

# Women's Decision Making from Men's View:

*A Perception Analysis from the City of Dhaka*

Thesis submitted for the degree of

Master of Development Studies

Semester: Fall 2018

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**BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD)**

**BRAC University**

**December 2018**

# Women's Decision Making from Men's View:

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Master of Development Studies (MDS)



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**December 2018**

# Declaration

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I, the undersigned would like to declare that this paper is solely presented for the thesis works titled as “Women’s Decision Making from Men’s View: A Perception Analysis from the City of Dhaka”. My polite request is to the honorable supervisor to accept this thesis work which is submitted for the degree of “Master of Development Studies (MDS)”. I declare that the work done in this thesis is unique and it is not used elsewhere. I am benefited by the work as I have obtained the knowledge and skill on quantitative and qualitative research study which will help me to pursue my future research career. I would like to do more investigations in future with this related topic.

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## **Certificate of Originality by the Supervisor**

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The research entitled “Women’s Decision Making from Men’s View: A Perception Analysis from the City of Dhaka” has been prepared Radiyah M. Salim, (ID No. 17162005), BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), BRAC University and submitted for the degree of Master of Development Studies (MDS) under my guidance and supervision. To my knowledge the report has been prepared based on original work done by the author. So far as I am aware, she did not submit this report fully or partially as a required subject of study to this university or to any other institution. The report may be accepted for evaluation and completion of the degree.

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## Acknowledgement

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First and foremost, I would like to thank my amazing supervisor, Dr. Md. Shanawez Hossain. His contribution to my thesis cannot be expressed in words. He has always been there as a constant source of support, motivation, encouragement and all kinds of positive energy. He took a lot of patience to educate me and work with me so that I could conceptualize big ideas and use in my thesis. He helped me in designing the research and provided all the necessary guidelines which helped me proceed faster to complete the thesis.

I would like to thank my family for their sacrifice and constant support during my thesis. My mother-in-law, Anjuman Ara, and father-in-law, Md Shah Alam, have provided me a lot of support during the completion of this thesis. I would also like to acknowledge the cooperation of officers and staffs of the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), BRAC University; I am also thankful to my work colleague, Mahbubur Rahman Ujjal, and MDS classmate, Asif Mohaisin Sadri, and for their support during the data collection procedure of this study.

Finally, I convey my special thanks to the respondents who gave their valuable time to help me by answering the questionnaire.

The Author

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## ABSTRACT

The ability of women to make decisions that affect the personal circumstances of their own lives is an essential aspect of empowerment and serves as an important contributor to women's overall welfare. There has been progress towards the equal representation of men and women in decision-making in the past ten years. Economists often believe that the family decision-making process is the outcome of conscious choices of each spouse, and the decision-making power of each spouse is determined by economic as well as non-economic factors. The gender status is a vital aspect that influences the decisions of men and women in any family, and the factors that influences the power that husbands, or wives wield in a family determines the decision-making process of the unit. The study was an attempt to dig into the men's mind to understand how they perceive women's participation in decision making in their households, and the influencing factors for their perceptions. Mixed method was used in this study using data collected through a questionnaire and focus group discussion from a sample of middle class married men to investigate the nature and freedom of women decision making from their view. Findings of this study suggested that majority of the surveyed men believe higher education is the most important socioeconomic factor for women to have decision making capability. The findings also reflect an interest by the respondents to be more involved in the lives of their children and in their domestic life.



# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background: Women Decision-making in Bangladesh

Women has been fighting for their rights in household and external matters for centuries as stated in an article titled “Women’s Rights” by HistoryNet, which is the world’s largest publisher of history magazines. Over the course of history, the fighting has taken form of demand for property rights, right to vote, reproductive rights and the right for equal pay.

