIs, and FGDs, across different participant categories enhanced the comprehensiveness and diversity of the evidence of the study. Overall, the demographic characteristics highlight substantial variation in sectoral establishment, educational qualification, gender status, and professional experience, thereby contributing to the breadth and depth of the qualitative findings of the study. The data collection periods differed between Northern Bangladesh (September 2024 to May 2025) and Southern Bangladesh (July to August 2026) because the qualitative investigation was conducted in separate geographical zones in successive phases. This phased approach facilitated context-sensitive fieldwork, coordination among participants, BSCIC officials, and other stakeholders, and the incorporation of region-specific entrepreneurial experiences. The later data collection in Southern Bangladesh enabled the researchers to extend the investigation to a comparative regional context, considering the practical requirements of accessing entrepreneurs,

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BSCIC officials, and industry representatives across the stated districts. The staggered schedule allowed the researchers to accommodate regional fieldwork arrangements while maintaining consistency in the core research questions, participant selection criteria, and data collection methods.

4.2 Data Analysis and Findings of Field Study

The research has made significant progress in meeting its stated objective; particularly through the qualitative data collection conducted using 28 IDIs, seven KIIs, and three FGDs with 38 entrepreneurs from seven districts in Rajshahi and Rangpur division and 27 IDIs, six KIIs, and three FGDs with 36 entrepreneurs from three districts in Barishal division respectively. Using thematic analysis, the qualitative data were coded, categorized, and interpreted to reveal core patterns related to the challenges BSCIC faces in promoting entrepreneurial development. In the qualitative phase of the study using inductive reasoning including literature, and theories successfully captures rich, context-specific insights, meaningful indications, and identifies six core critical thematic areas. These core areas are MoS; BD; CAC; LRF; WMS; and UoE respectively. Discussions are given below on the basis of these particular six core areas. BSCIC entrepreneurial challenges within the entrepreneurial side are considered as 'Unawareness of Entrepreneurs' faced by entrepreneurs in the BSCIC industrial estates and outside of its estates. These challenges are largely self-created by the entrepreneurs themselves, and they have almost full control over how to resolve them. The issues identified such as marketing difficulties, lack of product diversification, reluctance to take calculated risks, absence of display centers, lack of skilled workers, and unconsciousness of their competitors are challenges that entrepreneurs can address and resolve with time and effort. On the other hand, some entrepreneurial challenges are largely beyond the control of the entrepreneurial side. These challenges are lack of coordination among BSCIC, banks, and other financial institutions, insufficient infrastructure, government interventions, and bureaucratic hurdles. These aforesaid issues are included in MoS, BD, CAC, LRF, and WMS respectively. However, entrepreneurs can exert limited influence to overcome these challenges with the right support and collaboration from external parties. To address all these challenges, BSCIC should focus on improvements such as ensuring proper roads and culverts, drainage, boundary wall, and power supply within and outside of industrial estates. Additionally, providing profit/interest-free loans and facilitating import and export support would greatly benefit entrepreneurs. The establishment of trade based training and advanced courses for entrepreneurs would also foster growth and development of entrepreneurship in Northern and Southern Bangladesh.

4.3 Misalignment of Services

Although BSCIC aims to promote an industrially developed Bangladesh through the development and expansion of CMSMEs, its existing support mechanisms often fail to address entrepreneurs' evolving needs. The misalignment between institutional services and actual entrepreneurial

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requirements is reflected in outdated training programs, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient support services (Roy, 2025). These findings highlight the need for institutions to adapt to contemporary entrepreneurial demands, including digital literacy, innovation management, competitive advantage, and product diversification (Bruton et al., 2010; Gibb, 1990). Based on these insights, the following ideas and views are given below:

One of the participants $NEBDS_5$ shared, "After relocating my factory, I found inadequate facilities, including road issues, boundary concerns, and security problems. Drug addicts and idle people gather here in the evenings in Gaibandha BSCIC industrial estate." $NEBDS_4$ stated, "Industrial officers must have a proper understanding of necessary documents and licenses. Well trained officers would make venture operations smoother." Another $NEBDS_3$ added, "BSCIC officers need better training. The government has employed 15 to 20 people in Kurigram, but without industry expansion, it suffers losses."

$NEBIS_2$, $NEBIS_4$, $NEBIS_5$, $NEBIS_6$, $NEBIS_8$, $NEBIS_{11}$, and $NEBIS_{13}$ expressed frustration with existing loan repayment terms and advocated a three-month grace period to accommodate the mushroom cultivation cycle. They emphasized that flexible repayment schedules would enable women entrepreneurs to foster revenue before repayment begins, thereby reducing the risk of loan default.

$NEBIS_1$, $NEBIS_2$, $NEBIS_3$, $NEBIS_4$, $NEBIS_5$, $NEBIS_6$, $NEBIS_7$, $NEBIS_9$, $NEBIS_{10}$, $NEBIS_{12}$, $NEBIS_{14}$, $NEBIS_{15}$, and $NEBIS_{16}$ highlighted disparities in institutional support between enterprises located inside and outside BSCIC industrial estates. They reported that off-estate entrepreneurs receive limited practical support beyond BSCIC's general goodwill and face higher rental costs, unlike on-estate enterprises, which benefit from comparatively better access to facilities and services.

$NEBDS_1$, $NEBDS_2$, $NEBDS_3$, $NEBDS_5$, $NEBDS_6$, $NEBDS_7$, $NEBDS_8$, $NRFBCCI_1$, and $NRFBCCI_2$ highlighted that the roads are submerged in water during the rainy season. The area around the industrial units is especially submerged in water. Many times, when loading and unloading goods, they fall into water and get damaged.

$NEBDS_1$, $NEBDS_2$, $NEBDS_3$, $NEBDS_4$, $NEBDS_6$, and $NEBDS_{12}$ shared concerns about the lack of infrastructure development in the BSCIC estate that the Lalmonirhat BSCIC estate spans 15 acres, but the infrastructure is insufficient. Other districts have seen much more development, and this estate needs significant improvements.

Another $NEBIS_3$ shared, "I make Shataranji handicrafts, but I am struggling to sell them. If I could market them, I would have earned profits."

NBA_1, NBA_3, and NBA_5 stated that divisional and national level fairs could help industrial entrepreneurs promote their products beyond district markets. They also noted that entrepreneurs

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should differentiate their products when sales decline despite two to four years of enterprise operation, although this strategy is often unaddressed.

$NEBDS_1$, $NEBDS_3$, $NEBDS_5$, $NEBDS_6$, $NEBDS_7$, $NEBDS_8$, $NEBDS_9$, $NEBDS_{10}$, $NEBDS_{11}$, and $NEBDS_{12}$ shared concerns that frequent electricity load shedding disrupts production and causes financial losses. These interruptions also drive trained and experienced workers to seek employment in capital Dhaka and other divisional cities, creating skilled labor shortages that hinder the smooth operational activities.

$NEBDS_1$, $NEBDS_2$, $NEBDS_4$, $NEBDS_5$, $NEBDS_6$, $NEBDS_7$, $NEBDS_8$, and $NEBDS_9$ emphasized the need to improve communication infrastructure and strengthen administrative accountability of BSCIC in the 'A' category Rangpur industrial estate. They also stressed strict enforcement of environmental regulations, particularly regarding carbon-dioxide emissions from industrial operations, to protect environmental sustainability and maintain ecological balance.

