



A Case Study Analysis on the Participation of Women in Workforce in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Female employment plays an essential role in economic development of a country. Involvement of women in workforce helps not only the economic progress of a country but also other social sectors to develop. In compare to last decades though the rate of women employment has increased in Bangladesh but it is still very low in compare to global progress. It is urgently needed to increase female employment rate of Bangladesh for a sustainable development. We collected our data using stratified random sampling method where we interviewed fifteen women, some of them are job holders and others are unemployed. They are also categorized as married, unmarried and divorced. In our study, we analyzed the socio economic condition of women aged between 24 to 30. We find that women are facing many problems in choosing career as well as in their working places. Improvement is needed in the social norms and environment that often act as barriers to women's employment.

Key words: Participation, Women, Workforce, Bangladesh.

1.Introduction

According to the World bank report¹(2018), Women make up a little over half the country's total population, but their contribution to measure economic activity, growth and wellbeing is far below its potential. Despite significant progress in recent decades, the labour market remains divided along gender lines and progress towards gender equality seems to have stalled. Increasing female labour force participation will certainly help the country break the decade-long one digit growth barrier, as higher female labour force participation can boost growth by mitigating the impact of a shrinking workforce. If the female labour participation rate rises by 2.5 million a year, the participation rate will equal the current rate of male participation in Bangladesh in a decade. This will add 1.8 percentage points to potential GDP growth each year.

In Bangladesh, women account for most unpaid work, and when women are employed in paid work, they are overrepresented in the informal sector and among the poor. While growth and stability are necessary to give women the opportunities they need, women's participation in the labour market is also a part of the growth and stability equation. Restrictions on women's rights to inherit properties and social impediments to freely pursue a profession are strongly associated with large gender gaps in labour force participation. We should create lots and lots of jobs for female labour entrants in addition to creating jobs for new male labour entrants. This in turn will require large increases in investments in factories, farms and services. However, increase in investment is necessary but unlikely to be sufficient to increase female participation in the labour force. Bangladesh will need to break the barriers that prevent women from participating in the labour market or entering the organized business sectors as entrepreneurs. The barriers are both formal such as discriminatory inheritance laws, and informal such as unwritten social norms restricting female participation in activities traditionally considered to be the exclusive domain of men. Fundamentally, the mindset of both men and women will need to become much more gender-blind. Here the role of education and social policies will be most critical. Zahid Hussain, lead economist of the WB office in Dhaka agreed on this issue²(The Daily Star, 2018)

According to WB President Kim, Bangladesh's success was indeed due to the rise of its women power. Their participation in the labour force has been increasing

significantly. They are emerging as great entrepreneurs and their emergence as successful leaders at various levels has made this possible. Atiur said the central bank was giving special financing support to women entrepreneurs and promoting pro-women human resource policy for the entire financial sector. We take great pride in this global recognition of Bangladesh. Women empowerment will take Bangladesh to greater heights of balanced inclusive development.

One important cultural limitation to women's employment outside of the home has been the tradition of purdah. Prevalent in Bangladesh's rural society, it loosely refers to the sequestration of women from the male world outside of the family environment. Large variations in the effective implications of purdah are apparent for women in Bangladesh, in part varying by geographic location and socioeconomic status.⁵ Traditionally, geographic mobility of poor women in rural Bangladesh has been remarkably limited: in a 1996 survey in the rural area of Matlab, 93% of women interviewed had never been to the local bazaar, 92% had never been to the local mosque, and 68% left their residential compound at most once a week³(Anderson and Eswaran 2009). Effective restriction of mobility for women outside of the household can still be fairly severe today. In 2011, 44% of married women aged 20–24 said that they were not generally free to make decisions about visiting their own relatives⁴(BBS 2013). A minority of women face even more severe restrictions. The same survey found that 22% of women were not free to travel to a health center either alone or with their children.

Women can contribute to economic development in many ways, as elaborated by Duflo⁵(2012) and another more policy-focused discussion in the International Monetary Fund⁶ (2013). As of 2013, the labor force participation rate was 82% for men and 34% for women.⁶ If the rate for women were raised to the same as for men, the labor force of Bangladesh would be increased by 43%. Using the simplest possible model of production, this would help bring about a 27% increase in gross domestic product, even without any increase in the capital stock.

Despite a steep 35% growth in female employment in the last decade in the industrial sector, the number of women overall in the job force remains low compared to their male counterparts in Bangladesh. According to the International Labour Organization's (ILO) report titled "World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends

2018,” female employment in Bangladesh has seen a 35% increase, reaching 18.1 million from 2008 to 2017, while male employment has seen an 11% increase, reaching 45.7 million. Higher growth in female employment was fueled by the industrial sector, especially the apparel industry and services sector. But the agriculture sector still employs the highest number of women, employing 10.9 million workers. However, there is a huge gap between male-female employment ratio and the lion’s share of working women are being employed in agriculture. According to the ILO report ⁷ (2017), the total number of employed people in Bangladesh stood at 63.7 million, of which 28.4% or 18.1 million were women and 71.7% or 45.7 million were male. Total workforce at that time was 66.6 million, of which nearly 71% or 47.2 million are male, while only 29.1% are women. Male employment has seen a 25.44% rise, reaching 21.2 million workers, while the industry sector witnessed a 52.11% increase, reaching 10.8 million.

Now a days, women are more concern about their career then before. Parents are more liberal to their female child. They want to see their female child in a leading role of country. Parents do not differentiate male and female child to bear their expenditure now a days. If we compare with 90’s female education we will notice a tremendous growth of female education.