According to the United Nations Development Program’s (UNDP) Human Development Report 2016, Bangladesh ranks 119 out of 159 countries on the Gender Inequality Index, which reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions – reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity. In Bangladesh, 20% of parliamentary seats are held by women, and 42% of adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education compared to 44.3% of their male counterparts. Moreover, female participation in the labour market is 43.1% compared to 81% for men. (National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT), Mitra and Associates, and ICF International, 2014)

Bangladesh has topped the South Asian countries in the Global Gender Gap Report 2017, ranking 47th among 144 nations. According to the report, Bangladesh has made progress across all dimensions of economic opportunity and participation. However, report states gender gaps at the industry level, highlighting that even though qualified women are coming out of the education system, many industries are failing to hire, retain and promote them. Women need much attention from the government and all concerned units for them to achieve a desirable position of empowerment. (The Daily Star, 2017)

According to the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2014 (BDHS), 34.3% of married women surveyed had employment, where 32% who earned cash reported they mainly decided the usage for their earnings, 54% reported joint decision with the husbands and 13% reported their husbands alone made decisions of how to use their earnings. The ability of a women to make her own decisions is an important contributor to women’s welfare and an indicator of empowerment. The BDHS collected information on women’s participation in four types of

decisions: their own health care, major household purchases, their child's health care, and visits to their family or relatives. The study shows that just over half of women make each of the four types of decisions jointly with their husbands. About three in ten currently married women reported that their husbands are the main decision-makers about their health care, major household purchases, and visits to family or relatives. (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2016)

### **1.1.1 Demography of Bangladesh and Dhaka**

Bangladesh is a country with an area of 147, 570 square kilometers and a population of 158 million according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. The population of the country has increased by 8 million after the Census 2011, which has contributed to an annual increase in population of more than 2 million. The country has a population density of 1,070 persons per square kilometer. The GDP of the country is highly dominated by the industry sector, which is the largest sector of the economy, contributing to 30% of the GDP. The country's economy is growing at the rate of 6.5% which is led by manufacturing and construction sectors and huge investments in large and medium scale industries. Even with such rapid urbanization, agriculture is the second largest sector in the economy with a contribution of 16% to the GDP. The gross national income per capita in Bangladesh increased to USD 1,314 in 2015, thus graduating to the lower middle-income category according to the World Bank classification. (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2014)

Bangladesh has also made immense development in socioeconomic aspects when its Human Development Index increased to 0.570-which is the medium human development category-in 2014 from 0.386 from the 1990. It obtained the 142<sup>nd</sup> position out of 188 countries and territories. Persistent poverty has been a significant issue for the economy of Bangladesh. Many structural reforms and government interventions have helped to reduce the poverty and improve people's standard of living. Bangladesh's poverty rate had dropped to 24.3% in the last six years. The rural poverty rate is 26.4% while in urban areas it is 18.9%. The rate of extreme poverty is 12.9% which was 17.6% in 2011. (bdnews24.com, 2017)

Bangladesh's economy is at more risk than any other country due to the climate change. The country is vulnerable against tropical cyclones and experiences two-fifths of the of the world's storms every year. The country suffers from floods every year destroying homes, farms, businesses and infrastructure. This is due to the fact that two-thirds of the country is less than five meters above water, making it susceptible to flooding every year. Economic losses caused by floods can be estimated to USD 12 billion over the past 40 years. In the drought-prone northwest and the coastal areas in the southwest face fresh water scarcity where about 2.5 million poor people suffer from shortages of drinkable water or water for irrigation. The government has taken several initiatives to prepare the residents of the climate change prone areas-

*enhancing the capacity of communities to increase their resilience, increasing the capacity of government agencies to respond to emergencies, strengthening river embankments and coastal polders (low-lying tracts of lands vulnerable to flooding), building emergency cyclone shelters and resilient homes, adapting rural households' farming systems, reducing saline water intrusion, especially in areas dependent upon agriculture, and implementing early warning and emergency management systems. (The World Bank, 2016)*

Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, is the most densely populated and rapidly growing city in the third world. Dhaka is inhabited by 9% of the total population in Bangladesh with the highest population density of 10,337 persons in per square kilometer. The urban population of Dhaka is growing at the rate of 4% since the country independence in 1972. This extreme growth is due to the concentration of public facilities within the urban areas and partly due to the migration of rural to the urban areas in hope of better living standards. A study by the PPRC shows that only 16% of the urban population of Dhaka was born in the city they live in. The main reasons for such migrations were found to be urban pull factors such as employment and educational opportunities and rural push factors such as poverty and family influence. Compared to any other regions in the country, Dhaka presents an attractive destination for the rural population to migrate. The country's administration is centralized and confined to the capital; Dhaka is the centre of financial and banking services, and civil employment, and it offers the best health and educational facilities in the country. The most attractive component of Dhaka for migration is the garment industries with 80% of them located in Dhaka (Government of Bangladesh, 2016). This

rapid migration of rural to urban has led to the growth of urban slum population. A study shows that only 15% of the slum dwellers in Dhaka were born in the city while the rest were migrants. Other causes of migration can be traced to river erosion, local-level conflicts, economic shocks and natural disasters. (Bayes, 2018)