Entrepreneurs addressed inadequate infrastructure, poor roads, water-logging, electricity outages, weak security, and environmental non-compliance as major challenges. They also emphasized the need for better-trained BSCIC officers, improved loan grace periods, stronger support for businesses inside and outside of BSCIC estates, enhanced marketing opportunities, product diversification, and improved industrial infrastructure in Northern Bangladesh.

$SEBDS_4$ shared with sorrow,"I do not receive adequate facilities and support. I face financial constraints in our production activities."

Another $SEBDS_7$ added with frustration, "BSCIC provides small loans; however, the amount is insufficient to meet our actual needs. Electricity problems in the industrial estate severely disrupt production. BSCIC could further support industrial entrepreneurs by providing technical advice and assistance."

One of the participants of SBA_5 shared, "However, after providing these initial facilities, entrepreneurs receive limited additional support."

$SEBDS_1$, $SEBDS_5$, $SEBDS_6$, $SRBOA_1$, $SRBOA_3$, SBA_3, SBA_4 highlighted mismatches between entrepreneurs' operational requirements and the services provided by BSCIC, particularly regarding industrial security, drainage, electricity, transportation infrastructure, and access to adequate financial assistance.

$SEBDS_{10}$, $SEBIS_1$, $SEBIS_3$, SBA_1, SBA_4, and $SRNASCIB_2$ emphasized that existing support requires improvement through advanced technical training, practical advisory services, digital marketing assistance, product promotion, and more demand-oriented workshops and seminars.

$SEBIS_5$, $SEBIS_6$, $SEBIS_{12}$, SBA_2, SBA_3, $SRFBCCI_1$, and $SRNASCIB_1$ indicated the need for more responsive complaint-handling mechanisms, effective one-stop services, stronger institutional coordination, and regionally appropriate support to align BSCIC services with entrepreneurs'

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financial, administrative, and operational requirements. The qualitative evidence strongly indicates that MoS arise from a gap between the support entrepreneurs require and the financial, infrastructural, technical, and promotional assistance currently available through BSCIC in Southern Bangladesh.

4.4 Bureaucratic Delays

Lengthy and inflexible administrative procedures within BSCIC often frustrate entrepreneurs and hinder the achievement of enterprise objectives. These bureaucratic inefficiencies, including prolonged processing times, excessive documentation, unresponsive officials, and inadequate inter-agency coordination, reflect institutional rigidity that constrains entrepreneurial development and access to essential resources (Hasan & Hoque, 2026; Kumar & Singh, 2021; Chowdhury, 2007). Such practices may prioritize procedural compliance over administrative efficiency and effective entrepreneurial support (Subramony & Rosenbaum, 2024). These ideas and views are as follows:

$NEBDS_1$, $NEBDS_2$, $NEBDS_3$, $NEBDS_4$, $NEBDS_5$, $NEBDS_6$, $NEBDS_7$, $NEBDS_8$, $NEBDS_9$, $NEBDS_{10}$, $NEBDS_{11}$, and $NEBDS_{12}$ reported excessive fees for fire license renewals and labor inspections, substantially exceeding official rates. For example, they stated that a fire license renewal costing BDT 700 officially required BDT 3,000-4,000, while labor inspection fees of BDT 1,200-2,000 could rise to BDT 10,000. They perceived these additional costs as institutional harassment that imposes a significant financial burden on us.

Recently, $NEBDS_2$ was asked to pay BDT 15,000 for a fire license renewal, although the official fee is much lower. This kind of exploitation must be properly addressed in Dinajpur BSCIC industrial estate.

$NEBDS_1$, $NEBDS_2$, $NEBDS_3$, $NEBDS_4$, $NEBDS_5$, and $NEBDS_9$ participants shared that labor licenses cannot be processed in Kurigram and must be done in Rangpur. However, officers demand extra money, charging BDT 3,000 to 4,000 instead of the official fee BDT 500 to 700.

$NEBDS_2$, $NEBDS_3$, $NEBDS_4$, $NEBDS_7$, $NEBDS_8$, $NEBDS_9$, and $NEBDS_{11}$ discussed misconceptions about BSCIC and the challenges of paperwork that there are misconceptions about BSCIC. The government set up the industrial estate for benefit, but we still face issues with tax, VAT, and other paperwork. As entrepreneurs, we should not be burdened with these complications.

One of the participants of $NEBDS_3$ shared frustrations about government officials, “I am interested in import and export business and believe that officers who understand foreign trade should be appointed to local banks. They could provide me with the necessary support. Officers are not aware of everything. They lack knowledge about what is required for the import and export business, and they do not know where to get necessary documents or advice in Nilphamari BSCIC industrial estate.”

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Another $NEBDS_{10}$ expressed, "On behalf of an industrial entrepreneur in Rangpur BSCIC, an aluminum factory manager said that if there is a shortage of everything needed to manufacture products, starting from raw materials, that is my first problem. The current situation in the outside world is also affecting us.

$NEBIS_1$, $NEBIS_2$, $NEBIS_3$, $NEBIS_4$, $NEBIS_5$, $NEBIS_6$, $NEBIS_7$, $NEBIS_8$, $NEBIS_9$, $NEBIS_{10}$, $NEBIS_{12}$, $NEBIS_{13}$, $NEBIS_{15}$, and $NEBIS_{16}$ explained the challenges in obtaining necessary licenses that obtaining a fire license or factory license is difficult due to red tape. While the government charges BDT 700 for a fire license, the actual cost to us is BDT 3,000. When we approach the officials, they claim we are missing documents, and we are asked to pay extra fees. This adds to the burden on entrepreneurs.

$NRFBCCI_1$ and $NRFBCCI_2$ spoke about illegal benefits taken by officials that the government has developed, facilities including electricity and drainage in the industrial estate. However, some government officials are exploiting entrepreneurs by taking illegal benefits. This should be investigated.

$NEBIS_2$, $NEBIS_3$, $NEBIS_4$, $NEBIS_5$, $NEBIS_6$, $NEBIS_7$, $NEBIS_{10}$, $NEBIS_{11}$, $NEBIS_{13}$, $NEBIS_{14}$, $NEBIS_{15}$, and $NEBIS_{16}$ shared their experience with BSTI certification and they had a bitter experience with BSTI. Although the official fee is BDT 2,000, we had to pay BDT 10,000 to get my certification processed. This kind of corruption needs to be ended.

Participants outlined widespread corruption and administrative barriers, including inflated unofficial fees for fire, labor, and BSTI licenses, bribery, and exploitation by officials. They also addressed bureaucratic complexities, inadequate trade-related expertise among officers, raw material shortages, and called for higher transparency, accountability, and entrepreneur-friendly licensing and regulatory services.

One of the participants of $SEBDS_2$ shared frustrations "Obtaining environmental clearance from the Department of Environment also costs approximately BDT 14,000 is very high and a challenge for a small entrepreneur."

$SEBIS_6$ stated, "Political interference, deterioration in law and order, inadequate administrative support, delays in obtaining licenses, and insufficient loan facilities create significant challenges for industrial entrepreneurs."

$SRFBCCI_1$ shared with sorrow, "The procedures for obtaining trade licenses, Taxpayer Identification Numbers, VAT registration numbers, and submitting periodic returns within prescribed deadlines are often cumbersome for small, micro, and cottage industrial entrepreneurs."

$SEBDS_2$, $SEBDS_8$, $SEBIS_8$, $SEBIS_{10}$, and $SRFBCCI_1$ strongly addressed lengthy licensing procedures, extensive documentation requirements, repeated visits to government offices, and

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complicated trade licensing, VAT, taxation, and environmental clearance processes as significant administrative barriers to entrepreneurial development.

