

PERCEPTION OF WORKING MOTHERS ABOUT HAVING DAYCARES AT THE WORKPLACE

By

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A thesis submitted to BRAC Institute of Educational Development in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Early Childhood Development

BRAC Institute of Educational Development

BRAC University

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Declaration

I, hereby declare the following:

1. The thesis that I have submitted is my original work which I have completed for my BRAC University degree.
2. The thesis does not include any previously published or individually written content, except those which are appropriately cited through comprehensive and precise references.
3. The thesis does not contain any content that has been accepted or presented for any other academic qualification at a university or other institution.
4. I have properly acknowledged all the primary sources of assistance.

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Title of Thesis Topic: Perception of working mothers about having daycares at the work place

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1. Source of Population: Working mothers with children aged between 5 to 6 years
2. Does the study involve (yes or no)
 - a) Any physical risk to the participants Yes No
 - b) social risk Yes No
 - c) psychological risk Yes No
 - d) Discomfort Yes No
 - e) Invasion of privacy Yes No
3. Will participants be informed about (yes or no)
 - a) The nature and purpose of the study Yes No
 - b) The procedures to be followed Yes No
 - c) Any physical risks involved Yes No
 - d) Sensitive questions Yes No
 - e) Potential benefits Yes No
 - f) Their right to refuse participation or withdraw from the study Yes No
 - g) The confidential handling of their data Yes No
 - h) Compensation and/or treatment in cases of risks or privacy concerns Yes
No
4. Will signed verbal consent be required (yes or no)
 - a) From study participants Yes No
 - b) Specifically, from working mothers Yes No
 - c) Will measures be taken to ensure the anonymity of participants Yes No
5. Please verify the documents being submitted to the Committee:
 - a) Proposal
 - b) Consent Form
 - c) Questionnaire or Interview Schedule

Ethical Review Committee:

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Abstract:

This qualitative study explores the perceptions of working mothers of having daycares at the workplace. The research aims to investigate the experiences and perspectives of working mothers. Through in-depth interviews, the research uncovers working mothers' understanding of workplace daycare, their childcare practices while they are at work, the roles workplace daycares play, and the challenges they face with workplace daycares and their expectations as well. The research findings indicate that while workplace daycare is generally perceived positively, there are few important concerns regarding its quality, availability, and alignment with working mothers' needs. Additionally, the study identifies factors influencing the decision-making process for utilizing workplace daycare, including cost and caregivers' training and qualifications. Recommendations derived from the study may help policymakers and employers on how to enhance workplace daycare facilities to better support working mothers and create a supportive work environment for them.

The research reveals that workplace daycare is essential for supporting working mothers improving their work-life balance & productivity, and their children ensuring sound development in different domains. This study highlights recommendations for workplace daycares which include ensuring qualified and trained caregivers, offering flexible scheduling, providing affordable services, implementing different safety measures.

Keywords: Workplace daycare; working mothers; childcare facilities; perceptions, early childhood development.

Dedication

I am dedicating this work to my loving nephew.

Acknowledgement

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List of Acronyms

ECD- Early Childhood Development

IDI- In-Depth Interview

WHO- World Health Organization

UNICEF- United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

LFS- Labor Force Survey

MOWCA- Ministry of Women and Children Affairs

WBG- World Bank Group

CCAOA- Child Care Aware of America

USA- United States of America

IFC- International Finance Corporation

NGO- Non-Governmental Organization

ADB- Asian Development Bank

ILO- International Labour Organization

BBS- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics

Chapter- I: Introduction & Background

Introduction

Daycare centers are establishments that offer young children a secure and safe place where they can play and learn while their parents are at work. It offers a range of activities that enhance the development of cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills in children (Khan, 2015).

America was the first nation to open daycare facilities for children whose mothers had jobs beyond the house (Skehill, 2010). It has become increasingly popular in developing nations lately, and there have been various initiatives to open childcare facilities for caring and raising children. The perceptions of parents and the rise in parent employment rates have led to an increased number of child care facilities nowadays (UNICEF, 2017).

A well-managed daycare center is a great place to support young children in acquisition of many skills, they can pick up on schedules and routines, can learn social skills which help to develop interpersonal skills and self-esteem development, teachers and caregivers teach the basic ideas of alphabets and numbers through play and other interesting activities which facilitate children's transition to formal schooling (Academy, 2023).

An on-site daycare is an employer-sponsored initiative located at or close to a place of employment to support mothers of children under 6 years who require full time child care while the parents are at work. It may also include backup care facilities, which are intended to assist working parents in handling child care emergencies. Employees will feel more at ease and productive at work if they have a reliable child care option (Clarisse, 2020).

Strong early childhood development is vital to success and contentment not only for the early period of childhood, but also throughout the life course, (Irwin, Siddiqi, Hertzman, 2007). According to the definition of World Health Organization (WHO), Child development is a dynamic process that includes physical, cognitive, social, and emotional elements. It comprises of learning and developing a variety of skills, moving from total dependency on parents to a certain amount of independence during childhood and later teenage (UNICEF, 2022). Another research report of WHO specified the quality of the nurturing environment where the children grow up and learn influences a child's

overall development and parent alone cannot ensure the nurturant quality without the help of local, regional, national and international agencies, policy makers, civil society, Government, community and so forth (Irwin, Siddiqi, Hertzman, 2007). According to the Labor Force Survey (LFS) 2016-17, approximately 20 million women are employed nationwide in a variety of organizations in Bangladesh. Yet, there are very few daycare facilities exist.

The general secretary of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Maleka Banu, stated to The Business Standard that many working women are forced to resign from their jobs because there is not enough appropriate daycare for their young children. The economy is getting negatively impacted with this context (Tajmim, 2023).

The Child Daycare Center Act 2021 was approved by the Cabinet and subsequently passed by the Parliament of Bangladesh. This Act includes a provision for the construction and regulation of child care facilities in order to support working parents, particularly in light of the increasing number of nuclear families. In Bangladesh, government-initiated daycare centers will help achieve the goal of having 50% of women employed by 2041 (Jahan, 2023). Daycare can be an excellent scope for parents to work on the early development of their children (Khan, 2023). Working mothers can remain at ease when there is a daycare center on the premises. Parents are less worried about their child being nearby of them and they are less likely to have separation anxiety (Malik, 2016).

Thus, aside employment, protecting and raising their child in a responsible manner is the utmost priority for working mothers. To satisfy this need, working mothers are required a sound daycare center that can ensure supportive environment along with positive stimuli providing them opportunities to play, creating strong relationships, addressing any stress causing concerns that may affect a child's mental wellbeing (Khan, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

According to a World Bank Report published on 4 March, 2021 in Washington, nearly 350 million children under the age of five, or more than 40% of all children, lack access to childcare. The absence of high-quality, reasonably priced childcare is a major obstacle preventing women from obtaining more and better occupations, as the WBG Gender Strategy emphasizes (World Bank Group, 2023).

In the US, half of families said, they had trouble getting child care. The issue of child care is preventing women from entering the workforce. If more mothers had access to inexpensive and dependable child care, they would seek out new employment options and raise their incomes. Furthermore, changing jobs or quitting the workforce because of issues with child care can have genuine impacts on the financial stability of families and the long-term earnings of mothers. Families with young children may experience financial difficulties because of parental duties that prevent parents from working; in fact, this is one of the main reasons that half of young children in the US live in low-income households (Schochet, 2019).

Lack of childcare has a significant effect on gender equality in Asia and the Pacific's labor markets. Parents' inclination to enroll their children in daycare centers is known to be significantly influenced by their perception of the quality of the childcare. There are still gaps in the bare minimum facilities and care delivery standards across Asia and the Pacific. In addition, the childcare industry is still underappreciated and heavily occupied with female. Pay varies greatly in this sector; it is frequently below the poverty line and far below average. Childcare workers have low levels of job security, employment benefits, and social protection (ILO Press Release, Bangkok, 2023).

The 2016-2017 Labor Force Survey (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Statistics and Informatics Division, Ministry of Planning) estimated that 20 million women are employed nationwide in a variety of organizations. In urban areas, employed persons (Male/Female) worked an estimated average of 51 hours and in city corporation areas, it is around 56 hours in a week. Yet, there are very few daycare facilities (Hossain, 2022). The "Time Use Survey 2021" shows that women in Bangladesh perform domestic and caregiving duties for 11.7 hours a day, almost half of the day, while men do so for just 1.6 hours (BBS, June, 2022).

Preschool period of a child is a critical time for a child's cognitive development, parents must have the awareness of this (Sword, 2023). Through active participation in the early childhood education process, parents may assure that their kid receives all the necessary support to reach their maximum potential (Spreeuwenberg, 2022). And an on-site daycare center allows working mothers to access to this participation as they can visit their children in the break, their children can share the learning with them, and they can observe

their development and their area of interests and progress as well (Benefits of On-Site Child Care Companies | Bright Horizons, 2022).

