Title Sheet

Title of the research	**Effectiveness of One Stop Services (OSS) of Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) for Attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): An Exploratory Study**
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Abstract

This study explores BIDA's One Stop Service (OSS) in attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Bangladesh. Using a qualitative approach, the study conducted in-depth interviews with the CEOs and Managing Directors of 22 companies (local, foreign, and joint ventures), 4 BIDA officials, 20 seminar participants from BIDA, 2 private sector staff within BIDA, and 18 OSS focal points in organizations outside BIDA to evaluate OSS's operational challenges, stakeholder perceptions, and its influence on FDI decisions. Findings show that while OSS improves efficiency for basic services (e.g., registrations, permits) with 98% of BIDA-led processes meeting deadlines, systemic gaps still exist. Investors expressed satisfaction with OSS's transparency and its role in reducing corruption within BIDA. However, they also encountered ongoing bureaucratic hurdles and bribery demands when dealing with several non-integrated agencies. We find that most respondents (98%) were unaware that OSS allows them to access services from other agencies. Most importantly, we find no evidence that BIDA's OSS played a role in attracting foreign direct investment to Bangladesh. Policy recommendations include: accelerating full-stack integration of priority licenses across agencies; instituting clear service-level agreements and accountability mechanisms; enhancing user awareness and support; and deploying data-driven performance dashboards to align implementation with global investment facilitation practices. These findings provide practical guidance for policymakers in developing countries seeking to operationalize OSS frameworks and enhance foreign direct investment attraction as part of their broader development strategies.

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Abbreviations

- BIDA – Bangladesh Investment Development Authority
- BOT (model) – Build, Operate, and Transfer
- BRCP – Bangladesh Regulatory Commission Project (context: BRCP-1 referenced)
- BSTI – Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution
- BTCL – Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd.
- CCI&E – Chief Controller of Imports and Exports
- DoE – Department of Environment
- DPDC – Dhaka Power Distribution Company Ltd.
- DWASA – Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority
- e.Gen – e.Gen Consultants Ltd.
- FDI – Foreign Direct Investment
- FICCI – Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- GDP – Gross Domestic Product
- GoB – Government of Bangladesh
- IPA/IPAs – Investment Promotion Agency/Agencies
- IPAG – Institute for Policy, Advocacy, and Governance
- KII/KIIs – Key Informant Interview(s)
- LDC – Least Developed Country
- MCCI – Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- MNC/MNE – Multinational Corporation / Multinational Enterprise
- MoU/MoUs – Memorandum(s) of Understanding
- OECD – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
- OSS – One Stop Service / One-Stop Service
- REB – Rural Electrification Board

- RJSC – Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms
- TAM – Technology Acceptance Model
- TCE – Transaction Cost Economics
- TCV – Time, Cost, Visit
- TIN/e-TIN – Taxpayer Identification Number / electronic Taxpayer Identification Number
- UNCTAD – United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
- UTAUT – Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology
- VAT – Value Added Tax
- WAIPA – World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies

Chapter one: Introduction

1.0 Background/Problem statement

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) played a crucial role in the globalization movement of the 1990s. It helped developing countries by bringing in new capital, advanced technology, managerial expertise, and export markets. The neoclassical growth model suggests that FDI can positively impact economic growth by increasing the amount and efficiency of investment. Therefore, many governments, especially those of emerging and least developed countries, aim to attract FDI as it can significantly benefit the host country's economy (Sahoo, 2006). The evidence shows that developing countries can achieve progress with direct support by focusing on Quality FDI (Moran et al., 2017). For a developing nation like Bangladesh, attracting FDI is essential for stimulating economic growth, creating employment opportunities, and enhancing competitiveness in the global market (Ahmed & Rahman, 2019). One of the key institutions facilitating FDI in Bangladesh is the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), which introduced the One Stop Service (OSS) initiative to streamline investment processes and provide an easier, more efficient experience for foreign investors (BIDA, 2021). The primary concern for policymakers and business leaders in Bangladesh is the continued low level of FDI despite various reforms and initiatives aimed at improving the investment climate (Siddiqui, 2018).

In FY 2024, FDI inflows were only 0.4% of GDP, a 71% decline from July to November last year. Over the past decade (2013-2023), Bangladesh's average FDI inflow was just 0.8% of GDP—much lower than Cambodia (9.4%), Vietnam (4.6%), and Indonesia (1.9%) (Mala, 2025). As a graduating developing economy, Bangladesh is set to lose many special and differential treatments in trade, making it ineligible for grants and soft loans. Therefore, expanding private investment, especially foreign direct investment (FDI), is essential for Bangladesh (Saleh and Faruque, 2025). However, many foreign investors are not interested in investing here because anyone wanting to do business in this country needs permission from 43 institutions ("Expert: BIDA OSS," 2022). Despite offering incentives and facilities to attract foreign investment in Bangladesh, the system is often criticized for irregularities, complicated official procedures, and unnecessary delays in file processing. The launch of OSS by BIDA aims to simplify the investment process and attract FDI in Bangladesh. (Ahmed & Rahman, 2019).

BIDA's One Stop Service (OSS) portal offers businesses speedy and transparent access to investor services (business approvals and licenses) from a single platform. However, after the initiative was launched, the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) failed to deliver on its promise of providing OSS, leaving investors frustrated with the cumbersome process of starting their businesses ("Investors frustrated," 2022). Many businesspeople and economists believe that OSS is stuck in the concept stage only due to the non-cooperation of some government organizations (Islam, 2020). According to Rayhan (2025), 44 government and autonomous agencies have agreed to provide 134 services through OSS, but the key services remain unavailable. Many services remain manual or partially digitalized, compelling users to visit offices physically. Applicants need to apply through various websites to obtain licenses and permissions from other agencies. OSS is not working like unified digital platform for getting services of different agencies. Disorganized and inconsistent trade and investment services create frustration among investors, hindering their decision to invest in Bangladesh (Rayhan, 2025). However, BIDA is currently undertaking the transformation of its OSS by integrating advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, chatbots, and secure databases. Under new leadership, these innovations are anticipated to enhance efficiency, security, and user experience. BIDA also aspires to provide more than 150 services of 50 organizations through its OSS ("BIDA One Stop", 2023). These reforms, if effectively implemented, may substantially reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies and restore investor trust.

Against this background, it is essential to conduct a systematic, evidence-based evaluation of BIDA's OSS in attracting FDI to Bangladesh. Identifying the opportunities including practical barriers—structural, technological, and institutional—that limit its performance will offer valuable insights for policymakers aiming to improve investment facilitation mechanisms. Drawing on the perspectives of OSS users, BIDA officials, and representatives of collaborating agencies, this study critically assesses whether the OSS initiative is achieving its intended goals and what reforms are needed to make it a more effective tool for promoting FDI in Bangladesh.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What specific opportunities, challenges and barriers do investors encounter when utilizing the One Stop Service (OSS) platform of BIDA?
2. In what ways does the OSS initiative influence foreign investors' perceptions and decision-making regarding Bangladesh as a potential investment destination?
3. What institutional, technical, and administrative constraints does BIDA face in the effective operation of the OSS?
4. What underlying factors contribute to the limited participation of certain government agencies in providing services through the OSS?
5. What policy, institutional, and technological improvements can be undertaken to strengthen the OSS and enhance its effectiveness in attracting greater volumes of FDI to Bangladesh?

1.2. Objectives

1. To identify key opportunities, challenges and barriers faced by foreign and domestic investors when using BIDA's OSS platform.
2. To evaluate how the OSS influences foreign investors' decisions regarding investment in Bangladesh.
3. To examine institutional, technical, and administrative constraints affecting the effective functioning of the OSS.
4. To explore why some government agencies show limited participation and cooperation in the OSS framework.
5. To recommend policy, institutional, and technological measures to strengthen the OSS and improve its role in attracting FDI.

1.3. Rationality of the Study

Bangladesh aims to graduate from a lower-income to a middle-income country by mid-2026. Therefore, Bangladesh is expected to undergo a rapid and robust economic transformation in the coming decades. To maintain macroeconomic stability and growth, foreign direct investment (FDI) must be emphasized, among other strategies. Although Bangladesh is experiencing a higher GDP growth rate than other low-income economies, its share of foreign direct investment (FDI) in GDP and private investment is relatively low (Kathuria & Malouche, 2016). It is concerning to note that Bangladesh's Doing Business Ranking, Global Competitiveness Index, and Logistic Performance Index rankings are not satisfactory. Bangladesh must improve its ranking in essential indices such as the Ease of Doing Business Ranking, Global Competitiveness Index, and Logistic Performance Index. Despite some progress in recent years, the country currently ranks poorly in all three indicators. This underperformance poses serious challenges, especially as Bangladesh prepares to face the loss of preferential trade benefits, soft loans, and international support measures after LDC graduation. In this context, strengthening institutional mechanisms for investment facilitation has become an urgent national priority (Mansur, 2020).

Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) has identified certain constraints that have resulted in delays or disruptions in foreign direct investment. To ensure efficient and prompt services for stakeholders, BIDA has taken several measures to attract FDI to the Bangladesh economy. These measures include organizing workshops and seminars such as the International Investment Summit and Bangladesh Investment Roadshow, inaugurating the Bangladesh Investment Climate Improvement Program to improve the ease of doing business, and expanding and promoting the online One Stop Services (OSS) portal (BIDA, 2022).

The main aim of the OSS initiative in Bangladesh was to simplify the business process for entrepreneurs. However, there is a policy debate about its effectiveness. Experts say the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) has not fulfilled its promise of providing services through OSS (Islam, 2020). Technical problems, a lack of adequate human resources in BIDA, and a lack of cooperation and negligence from other organizations impede the rapid service delivery of OSS (Saleh and Faruque, 2025 & Islam, 2020).

Studies on Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) and their digital One-Stop Shops (OSS) show that these agencies play important roles in creating a favorable investment climate, supporting investor operations, attracting new investments, and pushing for better policies. However, their success depends heavily on having sufficient funding, strong institutional backing, and well-designed organizational frameworks (Wells & Wint, 1990; Morisset & Andrews-Johnson, 2004; Lim, 2008; Steenbergen, 2023a). Research examining digital OSS platforms in developing countries points to several key success factors. These include institutional strength, consistent regulations, matching services to user needs, and ensuring digital accessibility for all users (Brunetti et al., 2020; Tushar, 2025). Looking at global examples, many OSS initiatives struggle because of weak legal foundations, insufficient political commitment, internal resistance from government agencies, overly complicated systems, and poor tracking of results. On the other hand, successful platforms share common features: they have effective coordination mechanisms, clear legal authority, and provide continuous support to investors (OECD, 2019; Heilbron & Aranda-Larrey, 2020; Saeed & Abdullah, 2023).

Research on the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA)'s One-Stop Service (OSS) in Bangladesh largely focuses on issues including inadequate automation, inter-agency coordination difficulties, and limited institutional capacity. Recent assessments indicate improvements in service delivery and investor satisfaction (BIDA, 2022; IPAG & e.Gen, 2023; 2023a); yet, a substantial gap remains in the literature. Few studies have examined BIDA's OSS from the investors' perspective or the interrelation between portal design, inter-agency collaboration, and user experience. This study seeks to rectify that deficit, making the research both relevant and crucial for understanding BIDA's OSS performance. Policymakers, businesses, and international development partners require evidence-based information regarding the efficacy of the OSS in achieving its objectives, the existing institutional and procedural challenges, and the modifications necessary to align the OSS with optimal investment strategies globally.

The rationale of this study is therefore twofold. First, it addresses the urgent policy need for an objective evaluation of the OSS in light of Bangladesh's significant economic challenges and the requirements of global integration. Second, it aims to contribute to the broader academic literature on investment facilitation mechanisms in developing countries by examining a real-world institutional reform within a resource-limited and bureaucratically complex environment. By analyzing the experiences of investors/users with OSS, BIDA officials, and partner agencies, this study seeks to produce practical recommendations that not only improve the effectiveness of OSS in Bangladesh but also provide valuable lessons for other countries undertaking similar initiatives.

