

# **The Negotiating Patterns of Female Vendors: A Case from Dhaka City**

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Economics and Social Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Social Sciences in Anthropology

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# Declaration

It is hereby declared that:

1. The thesis submitted is my original work while completing my degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material that has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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# Approval

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## **Acronyms & Abbreviations**

|       |                                                          |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| BRAC  | Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee                   |
| UN    | United Nations                                           |
| GDP   | Gross Domestic Product                                   |
| WIEGO | Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing |
| BBS   | Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics                          |
| FPAR  | Family Planning Annual Report                            |
| NIDCH | National Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital |
| NGO   | Non-Governmental Organization                            |
| IJSR  | International Journal of Science and Research            |
| TBS   | The Business Standard                                    |

# **Abstract**

Street vending is one of the most important informal occupations in Bangladesh. Due to its easy availability and minimal skills requirement, this occupation became very popular with the urban poor. The country's economic growth after the 90's expanded the informal sector which resulted in a massive influx of migrants. As a result, many urban poor women started to join the garment industries and others joined in the informal sector like vending. Though males and females are working as vendors in Dhaka public space, this study observed a gender difference. In the same public space males and females are perceived and treated differently because of the patriarchal norms. As a result, the negotiation patterns of males and females are different. This study analyzes that women vendors in Dhaka city use different strategies to negotiate their livelihoods in public spaces. Using in-depth interviews with over 10 respondents in Dhaka city this study identified the challenges and explored the factors behind different negotiating patterns of stationary women vendors in urban space.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

This chapter first describes the background of this research and then introduces the problem statement with proper explanation and discussion. After getting an understanding of the problem statement, the research questions of this study are claimed. Moving straight from that, the research objectives are highlighted. After that, the significance of this research is explained. Lastly, for a better understanding of the readers, the organization of this study is described clearly.

### 1.1 Background of the study

The Informal economy's concept, practice, and connection to informal jobs are widespread thing in Bangladesh. According to the Labour Force Survey (2010), about 87% of the labor force of Bangladesh is connected to the informal economy. Though the term “Informal Economy” was introduced in the 1970s, the practice of it was there even before that. After its disclosure, it became a debatable topic even after featuring economic development (WIEGO,2024). Despite that, Bangladesh has been dealing with a significant gender gap in financial inclusion, which is increasing daily. There are several reasons behind this issue but the main issue is patriarchal norms and dominance. Some other reasons are lack of control over decision-making, illiteracy,

and lack of knowledge regarding digital technology. According to the latest TBS (2021) report, about 29.2% of bank account ownership and 44.8% of women's labor participation have been found. So, it highlights and creates a picture of women's opposition to financial security and points out that women use it less than men, and even in this issue, women are lagging behind men.

Moreover, independent women and job holders use bank accounts for formal purposes and needs. Even if they have savings accounts, the overall supervision is sometimes on their legal guardian's hand. As women use it less than men, they feel secure and free to hand over the banking duties to them. This sometimes leads a woman to an unstable situation; by doing this, women automatically depend on men. If the condition of literate people is like this, the position and struggle of the illiterate and connected with informal sectors like street vendors can be imagined. They are in a severe condition full of problems in life, and their main problem is the financial crisis as they do not work and have savings. Most female street vendors chose and started vending to serve their families and live better, not by their choice but only to minimize poverty and lack of job opportunities. However, most need the capital or saved money for a start-up business, which they still need to get.

Besides, they do not have any opportunity or facility to pursue loans from banks or help from associations, and guidelines for them in this specialized working sector in Bangladesh. They face legal objections, but the public demand and need put them in an intricate situation (Hoque & Hoq, 2022). On the other hand, the situation of street vendors regarding taking loans in the neighboring country India has a different scenario, which includes a new policy especially for street vendors of their city that they can avail loans having some rules from banks (Balakrishna, 2023). It is a good initiative and encouragement to work. As Bangladesh does not

have such things, street vendors took help or loans from their relatives and families. This is the most common scenario for Bangladeshi vendors as they do not have any policies or loan systems in this country. So, street vendors have to struggle a lot to establish themselves but still do not get recognition in society due to the rules and regulations, and specifically in terms of female vendors it is more challenging as it is a patriarchal dominating society and not all types of works are appreciated and accepted by the society for females.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Bangladesh's general picture portrays a vast population that deals with social issues like illiteracy, unemployment, corruption, crime, and gender violence. Here, in this country, the educated unemployment rate is getting higher, and formal jobs are like a dream for literate people, mainly for fresh graduates and illiterates who are okay with any kind of job that can manage their food. To survive, men and women choose informal jobs that don't require educational background and skills. Moreover, the informal unemployment rate in Bangladesh is about 89% in the labor market, and of the total number of jobs, urban areas are found to be the most dominant. Furthermore, men and women are also engaged in informal employment settings. According to the United Nations ([UN], 2008), Dhaka is one of the world's fastest-growing cities, with about 14 million inhabitants, almost 34 times more than in the 1950s. Therefore, 40 percent live in extreme poverty and live with illegal arrangements here. It's the result of urbanization, and the victims of its adverse effects and consequences are poor men and women. But women are in the most vulnerable position. However, there are four occupational

groups in the informal economy and those are domestic workers, street vendors, home-based workers, and waste pickers (WIEGO, 2024). Among all of these, street vending is quite famous in this developing country because it takes minimal overhead costs and capital to start the business. As illiteracy, and poverty, are considered serious issues behind the overall country's development, the street vending business is famous for both consumers and sellers in Bangladesh.

Moreover, the situation, status, and position of women in Bangladesh are changing daily. Progress in different sectors like- empowerment in jobs and rights has been seen since 1971. Because of illiteracy, child marriage, and some other social problems women are facing domestic violence and dominance. Though there are laws and new rules implicated for the overall betterment of women's equality, women in Bangladesh are still struggling regarding various issues. Where men in this country effortlessly continue switching and ensuring their jobs and rights, women living in the same country are using and applying different tricks to ensure they have rights for almost everything because of patriarchy and gender inequality. In Bangladesh women working outside the home are not accepted cordially by society and for that reason, female street vendors' jobs are very challenging. While working in the street female vendors are physically and mentally abused, they maintain both family and job but in the end, they struggle a lot to ensure the right to work. Male vendors do not recognize women in vending and public space is forbidden to women so, it is difficult for women to take part in vending business like men. For that reason, they face different challenges and to cope they negotiate differently.

Furthermore, to get economic freedom and social growth, this vulnerable population connects themselves with various works (Rashied, 2017). As flexibility is their primary interest, they choose street vending (Etzold et al., 2013). Street vending uses public space for commercial

things assumed to be used equally. But in this patriarchal dominating society, some public spaces are not equally served for all genders, and especially women don't have an equal position in the labor market. Gender is being ignored while shaping the cities, and the rights to everyday life are also gendered (Beebeejaun, 2017). Therefore, it creates the main challenges for working women because public spaces are considered accessible. As gender forms in spaces differently and unequal gender relations are visible in public spaces, women as minors have to follow the masculinist and prevalent norms (Myrdahl, 2019). Even after maintaining those, they face problems and have to deal with ensuring the place to work. In this context, this research will draw attention to the women street vendors who fight and negotiate to ensure their public working place. As they don't get the proper flexibility to work like men in public spaces, they have some concepts to follow in their regular practices. So, finding and clearing out the negotiating patterns and the notions of daily challenges of women street vendors in public spaces are the aims of this research.

### **1.3 Research questions**

The research questions of this thesis are:

1. How do women vendors in Dhaka city negotiate public vending spaces?
2. What are the challenges women vendors face in public spaces?
3. What are the negotiation strategies female vendors use to ensure public vending spaces?

## **1.4 Research objectives**

The research objectives of this thesis are-

1. To denote their daily practices in dealing with this public space as their working place.
2. To know their challenges in a vending public place.
3. To explore their negotiating patterns while working in a public space.