In the middle-income setting children are kept with domestic help alone at home or with the grandparents. There have many cases of child trafficking, abuse (Mohajan, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to identify the perception of parents on daycare center at workplace and to explore their awareness and importance of the role of it on the learning and development of their children. The study will also help to understand the practices of working mothers about the childcare, also the challenges and expectations of the working mothers from the daycare. A daycare center is aimed to ensure that the child's development potential is enhanced in different domain (Tikkanen, 2023). Working mothers are required a sound daycare center that can ensure supportive environment along with positive stimuli, providing their children the opportunities to play, creating strong relationships, addressing any stress when their mothers are away (Khan, 2023). Parents will undoubtedly be able to handle their home, workplace, and life in general more easily with the help of quality daycare facilities, (Khan, 2023). Also, children who attend daycare are encouraged to feel independent and confident since they are able to take pride in what they do. A youngster may overcome obstacles and achieve more goals with excitement when they are confident (KinderCare, 2017).

The Bangladesh Labor Act of 2006, Sec. 94, states: "In every establishment, where 40 (forty) or more female workers are ordinarily employed, one or more suitable rooms shall be provided and maintained for the use of their children who are under the age of 6 (six) years. These rooms will provide adequate accommodation, must have adequate lighting, ventilated and maintained in a clean and sanitary condition, and will be under the charge of women trained or experienced in childcare" (The Lawyers and Jurists, 2020). However, the law is rarely put into practice. A small number of reputed companies, including Grameenphone, Bangla Link, Robi, BRAC Bank, Daffodil University, and British American Tobacco, MetLife Bangladesh have been pioneering the implementation (Wing, 2023). Therefore, the purpose of the study is to explore the Perception of working mothers about having a daycare at the workplace. However, it is necessary for mothers to understand the importance of keeping their children at the workplace daycare. Therefore,

the purpose of the study is to understand the perception of working mothers about having a daycare at the workplace.

Significance of the Study

Children benefit greatly from the on-site daycare of their mother's workplace because it has been demonstrated to have a good impact on their development and wellbeing (Dekkan, 2021). According to a publication of World Bank, to enhance child development outcomes and ensure that the upcoming generation of Bangladeshi children is better equipped to participate as engaged citizens, access to high-quality childcare is essential. Caregivers are crucial to the development of the child's physical and cognitive growth in their early life. Furthermore, faster economic growth and a higher rate of female labor force participation have been associated with access to high-quality childcare.

Nonetheless, a knowledge vacuum persists in the field of child caretaker abilities, both internationally and specifically with regard to Bangladesh. Regarding Bangladesh, it is imperative to comprehend the complex framework of child caregiver training and devise strategies to enhance it. This will aid the nation in attaining its objective of becoming a developed nation within the next twenty years, as well as improving child development outcomes and increasing the participation of women in the workforce (Rahman, Tashmina, Arnold, 2022).

As there have been very few studies conducted in this context to explore the perception of working mothers about having a daycare at the workplace that addresses child development. The outcomes of this proposed study can be helpful to gain an overall understanding of the Bangladeshi working mothers about the workplace daycare center and how it affects mothers' bonding with their children and their overall development. The findings can be beneficial for the policymakers and the employers to formulate strategies for supporting the child overall development by addressing the working mothers' issues regarding commuting time, separation anxiety, safety and care of the children and eventually to increase the percentage of female workforce participation. This proposed study may offer an opportunity to explore the awareness and felt-need of working mothers on having a daycare center at the workplace and its consequences on the development of children from 0-6 years in Dhaka city, Bangladesh.

A holistic approach to early childhood development can be established by valuing the cooperation of parents, grandparents, and childcare providers, which assures that children develop emotionally, socially, and intellectually (Bansal, 2023). There has been less opportunity for working mothers to have such child care or even though they have daycare facilities at the workplace they keep their children with their in-laws, domestic help, with paid caregiver or in a home-based daycare setting (Howlader, 2022).

Research questions

RQ1. What is the understanding of working mothers about the daycare at workplace?

RQ2. What are the practices of working mothers about taking care of their children when they are at work?

RQ3. What roles do the daycares at workplace play?

RQ4. What are the challenges and expectations of the working mothers from the workplace daycares?

Operational Definition

Working Mothers

Working mothers are women who are employed outside the home while also balancing the responsibilities of raising children and managing household tasks (Zelonka, 2022). They contribute to both the workforce and the family, often juggling with multiple roles and responsibilities. They work for various reasons, including: financial stability, personal fulfillment, independence, sometimes they serve as the role models for their children, they also contribute to the economy and setting positive examples for their children. Overall, the reasons for working vary among mothers, reflecting their individual circumstances, goals, and values (Scaccia, 2023).

Perception

Perception means how we understand and make sense of things we see, hear, taste, smell, and touch. It's about how our brain sorts out and figures out what's going on around us, which helps us understand the world better (Cherry, 2023). Emotions play a significant role in shaping perception, feelings experienced in the moment are often perceived as

more intense compared to emotions from the past. Perception can be influenced by various factors such as past experiences, cultural background, and personal beliefs. Additionally, social influences and peer pressure can impact how we interpret and understand the world around us.

Workplace Daycare

Workplace day-care refers to child care centres or services that employers offer to their employees at or close to their place of employment. These establishments aim to facilitate working parents' juggling with their childcare needs and professional obligations. While the scope and amenities of workplace daycare can vary, it usually offers children a secure and caring environment to ensure their development at their early years during their parents' working hours. This arrangement enables organizations attract and retain talent through offering family-friendly benefits, as well as employees who benefit from easy access to daycare (Adewolu, 2020).

Early Childhood Development

Early childhood development encompasses the essential growth and learning in children from birth to around eight years old. This period lays the foundation for their future well-being, health, and success in school and life. It involves acquiring skills in language, problem-solving, emotional regulation, and social interaction. Early childhood development is heavily influenced by interactions with caregivers, environmental factors, and access to quality early education and healthcare services. (UNICEF, 2023)

Chapter- II: Literature Review

Literature Review

Scenario of working mothers

According to a study on parenting, it is found that children of working mothers were found to be emotionally regressive, while children of non-working mothers were found to be emotionally progressive (Khan, 2015). Since, working mothers are usually exhausted from their daily office works and commuting as well, it is observed that even after they return home from work, their children do not receive the required attention from them. These children struggle to receive emotional support and good education. Hence, working women need to provide their children with enough care for a set amount of time; otherwise, they risk experiencing crises. (Khan, 2015).

Most of our working mothers in Bangladesh have to leave their children to the domestic helps, who are not trained enough about child rearing. Often, the domestic helps cannot concentrate on the child fully as they have to do other households chores as well. Many children experience long-term emotional issues as a consequence of this scenario. On the other hand, being away from children working mothers also cannot concentrate on office works, they end up with less attention worrying about their children's safety and they often experience increased stress thinking that the children are lacking proper care (Islam, Neha, 2022).

According to research conducted by Mckinsey and Company during 2022, childcare was mentioned as a primary reason for quitting the job of 45% of mothers with children under five in USA immediate after Covid 19. A study conducted by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies to boost women employment found that during the period of 1993 to 2018 around 8% of urban working mothers who have children under six have quit jobs because of their responsibility of childrearing (Daily star, 2023). The study recommended for the necessity of the public and private investment in paid maternity leave, daycare at workplaces to enhance female participation at work, predominantly in urban areas.

Working mother can visit their children during breaks without travelling to a different daycare facility or have lunch with them, thus can spend more quality time to increase the mother-child bond (Afroz, 2023).

Working Mothers can save time commuting to work and maintain the office schedule properly. It strengthens the morale of the mothers and enhances the loyalty to the employers which leads to a better well-being of the mothers as well (ILO publications, Improving Working Conditions and Productivity in the Garment Industry, Pg.91).

Daycare contributes in child development immensely through ensuring an encouraging environment and positive experiences that facilitate the learning. They develop ability to manage stresses through playing and participating in indoor and outdoor activities (Khan, 2015).

In Bangladesh working women in the low-income setting are keeping their children either in their villages with the grandparents or they keep their children unattended and the children run errands. The majority of women employed in the ready-to-wear (RMG) industry leave their kids in the care of their children's grandparents in the village (Alam, 2016).

Men are regarded as the head of the family and its most significant member in Bangladesh alike other countries because they are typically the ones who provide the monetary supports needed to their families. Works are divided according to gender. Traditionally, men and women handle different types of work: women handle household and child care, while men handle "outside" jobs (Islam, 2023). When it comes to helping with childcare Bangladesh's social support systems frequently fall short of expectations. This increases the amount of unpaid labor that women must perform. Hence women are forced to devote greater time to child care due to the lack of accessible and reasonably priced daycare centers (Islam, 2023).

According to the Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2010-2021, rapid urbanization and increased employment participation of women are prompting the number of nuclear families, (LGED, 2020).

In an article of Prothom Alo named "Children's daycare and working mothers' dilemma" it was perceived that Child Care Centers are genuinely required for working women due to the acute shortage of trusted domestic help, (Liakat, 2022). She conducted few interviews with working women those reveal the challenges women are facing with their child rearing when they are at work. Few of them have to end up with leaving jobs and attending their children.

Working mothers hardly ever find time for themselves due to the stress of juggling in between their personal life, careers, and demanding household responsibilities. Furthermore, mothers are constantly made to feel inadequate and insecure by society's stereotypes. An overwhelmed chunk of them suffers from "Mom Guilt" which is the general term for the pervasive sense of unworthiness combined with blaming-oneself for concentrating on their own identity, occupation, and desires. They find themselves often guilty of not spending enough time with their children (Hoque, 2021).