1.4 Scope of the study

Our study assesses the impact of Bangladesh's One Stop Service (OSS) on attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). It examines investor experiences, BIDA's institutional capabilities, and its collaboration with government agencies. By exploring the systemic, procedural, and perceptual aspects of investment facilitation, we aim to understand how OSS functions and identify areas for improvement. The scope is defined across thematic, geographic, and temporal boundaries to ensure focus and feasibility.

Thematically, our study focuses on five key areas: (i) challenges and barriers for investors using OSS; (ii) how OSS affects foreign investors' perceptions and decisions; (iii) the institutional, technical, and administrative limitations within BIDA; (iv) what drives limited participation by partner agencies; and (v) how policy, institutional, and technological improvements can enhance operation of OSS. We're excluding macroeconomic factors that influence FDI, non-open-source fiscal incentives, and sector-specific industrial policies, unless they directly impact OSS operations. In the case of Geographical scope, the study focuses on Bangladesh, with a main focus on BIDA's national-level operations and those of its partner organizations. In terms of temporal scope, our study's time frame spans the entire OSS implementation process, from its launch in 2018 to its recent upgrades in 2023-2024. This timeframe enables us to evaluate both the initial rollout and ongoing reform efforts, offering a comprehensive look at OSS performance over time.

1.5 Limitations of the study

This study is subject to several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings.

At first, we faced challenges in identifying and reaching companies that seek OSS services. Despite getting an initial list from BIDA and randomly selecting 40 firms for key informant interviews, our pilot phase field verification revealed significant inaccuracies in company addresses and frequent office and factory relocations. These discrepancies made it harder to access respondents and reduced the number of eligible participants.

Second, geographic coverage was limited due to these access constraints. The study initially planned to conduct KIIs across multiple regions of Bangladesh to boost representativeness. However, repeated challenges in finding firms led to a phased restriction of the field sites—first to Dhaka and its surrounding areas, and then to specific clusters within the city (Mirpur, Savar, Uttara, and Gulshan). This focus on urban areas may limit the applicability of the findings to investors operating in other regions, special economic zones, or export processing zones where institutional dynamics and OSS engagement might vary.

Third, the actual sample size was smaller than expected. We completed interviews with 22 out of the 40 targeted firms within the available timeframe. Although the interviews provided valuable qualitative insights, the limited number of respondents reduced the range of perspectives captured and may have increased the risk of selection bias, especially if firms with stable locations or better administrative capacity were more likely to participate.

Fourth, relying on organizational contact information from administrative sources may have introduced a frame error. The lack of a continuously updated registry of OSS users with verified locations and contact information limited both sampling efficiency and response rates. As a result, the study couldn't systematically compare characteristics of interviewed and non-interviewed firms, which hindered the assessment of nonresponse bias.

Ultimately, the study's qualitative approach focuses on depth rather than broad statistical relevance. The findings should be considered analytically relevant to similar institutional settings, not statistically representative of all OSS users nationwide. Future studies would benefit from an updated sampling approach.

1.6 Organization of the research

To achieve the objectives of this research, the study is organized into six chapters, each addressing a core component of the inquiry and together forming a coherent analytical progression.

Chapter 1 lays the groundwork for the study by defining the problem, posing research questions, setting objectives, and outlining the scope and limitations. This chapter sets the rationale and parameters for the investigation.

Chapter 2 provides a thorough review of existing research and lays the groundwork for the analysis by developing a conceptual framework. The chapter brings together findings from studies on foreign direct investment, investment facilitation, and one-stop service models, and highlights the key concepts used in this study.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology, covering the research design, sampling approach, data sources, data collection methods, and analysis techniques. It also addresses concerns about validity, reliability, trustworthiness, and ethics.

Chapter 4 presents the findings from key informant interviews and related qualitative research. The results are organized by the study's research questions, focusing on investor experiences, institutional challenges, coordination between agencies, and the dynamics of digital service delivery.

Chapter 5 Finding brings together the key findings, draws conclusions, and offers actionable suggestions to boost the effectiveness of the OSS in drawing foreign direct investment to Bangladesh. It also outlines implications for policy and practice, as well as potential areas for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Institutional Background and One-Stop Service of BIDA

The Bangladesh Investment Development Authority was established as a statutory body through the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority Act, 2016. The Act established BIDA as "a body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal with power to acquire, hold and transfer of property, both movable and immovable, and it may by its own name sue and be sued" (Legislative Division, 2016). This legal status gives BIDA the autonomy and authority necessary to fulfill its mandate effectively. The primary purpose behind BIDA's establishment was to create a unified agency that could effectively promote domestic and foreign investment in Bangladesh's private sector, provide necessary facilities and assistance for building industries, and utilize public industries or commercial institutions and their unused lands or establishments for more useful economic activities (Legislative Division, 2016).

BIDA's functions include investment promotion, facilitation, and policy advocacy, aimed at creating a favorable investment climate in Bangladesh for both domestic and foreign investors. A key activity is providing pre-investment information and counseling services, which help investors understand the regulatory landscape and identify opportunities. Additionally, BIDA facilitates the registration and approval of various projects, including foreign and joint ventures, ensuring compliance with regulations.

2.1.1 Operations of OSS by BIDA and its Legal Framework

One-stop service (OSS) is one of BIDA's most significant innovations. It is designed to streamline the investment process by bringing together services from multiple government agencies onto a single platform. The legal framework for the OSS was established through the One Stop Service Act 2018, which aimed to facilitate the establishment and operation of businesses in Bangladesh (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2018). The OSS portal (www.bidaquickserv.org) was initially launched on February 24, 2019, and has since evolved into a comprehensive platform offering 134 services from 44 organizations. The portal enables investors to access all necessary services in one place, significantly reducing both time and costs associated with business setup and operation (*"BIDA launches", 2025)*.

In May 2020, the government issued the One Stop Service (OSS) Rules to strengthen the legal framework for the OSS further. These rules made it mandatory to provide investor services within stipulated timeframes and established a central One Stop Service authority led by the Executive Chairman of BIDA. The authority comprises focal points assigned from all investor service-providing agencies and is responsible for issuing standard operating procedures for the OSS, advising and assisting service-seekers, monitoring the progress of applications, and taking measures for swift processing (GoB, 2020).

The OSS platform operates under a Build, Operate, and Transfer (BOT) model, developed and managed in accordance with the One-Stop Service Rules 2020. ("Welcome to the", n.d). The services provided through the OSS cover a wide range of investor needs, including branch/liaison/representative office permissions, visa recommendations, work permits, utility connections, and various approvals related to foreign exchange transactions. The platform integrates services from 35 government agencies, 12 banks, and 5 chamber associations, creating a comprehensive ecosystem for business facilitation (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2020). In May 2025, BIDA launched an updated version of the OSS portal with several enhanced features. The new version includes a public service performance dashboard that provides comprehensive data on the number of applications processed and their resolution timelines by BIDA and associated stakeholders. *("BIDA launches", 2025).*

2.2 Empirical Studies, Assessment of OSS Impact, and Literature Gaps

The Bangladesh Investment Development Authority was established as a statutory body through the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority Act, 2016. The Act established BIDA as "a body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal with power to acquire, hold, and transfer property, both movable and immovable, and it may by its own name sue and be sued" (Legislative Division, 2016). This legal status gives BIDA the autonomy and authority necessary to fulfill its mandate effectively. The One-Stop Service (OSS) online portal is a key innovation by BIDA, designed to streamline investment by uniting multiple government services on a single platform. Established under the One Stop Service Act 2018, it facilitates business setup in Bangladesh (GoB, 2018). Launched on February 24, 2019, the OSS portal now offers 134 services from 44 organizations, reducing time and costs ("BIDA launches," 2025). In May 2020, the government issued the OSS Rules, making employee services available within set timeframes and creating a central OSS authority led by BIDA's Executive Chairman. This authority, with focal points from all related agencies, guides applicants, monitors applications, and ensures swift processing (GoB, 2020).

Most literature on attracting FDI investigates the promotional activities of Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs), which are government-supported bodies aimed at fostering inward investment. For over 25 years, their influence has been studied, beginning with Wells and Wint (1990), who questioned their effectiveness by comparing IPAs to marketing campaigns for profit-driven organizations. In 2001, Wells and Wint broadly defined IPAs as entities that disseminate information, create investment site images, and provide services to investors. They identify four primary functions of IPAs: image building, investor facilitation, investment generation, and policy advocacy. Research by Morisset and Andrews-Johnson (2004) provides key insights into the effectiveness of Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) through a comprehensive study of 75 IPAs. The study reveals that spending on investment promotion is associated with attracting more foreign direct investment (FDI), but only when the budget reaches a certain threshold and when other factors, such as the investment climate and institutional setup, are also favorable. This important work highlights the need for IPAs to have enough resources and a supportive environment to really make a difference in investor decisions. Steenbergen's (2023b) recent analysis builds on this understanding by pinpointing key characteristics of high-performing IPAs. Steenbergen finds that effective agencies are often private or semi-private entities with a clear focus on promoting foreign investment, without taking on domestic investment responsibilities. Furthermore, successful IPAs offer top-notch investor services through advanced sectoral analytics and effective complaint resolution mechanisms—capabilities that appear to be lacking in BIDA's current framework. Research consistently shows that the effectiveness of IPA depends on structural factors, such as the composition of the board, staff compensation levels, and political visibility through connections to senior government officials (Morisset & Andrews-Johnson, 2004). Lim (2008) examined how a host government's promotional initiatives, such as establishing an investment promotion agency (IPA), affect foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows. The findings indicate that the effectiveness of investment promotion- assessed through IPA age, the intensity of overseas staff, and overall staff count- positively influences FDI attraction. These results indicate that underlying organizational design issues may limit BIDA's OSS performance, going beyond the challenges of implementing technology.

Recent studies on delivering digital services show that developing countries face systematic challenges when implementing OSS. Research by Hayakawa et al. (2013) found that the effectiveness of investments varies significantly across countries, with factors such as institutional capacity and regulatory environment playing a crucial role. This is especially relevant for BIDA's OSS, where failures in coordinating between agencies persist as a significant hurdle to implementation. Studies on digital transformation point out common failure patterns that also apply to investment facilitation systems. Research on platform engineering reveals that product misfit, where the system design fails to meet user needs, is a significant failure mode (Brunetti et al., 2020). BIDA's OSS appears to struggle with this issue, as investors report that promised services remain unavailable online, despite the system being functional. Research by Tushar in 2025 examines how OSS is implemented in Bangladesh, particularly in relation to the digital divide and its impact on public services. The study reveals that infrastructure limitations, a lack of ICT literacy, and affordability concerns are key systemic obstacles that need to be addressed through phased implementation strategies tailored to both urban and rural areas. These results indicate that BIDA's OSS faces larger structural limitations that go beyond organizational design issues.

OSS failures frequently originate from inadequate legal obligations, deficiencies in political commitment, and resistance within agencies. It is observed that genuine one-stop mechanisms rarely achieve success on a global scale owing to coordination deficiencies. BIDA exemplifies this through non-binding agreements and lapses in accountability. Mismatches in technology design, such as interfaces that are not user-friendly, lead users to bypass the intended systems. Measurement gaps prevent improvements, perpetuating inefficiencies (White, 2022; World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies, 2019; Chakma, 2024).