## **1.5 Significance of the research**

The illiterate unemployment and literate employment rates are rising in Bangladesh. Running the informal family economy is the only way for both groups to survive. The most neglected sector with various problems, which is the informal sector, has an impact on the GDP because it contributes about 49% to 64% to the GDP of Bangladesh (Yeasin, 2022). Despite contributing this much to the economy, the informal sector workers, mainly the condition of stationary female street vendors, are very pathetic and unnoticed in this society. Their daily practices and negotiation to continue and assure their working place is very challenging. So, there is a research gap for female street vendors, and this dissertation will be helpful for further studies and research based on them. Moreover, public spaces explain equal rights, accessibility, and flexibility for all, but this idea isn't followed and reflected in society. Discrimination and gender inequality are seen in many things. As a result, through this study, a clear concept about these issues could be explored. As females hold the most vulnerable position in society, this study may help promote their equality, empowerment, and development. So, this study will help the community by spreading the knowledge to all and letting them know about the general but concerning issues of

society regarding female street vendors' daily lives, challenges, and negotiation patterns. Also, it can positively impact society by contributing pieces of information about a specific field and that can be also helpful for the academic side. Last, but not least, this specific study can be very beneficial for the Government and NGOs for further effective implementations and policy-making on this specific problem.

## **1.6 Organization of the thesis**

This desertion describes the negotiation patterns and daily practices of female street vendors in Dhaka city. The organization of the thesis following Chapter 1 states the background of this study and introduces the statement of the problem, including research questions, research objectives, the significance of the research, and the organization of the thesis. Chapter 2 focuses on the literature review and theoretical framework. Chapter 3 provides the methodology, including the research approach, research method, sample size and details, data collection, data analysis, and research ethics. Chapter 4 describes the findings and chapter 5 discusses the overall discussion related to the topic. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes the overall summary, recommendations, limitations of the study, and appendix.

# **Chapter 2**

## **Literature Review**

This chapter of the thesis elaborates on related works with female street vending and their negotiation patterns. The literature or the relevant papers are sectioned into three parts including named public space and street vending, street vending, and gender and the last one explains the status of women in Bangladesh. The second point, street vending and gender, is divided into two subsections to differentiate the concept of street vending in other countries and street vending in Bangladesh. Additionally, the sections of the literature review will help the readers to get to know about the other relevant and related studies linked with this research and it may help to critically analyze the research topic.

### **2.1 Public space and street vending**

Public space includes the idea of an open space that is unrestricted or accessible to all. Space is also dynamic and includes a multitude of identities (Massey, 1994). The most important element of public space is publicness (Li et al., 2022). Parks, roads, lifts, public libraries, etc., are examples of public space. Though these places are considered public spaces, people aren't always allowed to access or avoid them because of the flexibility, social rules, and orders. For example, Sadarghat is a public space that is accessible and open to all, but a woman will not try

to explore and visit there alone, fearing harassment. So, not all public spaces are used as they are supposed to be, and the idea of publicness is not reflected and highlighted in all public spheres. However, according to Harvey (1973), public space can be also explored as a place of political participation and deliberation or it can be highlighted as fundamental to democracy. Also, public space is essential because it connects people with their surroundings and environment, which also helps them get explicit knowledge about culture and society. The access, rules, and intractability of public space differ from country to country; it also varies from culture to culture. From childhood, people get knowledge of the rules, regulations, and restrictions required for using public spaces. And it can be said that public spaces are not neutral and also regenerate societal inequalities. For example- visiting a park alone for any purpose doesn't seem reasonable to the members of this type of conservative society.

Moreover, street vending means offering or selling goods on public roads or sidewalks. According to WIEGO (2023), the stalls or the shops are temporarily built, creating the question between the individual's rights to work and the collective's rights to public space. Furthermore, unemployed people prefer street vending because of the flexibility and convenience. Street vending as an informal economic activity is famous and illustrates a significant share of GDP in many countries (Rahman et al., 2019). As the country Bangladesh is dealing with substantial problems like- poverty, overpopulation, and corruption, both literate and illiterate people are choosing informal jobs like street vending to bring economic solvency to their families.

However, vendors do choose crowded public spaces for their business. Their targeted places are streets around schools, colleges, markets, and commercial and office areas. But they don't choose residential areas that much. For example- the Dhaka University campus is the most prominent place to observe street vendors gathering (Khatun & Sumiya, 2012). Moreover, street vendors

are considered an essential part of this developing country for different needs and cheap pricing. Though they play an essential role in society, a lack of education and rules are not pushing them to think about and ensure safety and the environment (Farhana et al., 2020). Not only in this developing country, street vending is famous, but in other countries, it is also famous. But the scenario is a bit different because in Bangladesh, it's illegal, and the street vendors face different problems regarding their business daily. For example- in New York City, there are several halal food carts and other carts, and it's fascinating to some people. Still, street vendors are under-reported and even seem like criminals (Poon, 2015). Even in Los Angeles, street vending is banned. On the other hand, a bill has been passed regarding street vending in India, and India is the first country to create progressive steps for street vendors. It includes the idea of their importance in the urban economy (WIEGO, 2023). Just like in India, the positiveness of street vending is found in Cambodia. This country is famous for street vending, and this business is unique according to them. They are always excited and crave street items (Soklim, 2021).

According to the IJSR (2021), The situation of street vendors became worse after the Covid 19, as they used all their savings and even borrowed money from others. Some women have also shifted to Dhaka and chosen Street vending because of the flexibility. With very little investment, only these jobs have been on the top preferred list to them but with huge situations and consequences. Nowadays, street vending occupying public spaces is giving birth to various controversies and opinions. It's because street vending has no policy to follow in Bangladesh (Mamun, 2022). Where different countries are taking initiatives; some are creating rules to prevent this, and some are appreciating it because of the economic growth. But in the developing country Bangladesh, this issue is handled and observed differently as it's illegal and still fully not stopped, and people are dependent on this. Indeed, street vending is a problem in the city's

growth as spaces are occupied because of this profession. Moreover, the problems street vendors face in general in terms of occupying public spaces are- lack of storage and damaged stocks (WIEGO, 2023). Furthermore, paying bribes, an unhygienic environment, and poor waste disposal are some more problems that they deal with (Islam, Hasan, and Hasan, 2019). In this country, street vendors are facing gender discrimination and creating inequality. Like- here, female vendors are few because of the patriarchal dominance, lack of education, early marriage, insecurity, overpopulation, female inferiority, and harassment (Rahman, 2019). Some female vendors have no option left, and they use policies and many other things to cope with so that they can at least survive and contribute to their families. Some females are the only earning source of the family. There is vast competition, so it's hard to survive with the huge patriarchal rules.

## **2.2 Street vending and gender**

The Street vending business is a widespread common thing in developing countries resulting in some good and bad impacts (Mramba, 2015). Bad impacts include occupying some public spaces which may cause difficulties for the public like- opening stalls in the footpaths. The problems occur because this business has no specific rules and regulations to follow but countries like Bangkok have street vending policies to manage footpaths as this business is organized and held in the open space (Mamun, 2022). However, street vending and gender have a deep connection regarding many things. Gender roles differ, and public space also acts differently for different genders. For example- women have very closed, fearful body language in public spaces. On the

other hand, men have very open and independent body language. There are many stereotypes that control and guide a woman to use and their rights in public spaces (Gardner & Begault, 2019). The facilities are not provided or experienced equally by men and women. Though it was supposed to be similar for all it highlights the inequality and creates discrimination in society. But having no choice and being a part of this society, women have to use a public space to fulfill their needs. While using these spaces, women face problems, and they also struggle with family while working outside. According to Sylvia Chant (2007), they are being controlled and forbidden to engage with the labor market by their fathers and husbands. Women are the most powerful as they fight and negotiate to ensure their rights in public and private spaces. Gender roles are assumed and set differently in terms of occupation. Men usually have very dominant characteristics and power in public spaces, which also highlights the patriarchal dominating society. On the other hand, in this traditional society, women are supposed to handle the household chores and family responsibilities. So, gendered space creates a separate space, which includes the idea that men are for public space production and women are for private spaces and reproduction (Jabeen, 2019). But in developing countries like- Bangladesh, a large number of people live in poverty and live in rural areas. But to grasp the development and advantages, people move to the surrounding areas or the developed cities. Living a better life and making a better future are the main purposes behind this shift. For this reason, they started a small business on the street (Soklim, 2021). But while doing this, they found themselves in a serious, uncertain, or problematic situation. To cope with the situation, both males and females start working. Moreover, it breaks the boundary of gender roles. Because women are seen to enter men's jobs, and men are also doing women's jobs in the labor market. It also helps to reduce crises and unemployment (Agadjanian, 2002).