A woman's career is severely affected by the "motherhood penalty," which includes reduced pay, less access to opportunities for training and development, fewer chances for advancement, and prejudice at work. According to studies, women who experience the "motherhood penalty" may end up making up to 40% less remuneration than males (Chowdhury, 2023).

In Bangladesh, the number of nuclear families and single parents are also in rise. In 2018, the percentage of single mother rose up to 10.8% from 9.1% in 2014 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Single mothers in Bangladesh experience trauma and financial hardships alongside their constant worry for their children which affect their works (Amanullah, 2024).

Roles of mothers

Mothers plays a key role in Childcare. According to an attachment research a parent's relationship with their child has a profound impact on the child's mental health, self-control, and capacity to form a deep connection with others (Schreiber, 2023). It can be difficult for many mothers to find the time and energy to care for both of themselves and their children when raising children. (Trinet, 2019). There are several aspects that influence the way parents raise their children. Cultural norms, socioeconomic limitations, and stress levels all have an impact on parenting approaches. One major problem is that a lot of parents wind up on their own with no help from the government, spouse, employers or other family members. This may overwhelm them and make it more difficult for them to build strong relationships with their children (BBC Work life, 2020).

Women's roles extend beyond taking care of the household chores and raising the children. Many women are performing the pivotal role in their own organizations and also fulfilling the responsibilities of a mother at home (Singh, 2016).

In an article of UNICEF Parenting, one eminent mental health expert with two kids stated “If I do not prioritize my own mental health and well-being, I do not show up with my best foot forward as a parent’ (Talib, 2019). In the same article a psychologist, author, a New York Times contributor and a mother of two said, ‘when I'm well-rested and my mind is clear, I am much more patient with my children and a lot more fun to be around. After a good night's sleep, I have energy to play, host a "kitchen dance party," or come up with other ways to enjoy my daughters' company. And when I'm not distracted by my own concerns, I am much better able to focus on my girls and what they need from me.’ (Damour, 2019).”

Global Context for Daycare Center at Mothers’ workplace

Childcare beyond the family is a critical necessity everywhere in the globe because a growing number of households are consisting of both working; a growing number of single-parent households are found; a growing number of family where members (grandparents, aunts, etc.) who are becoming less accessible due to migrating to other countries, distances, or they are also in employment (Abe, Hamamoto, Tanaka, 2003).

A Survey finding on Early Learning and Childcare Arrangements, 2020 published in Statistics Canada revealed that approximately 52% of children between the ages of 0 and 5 attended formal or informal child care in 2020 in Canada. The study highlights that around one third of parents of young children and employed mothers who worked full-time and had regular schedules, were more likely to use daycare centers for their children on a regular basis (Zhang, Garner, Heidinger, Findlay, 2021). But workplace daycare is not widely available there. A frequently observed reason is that it is an expensive endeavor, hence majority of businesses are reluctant to take on costs or responsibility associated with providing the childcare facilities to their employees. Though the top 100 employers in Canada are distinguished by their emphasis on work-life balance, social impact, and mental wellness and they are providing the facility of workplace daycare for their employees (Jermyn, 2019).

Workers who have access to childcare at work are more likely to arrive on time because they won't have to make the early morning run to a daycare facility and back (Dekkan,

2021). Parents are may be less prone to worry about whether their child is receiving proper care from their childcare provider or to have separation anxiety when their child is close by (Ross, 2023).

Being able to stop by and visit their children during breaks or have lunch with them may be enjoyable for employees. Additionally, they will have more time to spend with their young ones prior to and after work instead of commuting to a different daycare, (Ross, 2023).

Studies have revealed that investing and supporting in early childhood care and education initiatives for kids under the age of five fosters economic development, increases academic achievement, and enhances their future health and ensures their mental wellbeing (Zaslow, 2014).

Employers are increasingly conscious of the struggles associated with raising children in the United States, where access to early childhood education and child care is often not accessible and costs are excessively high for many families. According to studies, the cost of center-based child care in Ohio has risen by more than 220% in the last 30 years, with an average annual cost of approximately \$11,400. Although the financial burden on families is a major worry, there are other factors that affect how much child care costs (Fillion, 2022).

Investing and supporting in early childhood care and education initiatives for children under the age of five, fosters economic development, increases academic achievement, and enhances their future health and ensures their mental wellbeing (Zaslow, 2014).

According to a recent analysis by Child Care Aware of America (CCAQA), the average cost of center-based child care for an infant in the US in 2020 was over \$12,300, which represents a \$1,000 rise from the year before. The average yearly cost of care for all children under the age of six is about \$10,174, or about \$200 per week. In this context, to attract and retain competent employees in a competitive labor market, a few companies are responding by providing various kinds of childcare perks. The concept behind this is that if employees are satisfied with their childcare arrangements, they will be more motivated and focused at work (O.R, 2023).

According to a recent Care.com survey of 500 business leaders in the USA, 46% of them stated that in 2023 they would provide emphasis to childcare benefits for their employees.

This is related to the fact that almost 80% of respondents reported seeing enhanced productivity, better-hiring, and employee retention in their organization because of providing childcare benefits (Ewell, 2023).

The participation of employers investing in childcare is growing in USA. Even the federal government seems to be warming up to the idea of employer-sponsored childcare (Angel, 2023).

A lot of daycare facilities open at the same time of different workplaces, which isn't early enough for mothers working in some professions, for instance teachers, nurses, who must report to work even earlier. Instead of having rush to drop off the children and joining the work, mother can comfortably drop their children off to the same premises when they get to work and pick them up without any hassle of traffic when they leave if the childcare facility is already at work (Dekkan, 2023).

Benefits related to childcare takes many different forms in USA. One widely recognized and prominent kind of employer-sponsored childcare is the setup of on-site child care centers. In these cases, employers usually collaborate with an outside operator, like KinderCare or Bright Horizons, to develop and oversee a daycare center inside or close to the main workplace (Lusty, 2023).

Demand for daycare at Workplace is increasing amongst UK Companies. More than five fresh coworking locations with childcare available on premises have opened in London in response to this demand (Bhano, 2022). According to Selina Bakkar, Co-Founder of Amaliah, *“The workspace needs to reflect the needs of the workforce and Huckletree (‘A network of community-driven and design-led workspaces in London’) have recognized this by creating the family room where parents can comfortably work and be with their children. It is a space that allows you to bring all the sides of you to work”*.

India has the lowest rates of female labor force participation worldwide. The Ministry of Women and Child Development's National Minimum Guidelines for Setting up and Running Crèches (nurseries) state that one of the reasons behind the low rate of female labor participation is the absence of safe and quality childcare support (Suma, 2022).

In India, the percentage of women employed in paid occupations is under 20%, and the country's female workforce participation rate has been falling. (India Today, 2023).

In India Childcare at workplaces is governed by different laws and few of those are location or industry-specific. Employers of factories employing more than thirty women are required under The Factories Act of 1948 to provide a room or rooms that are appropriate for the use of children under the age of six (Suma, Stubb, Kasiva, 2022). These rooms should be kept clean and hygienic, have enough space, light, and ventilation, and be supervised by women who have received training in caring for young children and infants (*Crèche/Nursery Facility at Workplace - Indian Legal Framework*, 2022).

Similar provisions are included in the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996, which is applicable to specific construction sites. The requirement to establish a crèche is contingent upon the presence of 50 female building workers who are regularly employed in a construction site. The Maternity Benefits (Amendment) Act, 2017, which was also introduced in India, mandates that establishments with 50 employees offer childcare within the parameters set by the concerned government, either independently or in combination with shared facilities. The employer must also permit the women to attend the childcare facility four times a day. Maternity-related benefits must be informed with the female employee in writing and electronically that are available to her during appointment (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service Act, 1996/ The Building and other Construction Workers/ Chief Labor Commissioner, Central).

The National Minimum Guidelines for Setting up and Running Crèche, released by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in response to the Amendment Act, emphasize the expansion of crèche facilities to children between the ages of six months and six years for all employees, including temporary, daily wage, consultant, and contractual staff. According to the guidelines, crèches timing must be aligned with the working time for parents and ensures that each child has at least 10 to 12 square feet of area to play, rest, and learn. Standard operating procedures and rules for a crèche are also outlined in the guidelines (Irani, 2022).

While there is no shortage of skilled women at the entry-level or even the five-year mark, Leena Nair, executive director (HR) at Hindustan Unilever, said businesses struggle to select women to the top levels, particularly from those who have worked for 14 to 15 years (Nair, 2018). She was expressing, this is due to the responsibility of women workforce towards their children.

Bangladesh Context for Daycare

Few organizations actually follow the Bangladesh Labor Law 2006, section 94 (1.2) which

states a requirement of a suitable room or rooms for the children below six years from any employer employing forty or more women. A few of large banks, international NGOs, or Readymade Garment industries comply with this Act. In November 2019, 306 organizations participated in a study conducted by the International Finance Corporation (IFC). There were over forty female employees for each of the employers. According to the report, only 23% of employers provide childcare services to their staff, while another 16% have plans to do so. Out of the 306 firms, up to 61% do not have any plans to offer childcare options to their workforce.

There are only 119 childcare facilities operated by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, according to Md. Muhibuzzaman, Additional Secretary, in different office areas such as Motijheel, Ashulia, Mohakhali, and so forth (MOWCA, 2022).