SEBDS$_2$, SEBDS$_3$, SEBIS$_3$, and SEBIS$_9$ reported rising license and renewal fees, additional payments to relevant authorities, and complex regulatory obligations that increase operating costs and divert limited financial resources away from productive investment.

SEBIS$_5$, SEBIS$_6$, SEBIS$_{12}$, SRFBCCI$_1$, and SRNASCIB$_1$ emphasized the need for streamlined administrative procedures, a fully functional one-stop service system, improved coordination among relevant institutions, and faster resolution of entrepreneurs' complaints and service requests.

The qualitative findings indicate that bureaucratic delays arise from complex licensing and compliance procedures, rising administrative costs, additional payment demands, and insufficiently coordinated institutional services, collectively increasing the time and resources entrepreneurs must devote to regulatory requirements rather than enterprise development in the Southern Zone of Bangladesh.

4.5 Credit Access Challenges

Limited access to credit remains a major constraint on CMSME development, alongside skills shortages, bureaucratic complexities, corruption, and inadequate infrastructure (Roy, 2025). Weak coordination between BSCIC, banks, and other financial institutions restricts entrepreneurs' access to finance, reflecting structural gaps in institutional collaboration despite existing formal frameworks (Salvi et al., 2023). These financial barriers constrain industrial expansion, discourage entrepreneurial growth, and undermine sustainable development (Aghaei & Sokhanvar, 2020). These ideas and views are highlighted below.

NEBIS$_1$, NEBIS$_2$, NEBIS$_3$, NEBIS$_4$, NEBIS$_5$, NEBIS$_6$, NEBIS$_9$, NEBIS$_{10}$, NEBIS$_{12}$, NEBIS$_{13}$, NEBIS$_{15}$, and NEBIS$_{16}$ shared limited access to industrial loans due to collateral requirements, preference of banks for trading businesses, and inadequate knowledge of import-export procedures. They also stated the need for an on-site bank, noting that the nearest town is six kilometers away, and the reluctance of banks to finance industrial enterprises despite available funds.

NEBIS$_3$, NEBIS$_4$, NEBIS$_5$, NEBIS$_6$, NEBIS$_7$, NEBIS$_8$, NEBIS$_9$, NEBIS$_{10}$, NEBIS$_{12}$, NEBIS$_{13}$, NEBIS$_{15}$, and NEBIS$_{16}$ shared a similar experience when they sold their personal property to purchase plots in the BSCIC estates. Despite having buildings, land plots, and machinery, the bank refuses to accept BSCIC land as collateral.

NEBDS$_2$ added, "Banks must accept BSCIC plots as collateral and provide us with loans for entrepreneurial development. A few years ago, the commercial bank and NGOs refused to provide

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me loans because my National Identification Card listed Lalmonirhat district. Now, as my enterprise is on the rise, the district does not matter anymore for sanctioning me loans."

One of the participants, $NEBDS_7$ shared concerns about receiving financial support, "I have a beauty parlor outside the industrial estate of Rangpur BSCIC. I need an AC in the summer season to bring in more customers. I have received entrepreneurship development training from Lalmonirhat BSCIC. Therefore, I feel the urgency for a loan from BSCIC which benefits the customers and will eventually make them more satisfied."

$NRFBCCI_2$ stated, "I think if BSCIC provided loans on easy terms, industrial entrepreneurs inside and outside BSCIC would be able to expand their factories in Bogura BSCIC industrial estate."

Another $NEBIS_{15}$ highlighted with hope, "I am an agro-based small business entrepreneur. Some years ago, I took out a loan from the Kurigram BSCIC office. It has been almost a year since I repaid that loan. I invested in the factory with that loan and made a profit. This time too, I have taken training to receive loan assistance."

One of the participants, $NEBDS_{11}$ shared concerns about receiving financial support, "An industrial entrepreneur from Kurigram BSCIC industrial estate said that I have not faced any such problem so far. I have started working here very recently. If I had received some financial support from the BSCIC office, I could have made my factory bigger."

NBA_1, NBA_2, NBA_3, NBA_4, NBA_5, and NBA_6 urged that the small amount of loan provided by BSCIC to meet the need for extensive capital in production could be distributed to industrial entrepreneurs on a larger scale.

$NEBIS_{12}$ shared concerns about receiving financial support and said, "I am a fish farming entrepreneur. Now I am in a financial crisis. I have come to the Kurigram BSCIC office for financial assistance."

Another $NEBIS_4$ shared her experience with harassment by a renowned NGO, "I went to an NGO for a small loan recently. After processing my file, they called me a week later and told me that my outlet was located in the town while my home is in the village union. They advised me to contact the office near my home. When I went to the local office near my home, they directed me back to the town office. This back-and-forth was very embarrassing for me."

One of the participants, $NRFBCCI_1$ explained the challenge of limited loan offerings, "There are many industrial entrepreneurs inside and outside BSCIC, most of whom are facing capital problems. If they had received adequate capital, they could have expanded their activities. But unfortunately, BSCIC could not provide loans in that way."

Another $NEBIS_{14}$ urged with frustration, "I am a fish farming entrepreneur from Nageshwari upazila of Kurigram. I think the biggest problem is capital. When I go to the office for a loan, they

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cannot give the loan on time or do not give the loan at all. To use the training after receiving it, capital is needed a lot."

One of the participants on $NEBIS_{10}$ shared views with worry, "I am a small entrepreneur. I work in cork sheet design. I need some specific space to expand my business. Currently, I am facing financial problems."

$NEBIS_{13}$ shared views on conducting training, "I have received entrepreneurship development training from the BSCIC office in Kurigram. Now I have a financial crisis. BSCIC gave me some advice on that ground. I hope I will be able to use those suggestions in my factory unit."

Another $NEBDS_1$ shared concerns about receiving financial support, "If I had financial support, my industry could flourish. Every day, about 40-50 people come to me for work, but I cannot hire them. I have repeatedly requested the DM of Kurigram BSCIC for financial assistance and constructive advice for my organization, but no money has been provided."

$NEBIS_3$ stated, "I run a Shataranji handicraft business in Ulipur, Kurigram. If I had the necessary funds, I could raise 500 ducks, rear cows, and restart my handicraft production. I have 50 women workers who want to work, but I cannot provide them with jobs due to the lack of funds. I want to do something big, but the financial constraint is a significant issue."

One of the participants, $NEBIS_6$ explained, "Banks and financial institutions offer loans at much higher interest rates than BSCIC's simple rate of 6%. For women entrepreneurs, the rate is 5%. However, financial support is limited, and not even crores of loans are being provided through a district BSCIC office in a year."

Another $NEBDS_5$ described the limitations of BSCIC loans, "I do not have the financial resources to help entrepreneurs at BSCIC. Even the incentive loans are not sufficient. The maximum loan of BDT five lakhs do not meet the actual needs of entrepreneurs, who often require BDT 10 lakhs or more. They are then forced to approach banks for loans."

One of the participants $NEBDS_6$ explained the challenge of limited loan offerings, "BSCIC industrial entrepreneurs are contributing significantly to the country's development by involving agricultural products in production. I have taken loans and paid them back, but I no longer need a loan. I have created indirect employment for 400-500 people and currently employ 30-35 people in my factory. BSCIC's collaboration with banks could benefit many entrepreneurs by strengthening their position."

$NEBDS_1$ and $NEBDS_3$ elaborated that commercial banks are more focused on trading businesses, such as iron, cement, rice, and paddy. They are not interested in supporting industrial entrepreneurs who create employment opportunities.