### **2.2.1 Street vending in different countries**

Working experience in public space is different for males and females. The consequences aren't the same as well, so the percentage of workers differs from country to country. For example- in Ghana, 5 percent of women and 1 percent of men are street vendors (WIEGO, 2020). In Thailand, 3% of women and 2% of men are street vendors (WIEGO, 2020). Whereas, 3% of women and 5% of men are connected with street vending in India (WIEGO, 2020). On the other hand, in Mexico, 3% are male street vendors and 4% are female vendors (WIEGO, 2020). However, the gender discrimination problem is also a concerning issue in various other countries. For example -the Cambodians took street vending positively and responded nicely, still, the women of their country have to face problems like- harassment and abuse while doing street vending. Cambodian female street vendors have to pay high rentals and tax fees, but they don't get high wages from their businesses. According to FPAR, to prevent harassment and abuse and ensure the safety of working workplaces, Cambodian women street vendors pay illegal money to the police, guards, and local gangsters.

### **2.2.2 Street vending in Bangladesh**

As Bangladesh is a patriarchal and dominating society many women aren't allowed to work outside of their family. According to the 2022 The Global Economy report, the percentage of female workers or female labor force participation rate is 37.69%. About 186 million are female workers, and only 8.2 % are employed in the formal sector (Rahman, 2021). Also, religious boundaries and restrictions and assuming that working women may hold the power and rule the

family. That's why they are forbidden to work outside. Many women graduates are housewives and manage families. Despite having passion and chance, they can't use their skills.

Nevertheless, the scenario and conditions of women's street vendors are quite different. Choosing street vending as the occupation also has different thoughts, ideas, and opinions. Some females work in public spaces with the support of their families and husbands. Some are also found working with their husbands and supporting them. The inferiority complex, religious norms, and rules create a safe boundary for wives and also make them employed. In Ghana, adolescents start helping their mother's businesses, and later on, they get connected with street vending (Seeds, 2000). Mainly, widows and divorced or separated from their husbands are choosing these jobs. For example- in Phnom Penh, about 13.5 percent were widowed or divorced women who were connected to street vending in public spaces (Kusakabe, 2006). As they are single mothers, to run the family and raise the children, they are doing these jobs. It mainly creates self-employment and employment opportunities in other informal sectors (Saad, 2022). It also influences other unemployed women to get engaged with similar jobs. Most importantly, socio-cultural behavior, arguments, and self-expression create public spaces into public places. Because they give birth to human gathering and fascinating activities (Saad, 2022).

Furthermore, while working outside as a street vendor and using public spaces, women face various situations that highlight a challenging workplace (Sifullah et al., 2023). They face a public toilet crisis, sanitation problems, safe water shortages, and a proper environment. Also, female street vendors have to face and deal with harassment issues. They couldn't get a safe place to work and sometimes are mentally and sexually abused by bad locals and police. Using the cause of the illegality of these jobs, they are being assaulted by them. Street vendors are considered problem makers as their profession occupies some public or private areas (Sayem et

al., 2021). Keeping these problems and issues in mind, in Bangladesh, males are considered best for these jobs (Rahman, 2019).

## **2.3 Status of women in Bangladesh**

Women's equal participation is reflected in the history of Bangladesh. Like- the pre-independence era highlights that women went outside for any purpose, most of whom were homemakers. In rural areas, women could roam around in groups in public spaces, but the urban-centric women could not because they had to follow “purdah.” Mainly, they were restricted from accessing public spaces. Further, the post-independence era includes the idea that women had limited access to public spaces, but from the 1980s, a huge number of women got engaged in working in garment industries. On the other hand, according to the BBS, in 2015-16, the labor force participation of females in the informal sector was 95.4%, which is higher than the male percentage. Still, women have to negotiate for their equal rights because they are facing sexual harassment, abuse, domestic violence, and many more. Consequences faced by women are not because of the social hierarchy or position in society but because of the mentality and dominating rules. Both literate and illiterate females are facing different types of violence against them. For example - Rumana Monzur, who was an assistant professor at Dhaka University, was brutally attacked and abused by her husband who also works as a great example of domestic violence (Ray, 2011). Besides that, the participation of women in every contribution to this country is not highlighted or appropriately mentioned. For example, the active involvement of females in the 1971 liberation war and the 1952 language movement also in Shahbag gatherings

was seen (Babul, 2014). Still, it is not highlighted like the male's contribution. The new generation will never know the contribution of women in the historical sites because mainly males are being highlighted nicely. Women did a great job during those historical events, which is very appreciable. For example, in the 1952 language movement, a woman first went to the street through curfew (Babul, 2014).

In addition, after 51 years in Bangladesh, women are dealing with various issues that indicate the dominating rules, violence, and restrictions for them in the society. Therefore, women using a public space for business purposes illustrates or portrays a typical picture of a society that mainly describes the control of males over females, and that appears from the soft and polite behavior and appearance of females. As males' physical features are taken as threatening by women, it leads men to dominate the public space (Valentine, 2014). Moreover, men's aggressive behavior makes a woman fearful, which ultimately creates a public space that is timorous towards women. So, it can be easily said that acts help to shape gender roles, and the performance of each gender is also predetermined and man-made. However, for all of these reasons, “Patriarchy” is considered the primary barrier to women's development. This concept is available in both public and private spheres, and feminists apply the term patriarchy to explain the power relations between men and women. According to Walley, the patriarchal ideology could be illustrated in two ways: one is public patriarchy, and the other one is private patriarchy. Both types lead women to deal with an inferiority complex, and they usually follow a particular script written by society.

Adding to that, throughout this concept, women's vital facts of their roles as women could be explored (Sultana, 2011). Moreover, the rule that any space is being used for any commercial or economic purpose has to follow the first commerce or the power holders of that place. Each

public space has specific rules that have to be followed by those specific space users. Being a member of a patriarchal dominating society, the vulnerable member, the “woman,” accepts all rules, whether it is right or wrong. Every public space is monitored and judged by the audience, who are almost every member of society, including both males and females, and all expect the males to become the rule makers and the women the followers. So, in terms of street vendors, the rule remains the same, and due to that the performance changes, or in easy words performance is shaped according to gender.