In Dhaka city, a number of private daycare facilities have opened up. But the costs at these centers are outrageous. An entry fee of Tk. 10,000 to Tk 15,000 and a monthly fee of Tk 8,000 to Tk 10,000 are charged by a mid-level daycare center. Working women are obligated to keep their children in there because of many reasons, such as continuation of their career because of financial support and self-fulfillment (Hossain, 2022). Simultaneously, they do not have the on-site childcare supports from the employer or other reliable caregiver at home to look after their children.

A co-publication named 'Skills Development in Bangladesh' stated that the proportion of working women in Bangladesh is rising as more women acquiring higher education and receiving other relevant training to develop work ready skillsets, (Asian Development Bank, International Labour Organization, 2016.) A survey report from Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS, 2023) states that the percentage of women working in Bangladesh rose to 42.68% in 2022 from 36.3% five years earlier. Currently, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs oversees 119 daycare centers around the nation, while the Ministry of Social Welfare is responsible for establishing 20 additional centers but not all are located at the mothers' workplace (Hossain, 2022).

Women spend almost 8 times more time than men spend on childcare in Bangladesh (World Bank, 2019). A key barrier to women's access to more and better jobs is the lack of access to quality, affordable childcare (WBG Gender Strategy 2024-2030). It is stated in the research report 'Tackling Childcare in Bangladesh' conducted in 2019 by the International Finance Corporation that 'Employer-supported childcare can supplement public provision and benefit women, children, businesses, and the economy' (IFC, 2019).

According to the publication of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, 'The Child Daycare Act 2021 has been enacted. The process of finalizing the rules is ongoing. Daycare facilities for the children of working women are being provided by establishing 119 daycare centers at present from MOWCA and another 20 is in progress.', (MOWCA, 2022).

Parents should check the caregiver's background before enlisting their child's services because there are a number of risk factors associated with institution-based daycare in Bangladesh, including caregivers without licenses and caregivers who engage in unsafe behavior with children which leads to poor child development (Mohajan, 2014).

According to a publication of World Bank, to enhance child development outcomes and ensure that the upcoming generation of Bangladeshi children is better equipped to participate as engaged citizens, access to high-quality childcare is essential, (Rahman, Tashmina, Arnold, 2022).

Chapter- III: Methodology

Research Approach and Design: Qualitative Research Design which includes the collection, analysis and interpretation of comprehensive, narrative and visual data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest (Gay L.R. 2012) was the approach for the study.

Qualitative research is used to understand how people experience the world (Bhandari, 2023). Exploring people's thoughts, emotions, responses, behavior, and views is the goal of this qualitative study. The in-depth interviews are an effective tool of the qualitative study as these are more open-ended and discovery-mode to explore respondents' responses and feelings (Adedoyin, 2016).

Qualitative method was followed for this research using purposive sampling. The study was focused primarily on exploring the perception of working mothers about having a daycare at the workplace. In regard to the research topic, the study demands an in-depth insight of the ideas, which was observed and documented utilizing in-depth interviews. As qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences, through this effective approach, the study was conducted (Bhandari, 2023).

Research Site

This study was conducted in Dhaka city.

Research Participants

Inclusion criteria of the respondents were:

- a) Working mother.
- b) Residing in urban areas.
- c) They have children under 6 years.

To attain the highest outcome, the research population was consisted of ten (10) working mothers residing in Dhaka City. Four (4) of them who were taking facilities from the daycare at their workplace, three (3) were taking supports from the daycare those were not located in the workplace premises, and three (3) working mothers who were neither using the service of home-based, nor from the institution-based daycares, rather they are keeping their children at home.

Sampling Procedure / Participant Selection Procedure

Purposive sampling procedure was followed where the participants were deliberately selected to guide them for the In-depth Interview.

Data Collection Tool, Data Collection Method and Procedure

- In-depth Interview (IDI) guideline in the form of semi-structured questionnaire was the research tool which was reviewed by The BRAC IED Academic Committee Members and the thesis supervisor assessed the guideline to ensure the authenticity of the research. The guideline was focused on mostly open-ended questions to obtain more descriptive data.
- Duration of each interview was 60-90 minutes.
- Audio recording was done with the consent of the participants.
- Field notes were taken to obtain both descriptive and reflective information.

The IDI guideline was consisted of five parts to capture the data, such as socio economic and demographic status, understanding of working mothers about having daycares at the workplace, their practices about taking care of their children when they are work, the role of a daycare at workplace and the challenges the mothers face to take care about their children when they are at work. Also, working mothers' expectations from a workplace daycare.

Socio-demographic form: it has obtained the information about gender, age, qualification, employment status, income, children number, children age, current family structure (members of the family). etc.

The researcher collected necessary information to contact with ten individual participants for their convenient time-slot and date of the in-person interview. Confidential interactions were steered where researcher made good rapport asking some relevant questions, showing importance & being compassionate to the respondents and posing initial questions before starting the IDIs to make the interviewees easy with the researcher and trust the researcher to be more open and spontaneous to provide genuine information.

Before every In-Depth Interview, the researcher shared the research objectives in a brief manner, modality of the study, along with the type of questions they had been asked. Moreover, it was emphasized that the confidentiality of each information and their

anonymity would be strictly maintained while conducting and after the research. Participants were assured about the purpose was to derive the key insights only, from the conversations/interviews, those are helpful to complete the academic degree and to design workplace-based daycare center to address the child development.

The participants were duly informed that the interviews were being recorded to better transcribe those for the research purpose only. Also, field notes were taken to collect both descriptive and reflective data. The interviews were concluded by the researcher acknowledging their efforts and times thankfully.

Data Management and Analysis

It was done in four steps:

Step 1: preparing and organizing the data (familiarization).

Step 2: a thematic analysis approach was followed to analyze the data which is a method of analyzing qualitative data. It is usually applied to a set of texts, such as an interview or transcripts. The researcher closely looked at the data to identify common themes, topics, ideas and patterns of meaning those came up repeatedly (Caulfield, 2023).

Step 3: representation of the findings and thoughts.

Step 4. interpretations of the findings and making report discussing about the implications of the findings along with recommendations while ensuring integrity and credibility of the findings.

Microsoft Office (Word and Excel) was used to prepare the report and analyze the data. The report contains the effect of the findings and recommendations for further research.

Validity & Reliability

To ensure the all-out validity of the study, both the thesis supervisor and members of the BRAC IED Academic Committee read through the IDI Guidelines and provided their feedback. Additionally, the interview was piloted to assess its credibility and effectiveness as a tool, and final adjustments were made following the completion of the piloting process. Regarding the reliability, each interview was transcribed immediately after its completion through listening to the audio recordings and referring to the field notes.

Ethical Issues

The supervisor and academic committee of BRAC IED, BRAC university assessed the entire study proposal.

- Informed consent: every participant was explained thoroughly and they received specific information which enabled them to take an informed decision about whether or not to take part in the study. They had been assured that they are free to exit the interview at any moment and without explanation.
- Working Mothers' voluntary participation: the parents agreed to participate in the study themselves willingly without any influence. No words were used to make them induced for the participation.
- Anonymity and confidentiality: substantial efforts were there to protect the participants' privacy and anonymity. Their personal information and the data they provided have not been shared or used for any purpose other than this study. No psychological or social damage occurred during the study. They had been assured that the information they have provided, was used correctly and without any kind of manipulation.
- Sharing the purpose of the research: the working mothers had been shared that as a requirement of the master's degree from the Institute of Educational Development- BRAC University, the study was conducted to explore working mothers' perception about having a daycare at the workplace. Though, some of the information or results gained from this research can possibly be preserved for the purposes of future studies; in such cases, sharing data and information with other researchers will not impact the confidentiality of the information.

Limitations of the Study

Managing the schedules of working mothers who had been selected for the interviews was found quite challenging. While conducting the interviews, working mothers got distracted with their children's interaction with them. Also a few of the participants had to attend emergency and un-avoided phone call, thus all together the researcher and participants both have to make efforts to caters working mothers' constant attention all through the interviews.

Chapter- IV: Results/Findings & Discussion

Findings

The primary goal of the study was to explore how working mothers in Dhaka perceive office-based daycare. After conducting the study, the researcher derives some interesting and key findings from the in-depth interviews with ten (10) working mothers and those are furnished as follows under the headings of many themes and sub-themes.

Participants' Demographic

Each working mothers in this study have one to two children between the ages of 8 months and six years, and the mothers' ages ranged from 28 to 35 years. Approximately 70% of the participants are using the daycare service, when 40% of the total respondents are availing daycare facilities from their workplace. Two-third of the participants are not living with their in-laws or own family and do not receive support from their families in raising their children. Majority of the participants are residing in different parts of Dhaka city The participants' educational backgrounds range from bachelor to masters degrees for the most part.

Theme 1- Working mothers' understanding about the day-care at work place

Sub-theme: Understanding about daycare

Most of the respondents stated that daycare is an establishment where children get care and supervision, generally from the adults who are not their parents, relatives and guardians. A few of the respondents referred daycare as a safe place where children get care from the qualified and trained caregivers who provide attentive care, teach children etiquettes, manners and provides support in their development.