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NEBDS$_3$ and NEBDS$_4$ concluded that we could not conduct business due to the lack of funds. Banks are focused on trading businesses, but to create employment, we need to establish industries. There is no alternative to industrial growth.

One of the participants NEBIS$_{11}$ expressed, “BSCIC has requested a land stamp and cheque from me but wants a government employee as a guarantor for loans. This is a big obstacle for women entrepreneurs.”

Another NEBDS$_{12}$ stated, “I have a plastic processing industrial unit. I am here to receive training. I had taken a loan before and was successful. I have paid off that loan. I want to take a loan again. I want to use the experience I have gained through training in my industrial factory.”

NEBIS$_5$ shared, “I borrowed BDT three lakhs and have already repaid three installments. Once I finish repaying, I hope to borrow BDT five lakhs to start a chicken farm in the future.”

One of the participants of NEBIS$_1$ shared with sorrow, “My house is in Parbatipur upazila in Dinajpur district, but I cannot mortgage my house land for a BSCIC loan due to this reason. This is a problem for me. BSCIC wants to give me a loan but I cannot accept it due to the locational complications related to my land. I am assuming that I have a little land. But others do not have any land. So will he/she not get a loan? In that case, it would be very helpful to know how the Rangpur BSCIC office will provide loans for me.”

One of the participants NEBIS$_9$ stated, “I am a tailor master and have come from Jamuna Kamarpara in Ulipur upazila of Kurigram district to receive training and side by side micro loans so that I can develop my enterprise.”

NEBIS$_7$ shared the benefits of entrepreneurship training, “Entrepreneurs who have received training from BSCIC should be supported with loans to help them grow their businesses. An entrepreneur is an entrepreneur, whether big or small. For example, a woman in Wireless Colony has stocked her grocery store with a refrigerator, but her husband earns only BDT 500 per day. She is interested in taking out a loan to expand her business, and BSCIC should provide financial support within their capacity.”

Another NEBIS$_8$ highlighted with hope, “I came here to receive training and get loans, I would like to say that I have a small tiles factory. I make parking tiles. I came here because I want to make my factory much bigger. Since Kurigram is a very densely populated district, if my factory is big here, it will provide employment to some people. I am working on this initiative.”

Participants mentioned inadequate access to finance as a major barrier to enterprise growth. They focused on collateral restrictions, low loan ceilings, delayed disbursement, complex guarantor requirements, limited bank support for industry, and insufficient financial inclusion. Entrepreneurs urged larger, easier, and more accessible loans linked to training to enable enterprise expansion and employment generation in the Northern Zone.

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One of the participants of SEBDS$_7$ shared with sorrow, "BSCIC provides small loans; however, the amount is insufficient to meet our actual needs."

SEBDS$_9$ stated, "Although I received a loan of BDT 500,000 from BSCIC, the amount was insufficient to meet my enterprise requirements."

SRNASCIB$_2$ shared with urgency, "Small entrepreneurs generally have limited capital, while substantial financial resources are often required for production activities. Consequently, they approach banks for financing; however, banks frequently require collateral, which constitutes a major constraint for small-scale entrepreneurs."

SEBDS$_1$, SEBDS$_6$, SEBDS$_{10}$, SEBIS$_7$, SEBIS$_{12}$, SBA$_2$, SBA$_3$, SRBOA$_1$, and SRBOA$_3$ emphasized that existing loan amounts and institutional credit allocations are inadequate to meet entrepreneurs' capital requirements for establishing, operating, and expanding industrial enterprises.

SEBDS$_6$, SEBIS$_4$, SEBIS$_5$, SEBIS$_9$, SEBIS$_{13}$, SBA$_2$, SBA$_4$, and SRNASCIB$_2$ criticized banks' reluctance to accept BSCIC industrial plots as collateral, difficulties obtaining government guarantees and NOCs, and complicated loan-processing procedures as major barriers to accessing institutional finance.

SEBDS$_3$, SEBDS$_5$, SEBDS$_9$, SEBIS$_{10}$, SEBIS$_{11}$, SRBOA$_1$, SRBOA$_3$, and SRNASCIB$_1$ stressed the need for larger loans at lower interest or profit rates and more accessible financing arrangements to cover raw materials, machinery, working capital, and enterprise expansion, thereby reducing production constraints and the risk of industrial units becoming non-operational.

The qualitative findings indicate that credit access challenges are primarily associated with insufficient loan amounts, restrictive collateral and administrative requirements, and the limited availability of affordable financing. These constraints impede industrial establishment, routine production, and enterprise expansion among MSMCI entrepreneurs in the Southern Zone.

4.6 Lack of Regional Focus

A one-size-fits-all approach limits BSCIC's regional effectiveness and constrains entrepreneurs' industrial growth. BSCIC aims to generate employment and alleviate poverty through entrepreneurship development, skilled human resource development, and environmentally sustainable industrial estates nationwide (Rashid, 2022). However, its support initiatives, including seminars, industrial plot allocation, distribution channels, and district-level trade fairs, remain insufficiently tailored to regional needs (Wei & Duan, 2024; Shah et al., 2023). Limited coordination and inadequate attention to local conditions further weaken institutional support (Shahriar et al., 2024), adversely affecting entrepreneurial motivation, growth prospects, and overall development (Su et al., 2024). These challenges are particularly evident in the Northern

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and Southern Zones of Bangladesh, where balanced regional development remains inadequate. Entrepreneurs' and stakeholders' perceptions of these challenges are presented below.

$NEBDS_1$, $NEBDS_2$, $NEBDS_3$, $NEBDS_4$, $NEBDS_5$, $NEBDS_6$, $NEBDS_7$, $NEBDS_8$, $NEBDS_9$, $NEBDS_{10}$, $NEBDS_{11}$, and $NEBDS_{12}$ highlighted delays in obtaining essential enterprise documents, officers' limited knowledge of import-export procedures, and the absence of seminars or forums to address the needs of entrepreneurs. These institutional shortcomings hinder the effectiveness of Kurigram BSCIC's industrial estate.

$NEBIS_1$, $NEBIS_3$, $NEBIS_4$, $NEBIS_5$, $NEBIS_6$, $NEBIS_7$, $NEBIS_8$, $NEBIS_9$, $NEBIS_{10}$, $NEBIS_{11}$, $NEBIS_{12}$, $NEBIS_{13}$, $NEBIS_{14}$, $NEBIS_{15}$, and $NEBIS_{16}$ urged that BSCIC could organize fairs at district or upazila levels, inviting marketers and buyers to promote products and expand export opportunities. It could also be done at the divisional level for establishing better distribution channels.

NBA_1, NBA_2, NBA_3, NBA_5, and NBA_6 mentioned that BSCIC held a fair in Kurigram last year, and we expect future fairs to be in other districts like Bogura.

NBA_1, NBA_2, NBA_3, and NBA_4 shared that in Kurigram's BSCIC estate, several plots were allocated in low lying areas. Entrepreneurs had to fill these areas with their own funds to set up factories, which was a significant burden for them.

$NRFBCCI_1$ and $NRFBCCI_2$ shared that our town is small and neglected. We face difficulties obtaining loans because of this, even though we have no land.

Participants mentioned delays in obtaining business documents, limited officer knowledge of import-export procedures, and insufficient engagement with entrepreneurs. They recommended regular seminars, product fairs, and stronger market linkages. Concerns were also raised about costly plot development in low-lying areas and limited access to loans, particularly for entrepreneurs without land in Northern Bangladesh.

$SRFBCCI_1$ shared, "Therefore, industrial development initiatives should be designed in consideration of these regional constraints and available resources."