Although OSS initiatives have been implemented in many developing countries, their success has fluctuated based on the quality of implementation, inter-agency collaboration, and technological infrastructure. In Rwanda and Georgia, for instance, OSS reforms significantly enhanced their Doing Business rankings and increased FDI inflows (OECD, 2019). The World Bank's evaluation framework for improving service delivery indicates that effective investment promotion relies on a holistic approach that integrates institutional growth, technological advancements, and performance management systems (Heilbron & Aranda-Larrey, 2020). Unlike fragmented strategies that concentrate mainly on developing digital platforms, this framework emphasizes addressing the fundamental institutional coordination issues. Studies on successful OSS implementations in countries such as Rwanda and Singapore highlight the vital role of political commitment supported by legal enforcement mechanisms (OECD, 2020a). Successful OSS models in Rwanda, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Singapore highlight key factors absent in BIDA's approach. Rwanda's One-Stop Centre, managed by the Rwanda Development Board since 2008, efficiently processes 23 licensing services, emphasizing job creation and knowledge transfer with minimal capital requirements. Digitization has elevated Rwanda to the 38^{th} position in global ease-of-doing-business rankings, driven by strong political will and inter-agency coordination. In contrast, BIDA provides online access to only seven of the 43 pledged services, thereby compelling investors to engage in physical visits and endure procedural delays. (Islam, 2020; "RDB One Stop Centre", 2023). Malaysia's Invest Malaysia Facilitation Centre (IMFC), established in 2023 under MIDA, operates as a true one-stop hub with ministerial support, achieving over 80% project implementation rates "MITI sets up" (2023). Vietnam's OSS, which has evolved since 1995, features 11,956 units handling administrative procedures, focusing on gradual expansion and investor feedback ("One-stop shop services facilitate", 2024). Saeed and Abdullah (2023) analyzed how a one-stop shop boosts FDI in Kurdistan, using survey data from foreign investors. Results indicate that the shop has a positive impact on FDI, with many investors citing its availability as influential, emphasizing ongoing support as vital for attracting investment. These examples demonstrate that effective OSS requires a whole-of-government approach with transparent accountability frameworks and regular performance monitoring resources that appear to be limited in BIDA's current implementation.

In Bangladesh, scholarly focus on BIDA's OSS portal remains limited. Reports (BIDA, 2022; IPAG and e.Gen, 2023, 2023a) note improvements in service quality and investor satisfaction, but also highlight ongoing issues, including low automation, poor inter-agency coordination, inadequate user training, and incomplete digitization. Although the OSS's potential to attract FDI is recognized, thorough evaluations from the perspective of its users are scarce, with most research concentrating on the overall investment climate or relying on anecdotal evidence. This highlights a need for detailed studies on BIDA's OSS portal to evaluate its effectiveness, pinpoint challenges, and identify possible reform paths.

2.3. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is crucial as it is grounded in the intersection of institutional theory, transaction cost economics, and technology adoption models. This framework is designed to provide a comprehensive explanation of how the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) 's One-Stop Service (OSS) portal influences foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows. It reduces bureaucratic inefficiencies, enhances transparency, and improves the ease of doing business in Bangladesh.

2.3.1 Institutional Theory

Institutional theory is a prominent framework in sociology, organizational studies, and management that explains how institutions, such as laws, norms, and cultural expectations, influence the behavior and structures of organizations. Unlike theories that focus on efficiency or competition, institutional theory emphasizes the role of social and cultural pressures in shaping organizational practices. The contemporary version of institutional theory became prominent in the 1970s and 1980s thanks to scholars such as John Meyer and Brian Rowan. Their studies redirected attention from the economic and technical factors influencing organizational behavior to the symbolic and cultural influences that drive organizations to embrace similar structures, a phenomenon identified as institutional isomorphism. We have adopted a theoretical framework from a seminal paper by Meyer & Rowan (1977).

Institutional theory suggests that organizations function according to formal and informal rules, norms, and frameworks that influence their actions and decision-making. Within foreign direct investment (FDI), the institutional landscape of a host nation is crucial for drawing in foreign investors. The OSS portal represents an institutional innovation designed to minimize bureaucratic obstacles, standardize processes, and foster a more transparent and predictable environment for investment.

The OSS portal aims to streamline regulatory compliance by consolidating numerous government services into one platform, thereby minimizing the complexity and uncertainty inherent in bureaucratic procedures. By adhering to global best practices in investment facilitation, the OSS portal solidifies Bangladesh's reputation as an appealing investment destination, attracting more foreign investors. Additionally, implementing the OSS portal signifies a mimetic isomorphism, wherein Bangladesh adopts successful strategies from other nations to enhance its investment environment.

2.3.2 Transaction Cost Economics

Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) is a key theory in organizational economics and management that elucidates the reasons for firms' existence and how they organize their operations to reduce costs linked to economic transactions. Primarily developed by Oliver E. Williamson, TCE expands on earlier contributions from Ronald Coase, who initially proposed that transactions, not just production, carry costs.

Ronald Coase (1993) established the principles of Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) in his seminal article- "The Nature of the Firm (1973)". In this work, he explored the rationale for the existence of firms in an environment where markets function efficiently. Coase contended that firms arise primarily to minimize transaction costs—the expenses associated with negotiating, monitoring, and enforcing contracts in the marketplace. Building on Coase's framework, Oliver E. Williamson further developed these ideas throughout the 1970s and 1980s by incorporating elements of organizational theory, law, and economics. He solidified TCE as a vital framework for examining governance structures (Williamson, 1975 & Williamson, 1985).

Transaction cost economics (TCE) focuses on the costs associated with economic exchanges, including search, negotiation, and enforcement costs. The OSS portal aims to reduce these transaction costs for foreign investors by streamlining administrative processes, reducing the time and effort required to obtain necessary permits and approvals, and minimizing the risk of bureaucratic delays. It is expected that OSS portal provides a centralized platform where investors can access all relevant information, reducing the time and cost associated with searching for information across multiple agencies. It is also expected that by standardizing procedures and offering online services, the portal reduces the need for face-to-face negotiations and lengthy decision-making processes.

The transparency and accountability mechanisms embedded in the OSS portal minimize the risk of corruption and ensure that investors can monitor the status of their applications in real-time.

2.3.3 Technology Adoption Models

Technology adoption models are conceptual frameworks that clarify how people and organizations embrace and incorporate new technologies into their processes. They assist researchers, businesses, and policymakers in grasping the elements affecting technology adoption, forecasting adoption rates, and crafting strategies to enhance acceptance.

In this study, we adopt an integrated framework drawing on Davis's (1989) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Venkatesh et al.'s (2003) Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT). TAM focuses on

- Perceived Usefulness (PU): The extent to which a user feels the technology will improve performance.
- Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU): The extent to which a user feels the technology will be easy to use.
- Behavioral Intention (BI): The probability of adopting the technology.

The UTAUT model extended TAM by incorporating two more factors that affect investors' decisions to invest: social influence, such as peer and societal pressure, and facilitating conditions, such as infrastructure and support availability.

The success of the OSS portal in attracting FDI also depends on its adoption and utilization by foreign investors. Technology adoption models, such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), provide insights into the factors influencing investors' adoption of the portal. Implications of OSS considering UTAUT and TAM model:

- Investors are more likely to use the OSS portal if they perceive it as a helpful tool that simplifies the investment process and reduces bureaucratic hurdles.
- The portal's user-friendly interface and accessibility are critical factors that influence its adoption. If investors find the portal easy to navigate and use, they are more likely to rely on it for their investment needs.

- The intention of investors to use the OSS portal is influenced by their perceptions of its usefulness and ease of use, as well as by social influences and facilitating conditions (e.g., availability of technical support).

2.3.4 Conceptual Framework for Analyzing OSS Effectiveness

Building on these theoretical foundations and literature, a framework for evaluating BIDA's OSS effectiveness has been developed. This framework argues that the effectiveness of OSS in attracting FDI is influenced by:

1. Service Integration Level: The extent to which all services are truly integrated with the OSS.
2. Process Optimization: The degree to which core processes are delivered smoothly.
3. Governance Structure: The authority provided to the OSS to ensure compliance from participating agencies affects the reliability of service delivery.
4. User-Centered Design: The level of service design focused on investor's easy access as opposed to bureaucratic norms and complex procedures.
5. Technological Infrastructure: The strength and interoperability of digital systems that support the OSS play a crucial role in the consistency of service delivery.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a systematic framework for empirically investigating the effectiveness of the One Stop Services (OSS) of Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) in attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The research design specifically addresses five interconnected research questions examining OSS's influence on investor decision-making, challenges faced by stakeholders, operational constraints, inter-agency cooperation issues, and potential improvements.

3.2 Approach of the study (research design)

This study employs a qualitative research design to capture the complex dynamics and stakeholder experiences related to BIDA's OSS implementation. The exploratory nature of the research questions necessitates an approach that can uncover not just what happens in OSS operations, but why and how these processes impact FDI decisions. The study employs an analytical philosophical approach, acknowledging that comprehending OSS effectiveness necessitates the exploration of the subjective experiences and viewpoints of diverse stakeholders. This method recognizes that the experiences of investors, government officials, and BIDA representatives may vary considerably according to their roles and circumstances.

3.2.1 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Key Informant Interviews served as the primary data collection method. Semi-structured interview protocols were developed for each stakeholder group, allowing for systematic data collection.

The interview questions were carefully designed following best practices: beginning with factual questions before moving to opinions, using open-ended questions to elicit detailed responses, and employing probing techniques to encourage elaboration. This approach ensured we could capture the unique perspectives relevant to each research question while maintaining comparability across interviews.

3.3 Study Area

This study focused on companies surveyed in key industrial and commercial hubs within and around Dhaka, Bangladesh, specifically Savar, Mirpur, Uttara, Tongi, and Gulshan. These areas were selected for their high concentration of manufacturing, garment, and service-sector firms, which align with the research objectives. Due to budgetary limitations, including travel and logistical costs, the scope was confined to Dhaka city and its immediate peri-urban zones. This pragmatic delimitation ensured feasible data collection while capturing a representative cross-section of urban enterprises, mitigating broader geographic expansion that would exceed available resources.

3.4 Population and Sampling

The study employed a purposive sampling approach to ensure representation of key stakeholders relevant to the research questions. Our sampling targeted four distinct stakeholder groups:

3.4.1 Investor Sample (OSS Users)

From BIDA's records of OSS users during fiscal years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, we selected companies using both purposive and random sampling techniques to ensure diversity. While we initially identified 40 companies, practical constraints (discussed in section 1.6) in locating some businesses resulted in a final sample of 22 companies:

- 9 local companies
- 6 foreign companies
- 7 joint ventures

The primary focus of the research was on foreign and joint venture businesses, but the design also included a sample of domestic businesses so that OSS user experiences could be compared. This methodological approach facilitates the analysis of potential disparities in user satisfaction, system accessibility, and service efficiency across various ownership structures. The study incorporates local firms alongside foreign and joint venture entities to ascertain whether organizational background, familiarity with domestic administrative procedures, or investor origin affects perceptions and experiences of the OSS platform. These kinds of comparisons are important for figuring out how well BIDA's digital infrastructure works for different types of investors and how inclusive it is.

Due to ethical considerations and confidentiality, we have used pseudonyms such as P1-P22 (Annexure-01) instead of the names of the companies. These companies represented diverse business sectors and were primarily located in Savar, Mirpur, Uttara, Tongi, and Gulshan areas. This sample size aligns with qualitative research standards, as research indicates that "the standard in qualitative research is that it takes 12-13 responses to reach saturation," with most studies reaching saturation with fewer than 20 participants (Wynter, 2023).

3.4.2 OSS Workshop/seminar Attendees (Seminar participants)

To specifically address how OSS awareness influences investor decision-making, we purposively selected 20 investors from a list of 149 who attended BIDA's OSS awareness workshops in fiscal year 2023-2024 (See Annexure-03). These participants were contacted via telephone to assess whether awareness translated into OSS utilization.

3.4.3 Agency Focal Points

From the 35 government agencies with which BIDA has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) for OSS integration, we got a list of 18 focal point officers from the BIDA authority (See Annexure-02). We conducted:

- 4 in-person interviews
- 12 telephone interviews
- 2 focal points could not be reached

This sample was critical for addressing why some agencies do not provide services through OSS and identifying inter-agency coordination challenges.