A couple of the respondents said that a child is always unable to do necessary activities at their early age themselves, therefore a daycare is required to take care of children's physical, emotional, intellectual and social development when their parents are away from them. They also focused on the points that if the children are not left with a well-trained, professional and empathetic caregiver, the caregivers may not take care of the children properly because of the lack of training and knowledgebase on child rearing and also children may feel lonely and their social development gets hindered.

Most of the respondents emphasized on the long-term impact of proper care which children receive in their early ages on their future life. According to them, in a daycare, seeing other children eating, the children also eat properly. They said, the children can play in a childcare with other children and they do not come along with any bad incidents throughout their entire day which contributes in their psycho-social development. Most of the participants stated that a childcare aims to create a supportive and nurturing environment for the children when the parents are at work while offering convenience and peace of mind to them. And they viewed that the learning opportunity of new-new things is ensured in the workplace daycare well.

Nearly, half of the total respondents highlighted the risk of stunted growth due to poor nutrition and poor vision from excessive screen time in children lacking proper care. Frequently, most of the participants specified that the children who receive good care benefit from preschool-readiness, sound mental well-being, intelligence-growth, etc. which have a long-term effect in the children's adulthood, they can be resilient and confident to overcome many challenges in their future life.

A few of the respondents stated that if their children receive proper nutrition, healthcare supports, such as vaccination, and hygiene practices- all these supports in their physical development. They specified that positive interaction with caregivers and peers cultivates essential social skills amongst the children and they can demonstrate sensitivity and responsiveness towards others.

One of the respondents said, *“Children need care because of building their morality and disciplined life. Moreover, they will not take care of us at our old-age if we do not nurture them properly at their early age.”* (IDI # 4, Date: 12.03.2024).

Sub-theme: Consequences of the absence of good care for a child

Most of the respondents stated that the absence of good care for a child can lead to many adverse consequences, including physical health issues due to inadequate nutrition and healthcare, emotional challenges such as low self-esteem and anxiety, behavioral problems like aggression and difficulty in regulating emotions, social difficulties stemming from limited interaction and poor communication skills, cognitive deficits resulting in school readiness struggles, and an increased risk of abuse and neglect. These

consequences can have lasting and negative impacts on the child's overall well-being and future opportunities. Few of the participants emphasize that the absence of good care can lead to different developmental delays for a child such as speech delays, cognitive development, behavioral delays, etc.

Sub-theme: Awareness about the workplace daycare in Bangladesh

Most of the respondents found aware about the daycare at workplace. But majority do not have the detail information about their service and cost. Most of the respondents viewed the workplace daycare as a blessing for them as it takes care of their children and benefit them progress in their career. More than one-third of the participants found very clear about the services of the workplace daycare as they are availing this facility. Few of the respondents were regretting that they do not have daycare at their workplace. They expressed their interest to switch their job in telecommunication companies to have the opportunity of office-based daycare.

According to one of the respondents, *“I could not have continued my job, if our office didn't have provided daycare services as my husband do not like daycares those are not in the workplace. Also, my in-laws have strong reservation putting their grandchild in the daycare.”* (IDI # 8, Date: 19.03.2024).

Sub Theme: Benefits of workplace daycare

Nearly, half of the respondents perceive that workplace daycares grant parents' peace of mind, enabling them to concentrate on their work while ensuring their children receive quality care. According to them, these setups foster a healthy work-life balance, boosts employee satisfaction and retention, and can provide a competitive edge for the employers seeking to attract and retain talent.

A couple of the respondents expressed pride in their employers supports for valuing employee well-being and understanding the regular challenges faced by working parents. They view this facility with a broader perspective probing to the significance of long-term benefits for children's development. They appreciate reduced commuting time in Dhaka City due to workplace daycare, allowing them to travel with their children and have engaging conversations on how they have spent their day.

Few of the respondents stated that their children remain happy in their office provided daycare as their mothers are around which foster the sense of belonging in their children. Another few have expressed their gratitude to the creator and their employers as they can breastfeed their children in their office-based daycares. Around half of the participants who are the users of office-based daycares facility highlighted that these are more convenient as having childcare facilities on-site or nearby reduces the logistical challenges of dropping-off and picking-up the children for working parents, saving them the commuting time and reducing their stress.

A couple of the respondents stated that the workplace daycares often combine age-appropriate activities for the children to stimulate their learning and growth alongside the basic care. They emphasised on the plenty of varied activities which keep children engaged with fun and joy, which was not possible for the parents to ensure at home.

One of the respondents stated, *“I think workplace day-care is a fantastic initiative and it is incredibly valuable to have access to these services right where I work, as it makes a balance between my professional responsibilities and parenting duties. Workplace daycare helps me alleviating stress and allows me to focus better on my work knowing that my children are in a safe nurturing environment nearby.”* (IDI # 8, Date: 19.03.2024).”

Theme 2: Practices of working mothers about taking care of their children when they are at work

Sub-theme: Practices mothers do when they are at work

Nearly, one-third of the participants are depending on their household help to take care of their children while they are at work, while few of them are keeping their children in the private day-cares, and close to half of them are bringing their children with them in the office-based daycare. A couple of the participants who put their children at home, stated that they have to depend on their in-laws and parent for the monitoring of the children’s care.

Sub-theme: Involving mothers to take care of the children in a workplace daycare.

Most of the respondents who do not have the access to workplace daycare services, mentioned about parent meetings where caregivers discuss children's progress or delays in development.

A couple of the respondents referred that their workplace daycares actually are not involving them for their children's routine works. But if they want, they are allowed to clean the baby, change the diaper, feed the baby, play with them, help them in reading out their rhymes or stories during their break, they can also observe their children's activities during their visits and appreciate as well.

Most of the respondents whose children attend daycare specified that they provide meals (breakfast, lunch, and two snacks), along with extra sets of clothes, diapers, and other necessary items for their children's care at the daycare. One of the respondents said, *“I am allowed three times to visit my child for breast-feeding and I always change the nappy if it is the time to change during my visits.”* (IDI # 9, Date: 19.03.2024).

Sub-theme: Key things working mothers prioritise for taking care of their children when they are at work

All of the respondents have shown their concerns about the food their children usually take when they are at work and they address this by regularly following up with the caregivers and other adults at home and daycare. Many of the respondents expressed concern about their children's safety at daycare and sometimes monitor their activities through surveillance cameras. Few of the respondents mentioned that when it comes to their involvement at workplace daycare, they focus on visits, follow-ups and building strong rapport with the caregivers as key priorities. They further said that they also follow up about the hygiene related activities (nappy change) with the caregivers. Additionally, they have mentioned that they greet the caregivers on their special days with gifts and they celebrate the religious and other festivals in the daycares along with other parents and children.

A few of the respondents explained about the discussions with the caregivers regarding their children's activities, developments, learnings. They promote a supportive environment with caregivers for maintaining drop-off, pick-up, and visit schedules. They also take short or half-day leave if their children fall ill, regardless of their daycare types.

One of the respondents said, “*One day I got a call from our workplace daycare and was informed about the symptoms of a contagious disease- ‘hand foot and mouth’ of my daughter and I took her to home the soon I could.*” (IDI # 9, Date: 21.03.2024).

Theme 3: Roles of work place daycare.

Sub-theme: Contribution of workplace daycares in the development of the children

Most of the working mothers in the study highlighted that, the early years are incredibly significant for their child development as during these years, the foundation for future learning, social skills, emotional well-being, and communication development are being built. A couple of the respondents, probed on 0 to 6 years as a critical period, because they think during this period children undergo rapid growth across multiple areas, including physical and mental growth, problem-solving skills, and capacity for learning. Most of the participants highlighted that workplace daycare ensures a child that his or her mothers are around and this keep them away from the separation anxiety and makes them confident.

A majority of the participants referred that positive interactions with caregivers during the early years of the children foster secure attachments, emotional regulation skills, empathy, and social competence. These participants viewed that in workplace daycares the caregivers recognize and value the children’s feelings, they ensure a nurturing environment, mostly children are offered the opportunity to get engaged in positive interactions with their environments.

Approximately, half of the participants felt that exposure to rich language experiences through interactions with care givers, other parents, other children and listening stories & rhymes, through watching age-appropriate & quality contents (cartons, kids movies, etc.) in a workplace daycare enhances language development and literacy skills of the children. Few of the respondents mentioned that early experiences shape children's sense of self, identity, and resilience, influencing their perceptions of themselves and others which a workplace daycare ensures. Almost every respondent instinctively uttered that access to nutritious food, practicing hygiene in children’s routine works, safe environments, and positive caregiving experiences supports their overall health and development in a workplace daycare.

Nearly half of the respondents described that, the daycares usually arrange many age-appropriate interesting activities for their children which brings the children joy and happiness. Moreover, they said when the children are happy, they can learn more from the surroundings. One respondent, whose child attends the workplace daycare, remarked, *“My daughter is catching up many things seeing other children to play. Every day she is growing in some ways, I feel great observing these developments of her.”* (IDI # 8, Date: 20.03.2024).

Most of the participants perceive the value of the personalized attention, consistent care tailored to each child's needs in a workplace daycare. One of the respondents viewed, *“My child loves to play. If he was at home, it was not possible to mingle with other children to play. He is a very active child and my office-based daycare is providing him environment to play. Through play, he is continuously learning.”* (IDI # 10, Date: 26.03.2024).