One of the participants $SRFBCCI_2$ stated, "If the industrial estate had been situated closer to both the riverside and the roadside, transportation costs could have been reduced. This locational limitation has contributed to the relatively slow industrial development of the district."

$SEBIS1_2$ mentioned, "Greater attention should be given to industrial entrepreneurs operating outside BSCIC industrial estates by considering their specific institutional and operational needs."

$SRFBCCI_1$ emphasized that industrial development policies should account for Barishal division's limited natural resources, shortages of raw materials, inadequate gas connections, and dependence on agriculture, with regionally appropriate incentives to support industrial investment.

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SRFBCCI$_2$, SEBDS$_5$, SEBDS$_{11}$, and SEBIS$_{12}$, criticized the effects of unsuitable industrial-estate locations, inadequate road and transport connections, drainage deficiencies, and electricity problems on production, logistics, and regional industrial development. A culvert construction is very urgent for minimizing transport costs and convenience as the Patuakhali BSCIC industrial estate is adjacent to the riverside.

SEBIS$_1$, SEBIS$_{12}$, SRFBCCI$_1$, and SRNASCIB$_1$ indicated that support should be more responsive to local needs, including entrepreneurs operating outside industrial estates, affordable industrial spaces, regionally accessible one-stop services, and financing and training opportunities suited to the conditions of the Barishal division.

The qualitative evidence suggests that LRF is reflected in insufficient adaptation of industrial policies, infrastructure planning, and institutional support to regional resource conditions, geographic constraints, and the distinct needs of entrepreneurs across different locations in Southern Bangladesh.

4.7 Weak Monitoring Systems

BSCIC's shortage of personnel contributes to inadequate industrial monitoring, weak follow-up mechanisms, and limited institutional responsiveness. These deficiencies are reflected in security vulnerabilities, poor roads and drainage, inadequate policing and loan supervision, ineffective waste management, insufficient boundary protection, and limited banking support, which collectively constrain entrepreneurial development in Bangladesh (Dias et al., 2023; Ufua et al., 2022). Although BSCIC envisions an industrially advanced Bangladesh through the development and expansion of MSMCIs, weaknesses in its monitoring and supervisory systems raise concerns about effective institutional performance (Bari et al., 2019). Entrepreneurs and other stakeholders have highlighted these shortcomings, as discussed below.

NEBDS$_1$, NEBDS$_2$, NEBDS$_3$, NEBDS$_5$, NEBDS$_6$, NEBDS$_7$, NEBDS$_8$, NEBDS$_9$, NEBDS$_{10}$, NEBDS$_{11}$, and NEBDS$_{12}$ claimed that if every industrial unit had a day-and-night guard, timely maintenance, and prevention of theft could be ensured. We need proper lighting in the BSCIC estate. BSCIC collects service charges but has not provided adequate facilities.

NEBDS$_4$, NEBDS$_5$, NEBDS$_8$, NEBDS$_9$, NEBDS$_{10}$, and NEBDS$_{11}$ shared that when a transformer burns out, we rely on inspections by officials, but delays occur. A transformer was stolen years ago, and though the DC helped to reinstall it, it has become obsolete again, causing supply issues of electricity.

One of the participants NEBDS$_7$ highlighted, "One of the biggest issues is strengthening security for those who have industrial establishments or want to set up new factories. Extortion sometimes happens in Rangpur industrial estate. Security must be ensured through BSCIC. Police administration must be deployed inside this industrial estate."

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NBA$_5$ shared views with the urgency of entrepreneurs, "The problem faced by industrial owners is that even after skill development training, they need other more supportive training which can be done through BSCIC. Again, the lack of boundaries in the Rangpur BSCIC industrial estate allows various people to enter there and create disturbances."

NEBDS$_9$ stated, "Many times in the industrial estate, strangers come and try to extort money and it has to be stopped. When an extortionist comes to my industrial establishment, I ask him to contact my superior officer. So far, I have not faced any such problem."

Another NEBDS$_8$ shared, "There is a huge problem in transportation. Moreover, the security system on the part of BSCIC is not strong. I want a security branch to be opened in this Rangpur BSCIC industrial estate so that security is strengthened 24 hours a day."

One of the participants NEBDS$_4$ noted, "The Lalmonirhat BSCIC industrial estate is completely open, with no visible boundaries. A single guard cannot cover the entire area of it. BSCIC should take initiative steps to clear garbage and maintain cleanliness in and around the premises. Discussions happen, but they do not lead to any action."

Another NEBDS$_6$ added, "Many people misuse the area for illegal activities. A proper boundary and sufficient lighting should be arranged."

NEBDS$_{10}$ urged with fear, "There is a lack of security Rangpur BSCIC estate. Outsiders are coming and demanding extortion, threatening us. Many times, life-and-death situations are created. Some facilities that the government will provide are not here."

One of the participants, NRFBCCI$_1$ expressed in a frustrated way, "BSCIC could not play a sufficient role in the promotion of products. If BSCIC could have made adequate arrangements for marketing products inside and outside the country, industrial entrepreneurs would have benefited a lot. Again, BSCIC would have been strong and no one would have been unemployed."

NEBIS$_{11}$ shared views with concern, "The doormat (Papos) marketing is a big problem. I came to the training to receive such advice on how to create the market for this type of product."

Another NEBDS$_6$ remarked, "Without a boundary in the Kurigram estate, outsiders and intoxicated individuals enter at night, causing problems."

NEBIS$_{16}$ shared, "I have come from Nageshwari upazila, Kurigram and have been told that it is a relatively difficult task to take part in industrial entrepreneurship development training from the upazila level to the district level. I think I can share the experiences of training among those who are industrial entrepreneurs at the upazila level."

One of the participants NEBDS$_1$ stated, "The Kurigram BSCIC estate is open, allowing different groups to enter and cause troubles."

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NEBDS$_5$ added with sorrow, "Outsiders should not be allowed to enter the Lalmonirhat BSCIC estate and harass us."

Another NEBDS$_3$ mentioned, "If I had financial support, I could expand my business. Labor is cheap here, but I cannot provide work without the necessary funds. BSCIC should provide continuous, skill based training, ideally for a month, rather than the short two to four day sessions currently offered."

One of the participants NBA$_2$ emphasized the need for infrastructure repairs regarding the state of the roads in Kurigram BSCIC industrial estate, "Roads were fine when BSCIC was first established, but now they are deteriorated. Movement of vehicles has become difficult. The government allocated a budget for roads and drainage in 2018, but the funds have not been released yet. Industrialists often come to complain about these road and drainage issues. The roads and drainage systems need urgent renovation and repair to support business growth."

NEBDS$_2$ shared an experience with harassment by magistrates, "Sometimes magistrates demand documents that we cannot provide on time. Files are shuffled from one desk to another, causing delays and frustration. This red tape leads to unnecessary anger and inconvenience."

Another NBA$_1$ mentioned, "While the drainage system was once effective, it has deteriorated over time. The new drainage system does not adequately cover all the industrial units. However, there is space available in the estate for a police camp, which could be deployed in case of future emergencies."

One of the participants NEBDS$_3$ addressed the need for a police presence, "If a police camp were established in the Kurigram BSCIC estate, more industrialists would have been willing to venture here. However, my main problem is the lack of banking support."

Another NBA$_3$ proposed, "BSCIC should establish a post for loan supervisor to help with financial assistance and guidance of entrepreneurs."