### **1.1.2 Women in Dhaka**

Thomson Reuters published a study which showed that Dhaka is the world's seventh most dangerous megacity for women. The study was conducted by collecting data from 20 women rights experts based on four categories:

- I. Sexual violence
- II. Access to health care
- III. Cultural practices
- IV. Economic opportunities.

Dhaka ranked 4<sup>th</sup> worst city out of 19 cities in terms of sexual violence jointly with Mexico City, just behind Sao Paulo, Delhi and Cairo. The city was ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> position in terms of facing harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation and forced marriages. However, the city was in the best eight in terms of economic opportunities and access to healthcare. (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2017)

Harassment targeted at women has been a regular scenario for a very long time without many making headlines on television news or newspaper. However, with the help of social media, the subject has got many awareness in the last two years. In March 2018, BRAC published a study where 94% of the women complained of harassment in public transport at a time when more and more women are stepping out of social and familial boundaries to get education and join the job market. The research titled, "Safe road for women: Reducing sexual harassment and road crash in Bangladesh" was conducted between April and June last year under the road safety programme of gender justice and diversity initiative, BRAC. The study was conducted with the help of BRAC University. The research found that a majority of the perpetrators who harass women in public transports and on the streets are in the age group of 41-60. Sixty six percent women spoke of experiencing harassment by men of the group. The research brought up different kinds of verbal and physical harassment that women go through in their daily commute

-- 74 percent -- and while walking on the streets -- 26 percent. Bus, tempo, rickshaw and auto-rickshaw were deemed to be unsafe more or less. Obscene or abusive languages, catcalls, whistling were among the ways of harassing them. Nearly 45 percent women said they had been subjected to sexual comments on clothing, anatomy and their looks. (The Daily Star, 2018)

The Daily Star collected accounts of several incidents reported on the social media, Facebook. A number of women alleged that they had been sexually harassed by groups of men on crowded streets of Dhaka. "My two hands could not prevent so many hands grabbing my body. Finally, a police officer rescued me from the gang of molesters, stopped a bus and put me in it" wrote a female student on Facebook. She was allegedly harassed in Bangla Motor area by a group of people marching towards Shahbagh. "Soon after reaching Bangla Motor, I was caught in the middle of a procession. Around 15 to 20 people surrounded me and then the most obvious thing happened," the woman wrote. She said she was physically well but mentally devastated. On another case, a student of Dhaka University said a group of people heading towards Shahbagh, surrounded her in a pincer move near Karwan Bazar. "They groped me for about a minute, some tried to pull off my scarf whilst going past me," she said, adding that some policemen were seen nearby, but they did not come forward. A Dhaka University student of Science faculty wrote, "After being hurled with abuse near Shahid Minar, when I came in front Fine Arts Institute by rickshaw, a group of boys sprayed water on me. I was nearly drenched. (The Daily Star, 2018)

Women empowerment has been the focus of development initiatives by the government and other agencies for several years now. Through these interventions, women are gaining their rights and participating in public affairs. NGOs have played a major role in improving the situations of rural women through micro credit, safety net programmes, and awareness of education for girls. "Bangladesh has become a role model in empowering women in the field of politics and economy," said Speaker Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury. She had also mentioned Bangladesh parliament speaker, parliament leader and prime minister, deputy leader of the parliament and opposition leader -all are women, as an indicator of empowerment. (The Daily Star, 2018)

Empowerment may be visible superficially in Bangladesh, but the core female population still suffers from absence of women rights and freedom. According to government study, 52% of the

girls in Bangladesh are victims of early marriage, but the UNICEF holds the number at 59% with 3.93 million girls being married before the age of 18. While the government maintains the legal age for marriage at 18 for girls, a new law was passed in February 2017 that allowed the marriage of an underaged girl under “special circumstances” with parental consent and permission of the court in the best interest of the girl. Bangladesh has made massive progress in reducing early marriage from 2000, when the country was ranked second highest in early marriages, but laws such as this becomes a barrier for women as they are deprived of their ability to make their decisions regarding their own life. (Guha, 2017)