2.Objective of the study

Our aim is to conduct a research among young women aging between 24 to 30. This is the age when people tend to look for the suitable career options. Why these women cannot overcome the obstacles to move ahead with their career. We gather some information to find out the reasons behind the present condition of female participation in workforce.

So the main objective of our study is to find why women in our country are lacking behind men in job sectors with race of time.

3.Material and methods

In recent years, the developing countries of the world including Bangladesh have been focusing attention on the women empowerment. A society cannot afford to waste half of its human resources by discrimination on grounds of sex. For this reason

government are now focusing on increase opportunity for women and trying to ensure a secure work place for female.

This study has been conducted on the group of fifteen women aging in between 24 to 30. The study area was our surrounding which also includes our family and friends. We interviewed 8 unmarried women, 5 married and 2 divorced women.

Some random questions were asked to the fifteen women and discussed about their personal life and professional life. Through some specific questions we came to know about their planning for career and family. Among fifteen, ten women helped us to find some main concerns about balancing family and professional life. We got some important facts from the rest five about why some women still aren't interested to build their career.

In this study we have use exploratory research method. This is a research method conducted for a problem that has not been clearly defined. It often occurs before we know enough to make conceptual distinctions or to posit an explanatory relationship. Basically my research topic is finding out some major facts behind women's career choosing decision. We did not identify any specific reason behind this issue. We just tried to find out some major facts behind women's career choosing decision.

The Interview type is not structured. We did not use a specific questioner and interviewed people according to their life experience. But gathered some open ended questions which are related to women career choosing decision. The questions varied on person to person. Basically we interviewed fifteen women where some of them were married some of them were unmarried and divorced. According to their marital status we asked different questions and tried to find different facts.

There are different types of sampling methods. I thought stratified sampling will be appropriate for my research. Stratified random sampling is a method of sampling that involves the division of a population into smaller groups. So I have followed stratified sampling method and I have divided my samples in two groups where one group were employed women and other group were unemployed women. In my research I tried to make these two groups with different marital status.

4.Results and discussion

We found many factors influencing women to choose their career from the interviews. Among 15 only eight women were determined with their career goal and rest of them were not so much concerned about their career.

The determined eight women are ready to manage both family and professional life equally. They took it as a challenge and experiencing really tough to manage both life together. Among these eight determined women only two didn't face any problems to choose her career. Their own family encouraged them to go ahead with her goal without concerning the society's binding rules and regulations. The other six faced so many difficulties to choose their career of their own.

Among the rest two were divorced. From their interview I got to know that they are thinking about a bright future forgetting the past but they have children to care. They are not getting support from their own family or their in-laws.

Rest seven are not thinking about their career. Four of them are married and they are bound to obey there in law's decision. Their husband does not appreciate their work outside home.

One woman has got permission for job from in laws but only for prestigious government job. But she does not get enough time to prepare for exam since she has to maintain her joint family of her own. Her mother in law is paralysed and she take care of her.

Another one woman quit her job because of her baby. Her in laws does not support her in raising baby. Moreover, she was in a private sector job. So she did not get enough leave and other facilities from her employer. She mentioned that if in private services have enough maternity leave system and available day care centres she could manage her job with all other things.

Rest five are unmarried and are planning to marry soon. Their family are positive about their decision they remind them about negative side of private jobs. Two of them are convinced by their family and studying hard for government job. The rest three are not that much serious about their career. They believe job and family never can be managed in a parallel way.

So the analysis supports my topic in many ways. Still women are thinking twice before choosing their career. Still now so many families first think about their daughter's marriage and after marriage life. They do not teach their daughter how to manage both together. Families are also concern about their daughter's physical harassment and office environment. And our daughter's don't learn how to handle these situations smartly. Till now so many family does not accept a working daughter in law. They does not encourage their daughter in law to be independent women, they try to find out a women who will only take care of their family.

From the above discussion we can summarize the following two issues which can answer why women in our country are lacking behind men in job sectors with race of time.

4.1 Obligations from their societies and families

In choosing career for their female child most of the family first think about social acceptance for the particular job sector. For example, jobs where female have to go outside city, or where they have night duties are not accepted in society for women.

Family also concern about office environment. They have a fear of harassment of their female child. They discourage their female child to choose challenging career.

It is also true that our women are not safe everywhere. Now a days women aged between 6-50 all are being raped without any reason. So many families are very concern about their daughter's future. Most of the parents and family are still believe that female only can play a role of wife, role of mother and a role of perfect family women. Till now a portion of our society believe that family and professional life both never go in a parallel way.

4.2 Balancing family and professional life

Work load is one of the major issues behind women's decision about their career. The load of work is too high and facilities for a new mother are insufficient especially in private sector. So, it is too difficult for them to manage family and professional life equally.

Family support can play an important role here. But due to nuclear family most of the women don't get that support. In this study all employed interviewees are from

private sector and they say, the amount of maternity leave is not sufficient for a new mom to maintain a new born. They also mention that most of the offices don't have any day care centre and many of them are not reliable. Because of a reliable day care centre some women decide to quit their job.

5.Conclusion

Though the employment rate of women is still very low but the hope is women are getting more conscious about their career. After facing all these problems women don't stop to think about their career. Moreover, government is taking many initiatives to increase female employment rate but still there are some invisible core obligations behind the low female employment rate which we have tried to analyse in our study boldly. These obligations can reduce by taking proper steps by women. They have to be more determined about their career and also learn how to handle their professional problems and family obligations as well. Though all the facts are still exist but views are changing day by day. For marriage now a day's women are getting conscious about a supportive partner. Most of the women are adopting how to convince their family.

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