One of the participants of NEBIS$_2$ stated, "My industrial establishment is outside BSCIC, I am worried about the security of my establishment. I have to be very careful. Although there is a night guard. Then I have to be careful all the time. If I could stay in Rangpur BSCIC estate, there would be no fear of theft. If I were there, I would have got worker availability support. I do not get that here."

Participants emphasized the need for stronger security, boundary walls, lighting, road and drainage repairs, reliable electricity, and faster maintenance in BSCIC estates. They also reported longer skill-based training, improved product distribution channel, better administrative support, police camp, and dedicated financial guidance to strengthen industrial development and entrepreneurial confidence in Northern Bangladesh.

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One of the participants $SEBIS_5$ addressed, "Entrepreneurs' complaints should be received and resolved promptly."

$SEBDS_6$ shared with urgency, "It is essential to strengthen security measures, including the proper installation of barbed wire along the boundary walls of the BSCIC industrial estate."

Another $SEBIS_{13}$ mentioned, "Regular seminars and monitoring activities could contribute to the promotion and wider dissemination of entrepreneurs' products."

$SEBDS_5$, $SEBDS_6$, $SEBIS_2$, and $SEBIS_{13}$ reported inadequate institutional monitoring and follow-up, particularly regarding security deficiencies, drainage problems, electricity disruptions, and the maintenance of industrial estate infrastructure.

$SEBIS_5$, $SEBIS_6$, and $SEBIS_{10}$ emphasized the need for systematic supervision, regular consultation, and timely grievance redress mechanisms to ensure that BSCIC responds effectively to entrepreneurs' operational challenges and service-related complaints.

$SEBDS_9$, $SEBIS_9$, and SBA_3 indicated that insufficient monitoring of industrial estate facilities, security arrangements, and promotional initiatives limits accountability and weakens the capacity of BSCIC to support sustainable entrepreneurial development.

The findings indicate that inadequate institutional monitoring and follow-up undermine the effectiveness of BSCIC in addressing entrepreneurs' operational challenges. Persistent deficiencies in security, drainage, electricity, and infrastructure maintenance, alongside limited promotional activities, weaken accountability and institutional responsiveness. Regular supervision, systematic consultation, timely grievance redress, and promotional initiatives are essential to strengthening entrepreneurial development in Southern Bangladesh.

4.8 Unawareness of Entrepreneurs

Structural constraints, including theft, weak legal frameworks, and inadequate policy support, can hinder the adoption of lean entrepreneurship practices (Ufua et al., 2022). Similarly, limited awareness of external changes and emerging innovations, inadequate skills-based training, harassment by magistrates, reluctance to promote products, poor industrial-unit maintenance, risk aversion, lack of display centers, and insufficient knowledge of competitors' product quality constrain entrepreneurial development (Roy, 2025; Hammami et al., 2022; Cubbon et al., 2021). These challenges weaken entrepreneurs' adaptability, innovation, and capacity to expand their ventures, thereby undermining entrepreneurial development in Northern and Southern Bangladesh. These external interventions are highlighted in the following ways.

$NEBIS_1$, $NEBIS_2$, $NEBIS_3$, $NEBIS_4$, $NEBIS_5$, $NEBIS_6$, $NEBIS_7$, $NEBIS_8$, $NEBIS_9$, $NEBIS_{10}$, $NEBIS_{12}$, $NEBIS_{13}$, $NEBIS_{14}$, $NEBIS_{15}$, and $NEBIS_{16}$ raised concerns about the workers' limited health and regulatory knowledge, emphasizing that appropriate training could prevent penalties

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and improve production and marketing practices. They also noted limited product diversification and similarities among existing products.

$NRFBCCI_1$ and $NRFBCCI_2$ addressed that if the sales of the same product have decreased in the market even after two to four years taking up the industrial initiative, differentiation of that product will be required for entrepreneurs. Industrial entrepreneurs do not take this into account. Entrepreneurs struggle to display their products due to the absence of display centers at BSCIC industrial estate in Rangpur.

$NEBDS_1$, $NEBDS_2$, $NEBDS_3$, $NEBDS_4$, $NEBDS_5$, $NEBDS_6$, $NEBDS_7$, $NEBDS_8$, $NEBDS_9$, $NEBDS_{10}$, $NEBDS_{11}$, and $NEBDS_{12}$ noted that there had been an agreement to set up a financial assistance fund for cleanliness, but it did not last long. There were many discussions, but no actions were taken accordingly.

NBA_1, NBA_2, NBA_3, NBA_4, and NBA_6 shared the limited digital marketing skills of entrepreneurs, reluctance to promote their products, and lack of awareness of product quality of the competitors. They also emphasized the risks associated with frequent sector changes and inadequate awareness and management of modern machinery in Rangpur BSCIC estate.

NBA_2, NBA_3, NBA_4, NBA_5, and NBA_6 noted that in Rangpur's estate, entrepreneurs often have failed to take calculated risks, which affects their growth. Many entrepreneurs are unwilling to take proper training for their fields, which limits their growth.

Participants addressed limited worker health awareness, poor product diversification, poor marketing and online promotion skills, lack of online display facilities, and inadequate adoption of modern technology. They also noted ineffective implementation of cleanliness initiatives and emphasized the need for continuous training, innovation, and informed risk-taking to enhance competitive advantages.

SBA_5 stated, "Many industrial entrepreneurs also lack adequate knowledge of financial management and, therefore, face difficulties in effectively allocating their income and expenditures."

Another SBA_5 shared, "Furthermore, updated and need-based training is essential for industrial entrepreneurs."

One of the participants $SRNASCIB_2$ mentioned, "Although BSCIC provides various training programs, it could further contribute to the development of small and cottage industries by introducing more modern, innovative, and demand-oriented training programs."

SBA_5 indicated that many entrepreneurs lack adequate knowledge of financial management, working-capital allocation, and marketing strategies, limiting their ability to manage resources efficiently and expand their enterprises.

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SEBDS$_4$, SEBDS$_{10}$, SEBIS$_3$, and SBA$_4$ emphasized that insufficient technical expertise, limited exposure to modern production methods, and inadequate access to need-based training constrain entrepreneurs' capacity to improve productivity, product quality, and innovation.

SEBIS$_1$, SEBIS$_4$, SEBIS$_{12}$, and SRNASCIB$_2$ highlighted entrepreneurs' limited awareness of digital marketing, online product promotion, and emerging market opportunities, recommending targeted training and advisory services to strengthen their establishments capabilities and competitiveness.

The findings reveal that limited financial management knowledge, inadequate working-capital allocation, and weak marketing capabilities constrain entrepreneurial growth. Participants also highlighted insufficient technical expertise, limited exposure to modern production methods, and a lack of updated, demand-oriented training. Furthermore, inadequate digital marketing skills and awareness of emerging market opportunities hinder product promotion, innovation, productivity, and competitiveness respectively.

The overall findings of the study provide significant insights and indications into the institutional challenges that constrain BSCIC in fulfilling its mandate of entrepreneurship development, specifically in the Northern and Southern Zone of Bangladesh. Although BSCIC is theoretically well positioned to support SCIs, this study focuses on a persistent disconnection between its intended objectives and its on-ground impact.

4.9 Constructs and Corresponding Participants' Opinions

Taking into consideration the participants' opinions and the outcomes of the field study derived from the thematic analysis presented, the constructs related to the challenges of entrepreneurial development were validated, augmented, or newly developed. These were developed through a systematic and rigorous evaluation of the interview verbatim transcripts, involving repeated engagement with and in-depth interpretation and explanation of the data collected during the qualitative fieldwork study. The perspectives and experiences shared by the participants were carefully considered to identify recurring patterns and themes of the study. The emerging findings were subsequently cross-examined and synthesized to establish the final set of constructs incorporated into the conceptual model development of the study (Gülpınar, 2024).