3.4.4 BIDA OSS Officials and private sector help desk staff

Four officials and one executive from private sector help desk management directly involved in managing BIDA's OSS were interviewed to gain insights into operational challenges and potential improvements. These participants requested strict confidentiality regarding their identities and positions.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

3.5.1 Primary Data collection

Investor interviews were conducted in-person at company premises, when possible, while telephone interviews were used for workshop attendees and some agency focal points due to accessibility constraints. Questionnaires were prepared separately for service seekers, BIDA officials, OSS focal points at other agencies, and seminar participants at NADA (See Annexure 4-7 for the questionnaire). All interviews were conducted between September 2024 and April 2025, with each interview lasting approximately 30-45 minutes.

For investor participants, we used a semi-structured questionnaire focusing on:

- Their experience using OSS services
- Challenges encountered during the application process
- Impact of OSS on their investment decisions
- Suggestions for improvement

Agency focal point interviews explored:

- Their understanding of the OSS system
- Challenges in providing services through the OSS platform
- Inter-agency coordination issues
- Technical and procedural constraints

3.5.2 Secondary Data collection (Document Analysis)

To complement the primary interview data, we analyzed relevant documents, including:

- BIDA reports and publications
- OSS operational guidelines and regulations
- One Stop Service Act 2017 and Rules 2020
- News articles and media coverage related to OSS implementation
- Previous research studies on investment facilitation in Bangladesh

This document analysis provided important contextual background and allowed triangulation of findings from the interview data.

3.6 Data Analysis Method

3.6.1 Thematic Analysis Approach

The study employed thematic analysis to systematically analyze the qualitative data collected. Following the six-step process developed by Braun and Clarke (2006 & 2019). our analysis involved:

1. **Familiarization**: Immersing in the data through transcript review and repeated reading.
2. **Coding**: Systematically identifying and labeling meaningful segments of text.
3. **Generating themes**: Identifying patterns and clustering codes into potential themes.
4. **Reviewing themes**: Checking themes against the coded extracts and entire dataset.
5. **Defining and naming themes**: Refining the specifics of each theme and generating clear definitions.
6. **Writing up**: Integrating the analytic narrative with data extracts to address research questions.

This systematic approach ensured that analysis remained grounded in the data while allowing for interpretation of patterns and meanings relevant to the research questions.

3.6.2 Integration and Quality Assurance

Data from different stakeholder groups were initially analyzed separately before being integrated through cross-group analysis to identify convergent and divergent perspectives on OSS effectiveness. To enhance the trustworthiness of findings, we employed triangulation of data sources (comparing perspectives from different stakeholder groups) and triangulation of methods (interview data compared with document analysis).

3.6.3 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to strict ethical standards throughout the research process (Saul McLeod, 2023). All participants provided informed consent and were advised of their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was maintained by removing personal identifiers from transcripts and ensuring that reporting would not allow identification of individual participants.

For BIDA officials in particular, we provided assurance that their names and designations would not be published anywhere, as specifically requested. All data was securely stored with password protection and access limited to the research team. These measures were especially important given the potentially sensitive nature of discussions regarding government services and investment decisions.

3.7 Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

Several methodological limitations were identified and addressed during the research process:

Access Challenges

Difficulties in locating companies at their registered addresses significantly reduced our initially planned sample size. We mitigated this by focusing on geographic areas with higher concentrations of investors and ensuring the final sample still achieved theoretical saturation across investor types.

Response Bias Considerations

The potential for social desirability bias, particularly among government officials discussing their agencies' performance, was acknowledged. To address this, we emphasized confidentiality protections, framed questions in neutral terms, and triangulated responses with document analysis and perspectives from other stakeholder groups.

Scope Constraints

Time and resource limitations prevented inclusion of investors from all geographical areas of Bangladesh. While our findings cannot claim statistical generalizability, the in-depth nature of the qualitative approach provides rich insights that may be transferable to similar contexts.

3.8 Measures of Variables and Operational Definition

This study investigates the efficacy of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority's (BIDA) One Stop Service (OSS) in drawing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to Bangladesh. Effectiveness is measured by how investors feel about the OSS, specifically whether it helped them make decisions about their investments. The study employs a perception-based measurement methodology, wherein favorable investor feedback concerning OSS utility functions as the principal metric of the platform's efficacy in enhancing FDI inflows into Bangladesh.

3.8.1 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): Investments made by a firm or individual in one country in business interests in another country, such as establishing business operations or acquiring business assets.

3.8.2 One Stop Services (OSS): A facility or service designed to simplify the necessary processes for obtaining permits, licenses, and other documentation required to attract and facilitate investment.

3.8.3 Investment Promotion: Wells and Wint (2001) describe investment promotion as "activities that disseminate information about, or attempt to create an image of the investment site and provide investment services for prospective investors". In this context, OSS mainly serves as a tool for facilitating investors by tackling information asymmetries and lowering transaction costs that particularly impact foreign investors who do not have local knowledge and networks (Morisset and Andrews-Johnson, 2004).

OSS is designed to centralize and streamline regulatory compliance, promoting private investment by lowering transaction costs (White, 2022). The OECD (2020b) outlines four key reasons for implementing OSS: improving coordination among different government levels, offering user-friendly services, consolidating multi-policy service delivery, and establishing systems for integrated government services. There are two main models for implementing OSS: individual services, where various entities manage their own counters, and integrated services, which consolidate transactions around life events and are managed by a single official. BIDA has chosen the latter model, as it usually results in more significant efficiency improvements due to its comprehensive approach to service delivery (IPAG and e.Gen 2023a).

3.9 Conclusion

This methodology provides a robust framework for investigating the effectiveness of BIDA's OSS in attracting FDI. Through careful sampling, systematic data collection, and rigorous analysis, the research design enables comprehensive exploration of the research questions. The qualitative approach captures the nuanced perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups, providing valuable insights to inform potential improvements to the OSS system and enhance Bangladesh's FDI attraction capabilities.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Descriptive statistics of participant profiles

The companies interviewed span various sectors in Bangladesh's economy, primarily focusing on manufacturing. Of the 22 companies, manufacturing constitutes 60% of sampled firms, followed by information/communication (30%) and food services (10%). A number of foreign companies was 6, Foreign and Joint Venture was 7 and the number of local Bangladeshi companies was 9. Most respondents (80%) were in managerial roles, including titles from Manager to Managing Director. This assures insights from individuals with decision-making power and a deep understanding of their organizations' regulatory requirements. Additionally, most respondents were well-educated, possessing bachelor's or master's degrees, and their ages varied from 32 to 37 years.

The study examined five BIDA officials, primarily possessing Master's-level qualifications. Since telephone interviews were mainly done with agency focal points and seminar participants to cross-check data—specifically to confirm and put OSS user experiences in context—the research plan didn't include gathering their socio-economic information in a systematic way. This methodological choice emphasized the collection of operational insights and institutional perspectives rather than demographic profiling of these key informants.

Companies sought various services through BIDA OSS, with registration being the most popular, noted by 90% of respondents. Additional services included work permits, e-TIN, Security Clearance, and Import Registration certificates. Remarkably, all respondents demonstrated a limited understanding of the comprehensive services offered by BIDA OSS, and many were surprised to learn that the platform provides 35 distinct certification types.

4.2 Opportunities and Current OSS service delivery status:

BIDA's One-Stop services simplifies processes and ensures timely delivery of basic services.

Many participants praised the OSS for its simplicity and speed in handling standard applications. For routine investor services (such as company registration with BIDA or obtaining tax identification certificates), the OSS largely met or exceeded expectations in terms of convenience. Participants frequently noted that online application submission was straightforward and that the required steps were completed within a short timeframe. *"There was no problem, we did the application online,"* explained one manager (P2), whose software company needed an investor membership certificate. Another participant (P4) shared that applying through the OSS portal took just a day, and the approval was completed *"in 2 to 3 days"* (P4). Participants appreciated not only the quick turnaround but also the hassle-free, one-stop nature of the process for these basic services.

Participants' experiences indicate that the OSS has effectively reduced bureaucratic red tape for BIDA's core services, boosting investor confidence in Bangladesh's investment facilitation. One respondent (P11) expressed high satisfaction, rating the OSS 5 out of 5 for its efficient processes. This highlights the potential of a well-implemented one-stop service to enhance the ease of doing business, aligning with global best practices.

BIDA officials also highlight the OSS platform's success in maintaining committed service timeframes for BIDA-related services. Most significantly, they report that "approximately 98% of cases, BIDA successfully meets its service commitments," demonstrating a high level of reliability in service delivery. An Official succinctly captured: *"TCV: Less time, less cost, and fewer visits to get the services from OSS, including 100% hassle-free services. No need to pursue any person for getting services from BIDA."* Participants in the seminar also echoed the same findings of the service seekers that BIDA's basic services were easy to use and delivered on time.

Our findings strongly support institutional theory's view that standardized processes lower bureaucratic barriers. The efficient process and rapid turnaround for basic BIDA services demonstrate successful institutional innovation, with users completing applications within 2-3 days and praising the ease of online submission. Additionally, the results confirmed Transaction Cost Economies (TCE) predictions, showing reduced time, costs, and physical visits for BIDA services. Users notably experienced lower transaction costs for routine services, aligning with Williamson's framework of organizational efficiency.

No corruption has been reported at BIDA's OSS.

A unanimous theme from 22 investor interviews is that BIDA's OSS processes are largely free of corruption and hassle. Companies reported no bribes or "facilitation payments' for services like project registration, approvals, or work permits through the OSS portal. Firms found interactions straightforward and by-the-book. One IT joint venture said, *"we do not face any corruption or irregularities in BIDA"* and obtained registrations and e-TIN online without extra payments. Several foreign investors praised BIDA's efficiency and transparency, indicating that BIDA maintains high integrity and client service in its direct investor interactions.

BIDA's OSS remains partial and evolving: as of 2023, approximately 63 of the roughly 150 investor services were online, with only 18 fully integrated under BIDA, primarily its core functions. Within this limited scope, reported satisfaction is high (approximately 4.5/5), and interviewees noted no corruption in BIDA-managed services, suggesting that centralized, accountable delivery can curb petty graft at the service point. However, the benefits are constrained to BIDA's remit; once processes extend beyond BIDA to other agencies, difficulties re-emerge, indicating the need for broader integration and coordination across the full-service chain. BIDA officials and seminar participants also recognize that there is no corruption in BIDA-related services. Since BIDA's OSS operations are free from corruption, this reinforces the Institutional Theory's emphasis on transparent and predictable institutional environments.

User satisfaction and trust regarding BIDA's One-Stop Services

This theme captures participants' overall assessment of OSS effectiveness, weighing their satisfaction with convenience against any pain points or suggestions for improvement beyond what has been covered. Overall, most interviewees reported being satisfied with the OSS for the service they received. Many respondents used terms like "good" or "mostly satisfied" and gave a rating of four out of five. For example, P3 described his experience as *"Satisfied. Good."* and P11 stated he was *"very satisfied"* with how things turned out. The primary basis for satisfaction was the speed and lack of hassle (as discussed in Theme 1) and the feeling that the OSS personnel were helpful. Even P1, who had moderate satisfaction, conceded that *"what we got, we are satisfied with that"* given that they ultimately obtained the needed certificate without trouble. This generally positive feedback indicates a decent level of trust in the OSS system for the services successfully delivered. Notably, no incidents of malpractice were reported; this transparency likely contributes to users' trust. One participant (P6) noted that the process was *"safe and easy for everyone"*, implying that he found it reliable and user-friendly. When asked about satisfaction with helpline services, the officials rated them as "Very satisfied" (5 out of 5) for BIDA-related services, indicating high performance in this operational aspect.

In summary, user satisfaction with BIDA's OSS is encouraging but cautious. Investors appreciate the progress made in simplifying processes; however, they also recognize that the OSS is not a panacea yet. These findings reinforce that the success of OSS hinges on public awareness and support the Technology Acceptance Model's focus on perceived usefulness and ease of use as critical for technology adoption.

Corruption still exists in agencies that are not integrated with the OSS and are outside BIDA.