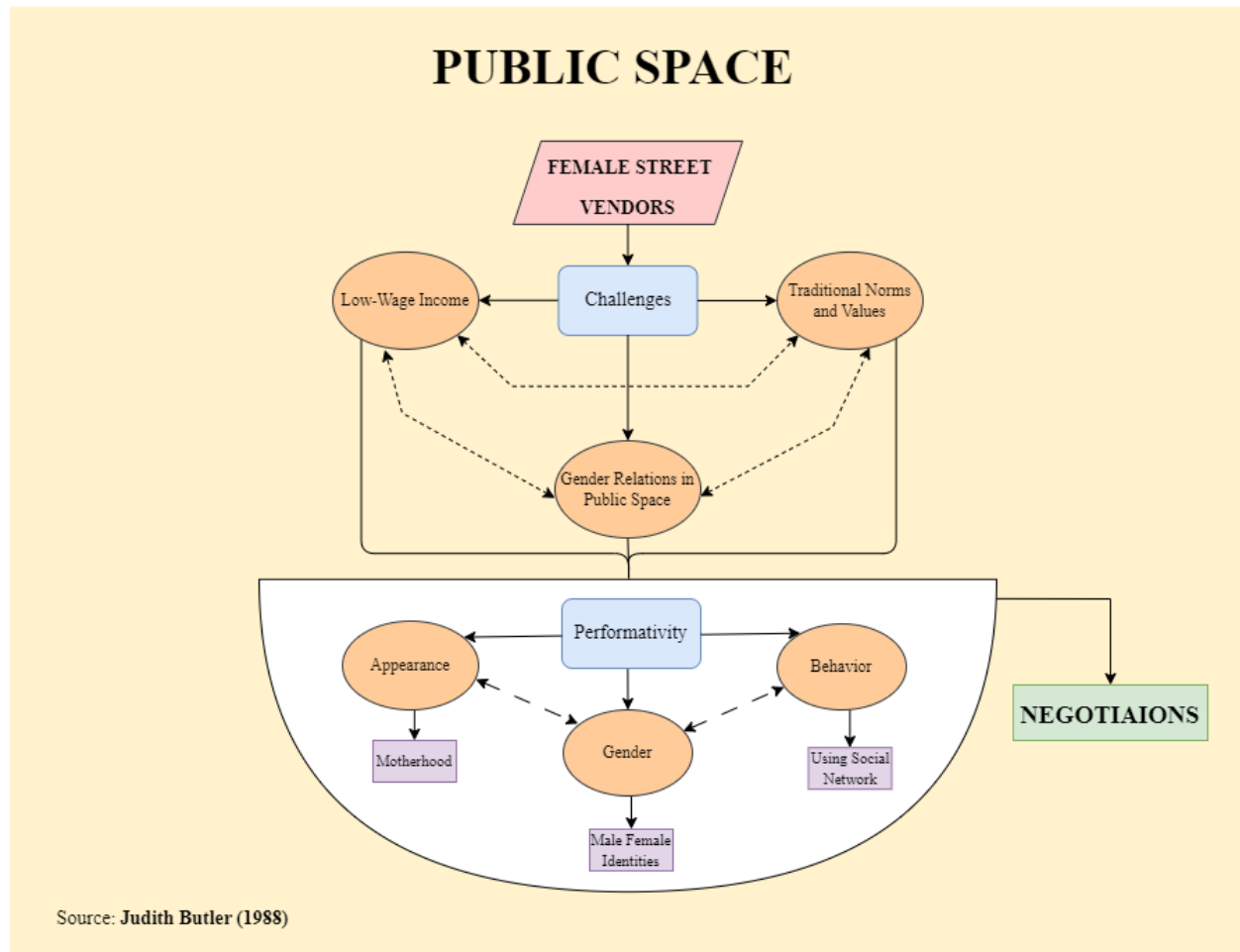
In addition, "Performativity," the idea introduced by Judith Butler in 1990, explains that gender performance builds the identity that is repeated by that specific gender and achieves stability in society. Those performances are imposed as fixed rules, and not following those rules is a rule breaker, and they face consequences. So, the explanations and gender rules are being taken from that idea. It determines the desires of the opposite sex. This can also be relatable to the daily practices and duties of males and females, as those are seen as fixed rules. Any changes in gender performance are identified as problems, and for that, negotiations and questions arise. Various things depend on performativity, including gender, behavior, and appearance. It is more important for the female street vendor because their work is challenging, and they negotiate to ensure their place of work. The performance differs from person to person. For example- those who are less egoistic, are friendly with almost everyone, are helpful to other vendors, have solid argumentative power, are more educated and clever than other vendors simultaneously, and hold a unique business technique than others are considered decisive. They hold powers in that place and also have strong negotiating ability. All these elements create strength in their business and result in good performance.

In this developing country, women have to work to fulfill family demands, contributing to the family but still negotiating to secure the right to work and space, which is a common thing they face. Their workplace is not protected for many reasons, and they are underprivileged because women's participation is abysmal in economic decision-making (Rouf, 2022). Despite having less appreciation and huge problems, women in this country continue their work, and the working environment is challenging. In Informal job sectors, females mostly face wage and gender discrimination. About 43% of women face colossal wage discrimination in their workplace(Sultana et al., 2021). Female stationery Street vendors are in the worst position in the informal sectors. Because they don't have legal rights to use a public space for their jobs or workplace. And all the consequences are its results. Bangladeshi female Street vendors face problems like- sexual harassment, the threat of eviction, threats by other vendors, paying a fixed amount to local gangsters and leaders, etc. These things are enormous because they earn a small amount of money daily.

Keeping these problems aside, the female vendors are completing their household chores daily and maintaining their families. They also fulfill a mother's duty and, along with that, handle business to feed the family. The husband and the family expect that whatever a female street vendor does, she has to complete her task properly otherwise, they face domestic violence and many problems in the family (Chakraborty, 2018). However, the same job with the opposite gender does not face the same consequences because of general roles and norms. This is a country of patriarchal rules and surrounded by religious orders and bindings. Despite having rules, laws, and so-called ensuring equality and rights for women, they are still struggling for their rights, and their place of work is not ensured, and typical gender roles are not changing in a good way.

## **2.4 Theoretical framework**

As the majority of street vendors choose street vending to support families and reduce poverty, it is usual that they come from a very traditional Bengali illiterate background and in those families, traditional norms and values function prominently and that's why it is a challenge to tackle and work outside being a female. Furthermore, as women doing business is not still normalized in this society, females working outside the home as street vendors to support their family and children is taken negatively and it affects them in their business. Though private spaces are considered women's kingdoms, males hold the power of control of all spaces, even in the personal spaces of their wives, and it is a biased thing. So, it can be said that because of the male-dominated society, gender roles are difficult to change to non-biased, which may remove difficulties like- the gender pay gap. It is also a great challenge to earn for those women which leads to lower income than male vendors. Another challenge for female street vendors is maintaining and balancing gender relations in public spaces. Despite treating them wrongly and discriminately they continue to work.



**Figure 2.1: Theoretical framework structure**

However, the members of society expect a particular type of behavior and appearance from different genders in each space and that introduces performativity. Performativity includes three concepts including- gender, behavior, and appearance. As female street vendors face and tackle situations and challenges regarding working and the workplace, ensuring that the working space is also very tough to manage. To secure their workplace they negotiate and use some tricks that work as safeguards and their performance at their workplace is dependent on gender, behavior, and appearance. First, gender is the prime element in determining performance, and the male and female identities are highlighted by describing their differences. Second, their behavior also

plays an important role in performativity. They use social networking for it, they manage local leaders of their workplace and they have to give bribes so that they allow them to work which is illegal and wrong. To cope with the situation and hold their position street vendors have to build connections with the neighboring vendors. That helps them to secure their position and also provide support when needed. Adding to that, by mentioning and highlighting their vulnerability and motherhood they try to convince customers emotionally which is their appearance in their performance in public spaces. Though street vending is illegal in this country, it is quite a popular profession and that is why the competition is also high. So, all of the above points help them to negotiate and to ensure public space.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology

This chapter explains the methodology of this research, which is divided into a few points to get a clear understanding. It begins with an introduction where the organization of the methodology chapter is explained and then the research approach is portrayed. After that, the research method that was used to get the answers to the research questions is explained. The next point gives a clear concept of the data collection and ends up with data analysis.

### 3.1 Research approach

There are different types of research approaches to apply in any research or study to investigate the problem of research and identify the solution. It plays an important role because through it the goal of this research is achieved. Among different types of research, this study uses the qualitative approach because by using this approach the research questions are easily understood which helps to get the answers to those questions, and a deep understanding of the meaning and attitude of humans are also gathered. Also, this type of research is common in the social science area and it helps a researcher to describe the experience of the world that he explored by himself (Berkovick, 2018). Adding to that the underlying reasons, thoughts, and opinions are explored by the participants through a qualitative approach. As the qualitative approach aims to understand

the experience of the world regarding different issues by people, it seems the best approach to apply in this research as it helps to remain things in their natural stages (Creswell, & Poth, 2018).

### **3.2 Research method**

For every research approach, there are a few data collection methods. There are no standard qualitative methods for qualitative research but the “quality” relies and depends on the researcher or observer's choice and preference (Aspers & Corte, 2019). The methods chosen for this study are- observation through seeing, hearing, and taking notes from fields. The interview is the most essential one. A semi-structured interview was conducted for this research. Therefore, the last one is secondary sources. These all help to cover the qualitative approach. To get a clear concept of the stationary female vendors' negotiation patterns and daily practices of the stationary female vendors, information from secondary sources and primary sources, which is the interview session, has been used. For this, the participants were observed closely and talked in an interactive way that helped to know their business style and about their customers. Moreover, this study noted that female vendors were mainly located in busy areas like- universities and hospitals. Many participants were found in the TB gate area where some vital govt. Hospitals like- Cancer Hospital, the National Institute of Diseases of the Chest Hospital (NIDCH), and universities like BRAC surround this area. So, it was clear that street vendors have a specific place for their business with targeted customers. It was also explored that this place has a huge demand for different products, resulting in competition for street vending alongside this area. This area was selected because of the popularity of street vending and huge types of people from

different classes and ages visit this place and buy products from vendors. Nevertheless, it was found that the number of female street vendors was few compared to the male vendors, and many factors were working behind that. Among those, the unstable working conditions, female vendors' positionality within this social setting, and coping with the environment were the influential factors that created challenging conditions for women street vendors.