Sub-theme: Importance of workplace daycare is significant

Most of the respondents whose children remain in workplace daycare opined that it provides a supportive and friendly environment where children of different ages can grow across all domains. According to them workplace daycare can make them worry-free, they can save time to focus on office works, overall, it fosters their employee satisfaction and enhances productivity. In a nutshell, most of the respondents recognized workplace daycares' importance for the working mother and their children as well, they referred to the children development and work-life balance for the mothers. Almost, all of the respondents strongly voiced that there can be no alternative of workplace daycare for their children's development during their working hours.

One of the respondents said, *“Yes, I believe workplace daycare is important for working parents, although I don't currently have access to it. However, if I had the access, it would certainly have removed my current stresses of finding external childcare arrangements and commuting to drop off and pick up my children, allowing me to focus more on my job knowing that my children are in good hands and they are nearby. I'm really anxious about meeting my parenting responsibilities, and I don't even have time for myself.”* (IDI # 4, Date: 12.03.2024).

Sub-theme: Work place daycare and women employment in Bangladesh

Majority of the respondents stated that, workplace daycare has the potential to significantly boost women's employment rates in Bangladesh. They opined, no access or limited access to dependable daycare options poses a notable challenge for many women seeking to enter or remain in the workforce. They further said, through offering onsite daycare facilities, employers can remove this obstacle, making it easier for women who juggles with their professional and family obligations. They viewed that increased participation of women in the workforce can drive economic growth and development in Bangladesh.

Couple of the respondents refers to the peace of mind, work-life balance of the working mothers because of having workplace daycare, which enables parents to contribute more to their office works while still being enthusiastically involved in their children's lives. According to them, this context can attract more women towards employment opportunity.

One of the participants who works in the development sector said, *“Indirectly, a workplace daycare can foster gender equality by creating a more caring and inclusive environment for the working parents, regardless of their gender. Overall, investing in workplace daycare holds promise for enhancing women's employment prospects in Bangladesh through long term employment with enhanced job satisfaction and increased productivity.”* (IDI # 7, Date: 14.03.2024).

Theme 4: Challenges and expectations of working mothers from workplace daycare.

Sub-theme: Challenges of workplace daycares.

Most of the respondents highlighted the challenge about the inadequate number of workplace daycares in Bangladesh. Nearly half of the respondents cited difficulties with the associated cost of onsite daycares. They noted that while workplace daycare costs are often aligned with their pay scales, additional expenses for transportation after extended work hours remain a challenge for them. These respondents appreciate that the office doesn't charge extra for overtime daycare but struggle with changing nannies during shifts, which affects their children's comfort.

Most of the respondents who are using workplace daycare echoed similar concerns, emphasizing the importance of flexible scheduling options, such as flextime where working mothers will be allowed from their employers to set their own start and end time provided, they fulfil their required work hours each week to better support working mothers aligned with their employees' working hours and responsibilities. Employer can also include adjusted working hours, such as, part-time, extended hours, remote works and emergency care provisions. They found accessing to office provided transportation along with their children is another issue as they have to wait for months to get entitled to avail the facility.

A few of the respondents stated about perception of other colleagues about their performance. Working mothers often rush to daycare after work to pick their children, occasionally leaving tasks unfinished. This leads to questions from colleagues about their performance on collaborative assignments.

One of the respondents stated, *“One of the big challenges is limited number of seats available in our workplace daycare and I am fortunate to have it timely. Without this support, I'm left scrambling to find alternative daycare arrangements, which is stressful and costly.”* (IDI # 5, Date: 12.03.2024).

Sub-theme: Expectations from workplace daycare

Qualified and trained caregivers are essential for meeting children's needs and development in workplace daycare, according to most of the respondents. They all emphasized the need for food supports from the workplace daycare. Some of the respondents using workplace daycare are unhappy with replacement caregivers.

Also, one of the respondents demanded about the workplace daycare supports at night as she needs to do office at night and her professions demands that. She is a doctor and most frequently she is doing hospital-duty at night. She has to keep her daughter at her sister's place in such cases which is worrisome for her.

Couple of the respondents stated that employer can have collaboration with other organizations for their employees' children in workplace daycare, such as the nearby schools for the school admission and hospitals to support the children with emergency medication with discounted fees and so forth.

All of them mentioned about the need of workplace daycare services those are more affordable for working parents through subsidies, discounts, or financial assistance programs to alleviate the financial burden on working parents. All of the participants were emphasizing on the adequacy of workplace daycare as an issue in Bangladesh for women employment and their children's development. According to most of the participants who do not have the workplace daycare facility, they would have ensured proper child-rearing practices if they have quality workplace daycares from their employers.

A participant using workplace daycare expressed safety concerns for their child due to the wet floors during cleaning, things also are not organized, and the absence of a lift, especially since the daycare is located on the fifth floor. She mentioned that her child is not exposed to varied activities and those are monotonous, also not always age-appropriate to ensure her child's learning.

One of the participants who has on-site daycare facility opined, *'I value facilities that offer engaging learning activities, suitable toys, and opportunities for social interaction to foster my child's growth and learning as well as flexibility in scheduling to accommodate my work hours.'* (IDI # 6, Date: 14.03.2024).

Discussion

Working mothers' understanding about the day-care at work place

The research revealed that working mothers perceives daycare as an important establishment where trained caregivers provide care and supervision for the children outside their immediate family. They emphasis on its importance for children's overall development and well-being, especially in the absence of the parents due to their work commitments. They comprehend that daycare offers a safe environment to the children for engaging in different interesting age-appropriate activities, rest, and nourishment, fostering holistic development across physical, mental, cognitive and social domains.

According to the research, a daycare addresses potential gaps in care at home, ensuring children's social interaction, nutritious meals which the children carry from their home, and opportunities for learning and growth. Overall, respondents recognized daycare as a

vital support system for working parents, offering convenience and peace of mind while prioritizing children's welfare and development.

The research emphasized that the mothers understand the significance of early nurturing for instilling values, healthy habits, and hygiene practices in their children, typically provided by the daycares. Overall, in this study daycare is consistently seen as a safe environment where mothers can confidently entrust their children's care, allowing them to focus on work without worries.

Respondents emphasized the profound benefits of quality daycare on children's development at their early ages citing that proper care builds the foundation for successes in various aspects of children's future life, fostering resilience, confidence, and positive outcomes from childhood into adulthood.

Participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of children's positive interactions with caregivers and peers in daycare settings for nurturing their social skills and empathy while the mothers are at work. Overall, respondents stated that if the children are raised with good care in a stimulating environment are more likely to demonstrate empathy and sympathy towards others.

The study reveals that mothers are delegating their children's care to the domestic help and the supervision to the grandparents, maintaining frequent communication with them for the updates on their children's routine works. Research indicates that when children are in daycare, whether it is at the workplace or elsewhere, working mothers typically prepare their children's necessities meticulously, including breakfasts, snacks, meals, clothes, toys, books, etc. Additionally, they monitor their children through surveillance cameras and video calls. Particularly, one respondent relies on daycare exclusively for her child's routine-cares and needs while the child is there. Meanwhile, another working mother, who uses workplace daycare, expressed concerns about cleanliness and interior arrangements. She questioned whether the activities offered were suitable for her child's age.

Overall, a daycare offers peace of mind towards most of the working mothers, allowing them to focus on their work while ensuring their children's development across all domains and well-being.

The study reveals the understanding of working mothers about the consequences of inadequate care on the children, including their physical health issues and growth in different domains. According to the research, children face challenges in regulating their behavior, their social difficulties and cognitive deficits when they do not get proper care in their early years. Additionally, the study underlines that these consequences can have lasting impacts on a child's well-being and future opportunities. Simultaneously, the study highlighted the potential of quality care for managing different developmental delays, such as speech and cognitive development which a workplace daycare usually ensures.

The study found majority of the respondents that they highly praise workplace daycare as a valuable initiative that supports them with many convenient solutions. They express gratitude for the access to daycares services, remarking how it alleviates stresses and enables them to focus on professional responsibilities. Many participants feel proud of their employer for prioritizing employee well-being and recognize the long-term benefits for their children's development. Overall, they appreciate the peace of mind it brings, contributing to a healthy work-life balance, and enhancing employee satisfaction and retention.

The majority of the respondents, though lacking direct experience with workplace daycare, are familiar with the basic supports they offer, such as maintaining the children's routine works, ensuring their sleep, food, engaging them in different age-appropriate activities, providing them different learning materials as stimuli, etc. They appreciate the engaging activities provided and the opportunity for their children to learn and socialize in a supportive environment.

The study emphasized that workplace daycare can facilitate better child development compared to other daycare options. It sheds light on having mothers nearby boosts their children's confidence. The research enlightened that the safety concerns were a common worry among all the participants and many expressing that having workplace daycare would alleviate this stress and allow them to focus more on work.

Practices of working mothers about taking care of their children when they are at work

The study revealed that working mothers are found to rely on private daycares for their children's care when they are at work, staying updated on children's well-being through

regular communication with the caregivers. Also, the research shows, some of them are employing female domestic help and they are taking supervision supports for the routine cares from other elder family members. Also, some of the working mothers are bringing their children to the workplace daycares, preparing foods for their children and they too follow up their children's activities and routine-care with the care givers.