While BIDA itself earned praise, nearly all interviewed companies recounted instances of corruption or irregularities when dealing with other government agencies involved in the investment process. A stark theme is that services not fully digitized or integrated into the OSS platform remain rife with "speed money" demands and bureaucratic delays. Investors found that after completing BIDA's initial procedures, they often had to physically visit various department offices – defeating the purpose of a "one-stop" experience. One participant noted that getting things done outside BIDA was "not easy like BIDA", as his team had to chase officials in other departments. Common problem areas cited include:

- Environmental Clearances: Multiple firms reported difficulties obtaining environmental clearance certificates from the Department of Environment (DoE). In several cases, unofficial payments to middlemen were required. One manufacturing company (P20) confessed paying an intermediary to secure the

DoE's approval, noting they still did not know *"how much we need to pay"* for a final certificate. Another local investor (P1) described still "negotiating" the bribe amount for an environmental clearance, indicating protracted rent-seeking. These experiences mirror broader industry complaints – business leaders have publicly alleged that environmental clearances won't move forward *"unless some 'speed money' is paid"* (Chakma, 2024). Such payments are essentially bribes to hasten file movement or to obtain conditional approvals that should be routine. However, the focal point of the Department of Environment disagreed about the corruption. He mentioned that most of the companies do not provide the required documents, and this is the reason for the delayed services from the Department of Environment.

- Bangladesh Standard Testing (BSTI certificate) Certificate and clearance for fire service: Investors in sectors like manufacturing and food faced hurdles at agencies such as the Fire Service and Civil Defense Department and the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI). Several interviewees shared that they had to pay bribes via brokers to inspectors for the certificate of clearance for fire service or product standard certifications. paid in bribes (suggesting the amounts or the fact of bribery is sensitive).
- Tax Identification Number (TIN) and VAT Registrations: Some traditionally corrupt steps like company registration with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies (RJSC) and obtaining VAT and TIN were not problematic when services were online. Foreign firms noted they faced "no hassle" for name clearance and incorporation from RJSC and no bribes for e-TIN, thanks to digital portals. Digitalization reduces face-to-face interactions, thus lowering bribery opportunities. It aligns with one interviewee's observation that *"we faced irregularities in almost all other organizations except those services which were provided online."* Thus, where genuine e-governance has been implemented, corruption was markedly lower or absent in our sample. However, the focal point also mentioned that though rate of application through BIDA is few but people do not need to visit RJSC, service is delivered through electronically without physical visit.
- Import and Export Permit, and VISA: Some companies faced coordination issues with the Chief Controller of Imports and Exports (CCI&E), utility providers, and city corporations when obtaining permits and licenses, often

leading to delays and extra costs. One investor noted the CCI&E's lack of coordination, requiring repeated visits, while others mentioned difficulties in certifications and trade license renewals, sometimes involving informal fees. The Passport Office was also problematic, forcing some individuals to use third-party agents for visa applications. As there was no focal point in these offices, we were not able to collect their comments in this regard.

- Security clearances from the Home Ministry (required for some foreign investments or expatriate staff) were singled out as *exceedingly difficult* – one joint venture company metaphorically described this process "like a golden deer," meaning extremely elusive unless one has the right connections or pays. Another investor stated "security clearance is not easy," suggesting that this crucial approval (which ideally should be facilitated via BIDA's OSS) was a significant bottleneck. Another investor mentioned that *"It has been almost 9 months since we applied for the security clearance; we do not know when we will get it."* As there was no focal point in these offices, we were not able to collect their comments in this regard.

The findings in this regard show that corruption in other agencies persists, directly challenging TCE's prediction that OSS would significantly reduce transaction costs. The substantial expenses associated with bribery in non-digitized procedures indicate that reductions in transaction costs remain fragmented, rather than reflecting a comprehensive systemic transformation.

4.3 Findings on the challenges and barriers faced by the investors using OSS

To investigate the effectiveness of OSS to attract FDI in Bangladesh, we have collected five sets of data from: a. Managing director/Manager/Chief Executive Officer of 22 companies (local, foreign, and joint ventures), b. 5 BIDA officials and private sector staff manage OSS and helpline at BIDA, c. Seminar (awareness about OSS) participants (company representatives) in BIDA, and d. OSS focal points of public agencies. In the following sections, findings are

4.3.1 Limited Awareness about OSS

A strongly recurrent theme was the lack of awareness about OSS services among businesses – including those who ultimately became OSS users. Most participants admitted that prior to their own application, they had little or no knowledge of the breadth of services available through BIDA's OSS. For instance, one manager (P1) candidly said, *"I didn't know that [OSS] could provide that certificate... I didn't know in that way"*, explaining that he only learned of the OSS when an audit firm told his company to get a BIDA certificate for compliance. Another respondent (P7) likewise noted, *"No, I didn't know that [before]... As I told you earlier, I didn't know"*, when asked if he was aware OSS offers many other certificates and services. In fact, nearly every interviewee (especially from local firms) was surprised to discover that BIDA's OSS could handle permits beyond the one they originally came for. The interviewer often briefed them that OSS can process *"35 different certificates... like Fire Certificate, Environmental Clearance, Trade License, Import Export Certificate etc."*, to which participants responded with remarks such as *"I didn't know all that"* (P11) or simply *"I didn't know that"* (P8).

This pervasive lack of awareness points to communication and outreach shortcomings in OSS implementation. Many participants first heard about OSS informally – from a colleague, a consultant, or by chance. P9, a manager in a food service company, learned about OSS through a colleague who happened to work at BIDA and mentioned it was *"one kind of a one-stop service, and it is very helpful."* A few participants discovered OSS through informal channels, such as an internal meeting where it was mentioned as a one-stop service for certificates. None reported learning about it through BIDA's official communications, indicating a lack of effective marketing to the business community. Interviewees suggested improved promotion, with P9 urging, *"They should advertise their doings... Many people don't know about OSS and BIDA."* P4 also emphasized the need for agencies to inform users, highlighting that while users see value in OSS, awareness is limited, hindering its uptake. Almost all of the BIDA officials also agree with the findings that a lack of awareness about OSS is one of the problems that prevents investors from applying.

In Bangladesh's case, although the OSS has been operational for a few years, the promotion seems insufficient, as evidenced by participants repeatedly saying *"many people don't know"*. The limited awareness of OSS services goes against the assumption of institutional theory that beneficial innovations will be adopted naturally. Although the service was operationally successful, 90% of users had limited knowledge of the comprehensive services available, indicating that institutional legitimacy requires active promotion beyond simply setting up the service.

4.3.2 Frontline Capacity Gaps and Service Delays in OSS Centers

Participants identified several areas for improvement in the OSS initiative, highlighting key pain points that could enhance its effectiveness. Beyond integration and awareness issues, some expressed concerns about staff capacity and the need for system enhancements. One participant, P5, noted that *"officers are not skilled enough to handle the OSS services,"* pointing to the importance of proper training and competence at OSS centers. If frontline staff struggle to collaborate with other agencies or manage applications, the handling of complex cases could suffer. Additionally, some users called for faster service, with rising expectations for turnaround times. P1 commented, *"I think they should do their work a little faster,"* indicating that as investors become familiar with one-stop processing, they will compare it to best-in-class digital services. Thus, BIDA must continuously optimize process efficiency. Several participants noted the need for repeat visits, particularly P6, who had to visit twice for different certificates, and P5, who faced delays. Reducing the number of physical visits, possibly by offering electronic or postal delivery of certificates, could enhance convenience.

4.3.3 BIDA's OSS personnel did not demonstrate proactivity

Respondents unanimously identified poor institutional outreach as a barrier. P2's manager remarked, *"OSS should announce their services more widely"*, a sentiment echoed by P1's manager, who suggested promotional video tutorials on social media. P8's manager criticized the passive approach: *"Their fault is that their co-operation is not active, i.e., not immediate. They are not the kind of workers who tell us about their work willingly, they should say, 'Sir, we have these services. If you need any, please come to us.' ... Although their customer care is active. I had to ask them about their work willingly... No, they didn't advertise anything. I heard about OSS, BIDA from outside."* P12's manager also criticized that *"Many people don't know about OSS and BIDA. And they should be active in Customer care. What I mean is that when I went to the office, they seemed disinterested, which suggests they were not committed to providing customer service. What I saw after going to the office was that they don't pay any heed to the customer."*

4.3.4 Investors depend on intermediaries/consultants/lawyers for getting services both from BIDA and non-BIDA agencies.

Many foreign companies in Bangladesh hire local consultants or intermediaries to navigate the country's complex bureaucracy. An investor mentioned hiring a lawyer for licenses, often without knowing if part of the fee was used as a bribe. Another mentioned paying extra to a middleman for permits. This reflects a common practice where investors resort to unofficial channels for quicker results. The contrast between BIDA's controlled OSS and the unruly agencies is striking. BIDA's OSS was meant to integrate services, but many agencies have not entirely relinquished old procedures. As a result, Bangladesh's OSS functions as a partial single window—effective for what it covers but unable to shield investors from office dysfunction.

4.3.5 Simply raising awareness about OSS is not sufficient; it is essential to establish trust in OSS.

Those who received training on BIDA's One-Stop Service all applied online for BIDA-related services through the One-Stop Service Center. They are pleased and satisfied with BIDA's One Stop Service, and each respondent praised the service highly. However, almost all respondents were not very familiar with airport services and, therefore, did not utilize them. Additionally, they did not utilize services from other departments available through BIDA's One-Stop Service. They applied directly to the respective organizations for services from different online or offline departments.

However, one respondent mentioned that while they easily obtained work permits through BIDA's One Stop Service, they faced significant difficulties in obtaining visas, particularly due to SB's security clearance. This caused them considerable trouble. However, when asked about their reluctance to apply via OSS, they stated that OSS is not fully functional, and this is why they refrain from using it. One respondent mentioned that there is double costing when applying for services through BIDA's OSS, meaning that when he or she used OSS, they had to pay fees to both the office (BIDA and another agency).

In addition, they need to communicate with two offices, and they think this is double trouble, rather as the OSS is not fully functional, they get their services.

4.4 Findings on the perceptions of respondents regarding Foreign Direct Investment in Bangladesh: patterns, motivations, and reasons

4.4.1 Patterns and motivations of the investor for selecting Bangladesh for the investment

The most prominent finding from the analysis, and the focus of particular interest, is the set of motivations driving foreign direct investment in Bangladesh. Several key factors emerge consistently across the dataset:

Low Labor Cost as a Competitive Advantage

Low labor cost emerges as the most frequently cited reason for foreign direct investment in Bangladesh. Three of the four companies detailed in the dataset explicitly mention this factor as a primary motivation. P5 and P11, both operating in the ICT sector, cite low labor costs as their primary motivation, suggesting that Bangladesh's competitive advantage in this area is particularly relevant for knowledge-based services. P7, operating in the food service sector, also mentions low labor cost alongside the large consumer base as motivating factors. This indicates that even in consumer-facing service industries, Bangladesh's labor cost advantage remains significant in investment decisions. The prevalence of this factor across different sectors suggests that Bangladesh's demographic dividend, with its large working-age population, continues to translate into a compelling cost advantage for foreign investors.

Market Access and Consumer Base

The large consumer base in Bangladesh represents another significant motivation for foreign direct investment, particularly for companies in consumer-facing industries. Both P7 and P20 explicitly cite the large consumer base as a key investment driver. With a population exceeding 160 million and a growing middle class, Bangladesh offers substantial market potential for companies in the food and service sectors.

Fiscal Incentives and Supportive Policy Environment

Tax incentives emerge as another influential factor in FDI decisions, though mentioned less frequently than labor costs and market access. A company manager (P21) specifically cites tax incentives as one of its motivations alongside the large consumer base. This suggests that Bangladesh's fiscal policy measures designed to attract foreign investment are yielding results, at least in certain sectors. The presence of tax incentives in the decision-making matrix highlights the importance of the policy environment in attracting and retaining foreign investment.