### **3.3 Sample size and details**

For this research purposive sampling technique is being used which is one of the most useful techniques and popular because it helps to identify perfect participants for particular knowledge and skills and as well as helpful to reach the interested population. It is also known as judgment sampling where researchers use their expertise while selecting a sample that is helpful for the study (McCombes, 2019). Moreover, because of geographical distance, it was really hard to select an appropriate participant. Furthermore, this research conducts in-depth interviews with 10 interviewees. The data reached its saturation point after the 10th participant and the interview was stopped. Also, for the future safety of the participants, pseudonyms have been used in this study instead of their real names but the other pieces of information are authentic.

### **3.4 Data collection**

Both primary and secondary data were used to conduct the research and to achieve the goal. To analyze the main problems and describe the concept secondary materials like- articles, journals, books, documents, and research papers were used. For the primary data depth, interviews were conducted with semi-structured interviews as it is considered the best for this type. The semi-structured questionnaire also helped to collect information but some more unique questions were added based on the situation and participants. To start and make them comfortable for the interview different items were bought from them and tried to understand their comfort and discomfort zones. Their opinions and ideas were appreciated and listened to carefully. As the questionnaire was semi-structured and open-ended, more things about their lives, daily practices, and livelihoods were reflected and came to know.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

In cultural research, qualitative data helps a researcher to understand the culture which is founded on behavior, symbols, and language. However, qualitative data needs some steps for analyzing data and there are 5 steps in this process. Preparing data, organizing those data, and collecting notes are the first steps of data analysis (Dye, 2021). The same was done for this research. Moreover, interviews were recorded and each interview took about 30 to 40 minutes. Before conducting the interview they allowed me to record the consent they gave me to note their conversations and use it for my research purpose. Additionally, all the recorded interviews were analyzed properly and translated into English as needed. Secondly, the data were explored

and reviewed several times to have a clear concept of the collected data and what it contains. The third thing was creating initial codes like- using highlighting or sticky notes by using sticky pads to connect to my data. Then, by reviewing those codes those were sectioned into themes and lastly, the themes were presented invariably.

### **3.6 Research ethics**

Proper research ethics were followed while conducting interviews which is important for the Research. The rules and regulations were maintained as needed. Also, respecting the participant's thoughts, opinions, and values. With honesty, the data were analyzed. The participant's confidentiality and privacy were assured as they wanted.

# **Chapter 4**

## **Findings**

The findings mainly reflect that women are underprivileged in their working conditions. It also indicates their unequal position within society. The difficulties in the security of working conditions highlighted the everyday fights of women in this society. Being a woman and making money for the betterment of families while working in an unsecured public space is a very challenging job. They do not have equal public space like males, and the way females work is very diverse from males. The assumed situation for choosing street vending as a flexible and convenient profession must be reflected in their workplace. Unequal public space facilities, dominating and suppressing women, harassment, and discriminatory work environments are the highlighting points of this research. Moreover, the details of the participants are shown in the table below. From that, the average age of the participants is around 39, the interviews of participants are being analyzed, and the findings are categorized into different themes. Furthermore, to get a proper and better understanding of the findings, they are described in different themes, and each piece has relevant sub-themes with explanations.

| Serial No. | Participant Name | Age | Children Number | Daily Income           | Home Town | Type                             | Marital Status                      | Experience |
|------------|------------------|-----|-----------------|------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|
| 1          | Sadeka           | 30  | 1girl, 1boy     | 1500-1600 tk           | Chandpur  | Sells tea                        | Divorced                            | 2 years    |
| 2          | Johura           | 45  | 1girl, 1boy     | Not fixed. 2000 tk max | Narsingdi | Cloth selling                    | Divorced (But wants to marry again) | 1 year     |
| 3          | Moyna            | 67  | 3girls, 1boy    | 1500-1700 tk           | Tangail   | Sells tea, cigarettes, and cakes | Widowed                             | 5 years    |
| 4          | Rahela           | 36  | 2girls          | 400-500 tk             | Jashore   | Sells betel leaves and tea       | Divorced                            | 7 months   |
| 5          | Nosimon          | 41  | 4girls, 1boy    | 600-700 tk             | Kushtia   | Sells tea and cigarettes         | Married                             | 1.5 year   |
| 6          | Rita             | 32  | 3boys           | 900-1000 tk            | Sirajganj | Sells pitha                      | Married                             | 2 years    |
| 7          | Kulsum           | 42  | 4girls          | 1800-2000 tk           | Sunamganj | Sells pitha                      | Married                             | 3 years    |
| 8          | Tohura Begum     | 35  | 3girls          | 1200-1500 tk           | Bogura    | Sells spicy puffed rice          | Divorced                            | 1 year     |
| 9          | Rabeya           | 28  | 2boys, 1girl    | 1100-1200 tk           | Sherpur   | Sells tea                        | Married                             | 1 year     |
| 10         | Shopna           | 33  | 2boys           | 1400-1500 tk           | Rangpur   | Sells tea                        | Divorced                            | 6 months   |

**Table 4.1: Demography of the respondents**

## 4.1 Challenges of female street vendors

In Bangladesh, women face challenges in almost every step of their lives, and their situation and society make them dependent on others. From birth to death, women lead an unstable and

subordinate life. Before marriage, most of the women depend on their parents, and after marriage, the dependency shifts to husbands. As a result, in this developing country, women were considered a burden because they were not economically solvent. Still, fewer initiatives were taken to make them independent and solvent because of patriarchal norms and rules. Making women independent was a challenge earlier, but now the situation has changed because of regulations and laws. This ultimately gives birth to discrimination, gender biases, and gaps. As this is a patriarchal dominating society, women must struggle and defend at every step to ensure their place. So, the overall condition of the surroundings does not favor them. Nevertheless, women in this developing country are working, struggling, and contributing to the country's economy.

#### **4.1.1 Traditional norms and values**

Despite having some financial support, some women are not allowed to work outside because of traditional norms and values. Family is the prime guideline and support system for every family member whose opinions and suggestions matter to them. Also, the norms and values are learned and perceived from family and other members of the society which may reflected and practiced in front of them. As people apply and follow the knowledge provided by their family and surroundings, they are also aware of their limitations and boundaries. Bangladesh's people are more concerned about social stigmas and norms than becoming solvent and stepping ahead from poverty. They are ready to starve but not ready to do any jobs that hit their ego and create questions for them. In addition, the ego and social rules push them into a dilemma of not allowing and supporting women to work outside the home. Shopna claimed,

*“It’s very shameful working in the street for a divorced woman and my relatives and villagers will not take my profession normally if they get to know that I work as a street vendor. That’s why, I do not tell them the truth and they know I work in a company”.* (Shopna, (33), 26th May ,2023)

Therefore, the religious rules and ideas are similar in gender rules and norms. So, overlooking the family and religious boundaries and moving ahead is the biggest challenge for working women in Bangladesh. Besides, the males do not have to face this situation; they face different things. As social and religious rules and norms support them to work outside, they do not have to face challenges regarding this. Additionally, while performing and helping with household chores, males face controversies that arose from the social idea of “Masculinity.” According to that, males seem good at operating outside, and females are suitable for kitchens and working inside the home. Nosimon added,

*“In this city, it is quite impossible to bear the expenses of children and family with one’s income and that is why I also work but it is my everyday challenge to face the society, tackle and answer their taunts and questions while getting out to work and also during work time. No one helps us when we need money but so many people are here to oppose my occupation”.*(Nosimon,(41),

20th May, 2023)

Males and females face different challenges and consequences because of gender roles, rules, and norms. However, the engagement of females in public spaces is closely related to “Purdah” in the Muslim majority countries like Bangladesh. This idea also adds that it does not happen in male space. Mainly, females' existence in public spaces depends on their income status, religion,

age, and geographic location. Hence, the patriarchal controlling power relies on economic classes, adding that the poorer family has the responsibilities almost equally served between the sexes and the “Purdah” that is less followed and maintained by them. Also, they have to support the family to cure poverty. Again, landless women or poor women have restrictions, but that is less than wealthy and affluent families working outside (Paul, 1992).