The findings indicate that the effectiveness of entrepreneurial development is influenced by several interrelated institutional, financial, administrative, marketing, and informational challenges. Among the identified constructs, credit access challenges emerged as the most consistently reported constraint, as it was acknowledged by almost all of the participants. This suggests that inadequate access to affordable and appropriate financial resources remains a major impediment to the development of entrepreneurship.

Additionally, misalignment of services was also frequently identified, showing weaknesses in the coordination and delivery of entrepreneurial support services. Similarly, bureaucratic delays were

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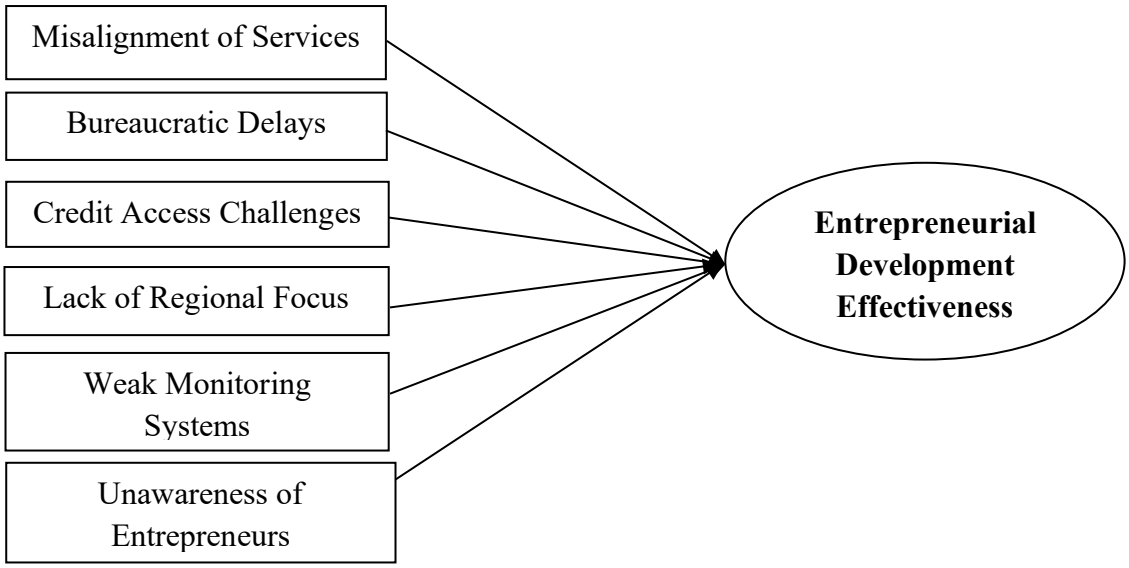
widely shown, indicating that administrative procedures may hinder timely access to institutional assistance and offerings. The findings further reveal concerns regarding lack of regional focus**,** implying that entrepreneurial support may not significantly reflect the demands and conditions of different regions.

Moreover, weak monitoring systems were also addressed by a crucial proportion of participants, indicating shortcomings in program oversight and implementation. Finally, unawareness of entrepreneurs indicates limitations in entrepreneurs' knowledge of available support services. Finally, the findings depict that improving entrepreneurial development effectiveness requires coordinated institutional and financial reformation in Northern and Southern Bangladesh.

4.10 Conceptual Model Development

A conceptual research model has been adopted on the basis of the field study, literature reviews, Institutional Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and RBV respectively.

Figure 4.1 Conceptual Research Model



Source: Adopted from the PhD dissertation of Md. Nasir Mahmud, 2026 (Developed Based on Field Study Using Inductive Reasoning, Literature, and Theories)

An Institutional Theory explains how organizations are shaped by their social and cultural environment with focusing on the impact of rules, norms, regulations, aspirations, and expectations on organizational structures and practices (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). This theory emphasizes that organizations adapt to conform to these external pressures to obtain legitimacy and strengthen survival. This theory can also be satisfied under the following grounds namely bureaucratic barriers, regulatory difficulties, administrative delays, accessibility of BSCIC services,

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government policy-related challenges, institutional coordination, transparency, and responsiveness of support services.

Moreover, Stakeholder Theory is a concept of enterprise that emphasizes the interconnected relationships between a company and all those affected by its overall activities, not just shareholders (Freeman & Phillips, 2002). It argues that a company's success depends on creating value for a wide range of stakeholders, including consumers, customers, employees, suppliers, local governments, competitors, and social communities. This Stakeholder Theory is also highly relevant because the initiatives of BSCIC entrepreneurial development involve multiple stakeholders, including entrepreneurs, government agencies, financial institutions, training providers, local authorities, and support organizations. This theory can help to explain how the interests, expectations, and relationships among these stakeholders affect the delivery and effectiveness of entrepreneurial support and to satisfy the future objective of any research work. Additionally, the RBV, principally connected with Barney (1991), gives a crucial theoretical foundation for evaluating how the availability and fruitful utilization of resources affect entrepreneurship development and performance. This theory emphasizes that institutions can achieve better performance when they possess and or can evaluate valuable resources and capabilities, including financial capital, human skills, knowledge, ideas and views, technology, infrastructure, information, and managerial efficiency. These resources are inevitable because they enable entrepreneurs to establish, operate, adapt, flourish, and expand their enterprises in entrepreneurial development work. This theory can also explain the challenges related to access to finance, infrastructure and industrial facilities, technology and equipment, raw materials, market networking, skilled human resources, and managerial capabilities respectively. Literature reviews also finds the following challenges namely bureaucratic barriers, regulatory complexities, administrative delays, accessibility, government policies and procedures, institutional coordination, transparency, stakeholder relationships, and responsiveness of support services, access to finance, infrastructure and industrial facilities, technology and equipment, raw materials, market information, skilled human resources, knowledge, and managerial capabilities respectively which were highlighted in the literature review part. Moreover, qualitative field study also emphasizes most of the aforesaid phenomena discussed earlier.

5. Discussion

BSCIC entrepreneurial challenges arise from entrepreneurs' practices and decisions include marketing difficulties, limited product diversification, and reluctance to undertake calculated risks, which can be addressed through improved skills, strategic planning, and sustained effort. Other challenges stemming from the institutional and enterprise environment include weak coordination among BSCIC, banks, and other financial institutions, inadequate infrastructure and culverts, and bureaucratic hurdles. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated institutional support, inter-

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organizational collaboration, and constructive engagement between entrepreneurs and relevant stakeholders.

EDE is an ecosystem-dependent phenomenon shaped by institutional, financial, infrastructural, regulatory, and capability-related challenges, requiring integrated interventions to strengthen entrepreneurial capacities, institutional support, and sustainable economic growth (Wei & Duan, 2024). Moreover, Rao et al. (2023) proposed an integrated framework for sustainable SME development that combines macro and micro level determinants to guide enterprise strategy, strengthen enterprise capabilities, and support long-term economic growth. Additionally, EDE is an ecosystem-level phenomenon shaped by financial, institutional, infrastructural, social, and market-related challenges, requiring coordinated, gender-responsive interventions to improve access to finance, markets, technology, skills, adequate labor force, and institutional support (Kumar & Singh, 2021).

To address these external challenges, BSCIC should focus on improvements such as ensuring proper roads, drainage, and power supply within industrial estates. Additionally, providing profit or interest-free loans and facilitating import-export support would greatly benefit entrepreneurs. The establishment of trade-based training and advanced courses for entrepreneurs would also foster growth and development.