Personal and Business Networks

Japanese, Korean, and Chinese companies cited personal communication and established relationships with Bangladeshi partners as factors facilitating their investment decisions. This relational approach can help navigate local business environments and reduce perceived risks.

Access to Raw Materials and Cost of Inputs

For manufacturing firms, such as those from Pakistan, the low price of materials and other inputs in Bangladesh is an additional motivator, supporting cost-effective production.

4.4.2 No effect of BIDA's One-Stop Service (OSS) on FDI

The analysis above clearly indicates that low labor costs are the primary reason foreign companies choose to invest in Bangladesh. The country provides a highly competitive labor market, financial incentives for establishing operations, a substantial consumer base, and favorable tax benefits, all of which have significantly contributed to numerous joint ventures and foreign direct investment (FDI). Unfortunately, we did not find any respondent who mentioned that starting a business in Bangladesh is easy, and none of the respondents mentioned that they were attracted by the OSS or service delivery by BIDA. During the piloting of the survey, most respondents mentioned that they were not aware of the integrated services offered by OSS, and they used OSS only to access specific services provided by BIDA. Therefore, in our final survey questionnaire, we asked respondents whether OSS would be effective if people were aware of it and received integrated services from OSS. 100% of respondents mentioned that OSS would be a very effective way to attract FDI to Bangladesh, as they were delighted with the initial services they received from BIDA's OSS. The findings in this regard are consistent with the Technological Adoption Models, which state that investors are more likely to adopt OSS if they perceive it as easy and convenient.

4.5 Findings on the institutional, technical, and administrative constraints of operating OSS

4.5.1 Institutional and Administrative Constraints

Shortage of human resources

One significant weakness facing BIDA is its staffing gap. With 213 vacant positions out of 409 approved positions as of mid-2022, BIDA is operating with just over 50% of its intended workforce. This shortage could impact the authority's operational capacity and its ability to provide timely and effective services to investors. The budget allocation for BIDA also reveals potential weaknesses in resource allocation. The relatively small proportions of the budget allocated to research (2.55%) and ICT development (1.20%) might limit BIDA's ability to conduct market research, enhance its digital services, and adopt innovative approaches to investment promotion and facilitation (BIDA, n.d.).

Pre-investment facilities are rarely used due to lack of awareness

The pre-investment services represent an important complement to the OSS, addressing information asymmetries that may deter potential investors. The officials articulated a vision for expanding these services through Bangladesh embassies, proposing that "pre-investment information and counseling could be incorporated as part of the responsibilities of Labor Counselors in Bangladeshi embassies." Another operational component of the OSS is the provision of airport facilitation services for foreign investors. Officials rate this service as "Very effective" (5 out of 5). However, they acknowledge an operational gap in this service: *"most of the investors and their agents do not know about this service. Hence, they are [not] availing this service."* This points to an awareness challenge regarding the full range of operational services available through the OSS. In our survey with the investors, almost all mentioned that they were not familiar with the pre-investment and airport services and, therefore, did not utilize them.

4.5.2 Regulatory and Implementation Gaps of establishing OSS as a true single window

The interviews reveal a gap between the legislative framework and the actual implementation of the OSS. While BIDA officials express high satisfaction (5 out of 5) with the law itself, they acknowledge implementation challenges. This points to a regulatory enforcement challenge that prevents the OSS from functioning as a true single window for all investment-related services. The officials note that a *"proposal has already been submitted to the Cabinet"* to address these issues, indicating ongoing efforts to strengthen the regulatory framework for full OSS implementation.

4.5.3 Need to have OSS fully functional and a single platform to provide all services

These findings have significant implications for Bangladesh's FDI attraction efforts. While the OSS platform represents an important policy initiative to improve the investment climate, its effectiveness appears constrained by implementation gaps. Studies indicate that Bangladesh's FDI to GDP ratio remains below 1%, significantly lower than comparable countries like Vietnam (6.155%) and Sri Lanka (3.292%). The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry has emphasized the need for bringing all OSS portals under one national single window called the National Single OSS, acknowledging current fragmentation.

Those who joined an awareness workshop on BIDA's One-Stop Service, almost all applied online for BIDA-related services through the One-Stop Service Center. They are pleased and satisfied with BIDA's One Stop Service, and each respondent praised the service highly. However, almost all respondents were not very familiar with airport services and, therefore, did not utilize them. Additionally, they did not utilize services from other departments available through BIDA's One-Stop Service. They applied directly to the respective organizations for services from different online or offline departments.

However, one respondent mentioned that while they easily obtained work permits through BIDA's One Stop Service, they faced significant difficulties in obtaining visas, particularly due to SB's security clearance. This caused them considerable trouble. However, when asked about their reluctance to apply via OSS, they stated that OSS is not fully functional, and this is why they refrain from using it. One respondent mentioned that there is double costing when applying for services through BIDA's OSS, meaning that when he or she used OSS, they had to pay fees to both the office (BIDA and another agency). In addition, they need to communicate with two offices, and they think this is double trouble.

4.5.4 Implementation status of the One Stop Service (OSS) Act 2018

Inactive *Central One-Stop Service Authority*

Section 4 of the One Stop Service (OSS) Act 2018 provides a provision for forming a Central One-stop Service Authority. According to the law: "For the implementation of any project or venture under any of the Authorities mentioned in Schedule-A and within the scope of the law or legal instrument under which it is established, such authority shall be deemed to be Central One-Stop Service Authority to ensure, within the prescribed time, necessary services, facilities, incentives, licenses, approvals, permits, clearances, by whatever name-called, to an investor or a venture." During a key informant interview in BIDA, we learned that this committee has been established and is headed by the finance minister/Advisor. However, as of today, this committee has not met.

Absence of a focal point in the related organizations other than BIDA

According to Section 4(5), every connected organization with OSS must have a focal point to provide services through BIDA OSS. During the interview, we asked the concerned officials of BIDA about the list of focal points from other organizations. Out of 48 organizations, we found only 17 offices that had appointed focal points for coordination with the OSS of BIDA. We attempted to contact the focal points, but they were unreachable via their mobile numbers. BIDA also did not disclose these focal points on its website. Even in Section 9 under the One Stop Service (OSS) Act 2018, there is a provision for taking necessary punishment if the focal points do not serve properly. In reality, this *isn't feasible, as we rarely have any examples to refer to in this regard,*" a BIDA official stated during the KII.

Though it is mandatory, there is a limited number of applications in OSS

According to section 6, sub-section 4, 'if an applicant applies to the Central One-stop Service Authority or the Regional One-stop Center, the applicant need not submit any separate application to any of the organizations or authorities providing services, facilities, incentives, or issuing licenses, approvals, permits, or clearances.' Although the number of applications for OSS has increased (IPAG and e.Gen, 2023), very few investors apply for the necessary services from other organizations to the OSS. Even though applying through the OSS portal is legally mandatory, the law has not been enforced.

Inactive One Stop Service Observance Cell

According to the One-stop Service (Bangladesh Investment Development Authority) Rules, 2020, there is a provision for forming a One-stop Service Observance Cell (BIDA, n.d.c). The cell comprises representatives from other organizations and is headed by the cabinet secretary. The member secretary of this cell is the BIDA Chairman. During an interview with a Key informant at BIDA, we learned that this committee rarely conducts meetings.

4.5.5 No technical constraints of OSS operations

Almost all of the participants mentioned that they did not face any technical problem, such as a server problem, error, etc., while using the OSS platform. BIDA officials also mentioned that there are no technical problems with the functioning of OSS.

4.6 Findings on why some government agencies show limited participation and cooperation in the OSS framework.

The One-Stop Service (OSS) from the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) was made to connect different government agencies and give investors a smooth, all-in-one digital platform. A considerable policy debate is going on about how well OSS works, but poor coordination between agencies makes it much harder to get things done. The OSS should, in theory, make it so that investors do not have to deal with different departments separately. However, in reality, this integration often remains superficial deep.

Many of the investors said that even though they applied through the online portal, they still had to go to places like the Department of Environment (DoE) and the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSC) in person to get approvals. The investors also said that "OSS is not fully functional and files do not move smoothly between departments without direct, physical follow-up, sometimes involving illegal 'speed money' to get around bureaucratic inertia." This fragmentation makes the "one-stop" platform into a frustrating, multi-stop reality, which goes against its primary goal of making investment easier.

According to the BIDA officials, this systemic failure is caused by a lack of genuine interoperability and a reluctance among some government bodies to relinquish manual processes. Regarding the non-cooperation of other agencies, BIDA officials shows their concern and a BIDA official mentions that

> *"But it is true, other departments are not very positive to provide their services through OSS. Hence, they simultaneously providing their services through their traditional methods and they are reluctant to provide services if any one apply through OSS."*

This resistance from other government departments represents a fundamental barrier to achieving the "single window" vision of OSS. The officials identify a key challenge as the reluctance of other organizations to shift from traditional service delivery methods, noting they are *"working hard to solve the issue."*

However, the focal points of different organizations' views are different from those of BIDA officials. Most focal points reported that despite being officially connected to the OSS system, actual service delivery through the platform remains minimal. Almost all agencies indicated *"no activities have occurred through OSS, more specifically, they do not receive any files through the OSS"*.

During a KII with BIDA official, when asked how files are sent to other offices, they did not respond with an appropriate answer. One officer mentioned that files are delivered through D-nothi but not through the OSS portal. This aligns with organizational challenges identified in broader studies, noting that despite the OSS, BIDA has not been able to bring all services onto a single board. Almost all of the respondents mentioned that if the application comes through OSS, "*we will deliver it promptly, it is for sure* "! A focal point of an organization specifically recommended that *"it would be better if online integration with OSS were easier",* suggesting that technical interoperability issues may hamper seamless service delivery through the platform. This reflects the challenge of creating a truly integrated digital service environment across different government agencies with varying levels of technical infrastructure and capacity.

4.6.1 Regular meetings between BIDA and focal points of other agencies suggest that an institutional communication framework exists

The survey indicates that participating agencies demonstrate awareness of their roles and express willingness to comply with BIDA directives. Regular meetings between BIDA and focal points suggest an institutional communication framework exists. For example, an organization reported attending OSS-related meetings every two months. This indicates that while the formal institutional structure for service integration exists, operational integration lags behind the administrative framework established through the One Stop Service Rules of 2020.

4.7 Conclusion

The findings paint a picture of significant improvement coupled with important limitations. On one hand, BIDA's OSS has clearly made the application process for many investor services faster, easier, and more transparent. Users no longer have to navigate a maze of offices for routine approvals – a development that has enhanced satisfaction and trust in the system. On the other hand, the OSS's promise of a truly integrated, "one-stop" solution is not yet fully realized, as evidenced by delays in services that depend on coordination with other agencies and a general lack of awareness about the platform's offerings.

While Bangladesh has established the necessary legal and institutional framework for an integrated service delivery model through BIDA's OSS, practical inter-agency coordination and technical integration remain challenges. Addressing these gaps will be critical for improving Bangladesh's investment climate and achieving its ambitious FDI targets to become developed country.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

This exploratory study investigated the efficacy of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority's (BIDA) One Stop Service (OSS) in drawing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to Bangladesh. The findings indicate a paradoxical scenario wherein BIDA's OSS exhibits operational success within its constrained parameters, yet does not fulfill its overarching aim of evolving into a comprehensive investment facilitation mechanism for attracting FDI.

5.1.1 Partial Success: BIDA's Operational challenges and opportunities

The study shows that BIDA's OSS has been very successful in making its main services more efficient. The platform has successfully lowered transaction costs and bureaucratic barriers for BIDA-managed services. It has a 98% service commitment rate, operations that are free of corruption, and user satisfaction ratings of about 4.5 out of 5. Users consistently reported completing applications within 2-3 days without experiencing bribery or facilitation payments, thereby corroborating the Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) framework's predictions regarding diminished time, costs, and physical visits. This success fits with what institutional theory says about how standardized processes and clear institutional settings can make things run more smoothly.

But these successes are still limited to about 18 fully integrated services that BIDA directly controls. This is out of the 150 investor services that are needed to start and run a business in Bangladesh. This limited integration goes against the OSS idea of providing full, one-stop service delivery.