The study emphasized the key priorities for working mothers for their children during their working hours including ensuring their children eat properly, their sleep and their safety. In case the children are unwell, the mothers are taking short-leave to attend their children. Working mothers are also prioritizing rapport with the caregivers to ensure their children take food properly and their proper hygiene practices as well. Visiting daycares is common for every working mother whether it is an onsite daycare or not. They do maintain effective communication and good relationship which helps them to know about their children's activities and progress. Working mothers sometimes are celebrating special occasions, festivals with the caregivers to nurture a community feeling, maintain an encouraging environment and enhance the sense of belongingness in their children.

Roles of workplace daycare

The research highlights that the role of workplace daycare is very significant both for the children and for their working mothers. Most of the respondents unanimously agree on the importance of workplace daycare for their children's development during their working hours. They view workplace daycare as highly beneficial, offering convenience and peace of mind. Majority of them emphasize the personalized attention provided by nannies, fostering strong bonds and consistent care tailored to individual needs brings appropriate development in the children. Moreover, working mothers appreciate the flexibility of workplace daycare, which helps them adapting to family schedules and preferences. Mothers' visits to the daycare within the office premises foster bonding and confidence in children, while children's interactions with peers facilitate learning and exploration. Observing others' behaviours, such as eating habits, reading habits, their other actions, influence children positively, encouraging them towards healthy choices, practicing hygiene and social learning.

The majority of the working mothers grasp child development as a multifaceted process encompassing children's physical, intellectual, social, and emotional growth and it can be

ensured well through proper care and exposing them to different age-appropriate activities, which a workplace day-care demonstrates well.

Working mothers unanimously recognize the critical importance of the early years in their child's development. They emphasize that this period builds the foundation for future learning, social skills, emotional well-being, and communication development. The majority view the ages of 0 to 6 as particularly crucial, observing a rapid growth in various areas during this period. Positive interactions with caregivers are highlighted as vital for fostering secure attachments, emotional regulation, empathy, and social competence. Additionally, exposure to rich language experiences, safe environments, and nutritious food are emphasized as essential factors in supporting children's overall health and development. And according to all the working mothers all these supports for children are being ensured in the workplace daycares.

The study revealed that most working mothers with children in workplace daycare emphasize its supportive environment to the children, fostering child growth and enhancing the working mothers job satisfaction along with increased productivity. They recognize its significance in promoting both child development and work-life balance.

The respondent highlights the importance of workplace daycare, expressing the benefits it would provide to the working parents in terms of convenience and reliability. They emphasize the reduction of stress associated with external daycare arrangements and commuting time in poor traffic, allowing them to focus more on their job and child-rearing.

The study highlighted that workplace daycare has the potential to significantly increase women's employment rates in Bangladesh by removing difficulties related to responsibilities to take care of their children during work-hours. According to the study, access to quality daycare at the workplace encourages women to pursue and maintain employment, thereby its driving economic growth. Additionally, it was highlighted in the study that workplace daycare plays a significant role in fostering gender equality and creating a more caring and inclusive environment for working parents. Overall, investing in workplace daycare is seen as beneficial for enhancing women's employment prospects, promoting work-life balance, and increasing productivity.

Challenges and expectations of working mothers from workplace daycare.

The study highlighted that nearly, all of the participants emphasized the need for caregivers

who understand children's needs and can create a safe, stimulating environment for them. Additionally, regular and effective communication between caregivers and parents was deemed crucial for consistency in the practices of daycare. Providing sufficient age-appropriate toys and activities for children to explore and learn was also emphasized in the study as essential for their overall development and happiness.

The study underlines the working mothers' concerns who utilize workplace daycare facilities about the financial stress of accessing high-quality daycare, which affects working mothers' capacity to afford other expenses. Some found the costs reasonable, while others struggled with extra work hours and caregiver shifts affecting their children's well-being. Having fixed daycare hours and facing negative attitudes from colleagues when leaving work on time made it harder for them to manage work responsibilities well and feel satisfied with their jobs.

The study highlights the significance of flexible scheduling options in the workplace daycares, such as flextime, allowing parents to determine their own start and end times while fulfilling their weekly work hour requirements. Employers should also provide alternative hours, including part-time, extended-time, or remote work, and emergency care options. Another issue identified in the study was accessing office-provided transportation with children, some of the participants were facing long waiting periods to become eligible for this service.

The study highlights the issue on the inadequate numbers of workplace daycares in Bangladesh. Most of the respondents were emphasizing the needs again and again. Participants without access to workplace daycare facilities expressed that they would have implemented proper child-rearing practices if quality workplace daycares were provided by their employers.

The study findings reveal the critical importance of qualified and trained caregivers in workplace daycares, as emphasized by the majority of respondents. They also highlighted the necessity of food support provided by the workplace daycares. However, dissatisfaction with replacement caregivers was noted among some users of workplace daycare. Furthermore, one exclusive demand came from a doctor participant who

frequently works night shifts, seeking night time daycare support due to professional obligations.

Several respondents suggested collaborative efforts between employers and other organizations to enhance workplace daycare services. This includes partnerships with nearby schools for admissions and hospitals for emergency medical support at discounted rates. The research underlines a common finding across participants' feedback was the need for a workplace daycare option that is more affordable, emphasizing the financial difficulties faced by working parents in Bangladesh and the necessity for subsidies or financial aid programs.

Safety concerns within workplace daycare settings were also emphasized in the study, particularly regarding cleanliness, organization, and the absence of essential amenities like elevators. Additionally, one of the participants highlighted the need of varied and age-appropriate activities for children, hindering their learning experiences in workplace daycare.

Conclusion

The research delved deep into the perceptions of working mothers about having a daycare at the workplace in Dhaka city. The study sheds light on the significant role daycare plays in the lives of working mothers and their children. Daycare is perceived as essential for children's development and well-being, providing a safe environment for them to learn and grow while their parents are at work. Workplace daycare, in particular, is highly appreciated for its convenience and comprehensive care, contributing to a healthier work-life balance for mothers and boosting productivity.

However, the study revealed some expectation-gap of the working mothers with their existing daycare facilities, such as availability, affordability, and quality of services persist, along with issues related to fixed operating hours and negative perceptions from co-workers in their performance and taboo amongst their elder family members about the care of their children in daycares.

Access to quality daycare, especially within the workplace, is seen as crucial for increasing women's employment rates and fostering gender equality in the workforce. It is the a most demandable supports, working mothers can avail from their employers in

their current context in Dhaka. Therefore, more initiatives are required to generate awareness about the positive impacts of workplace daycare among the employers. Government bodies and organizations can find the insights from this study valuable for implementing future work-life balance policies. Policy makers, employers, other relevant bodies and the respective ministry can work together for the implementation of The Child Daycare Act 2021 in Bangladesh.

Recommendation

Based on the literature review, research findings and discussion, also the insights drawn from the IDIs with the working mothers, the researcher puts forward the following key recommendations regarding workplace daycares and addressing the challenges faced by the working mothers:

- i. **Qualified Caregivers:** Ensure all caregivers are properly trained and equipped to provide quality care that supports children's development across domains.
- ii. **Flexible scheduling:** Employer should offer flexible scheduling options for onsite daycare center to accommodate the diverse needs of working mothers in terms of varied working hours and responsibilities, including adjusted working hours, such as, flextime, part-time, extended hours, remote works and emergency care provisions.
- iii. **Affordability:** Employer need to formulate policies to provide quality day care services those are more affordable for working parents through subsidies, discounts, or financial assistance programs to alleviate the financial burden on working parents.
- iv. **Safety Measures:** On-site daycare must implement robust safety measures, including the use of surveillance cameras and the floors shouldn't be wet & free from materials which can pose choking hazard to the children, also sharp-edged furniture should be avoided. altogether it should be baby proofed.
- v. **Adequacy of workplace daycare:** Employers with over 40 female employees should adhere to Bangladesh Labor Law 2006, Section 94 (1.2), mandating workplace daycare facilities for children under six. Employers should prioritize investing in onsite daycare facilities to support working mothers with a healthy work-life balance and endorse their well-being.
- vi. **Accessibility:** Ensure workplace daycare facilities are easily accessible to all employees, including those with disabilities, and provide transportation options if

needed. Also, there should have provision for the employees to take care of the children with special needs in their workplace daycares.

- vii. **Promote Stimulating Activities:** Create stimulating and age-appropriate activities within the daycare environment to promote children's learning and socialization.
- viii. **Offer Nutritious foods and encourage playful interactions with food:** Provide nutritious meals and snacks to promote children's physical health and foster healthy eating habits, while encouraging playful interaction with food to keep mealtime engaging and enjoyable.
- ix. **Partnership with other organization** for medication support, such as vaccination, medicines, emergency medical supports and school admission, etc.
- x. **Intense support from the Ministry:** The Child Daycare Act 2021 has been enacted. And according to the law there will be four types of daycares for the working mothers, amongst which one type is non-profit daycares which can be operated by individuals, organizations, NGOs, club, associations, corporations, or industrial sector. In FY 2023-24, MOWCA is implementing many policies and allocating budgets for daycares. Employer can seek guideline or seek for set regulatory standard for becoming compliant which they can follow to better help their employee.
- xi. **Additional research is necessary:** Moreover, further studies may help to develop a comprehensive understanding of the services of workplace daycare amongst working mothers and uphold its quality- standards to ensure early childhood development.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Research Tools

In-depth Interview (IDI) Guideline

Research Title: Perception of working mothers about having a daycare at the workplace.