BSCIC can offer various services such as licenses and documents, with service charges collected from entrepreneurs. Additionally, the coordination of BSCIC with banks could significantly benefit entrepreneurs by easing access to financial resources.

Overall, the qualitative evidence identifies a persistent gap between BSCIC's intended contribution to CMSME development and the practical support available to entrepreneurs across the Northern and Southern Zones of Bangladesh. MoS, BD, CAC, LRF, WMS, and UoE collectively constrain enterprise establishment, production continuity, market expansion, and employment generation.

The central implication is that improving entrepreneurial development requires more than expanding existing programs. BSCIC needs to strengthen implementation capacity, ensure transparent and coordinated service delivery, tailor institutional interventions to regional conditions, and establish effective mechanisms for monitoring outcomes. Equally, entrepreneurs need sustained opportunities to develop managerial, technical, financial, and marketing capabilities. An integrated approach combining institutional responsiveness with entrepreneurial capacity development would provide a stronger foundation for sustainable industrial growth and more balanced regional development in the entire Bangladesh.

5. Implications

The government needs some strategies to overcome the challenges of BSCIC entrepreneurs in Northern Bangladesh. Through interviews with entrepreneurs, industry experts and BSCIC

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officials, the research aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the diverse perspectives on the challenges confronting entrepreneurial development under the BSCIC industrial units of the stated districts. This provided insight into the nuanced experiences and viewpoints of various stakeholders. The research intended to delve deeper into the underlying reasons of the identified challenges, examining both internal and external factors contributing to their persistence. A key contribution of this paper was that the findings are accessible to new entrepreneurs, industrialists, policy-makers, and practitioners responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies and programs for the industrial estates in the Northern and Southern Bangladesh and side by side international level with import-export concerned.

The findings of this research informed the stakeholders including novice entrepreneurs, industry experts, BSCIC officials, policy-makers, and relevant organizations about the critical barriers hindering entrepreneurial development. Moreover, it contributed to the formulation of targeted interventions and policies aimed at addressing challenges, thereby fostering a more conducive environment for entrepreneurship and economic development within the country.

6. Limitations

We must acknowledge that there are some limitations to the study. The study was conducted in a qualitative manner rather than a quantitative or a mixed-methods. Therefore, generalization and evidence-based statistical findings was quite difficult. Under the surveillance of BSCIC, information was collected from seven districts namely Bogura, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, and Rangpur at Rajshahi and Rangpur division in Northern Bangladesh and three districts namely Barishal, Jhalokati, and Patuakhali at Barishal division in Southern Bangladesh. If it was possible to get information from other zones, then a more appropriate scenario could have come out. Large-scale research is needed on how to adapt to changing conditions in industrial sectors. The paper used a cross-sectional design within the context of the aforesaid districts in Northern and Southern Bangladesh.

Hence, the findings of the study may have limited generalizability to other zones of the country. Further studies are needed using other zones of the country (i.e. Eastern and Western Zones of Bangladesh). And that is why, there is a need for larger samples to be used in the future quantitative research studies. Moreover, entrepreneurial challenges are measured using self-reports provided by the entrepreneurs. That means data was collected from the mouths of entrepreneurs about what they told at the time of conducting interviews with them.

7. Conclusion and Future Research Direction

A quantitative and a mixed-methods can be applied for future research and practical implication for the practitioners for getting more insights in this field. Furthermore, longitudinal studies that follow-up on how entrepreneurs can maintain and sometimes terminate or disinvest in their industrial units could also provide further insight into the changing dynamics of entrepreneurial

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practices. This is equally important as new entrepreneurs for their initiatives could change over time depending on the industrial trends, government rules, regulations, policies, and entire economic conditions in the external environment of the country. The research contributed new insight and empirical evidence to the existing knowledge on entrepreneurial development in Bangladesh, particularly concerning the role and challenges faced by government agencies like the BSCIC. By filling gaps in understanding and offering practical implications, the research informed the future academic inquiries, policy formulations, and practical interventions in the field of entrepreneurship and the entire economic growth and development.

Moreover, commercial banks and other financial organizations might support those who have industrial expertise. If BSCIC had its own bank, the head of office would recommend that they provide loans. Artisans in creating industrial entrepreneurship development is the BSCIC or incubator for creating entrepreneurship is the BSCIC. Service charges should be collected from BSCIC and those benefits should be ensured for taking what regards. This industrial sector contributes the most to the economy after the agricultural sector. The share of contribution of the industrial sector (manufacturing and service) in GDP is more than that of the agricultural sector (Uddin, 2015). The growth in industry is undeniable as it enters the developed world. Industrial estates need to reduce per unit cost of electricity for massive industrial development and creation of environment-friendly surroundings. Even if the government subsidizes the production of the industries, they should create opportunities for the production to continue. If the government invests more at the BSCIC industrial estates in Northern and Southern Bangladesh, the entrepreneurs of other industries will surely be interested to invest more here.

List of Abbreviation

AC	Air Conditioner
ASA	Association for Social Advancement
BASIC	Bangladesh Small Industries and Commerce
BD	Bureaucratic Delays
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
BIDA	Bangladesh Investment Development Authority
BKB	Bangladesh Krishi Bank
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BSCIC	Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation
BSTI	Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution
CAC	Credit Access Challenges

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CMSMEs	Cottage Micro Small and Medium Enterprises
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DM	Deputy Manager
EDE	Entrepreneurial Development Effectiveness
EPSIC	East Pakistan Small and Cottage Industries Corporation
F	Female
FBCCI	Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HSC	Higher Secondary Certificate
IDIs	In-depth Interviews
JEL	Journal of Economic Literature
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
LRF	Lack of Regional Focus
M	Male
MIDAS	Micro Industries Development Assistance and Services
MoS	Misalignment of Services
MSMCIs	Medium Small Micro and Cottage Industries
NBA	Northern BSCIC Authority
NEBDS	Northern Entrepreneurs of BSCIC Directly Surveillance
NEBIS	Northern Entrepreneurs of BSCIC Indirectly Surveillance
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NOCs	No Objection Certificates
NRFBCCI	Northern Representative of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PLC	Public Limited Company
PVC	Polyvinyl Chloride

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RBV	Resource-Based View
SBA	Southern BSCIC Authority
SCIs	Small and Cottage Industries
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEBDS	Southern Entrepreneurs of BSCIC Directly Surveillance
SEBIS	Southern Entrepreneurs of BSCIC Indirectly Surveillance
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SRBOA	Southern Representative of BSCIC Owners' Association
SRFBCCI	Southern Representative of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry
SRNASCIB	Southern Representative of National Association of Small and Cottage Industries of Bangladesh
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TMSS	Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sangha
UoE	Unawareness of Entrepreneurs
VAT	Value Added Tax
WMS	Weak Monitoring Systems

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Studies Involving Humans or Animals

The ethical approval confirmed that the study involved human participants and did not entail any animal experimentation. No procedures were undertaken that could compromise the participants' privacy, confidentiality, or personal rights, and all information was handled responsibly to protect the interests of the individuals involved.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest that could have affected this study.

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Declaration of the Study

ArcGIS Software Version 10.8 was used for locating study areas. Again, ChatGPT-5.5 was used solely for language editing and improving readability. The authors are fully responsible for all analyses, interpretations, and conclusions presented and declare no competing financial or personal interests. This manuscript constitutes one of the scholarly outputs of the PhD dissertation of Md. Nasir Mahmud.

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