5.1.2 The Awareness Paradox and Trust Deficit

A big reason why OSS doesn't work is that investors don't know much about it. Even though OSS was available for use, 90% of users didn't know much about all the services that were supposed to be available through it. Many learned about the platform through informal channels instead of official advertising. This gap in awareness goes against institutional theory's idea that good institutional changes will naturally be widely used.

5.1.3 No Impact on FDI Attraction

The study's most significant finding pertains to OSS's minimal influence on FDI decisions. Foreign investors said that low labor costs, a large customer base, tax breaks, and business networks were reasons to invest, not how easy it is to start a business. No respondents indicated that OSS or BIDA service delivery was a factor of interest. All respondents suggested that OSS "would be" effective if it were fully operational and well recognized. However, this conditional support only shows how OSS is currently lacking. This finding helps explain why Bangladesh's FDI-to-GDP ratio is so low (less than 1%) compared to Vietnam's (6.155%) and Sri Lanka's (3.292%). The research indicates that incomplete service integration actively obstructs FDI flows instead of promoting them, despite the presence of various influencing factors.

5.1.4 Implementation Constraints of OSS: lack of institutional compliance and administrative and legal barriers

The analysis revealed that the OSS Act 2018 was inadequately implemented. The Central One-Stop Service Authority has not yet convened, despite being established and led by the finance minister. Merely 17 of the 48 mandated agencies designated focus points, and the majority of these individuals are either inaccessible or not featured on BIDA's website. The One Stop Service Observance Cell convenes infrequently, and the regulations for OSS applications remain unobserved. The governance issues elucidate why agency focal points reported infrequently receiving files via OSS.BIDA's capacity to facilitate cross-agency integration is further constrained by its staffing, which is at just 50%, and its minimal financial resources (2.55% allocated for research and 1.20% for ICT development). Investors frequently criticized OSS staff for their lack of proactivity, labeling them as "disinterested" and "uncommitted to customer service."

5.1.5 The Integration Paradox: Success at the Center, Failure at the Periphery (other agencies)

The research revealed widespread opposition to OSS integration from many government entities. BIDA executives indicated that other departments exhibit a lack of enthusiasm for delivering their services via OSS, favoring conventional ways instead. When investors worked with the Department of Environment, Fire Service, Bangladesh

Standards and Testing Institute, and security clearance authorities, they always said they faced corruption, delays and red tape. Agencies persist in conventional service delivery, compelling investors to make in-person office visits that undermine the one-stop notion.

5.2 Theoretical Implications of this research

The findings present nuanced implications for the theoretical frameworks applied. Our findings contribute to the theoretical discourse on investment facilitation through several lenses:

From an institutional theory perspective, the research demonstrates how formal institutional changes (establishment of OSS) may achieve limited effectiveness when informal institutional elements (inter-agency coordination, communication patterns) remain unchanged. The persistent gaps between BIDA and other agencies underscore North's (1990) assertion that formal rules must align with informal norms and enforcement mechanisms to achieve desired institutional outcomes.

Through the lens of transaction cost economics, our findings validate that BIDA's OSS has successfully reduced certain transaction costs (time, effort, and uncertainty) for basic services, aligning with Williamson's (1985) framework. However, the persistence of high transaction costs for complex services indicates that the theoretical promise of integrated single-window systems is only partially fulfilled in practice.

Regarding technology adoption models, our research demonstrates that the mere availability of a technological solution (OSS portal) is insufficient without complementary awareness, training, and institutional integration. This supports the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology's emphasis on facilitating conditions as critical determinants of system success.

5.2 Policy Recommendations

In addition, we possess multiple policy recommendations. First, Bangladesh must evolve from the existing partial One-Stop Service (OSS) to a fully integrated National Single OSS, unifying all investor services into a single platform with compulsory participation and enforceable service-level agreements for all agencies. Streamlining business licensing and permit acquisition processes requires strategic adaptation of proven international models, particularly Rwanda's efficiency-driven framework, Malaysia's comprehensive digital infrastructure, and Singapore's user-centric design principles. Such benchmarking can inform BIDA's institutional capacity development and technological enhancement strategies.

Secondly, robust political commitment is needed; the Central One-Stop Service Authority and One Stop Service Observance Cell must be operational, with consistent meetings and accountability measures for non-compliant agencies. Third, BIDA necessitates significant capacity augmentation by filling vacant positions, raising funding for ICT development and promotion, and investing in staff training for intricate case management.

A comprehensive awareness campaign employing digital media, embassy networks, and direct approach to business associations is essential to educate potential investors about OSS capabilities. The enforcement of the OSS Act 2018 must be authentic, imposing fines on agencies that fail to integrate or provide services via the platform. Sixth, tackling corruption in non-BIDA agencies necessitates the application of the successful digitization model from BIDA to all investment-related services, thereby reducing discretionary in-person interactions that facilitate rent-seeking behavior.

5.4 Conclusion

This study illustrates that BIDA's One Stop Service has attained operational excellence within a limited scope, although it does not fulfill the transformative investment facilitation anticipated by policymakers. The platform effectively diminishes bureaucratic obstacles, eradicates corruption, and improves satisfaction for services under BIDA's direct oversight. Nevertheless, insufficient inter-agency integration, inadequate awareness initiatives, feeble governance enforcement, and redundant service delivery technologies hinder OSS from operating as a true single window for investment.

The research reveals that although OSS has the capacity to attract FDI, this potential is not actualized due to deficiencies in execution rather than problems in design. The overwhelming endorsement from investors that a fully operational OSS will successfully draw investment substantiates the concept while criticizing the existing implementation. Most significantly, the OSS of Bangladesh Investment Development

Authority exerts no measurable influence on FDI attraction in Bangladesh. Investors select Bangladesh based on labor costs and market access, not administrative convenience. Until the OSS achieves comprehensive integration across all investment-related services, eliminates corruption in partner agencies, and actively markets its capabilities, it will remain an underutilized administrative innovation rather than a strategic FDI tool.

Bangladesh's investment climate faces a critical juncture. The legal and institutional framework for integrated service delivery exists through the OSS Act 2018 and supporting regulations. What remains absent is genuine political will to enforce inter-agency cooperation and technical commitment to achieve full digital integration. Without addressing these fundamental governance challenges, Bangladesh will continue losing FDI opportunities to regional competitors with more streamlined business environments.

The way forward to make OSS effective requires three essential elements: enforcing mandatory OSS usage across all agencies with accountability mechanisms, investing in capacity building and digital infrastructure, and conducting sustained awareness campaigns targeting both domestic and foreign investors. As Bangladesh aspires developed country status, evolving OSS from a partial solution to a comprehensive investment gateway signifies not only a regulatory change but a fundamental reconfiguration of government-investor interactions in the digital era.

This study acknowledges certain methodological limitations that offer avenues for future research. The relatively small sample size constrains the generalizability of findings and limits the scope for statistical inference. Future research ought to utilize bigger, statistically representative samples and do comparative analyses with successful OSS implementations in nations such as Singapore, Rwanda, or Vietnam. Longitudinal research examining OSS evolution and its influence on FDI inflows over time would yield significant data regarding the extent to which reforms result in quantifiable enhancements to the investment climate.

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Annexure-1

Company and Respondent Profiles

The data includes interviews with managers and executives from 22 companies across different sectors. (Due to ethical and confidential reasons, we did not mention the name of the company rather we used pseudonym of the companies, sector, status and origin of country is real)

SL	Sector	Location of the company	Local /Foreign (F)/F & JV(Foreign and Joint Venture)	Origin of country
P1	Manufacturing (Manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products)	Mirpur	Local	BD
P2	Manufacture of electric power distribution transformers	Uttorkhan	Local	Bangladesh
P3	Information and Communication Technology	Mirpur 1	Foreign	UK
P4	Manufacturing (Other Manufacturing)	Keraniganj	Local	BD
P5	Manufacturing (Manufacture of wearing apparel (Read made garments)	Mirpur	JV	China
P6	Manufacturer (Manufacture of fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment)	Khilkhet	JV	Pakistan
P7	Information and Communication Technology (Computer programming, consultancy and related activities)	Badda	JV	UK
P8	Manufacturing (Manufacture of leather and related products)	Savar	Foreign	China
P9	Manufacturing (Transformer)	Managing Director	Local	Bangladesh
P10	Manufacture (Manufacture of leather and related products)	Savar	Local	Bangladesh
P11	Information and Communication Technology (Computer programming, consultancy and related activities)	Uttara	Local	- Bangladesh

P12	Manufacturing (Manufacturing of Beverage)	Mirpur	Local	Bangladesh
P13	Manufacturing (Manufacturing of Food)	Gulshan	Foreign	India
P14	Manufacture (PVC Solvent Cement (GLUE))	Savar	JV	Korea
P15	Manufacturing (Manufacture of textiles)	Mirpur	Local	Bangladesh
P16	Information & Communication (Computer programming, consultancy and related activities)	Mirpur	Local	Bangladesh
P17	Information & Communication, publication (Publishing Activities)	Mirpur	Foreign	Japan
P18	Information and Communication Technology	Uttara	F& JV	USA
P19	Manufacture (Manufacture of food products)	Savar	JV	China
P20	Food and beverage service activities)	Gulshan	Foreign	China
P21	Manufacture (Manufacture of fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment)	Savar	JV	China
P22	Information and Communication Technology (Computer programming, consultancy and related activities)	Mirpur	Foreign,	UK

Annexure-02:

List the name of the offices of the of focal points (due to confidentiality, name of the focal points is not mentioned.

1. Office of the Registrar of Joint-Stock Companies and Firms (RJSC)

2. Department of Environment

3. Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industries

4. Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board

5. Dhaka Power Distribution Company Ltd. (DPDC)

6. West Zone Power Distribution Company Ltd.

7.Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Registration Department

8. Department of Defense

9. Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (DWASA)

10. Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd. (BTCL), Head Office

11. Jalalabad Gas Transmission and Distribution System Ltd.

12. Department of Immigration and Passports

13. Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry

14. Bangladesh Bank

15. Sundarban Gas Company Ltd., Khulna

16. Dhaka South City Corporation

17. Sonali Bank Ltd

18. Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company Ltd.

Annexure-03

List of seminar participants (Due to confidentiality, name of the respondent is not mentioned here)

Designation	Organization name
Accountant	Sung Kwang Apparels Ltd.
Admin Manager	Parkscene Ltd.
Administrator	Golden Touch Imports Inc
AGM, System Operation	Eastern IT
Assistant Manager (Admin & Finance)	Nagase Singapore (Pte)Ltd, Bangladesh Liaison Office
Associate Director	Standard Chartered Bank
CFO	Onetex Industrial (BD) Limited
Coordinator	Sunny Sweater Ltd.
Corporate Coordinator	Beaumanoir Asia Sourcing Pte. Ltd
Manager	Fujikura Ltd
Manager	LUSAKA FASHION LTD
Manager Admin & Accounts	Jiangsu Guotai Huasheng Industrial Co., Ltd.
Manager, Finance & Administration	China Glaze Bangladesh Ltd
Manager-Administration	Nippon Steel Trading Corporation
Officer	Amigo Bangladesh Ltd
Senior Advisor	Sangu Hill Eco Resort Ltd.
Senior Business Manager	China Shandong International Economic & Technical Cooperation Group Ltd.
Senior Executive, Commercial	Partex Star Group
Sr. Accountant	VEIT Hong Kong Ltd.
Sr. Manager- Head of Finance	TATA SIA Airlines

Annexure-04

Research Title: Effectiveness of One Stop Services (OSS) of Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) for Attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): An empirical Analysis

Survey, 2024 (Service Seekers)

This questionnaire is prepared for the research titled above which is a part of research program of BPATC. The information will be used only for academic research. Your response will be recorded in an audio device. If you disagree with the audio recording please let allow sufficient time to the enumerator to write your answer. If you agree please let us know and we can start asking questions. Are you agree ?1=Yes 0=No

Unique ID: XY: X=Enumerator ID, Y=Serial
Location:
Name of the enumerator: Date:
Start time: End time:

Unique Id

*	*

* Enumerator will fill out the above box

1. Name of Service seekers:

2. Designation: 3. Age 4. Gender 5. Religion

6. Education Qualification: 1= Post graduate (including PhD) 2=Graduate 3=HSC 4=SSC 5=Elementary School 6=No formal education

7. Address a. Current Address

b. Headquarter address (City/province and Country):

8. Which sector does the company/firm works

a. Agriculture b. Health c. Services d. Commerce and trade e. Manufacturing f. Others (Please specify)

9. Why you/your client selected Bangladesh for the investment? (Investment incentives, political stability, availability of natural resources, access to market with huge population, tax incentives etc.).