#### 4.1.2 Low-income

Female street vendors do not have any fixed income, which is the most vital part of making their lives more complicated. Besides, most of them stay in rented houses, and at the end of the month, they have to pay bills whether they have income or not. Because of low income, they could not flourish properly, which did not lead them to the ultimate development. As a result, every family member suffers a lot, but the primary sufferers are the children. Moreover, another issue of low income in terms of women is working half a day. The way and time male street vendors give in the work is not possible for female street vendors as they have to support their families and children. To justify the above statements one participant named Rahela claimed that,

*“As I have to maintain my family and prepare food for my children, I can’t work full day long even if I want to. For this reason, I choose to work half of the day so that I can complete my household chores in the other half. But with this half-time working income, it’s quite challenging for me to fulfill all the demands of my children.”* (Rahela, (36), 27th May, 2023)

However, female street vendors face another severe problem which is when some customers do not pay for their goods and leave the place, and sometimes they steal their products. In this

generation, the living expenses are enormous for any middle-class or upper-middle class, and the condition concerns poor people. Staying in a city and maintaining and fulfilling all costs is challenging. Even from their income, house rent and bribes are paid. After that, a small amount is left, but some unethical people treat them incorrectly. Tohura Begum says,

*“Some people do not pay after buying products. Some stole products from the cart. They are from good families and not poor. It hampers my business. My earnings are small, and if people do this kind of job, how will people of my type survive in this world?”* (Tohura Begum, (35), 20th May, 2023).

#### **4.1.3 Gender relations in public spaces**

There is no specific list of rules for street vending in Bangladesh and for that reason, street vendors in Dhaka follow no discipline and they use the footpaths and any free space around them which ultimately hampers the regular life of the public (Mamun, 2022). Despite having no policies, the dominant group who are the male vendors of this society make rules and regulations in the vending space, and female vendors have to follow the rules and also obey the other male vendors to ensure their place to work (Nowshin, 2015). This thing does not work positively to make a good relationship with the neighbor vendor.

Additionally, women are treated and seen as very neglected while using the public space as women are assumed to stay inside the house and maintain the household chores. However, the ‘intersectional’ study concerning gender roles led them to practice, sacrifice, and honor the floor to men as they are a part of the particular ‘dominating’ society. These things push a woman to a flattering condition. Therefore, they could not get rid of this problem because they have no

choice but to switch from this job. To continue their job, make sure they use different negotiation patterns. In the Bangladeshi context, most busy business places have some specific rules and orders that the local leaders of that particular place manage. Adding to that, the rules and orders must be obeyed by all, which is sometimes unjustified.

However, female street vendors do not have the power of men, and they listen and obey men. They are not allowed to sell similar products or are sometimes forced to do an alternative business because of the demand. Rita says,

*"I wanted to sell snack items here because I found it has a demand and making a profit from it would be easier for me, but my neighbor vendors did not allow me to do so; they gave a threat to my family and me. As I live nearby, I fear for my children and our lives, so I chose an alternative selling product."* (Rita, (32), 19th May, 2023).

According to QUCIT (2021), no matter the place and time women are being dominated and ruled by the males, and the gender relation in space highlights inequality and several spaces are male-friendly and not that much friendly for females. So, society is portrayed as male-dominated, and for that reason, the relationship between the male and female vendors is not that good.

## **4.2 Access to public space and negotiations**

The accessibility and performance of street vendors depend on a few things in this patriarchal dominating society including gender, behavior, and appearance. Females are not allowed to access all the spaces like men, and relating to that, female street vendors face and deal with the most crucial challenges. To elaborate, female street vendors claim they do not have an appropriate, safe, and permanent place for their business. Moreover, they deal with regular challenges with inadequate sanitation facilities, female public toilet crisis, a hygienic environment, and uncomfortable seating arrangements, all of which affect their performance.

### **Performativity (Butler, 1988) Shaping findings with theory:**

The main highlighting points of “performativity” include any performance performed by any gender in front of society, depending on the gender roles of that specific gender. The roles are also repeated by the same gender which ultimately provides a steadiness to the society (Salih, 2002). So, society gets a framework for each gender's performance. Additionally, the idea of performativity isn't fulfilled without behavior and acceptance. These two terms are also as important as gender. The concept gathered to find out the answers for this research is closely related to gender, appearance, and behavior. So, through the identity of gender, the specific behavior of women and their appearance portray their performance in street vending or their business. According to the theory of “performativity”, gender provides a designation that gives that specific gender identity in front of society otherwise that gender isn't recognized fully (Allen, 2023). Relating to this, female street vendors are facing challenges and negotiating as

they are performing some opposite gender rules. In simple words it is not usual to work outside the home according to gender norms and roles and behavior and appearance come from gender and its roles. From this, it can be said that these three concepts are interconnected. So, regarding the negotiation patterns of female street vendors, the overall concept and the problems related to this can be detected through gender, behavior, and appearance.

### **4.2.1 Gender**

Gender is a social construction but society identifies gender by differentiating sexes which is biological and there are many differences in their body structure. For example, the energy of men and women is not the same. So, the physical structure does not let women perform like men. Naturally, women have to maintain hygiene to avoid different fungal and bacterial infections but men do not have to keep these lesser in mind. Besides, women's street vendors face the most crucial time during their menstrual period. During that time, women needed extra care and hygiene for themselves, but the street vendors could not confirm that because the most severe problem was mainly faced by working women in Bangladesh's female public toilet crisis. Working women spend extended periods, like 12-16 hours, outside their homes, and about 80% do not drink water properly due to the female public toilet crisis (Erdenesanaa, 2023). However, the number of male toilets exceeds that of female toilets and it also highlights gender discrimination in society. So, this is how the male-female identities are being portrayed by the society. It is also a discouragement for women to work outside by providing fewer facilities where men can avail the necessary facilities they want while working outside. Most workers, especially garment workers, travel often to workplaces and back home. Nevertheless, few public

toilets are noticed on the road, and most do not have female toilets. As female street vendors choose this occupation knowing all the facts, they negotiate to sustain in their workplace, and for that, they sometimes keep their children or relatives in their shop till they come back. Relating to the above statements, Moyna claimed,

*“ It takes 15 minutes walking distance to go home from my workplace and whenever I need to use the toilet I need to go to my home as there is no public toilet near my workplace. In case of an emergency, I go back home to use the toilet but to avoid that I try to have less food and water to avoid using the toilet. If I leave my stall for a few minutes, people start taking items from there, and I deal with a huge loss. Also, losing one minute is like losing one customer.”*(Moyna, (67), 19th May, 2023)

The gender identity of females also gives birth to safety issues at their workplace. Safety and security are the most common problems and severe problems faced by Bangladeshi women of all classes. Regarding this, Bangladesh holds 152th position among 170 countries, so many factors are working behind this (Khan,2021). According to a TBS report, about 810 rape and 225 gang rape took place only in 2021 in this country. Most of them were harassed and assaulted by their relatives, teachers, and neighbors at a very young age, which simply discloses that women are unsafe at home and outside. So, every working woman's situation and challenges are crucial, and female street vendors handle more incidents as they work outside. All day long, they face unusual things. abusive words, sexual assault, and harassment from customers, some passers-by, and local people provide insight into the unsafe working conditions of female street vendors. By taking advantage of politeness and vulnerability, women are harassed by males. It identifies women as the most vulnerable people in terms of sexual identity which comes from gender

identity or the identity as women. The circumstances that women vendors face are not the same for the male vendors because the public space is friendly for males. Males do not need support to feel secure and get rid of harassment and abuse. For the right to work outside the home and while working outside ensuring the public space simply introduces the picture of gender identities and inequalities. In addition, participants described and explained their experiences and negotiation ideas related to gender identity.

Rabeya added,

*"My daughter studied till class 8, but after that, she stopped studying because I brought her to my workplace with me. It makes me feel secure for both me and my daughter. However, I encouraged her to work with me because this country's situation is worsening, and she is a grown-up and I can not leave her alone in the house. Moreover, I want her to leave this place by getting married as soon as possible. Until then, I think it is better to work here because it is helpful for my job and her presence makes me tension-free. "* (Rabeya, (28), 16th May, 2023).