Section A: Demographic Information

Name:

Age:

Education:

Employment type: Full Part-time Government
 Private organisation NGOs

Working experience (Yrs.):

Name of the employer:

Number of children:

Age of the children:

Monthly Income:

Family type: Joint-family/Nuclear Family/Single Parent

Availing workplace daycare Availing a daycare that is not onsite
 Keeping children at home when mothers are at work

Research questions

RQ1. What is the understanding of working mothers about daycare at workplace?

RQ2. What are the practices of working mothers about taking care of their childcare when they are at work?

RQ3. What roles do the daycares play at workplace?

RQ4. What are the challenges and expectations of the working mothers from the workplace daycare?

Section B: Working mothers' understanding about daycare at workplace

1. What do you understand by daycare?
2. In your opinion what are the benefits a child may get if s/he gets good care?
3. What are the consequences if a child does not get good care?

4. Are you aware about the daycare at workplace in Bangladesh? If yes, please share.
5. How do you perceive about the benefits of workplace daycare?

Section C: Practices of working mothers about taking care of their children when they are at work

1. What are the activities a working mother does to take care of her children when she is at work?
2. In your opinion, how workplace daycares are involving mothers to take care of their children?
3. What are the key things you prioritise about taking care of your children being in the workplace?

Section D: Role of workplace daycare

1. Are you familiar with the contribution of workplace daycares in the development of your children in their early ages?
2. Do you think workplace daycare is important for you and your children?
3. Do you think workplace daycare plays a vital role in women employment in Bangladesh?

Section E: Challenges and expectations of the working mothers from the workplace daycare

1. What are the key obstacles working mothers are facing with workplace daycare that hinders their role and the development of their children?
2. What are the facilities generally you expect from a workplace daycare when you are at work?

ইন-ডেপথ ইন্টারভিউ নির্দেশিকা

গবেষণার বিষয়: অফিসভিত্তিক ডেকেয়ার (দীর্ঘায়ু কেন্দ্র) সম্বন্ধে কর্মজীবী মায়েদের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি
আমি....., ব্র্যাক বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের অধীনে ইসিডি তে
মাস্টার্স এর অংশ হিসাবে একটি গবেষণা পরিচালনা করতে যাচ্ছি।
ঢাকা শহরে অফিসভিত্তিক ডেকেয়ার সম্বন্ধে কর্মজীবী মায়েদের ধারণা নিয়ে আপনাকে নিম্নলিখিত
উত্তর দেয়ার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হচ্ছে। আপনার দেয়া সমস্ত তথ্য গোপন রাখা হবে এবং
শুধুমাত্র গবেষণার জন্য তথ্যগুলো সংরক্ষিত ও ব্যবহৃত হবে।

প্রথম ভাগ: অংশগ্রহণকারীর ব্যক্তিগত তথ্য

অংশগ্রহণকারীর নাম :

বয়স :

শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা :

অংশগ্রহণকারীর চাকরির ধরণ :

অংশগ্রহণকারীর চাকরির অভিজ্ঞতা :

সন্তানের সংখ্যা :

সন্তানের বয়স :

পরিবারের ধরন : একক, যৌথ, মা একাই সন্তানের দায়িত্ব নিয়েছেন (সিঙ্গেল মাদার)

যখন আপনি অফিস এ থাকেন তখন সন্তান থাকে : বাসায়/ ডেকেয়ারে/ অফিসভিত্তিক ডেকেয়ারে

দ্বিতীয় ভাগ: ডেকেয়ার সম্বন্ধে অংশগ্রহণকারীর ধারণা

১। ডেকেয়ার বা বলতে আপনি কি বোঝেন ?

২। আপনার মতে সঠিক ভাবে বাচ্চাদের যত্ন নিলে বাচ্চারা সাধারণতঃ কী কী ভাবে উপকৃত হবে ?

৩। ঠিকমতো বাচ্চাদের যত্ন নিতে না পারার ফলাফল কী কী হতে পারে ?

৪। বাংলাদেশের চাকরিজীবী মায়েদের জন্য কর্মক্ষেত্রে অবস্থিত ও অফিস কর্তৃক পরিচালিত দীর্ঘায়ু কেন্দ্র গুলো সম্বন্ধে আপনি কী অবহিত? উত্তর যদি হ্যাঁ হয় তাহলে দয়া করে বিস্তারিত বলুন।

৫। কর্মক্ষেত্রে অবস্থিত দীর্ঘায়ু কেন্দ্র গুলোর সুবিধাগুলো সম্বন্ধে আপনার উপলব্ধি কী?

**তৃতীয় ভাগ : কর্মক্ষেত্রে থাকাকালীন সময়ে সন্তানের যত্ন নিয়ে কর্মজীবী মায়াদের
প্রতিদিনের প্র্যাকটিস**

- ১। কর্মজীবী মায়েরা কর্মক্ষেত্রে থাকাকালীন সময়ে তাদের সন্তানদের নিয়মিত পরিচর্যা
কিভাবে করে থাকেন বা এ ব্যাপারে আপনার নিয়মিত অভ্যাস (প্র্যাকটিস) গুলো কী কী?
- ২। কর্মক্ষেত্রের ডেকেয়ারগুলো বাচ্চাদের যত্ন নেওয়ার জন্য সাধারণতঃ মায়েরকে কী কী
ভাবে নিযুক্ত (ইনভলভ) করে থাকেন?
- ৩। আপনি যখন অফিস এ থাকেন তখন বাচ্চাদের যত্নের জন্য কী কী বিষয়ে সাধারণতঃ
প্রাধান্য দিয়ে থাকেন?

চতুর্থ ভাগ : কর্মক্ষেত্র ভিত্তিক দিবায়ত্নকেন্দ্র গুলোর ভূমিকা বা দায়িত্ব

- ১। আপনার মতে কর্মক্ষেত্রের ডেকেয়ারগুলো বাচ্চাদের প্রারম্ভিক বিকাশে সাধারণতঃ মায়েরকে
কীভাবে সাহায্য করে থাকে ?
- ২। আপনি কী মনে করেন কর্মক্ষেত্রের ডেকেয়ার কর্মজীবী মা এবং তাদের সন্তানদের জন্য
তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ ?
- ৩। আপনি কী মনে করেন কর্মক্ষেত্রের ডেকেয়ার বাংলাদেশে নারীদের কর্মসংস্থান সৃষ্টিতে
গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করে ?

**পঞ্চম ভাগ: কর্মক্ষেত্রে ডেকেয়ার নিয়ে কর্মজীবী মায়াদের চ্যালেঞ্জ এবং এগুলো থেকে
তাঁদের প্রত্যাশা**

- ১। কর্মজীবী মায়েরা কর্মক্ষেত্রে ডেকেয়ারের সাথে সাধারণতঃ কী কী বাধার সম্মুখীন হচ্ছেন
যা একজন মা হিসাবে তাদের ভূমিকা পালন করতে এবং তাদের সন্তানদের বিকাশকে
বাধাগ্রস্ত করছে?
- ২। যখন আপনি কর্মস্থলে থাকেন তখন সাধারণত আপনার কর্মক্ষেত্রের ডেকেয়ার থেকে
আপনি কী ধরনের সুবিধা আশা করে থাকেন ?

Appendix B: Consent Form

Title of the study

Perception of working mothers about having a daycare at the workplace.

Purpose of the study

In order to fulfill the requirements of a master's degree, I am pursuing from the Institute of Educational Development- BRAC University, the study aims to explore the perception of working mothers about having a daycare at the workplace.

Risks

Participants will not be posed any threats for their direct or indirect involvement in the study. The study results contributed by mothers of children below five years, will be predominantly used as a requirement of the master's degree.

Benefits of the study

There will be no direct benefit to be provided to the participants to take part in the study. As a whole, your participation will contribute to understand the perception of working mothers about having a daycare at the workplace and its role in child development.

Confidentiality

Each and every information collected from the research participants will be kept confidential private.

Further use of information

A certain amount of the information obtained from this research could possibly be kept for the purposes of future studies; in such instances, sharing data and information with other researchers won't interfere with the anonymity of the information.

Voluntary participation

It is entirely voluntary to participate in this study. It depends on the decision of the participants whether to take part in the study or not. If the respondents want to participate in this research work, she will have to sign the consent-form. Even after signing, if she is willing to not participate, she is completely free to do so. Additionally, amidst of the interview if she feels to quit, she can withdraw herself at any point without providing any

reason. This context will not negatively impact the relationship with the researcher if any at all. If the participant removed herself before completing the data collection, her provided data will be returned to her or it will be demolished.

For better transcribing and not to alter the meaning of the information, the interview will be recorded and it will be used as and when required during the study.

Thank you very much for your overall cooperation and kind consent to participate in this research.

Consent

I have gone through the above-mentioned information and I have cordially accepted the opportunity to be asked questions. I am deliberately participating in the study without any kind of influences and I understand that I can withdraw myself at any point of the research and without providing any explanation. I appreciate that I will be given a copy of the signed consent form.

Participant's

Name.....

Participant's Signature.....

Date.....

Researcher's Signature.....

Date.....