1= Website, 2= Seminar/Workshop, 3=Colleague, 4=others (please specify)

10. What are the factors behind it to apply through OSS? (Reputation, less time to get services, no hassle)

11. Can you remember how many and which services (if possible, please let us know about the services and name of the departments) you applied for?

12. If you do not apply all services from OSS, what are the reasons behind this? Let us know your experience

13. How long did it take to complete the process of application in the OSS

14. How long did it take to receive the services from the OSS

15. Have you received services through online or you get it from BIDA office personally

16. Have you called to helpline services to know your applied services status ? Please tell me your experience.

17. How many times you have poked to the concern for getting service easily?

18. Have you visited other offices to get services? (let us know how many times you visited, or let us know your experiences in this regard)

19. Have you faced any irregularities/problems/corruption to get services ? (Please let us know if you faced any specific irregularities)

20. How satisfied you are with OSS services

1= Very dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, 5=Very satisfied

21. How effective do you think OSS for foreign direct investment (FDI) are in attracting and facilitating investment in Bangladesh?

1= Very ineffective, 2= ineffective, 3=Neutral, 4= Effective, 5= Very effective

22. Do you believe that OSS provides sufficient support and assistance to foreign investors throughout the process of setting up a business in Bangladesh

1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

23. Compared to the hospitality of BIDA-OSS in the airport, (if you/your client receive) how you will rate it ?

1= Very dissatisfied, 2=Disatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, 5=Very satisfied

24. Comment please- is OSS is more one stop ?

1=yes 0=No

25. If you receive services from call center of OSS, how you will rate it ?

26. Were you able to obtain all the necessary permits and licenses through the OSS for FDI?

27. Were there any services you required from any other organization, was not included in the OSS services? (name of the services and departments/organizations)

28. Did you find any weakness in terms of using OSS like application process, service issue (error/not accessible etc)

29. Any idea about the strength of the OSS (application is easy, anyone can apply through online from any place, file processing tracking)

30. In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges that foreign investors face when establishing a business in Bangladesh? (Local rules regulation, finding suitable location for business, obtaining necessary permits and licenses, finding local partners) (if I ask to select one from the above-mentioned challenges which one you will select?)

31. How would you rate airport Services (arrival visa, faster immigration, VIP lounge use if you your client avail it) of BIDA-OSS in the airport, (if you/your client receive) how you will rate it?

1= Very dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, 5=Very satisfied, 0=Did not receive airport service

32. How would you rate Pre-investment information and counseling service of BIDA-OSS (if you/your client receive) how you will rate it? Let us know also your experience in this regard.

1= Very dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, 5=Very satisfied, 0=Did not receive airport service

33. If you take any services other than using OSS related to your business start in Bangladesh, let us know your experiences (name of department, length of time to get services, any happy or unhappy situation faced)

34. Overall experiences and suggestions to make OSS more effective.

Annexure-05

Research Title: Effectiveness of One Stop Services (OSS) of Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) for Attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): An Exploratory Study

Survey, 2024 (Service Providers-BIDA)

This questionnaire is prepared for the research titled above which is a part of research program of BPATC. The information will be used only for academic research. Your response will be recorded in an audio device. If you disagree with the audio recording, please let allow sufficient time to the enumerator to write your answer. If you agree please let us know and we can start asking questions. Are you agree ?1=Yes 0=No

Unique ID: XY: X=Enumerator ID, Y=Serial
Location:
Name of the enumerator:
Date:22
Start time:
End time:
Unique Id

*	*

* Enumerator will fill out the above box

1. Name of the organization: BIDA

1. Name of the respondent:

2. Designation: 3. Age 4. Gender 5. Religion

6. Education Qualification: 1= Post graduate (including PhD) 2=Graduate 3=HSC 4=SSC

7. Why you/your client selected Bangladesh for the investment (Any idea?)? (Investment incentives, political stability, availability of natural resources, access to market with huge population, tax incentives etc.).

8. What do you think, which method is effective to reach investor for the promotion of OSS.

1= Website, 2= Seminar/Workshop, 3=Colleague, 4=others (please specify)

10. What are the factors behind it to apply through OSS? (Any idea?) (Reputation, less time to get services, no hassle)

11. How you are involved with OSS (i.e., what responsibilities you are assigned)

12. Some investors do not apply to get all services through OSS rather they apply to other organization individually, what are the reasons behind this? Let us know your experience

13. Does OSS maintain the committed time to provide services? if not let us know the reasons behind it. If yes, let us know the strength of the OSS

14. In your own experience, are you aware of the maximum length (maximum working days) of providing services through OSS? let us knot the maximum time and service name.

15. Are you satisfied with the helpline services of BIDA-OSS? Please rate it

1= Very dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, 5=Very satisfied, 0= Not willing to answer/ do not have much experiences

16. How many times you have poked to the concern (other department or staff of BIDA) for providing service easily? Let us know the experiences

17. Have you heard any irregularities/problems/corruption to provide services? (Please let us know if you faced any specific irregularities)

18. How satisfied you are with OSS services

1= Very dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, 5=Very satisfied, 0=Unwilling to answer

19. How effective do you think OSS for foreign direct investment (FDI) are in attracting and facilitating investment in Bangladesh?

1= Very ineffective, 2= ineffective, 3=Neutral, 4= Effective, 5= Very effective, 0=Unwilling to answer

20. Do you believe that an OSS provides sufficient support and assistance to foreign investors throughout the process of setting up a business in Bangladesh

1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

21. How you will rate it about the hospitality of BIDA-OSS in the airport ? (if available)

1= Very ineffective, 2= ineffective, 3=Neutral, 4= Effective, 5= Very effective, 0=Unwilling to answer

22. Comment please- is OSS is more one stop?

1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree, 0=Unwilling to answer

23. Do you know any services which is important but was not included in the OSS services? (Name of the services and departments/organizations)

24. Do you know/heard any weakness in terms of using OSS like application process, service issue (error/not accessible etc.)

25. Any idea about the strength of the OSS (application is easy, anyone can apply through online from any place, file processing tracking)

26. In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges that foreign investors face when establishing a business in Bangladesh? (Local rules regulation, finding suitable location for business, obtaining necessary permits and licenses, finding local partners) (if I ask to select one from the above-mentioned challenges which one you will select?)

27. Please let us know about the Pre-investment information and counseling service of BIDA-OSS (how to manage it and who manage it , skills, education of the manager), and how you will rate it? Let us know also your experience in this regard.

28. So far investors are not aware of OSS by BIDA. Any program and plan to aware investors to apply through OSS to other department?

29. So far, there is a law about the OSS. The is not implemented. What do you think? Please let us know you opinion about this.

1= Very dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, 5=Very satisfied

30. Overall experiences and suggestions, and plan (weakness and strength) to make OSS more effective.

Thank you for your patience and time

Annexure-06

Research Title: Effectiveness of One Stop Services (OSS) of Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) for Attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): An Empirical Analysis

Survey, 2024 (Service Providers- agencies other than BIDA)

This questionnaire is prepared for the research titled above which is a part of research program of BPATC. The information will be used only for academic research. Your response will be recorded in an audio device. If you disagree with the audio recording please let allow sufficient time to the enumerator to write your answer. If you agree please let us know and we can start asking questions. Are you agree ?1=Yes 0=No

Unique ID: XY: X=Enumerator ID, Y=Serial
Location:
Name of the enumerator: Date:
Start time: End time:

Unique Id

*	*

* Enumerator will fill out the above box

1. Organization name: 1a. Address:

2. Name of the respondent:

3. Designation: 4. Age (year): 5. Gender: 1=Male, 0=Female 6. Religion

7. Education Qualification: 1=PhD, 2= Post graduate, 2=Graduate

8. What are the services your organization provide through OSS.

9. What are the factors behind it to apply through OSS? (Reputation, less time to get services, no hassle) (Any idea?)

10. Have you provided any services through OSS (if possible, please let us know about the services)? Let us know the mechanism of providing services of your organizations through OSS.

11. How long did it take in general to complete the process of application in the OSS

12. Have you heard any irregularities/problems/corruption to provide services? (Any experience ?)

13. How satisfied you are with OSS services

1= Very dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, 5=Very satisfied

14. How effective do you think one-stop shops for foreign direct investment (FDI) are in attracting and facilitating investment in Bangladesh?

1= Very ineffective, 2= ineffective, 3=Neutral, 4= Effective, 5= Very effective

15. Do you believe that a one-stop-shop for FDI provides sufficient support and assistance to foreign investors throughout the process of setting up a business in Bangladesh

1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

16. Did you find any weakness in terms of using OSS like application process, service issue (error/not accessible etc.)

17. Any idea about the strength of the OSS (application is easy, anyone can apply through online from any place, file processing tracking)

18. In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges that foreign investors face when establishing a business in Bangladesh? (Local rules regulation, finding suitable location for business, obtaining necessary permits and licenses, finding local partners) (if I ask to select one from the above-mentioned challenges which one you will select?)

19. There is a claim from the BIDA that other organization do not cooperate properly? If it happens in your organizations what are the reasons actually behind this? or please comment on this statement.

20. Overall experiences and suggestions to make OSS more effective especially focusing on inter organizational coordination.

Annexure-07

Research Title: Effectiveness of One Stop Services (OSS) of Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) for Attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): An Empirical Analysis

Survey, 2024 (Seminar participants)

This questionnaire is prepared for the research titled above which is a part of research program of BPATC. The information will be used only for academic research. Your response will be recorded in an audio device. If you disagree with the audio recording please let allow sufficient time to the enumerator to write your answer. If you agree please let us know and we can start asking questions. Are you agree ?1=Yes 0=No

Unique ID: XY: X=Enumerator ID, Y=Serial
Location:
Name of the enumerator: Date:
Start time: End time:

Unique Id

*	*

* Enumerator will fill out the above box

1. Organization name: 1a. Address:

2. Name of the respondent:

3. Designation: 4. Age (year): 5. Gender: 1=Male, 0=Female 6. Religion

7. Education Qualification: 1=PhD, 2= Post graduate, 2=Graduate

8. What are the services you received from OSS.

9. What are the factors behind it to apply through OSS? (Reputation, less time to get services, no hassle)

11. How long did it take in general to complete the process of application in the OSS

13. How satisfied you are with OSS services

1= Very dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, 5=Very satisfied

14. How effective do you think one-stop shops for foreign direct investment (FDI) are in attracting and facilitating investment in Bangladesh?

1= Very ineffective, 2= ineffective, 3=Neutral, 4= Effective, 5= Very effective

15. Do you believe that a one-stop-shop for FDI provides sufficient support and assistance to foreign investors throughout the process of setting up a business in Bangladesh

1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

16. Did you find any weakness in terms of using OSS like application process, service issue (error/not accessible etc)

17. Any idea about the strength of the OSS (application is easy, anyone can apply through online from any place, file processing tracking)

19. There is a claim from the BIDA that other organization do not cooperate properly? Comment please

20. As a seminar participant, so far you are aware of OSS. So, have you used all the facilities from OSS. If answer is yes, list the services. If answer is no, why ?

20. Overall experiences and suggestions to make OSS more effective especially focusing on inter organizational coordination.

The end