#### **4.2.2 Behavior**

Behavior is another important element of ensuring the workplace and it also determines performance. The female street vendors like to talk about their weak and crucial situations and by using this behavior they take assurance from the people related to their work. Moreover, by convincing the locals and police by describing their vulnerable situation, they partially eliminated dominance issues from the neighboring male vendors and ensured the place to work. To describe this type of issue Johura added,

*“ I explained my weak and sorrowful condition to the local leader of this area and he supports me a lot. If anyone tries to disturb or threaten me regarding anything I take his help and it works as a support system to me.”* (Johura, (45), Narsingdi, 1st June, 2023).

However, a fixed amount of money they pay to the locals and police to ensure their place, which has no legal law or rules. Some female street vendors use tricks like- selling goods at a lower price than other vendors, they get low profits to encourage customers to come which also highlights a competitive situation with the other vendors and the tension to gather the money that should be paid to the leaders is a reason for the lower selling price.

Kulsum claimed,

*“ I can't mention their name and identity but daily I have to pay a fixed amount of money whether my business runs well or not. And it's an impossible task for anyone to do street vending here without paying them.”* (Kulsum, (42), 21st May, 2023)

### **4.2.3 Appearance**

As most female street vendors are mothers, they are comfortable showing their identity as mothers in front of everyone. The mother street vendors are mostly divorced or separated from their husbands and their families which leads them to a very vulnerable and helpless situation in this society. As most of them do not have any help or support system where they can rely on and keep their children, they bring their children with them and stay in less tension which also shows their permeable and fragile condition in front of the public. By pointing out their motherhood and the need for money for their children and family they attract customers. Sometimes because of

this appearance, customers feel they can help them by buying items from them which may bring a little support to them. Sadeka, a divorced woman and mother of 2 kids, said,

*"Sometimes my kids ask for money from my customers and some of them give them money and they like to buy the food or other things they need. It is a sort of happiness to them as I could not give them the money they want from me."* (Sadeka, (30), 17th May, 2023).

For all those reasons, customers sometimes buy products to support them. So, these emotional talks are difficult for the male vendors whether they want to and these things make a female vendor different.

# Chapter 5

## Discussion

This chapter describes the way women are perceived in society, their position and situation in the public space due to their identity as women, and how gender relation is created through the identity of appearance and behavior they show in front of society. A proper discussion for getting a better understanding of the whole research topic including relevant examples and explanations is the main motto of this part.

### 5.1 Identity as women in street vending

From childhood, baby girls acknowledge their boundaries regarding everything they learn from their surroundings. It creates a barrier for women to stay away from several things, which ultimately leads them to know about gender roles, limitations, and discrimination. From birth to brought up, they are being manipulated and neglected in many ways, and they get used to it. The way toys are categorized by gender, not by choice of children, the same way women maintain a bundle of fixed rules and regulations in terms of their career, choices, education, and rights throughout their lifespan. Additionally, women are supposed to be the caregivers and men the bread earners of a family, as girls have to leave their parents' house at any point in their life. The birth of a girl to a family was considered a curse, and the main factors were bride price, bribes, and gender stereotypes.

Moreover, whenever a girl gets married, she goes to her husband's house with almost all her belongings and leaves nothing behind; for that reason, empowering and educating them is seen as a waste of time and money (Buchmann et al., 2023). However, people of this patriarchal society forgot that this unequal treatment leads to so many social problems like- high child death rates, murders, abuses, and high divorce rates. Furthermore, education is the best way to postpone child marriage and, at the same time, eliminate discriminatory gender rules and norms.

In Bangladesh, working in the street and maintaining the family is more complicated, creating double pressure and tension because of gender bias and social rules. As most women street vendors are principal earners of their families, the situation and scenario are more complicated than for men. Most of the street vendors are single mothers and divorced. In the Bangladeshi context, choosing street vending as a source of income or working in the street is very unusual and challenging due to social stigma and rules.

In addition, Single mothers bring their small children with them as they cannot keep them alone at home. At this age when they need a proper environment to grow and develop their skills they are getting the opposite. Their fundamental rights are not ensured at the same time. At the same time, desire, motivation, and awareness for study are lost. The children's lives are also stuck in the same phase and point as their mothers, and they cannot provide proper childcare, which a child needs the most. As the children mostly stay with their mothers, sometimes lack of attention of mothers, children face accidents and diseases.

Besides, gender stereotypes are making life complex for both men and women, where women are suffering the most. In the Bangladeshi context, all jobs are not suitable for women because of the hostile working environment, harassment, and violence. So, the women's identity specifies them

to a set of careers predetermined by their culture, family, siblings, friends, family tradition, and themselves (Tabassum et al., 2021). For instance, society supports women becoming nurses, doctors, and teachers, whereas boys are encouraged to join the technological sectors (Sushoma, 2021). Hence, society does not stop or create issues for men if they choose any preferred job. It is because of social power, acceptance, and social regulations.

Nevertheless, it is tricky and challenging for a woman to choose her occupation. Therefore, stereotyping career goals is demotivating other occupations and creating gender discrimination at the same time. It also does not let women in decision-making in job sectors because of predetermined thoughts regarding professional life.

Despite these challenges, women fight with society, family, and surroundings to ensure their jobs and independence. Even though the job and career are not only helping women to flourish themselves but also bringing solvency to their families. Besides, the background and society, which are entirely rooted in patriarchal norms, create a critical and uncomfortable working environment by asserting men's power and dominance (Pervin et al., 2023). Where women are in this fragile and unprotected condition from family, their acceptance as women by their colleagues can be imagined easily, especially when working in the street and running a business. It is because business introduces talking with unknown people, connection with surroundings, and many other things that are not socially acceptable.

In addition, female street vendors face many uncertain things while working because of being women, which affects their business. Firstly, the nature of women is soft-hearted and calm, and by misusing these, the other vendors do not allow and give a place for their business. Nevertheless, men do not have to struggle regarding this because of the identity of men, whereas women have to ensure safety and security issues. As public spaces are not convenient for

women, they cannot fully concentrate on their work, ultimately hampering their business. Adding to that, some customers harass and threaten them and take products as they cannot protest like men for their rights. So, the identity of women is very challenging for working women, from establishing a business to running and packing up.

## **5.2 Perception of women vendors in Dhaka City**

Measuring women's achievement, respect, and responsibility varies from culture to culture and society to society. In the South Asian context, a woman is fulfilled when her children are raised and brought up with suitable manners, norms, and rules, including education. It is assumed to remain the same for almost all mothers, whether homemakers or working women. If she fails in this particular duty, she is considered a loser in society. On the other hand, the scenario is different in some tribal societies as they have different norms and rules (Das, n.d.).

Moreover, menstruation and gestation make a woman unique and more robust, and women are naturally calmer and more polite than men. Consequently, women are viewed as the best caregivers in the world. Therefore, society assumes a woman provides the best role as a mother, with the other roles she has to fulfill. However, the situation and scenario are different for the men regarding child upbringing, though a child needs both father and mother in their overall development, and there are no specific gender rules for this. Still, most of the responsibilities are maintained by the mother.

So, female street vendors, as working women, have to obey some duties regularly, which could be pointed out through the working schedule they follow (Umamakeshwari & Arocikam, 2016).

Most of the female street vendors work half a day to keep a balance between work and family. If she works the whole day, she may earn more but can not satisfy her family, which can be problematic for both. As street vending is a great challenge for them, they work half a day to be good in society's viewpoint and maintain the duty of a mother and wife and many more relations. The workload and pressure of working women could be less and more manageable if the husbands or other family members supported her by dividing some household work among them. Relating to this point of females, the male members do not have to take the mental pressure like females as their partner supports them, and while working outside, they do not have to worry about other family issues. This discrimination is seen not only in the lower-class society but also in the middle and upper-middle classes.

Despite this, it has yet to be normalized in our society to stay single and not have children by choice, considering the situation and religious viewpoint of this society. Also, the unsafe and violent experiences of women do not let a woman stay single and let her live and perform her regular duties independently because women are at the most unsafe in a public place where they should be the safest in front of the public. Considering all these, working in the street as a woman was unusual earlier. Though the scenario has changed slightly, the consequences and everyday fights are the same, especially for female street vendors. Society does not perceive female street vendors lightly; they are judged and viewed critically, including their characters and incomes, by all, from neighbors to customers. It is because of the patriarchal rules that have been rooted in the mind deeply. The term 'equality' is only used to favor flourishing and growth in this society. However, it does not work in real life because not only men but also some females do not want females to flourish and become independent in society as they think that women's independence plays a negative role in the patriarchal society.

Therefore, in terms of plans and decision-making, society supports the male's opinion to continue the hierarchy of patriarchy even if the suggestion and standpoint are wrong, biased, or inappropriate for a topic that is taken for granted, which ultimately makes them superior. However, in terms of working, women from the lower class need to have the chance or floor to stand up and describe their points of view and opinions. For this reason, the ratio is meager for females regarding decision-making. A particular group of people in society, including both males and females, supports the predetermined idea based on an unfair concept that women have to obey to continue their business or job. It eventually shows how society discerns the position of both males and females in society.

### **5.3 Gender relations at space: appearance and behavior**

Any societal workplace depends on 3 central concepts- gender, behavior, and appearance and the combination of these can provide a clear picture of the performance and activity of any profession. In most of the professions in our society, gender stratification is a prevalent thing, which can be highlighted through unequal services, including power and privileges between different genders. Moreover, gender relationships are created through various social things of males and females but mainly using rights, responsibilities, and identities in the relationship with one another. Moreover, appearance is a vital element in differentiating genders through gender the roles are being identified (Jackson et al., 1987). Though the human body structure or physical appearance is natural, it highlights a total image of the specific gender, differentiating the characteristics, acts, and actions made by society. For each gender type, the appearance or the body image is imagined distinctly. For example, women's body type is considered thin, having a

perfect weight, and at any point in their life, their concern goes to the idea of thinness. On the other hand, the male body is assumed to be hard, muscular with six packs, and many more features. These specific features may differ from culture to culture. Though male and female body structures are biologically uniquely made, these differences in physical appearance may highlight gender power and traditional roles. Additionally, changes in body structure may also switch the power dimension of gender. For example, a woman with strictness and power in talking may not be seen as vulnerable, though they are supposed to be polite. Moreover, in a patriarchal society, in terms of heterosexual preference, a woman's perfect body type or appearance plays a vital role in coping with society's desires, and a male's appearance matters as well. Both are important for each other's satisfaction and fulfillment (Murnen and Don, 2012). This is how the appearance of gender relations is being created.

Moreover, facial expressions and behavior, including approaches and style of talking mainly influence the personality, and some social growth and developments also depend on this (Jackson et al., 1987). Just like the physical traditional appearance, behavior also influences building gender relations. This behavior or gender expression is expressed through different genders in private and public spaces. For instance, males use masculine norms, and females use feminine norms publicly to introduce themselves, which ultimately creates a gender relation among themselves. That has become a widespread thing in all professions and sectors of life. The dependency, trust, and expectations from the opposite gender are factors of growing relationships among themselves. As all of these elements help to determine and differentiate a gender, gender relationship is created from the identity of gender when all the components positively and actively work together.

# Chapter 6

## Conclusion

Street vending and the products they sell have a huge demand in this society. About 40 million people in this country are middle class and a maximum of them buy and rely on street products. Because of the price hike, people prefer products of low costs that fulfill their demands and needs at the same time. Even not only the middle class and upper middle class, some rich also buy products from them. Despite having so many positive sides in this informal job sector, street vendors couldn't ensure their place of work in society. Their overall business runs with uncertainty as there are no fixed laws and rules for the business in the street. However, where street vending in Bangladesh and outside is quite difficult it's more challenging for women because working in the street or using public space is friendly for men but not the same for women. The public spaces are assumed to be equal for all while using the public spaces but the unequal treatment of women is highlighted through harassment, abuse, and many other issues. Though women have to deal with all of these problems, they work in the street for family, children, and themselves. The females have to go through a tough process in this patriarchal dominating society during their work and even fight before work. As this is a patriarchal society, women tackle both inside the home and outside the home for better treatment, and in terms of working outside they face the most challenging conditions to ensure their working place by negotiating. The way females act is not the same for males. The females use some negotiating patterns to tackle society and continue their work. So, to get a clear understanding about this specific problem data is collected and analyzed intensively from the respondents' interviews.

Moreover, judgment sampling was used to reach the interested population, and in-depth interviews were conducted. After getting a saturation point, the interviews were stopped and analysis was conducted. However, their negotiation patterns and challenges were pointed out nicely as needed. From these, it is clear that female street vendors are dealing with more issues, and their condition is also serious and vulnerable. So, the government and every individual should be aware of ensuring their rights. Awareness should be created for all. Ensuring a place for street vendors should be of concern and everyone should work on making an equal and peaceful society with no dominance and privilege.

## **6.1 Recommendations**

In this part few recommendations are mentioned and described below and hopefully by following these recommendations a sustainable and healthy working environment for the street vendors could be ensured and public space rights could be assured for all.

- Build a safe environment for the betterment of female Street vendors in both working workplace and their homes.
- The government should appreciate and recognize their contribution to the economy of the country.
- Discrimination in their workplace should be removed and policies should be applied for that.
- Public space rights should be equal for all as it is assumed to be.

- The government should make rules and policies to have a secure working place for all so that female street vendors can continue their work or business without any hesitation and low feelings.
- Basic Amenities for the marketplace should be ensured for females.
- The Women Street Vendors Association should be created for the development.
- Proper training should be provided for their business purpose and betterment.
- They should get the chance to continue their business with the product of their interest. The right to choose and work should be on their own, not in the force of others.
- Equality should be confirmed for all and dominance of patriarchal rules should not be reflected in society.
- The basic rights of their children should also be ensured, and their security should be confirmed along with that.
- Sufficient female public toilets should be provided by the government for working women.
- Hygiene and cleanliness of the city should be ensured by the vendors as some of them are responsible for making the city dirty and unhygienic.
- For harassment and physical abuse, strict rules should be implemented.

## 6.2 Limitations of the study

The limitations of this dissertation are-

1. As this was a new experience of interviewing with the street vendors, hesitation and nervousness both reflected.
2. The secondary source wasn't enough and that's why constructing a clear idea about the background information was difficult.
3. As the female street vendors have a hectic schedule all day long, it was difficult to manage time to get a good interview session.
4. The time limit for conducting the whole research was not enough.
5. As most of the participants are illiterate and female they were frightened to speak up and share information because they thought it may hamper their business.

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# Appendix 1 Interview Questionnaires

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Are you married or unmarried?
4. If married, do you have any children?
5. Where is your hometown?
6. Are you the main earner in your family?
7. How much is your daily income?
8. If married, what does your husband do?
9. How many hours do you run the shop daily?
10. Who looks after the household chores when you are in the shop?
11. How many years have you been doing this?
12. If you have children, who take care of the children while working?
13. What do you sell?
14. As a woman, what problems do you face while working in a public space?
15. Have you ever felt any sort of discrimination because of your gender at your workplace?  
If yes, can you please tell me in detail?
16. Have you ever faced any harassment or abusive behavior from the customer?  
If yes, can you please tell me in detail?
17. Why do you choose this place to perform your business?
18. What do you do when you need to use the washroom and toilet? Can you tell me the problems regarding this in detail?
19. Are you satisfied with your business and earnings?
20. As a woman is it safe to do business in such a public space?
21. Do you have family support in doing this work?

## Appendix 2 Consent Form

### Questionnaire Consent Form

I [respondent's name] \_\_\_\_\_ hereby give my permission to **Taharima Kabir** (researcher) to allow me to respond to a questionnaire and quote my responses in a scholarly research paper. I understand that her work is for academic purposes.

I also understand that I waive any claim for copyright to this material should the researcher ever publish it in a scholarly journal or in electronic format online.

I understand that the Research Title is “**The Negotiating Patterns of Female Vendors: A Case from Dhaka City.**”

I also understand that this researcher, hereby named **Taharima Kabir**, will maintain my **anonymity** with regard to my responses to Questionnaire items.

I hereby give my permission in the form of my signature below:

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_