### **1.1.3 Women in household decision making**

Men usually hold the position as the head of the family, the most important member, in Bangladesh. They are the prime income earner in the families and provide food and shelter to the families. While men are the providing the means of the families, the women play the role of a homemaker under the men’s subordination. Even though women are an important part of the society, it is their gender that dictates the level of progress by the society. Women are economically dependent on their husbands giving them an inferior position in the partnership called marriage. This does not allow them to have a position of authority within the family structure. This situation may be mostly severe for middle-class women according to a study by Efroymsen, Biswas and Ruma. While poorest need their jobs to contribute to the family, the upper-class women have their education and status for stronger participation and authority in the family. However, the middle-class women, due to their lower levels of education, often find themselves as “full time housewives” facing social obstruction and exclusion. Even for women who have jobs also have to bear the obligation of the household chores. This social perception towards women underestimate women’s status in a family and the society. (Efroymsen, Biswas, & Ruma, 2007)

## **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

In the context of the present condition of women’s position of participation in decision-making, this study seeks to investigate the nature and freedom of women decision making from the view of middle class married men. The study also tries to find out the factors that make women capable of decision making according to men. The following the objectives for the study:

- To understand the factors that make women capable of decision making according to men
- To explore the fields in which men would
  - like to make joint decisions with their wives
  - make decisions alone that may affect the family
  - like their wives to decide for themselves

## **1.3 Research Questions**

The study will address the following questions reflecting the objectives of the study mentioned previously.

### **1.3.1 Overarching Question**

How do middle class married men view the decision-making power of their wives

### **1.3.2 Main Research Questions**

- What are the socio-economic factors of women that lead men to believe that their wives can make their own decisions that may affect the family?
- When do men want to make joint decisions with their wives?
- When do men want to make decisions alone that may affect the family?
- When do men want their wives to decide for themselves?

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The first protest of women's rights can be traced back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century when trivial items were brought into the attention with a proposal to give women equal portion of colonial lands or the first female lawyer in the USA in 1638 who was involved in 100 court cases. 400 years have passed since then, but women are still struggling to practice their rights as equal as men and also bound by laws of the parliament or supreme courts where the majority seats are possessed by men in most cases.

Women have gained more power and visibility than any other time in history have ever permitted. Women have more participation in public authority, civil and political rights, academics, businesses and any other industries. However, this is not a uniform or universal trend.

There are still differences between countries, regions or classes. The movement for equal rights for women in Bangladesh varies within different regions and classes. While leader of the country is a female, we still can see the increasing number of cases of violence towards women in different forms on social media, newspapers and the news. Despite national or international commitments by the ruling political party or international agencies, Bangladesh is far from achieving the goal of gender equality.

Women are still viewed as the weaker sex due to the physical restraints. Even in modern days, women are still the largest victims to domestic violence and deprived of equal rights. Even through enough awareness created to reduce violence, the number of cases still remains high. Unless women participate in all aspects of life equally with their counterparts, the country cannot progress as per its potential. Women alone cannot win this fight for rights and freedom without the help of the men. To view into the minds of how men believe women deserve their rights of decision making and how her level of income may affect the participation, the study seeks to find answers in different areas to understand the potential of how the present scenario of the society towards women can be changed. The research tries to point out the factors that makes men either more resistant or acceptable to the idea of women taking decisions in the households and elsewhere.

The study contributes to understand the perception of how men would want women to take decisions in their households and their lives. It shows the difference in how men believe the different socio-economic factors may affect that decision power, such as education level, income level, social class, and so on.

Understanding how men want participation of women in decision making will allow the those who are working in the field of Women Rights or Empowerment to learn the ways of thoughts of men and make policies or changes accordingly to develop the social issue support from men, and also develop ways to change the mindset where necessary. Development of any issue will need the support from the community without any segregation based on gender, class or race.



# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter, at first, summarizes the theories of various scholars in the field of sociology, who discussed the dynamics of husband-wife relationship in a household, distribution of power and the theory of resources. This chapter further presents the theoretical framework that form the base of women's freedom in decision making.

## 2.1 Theories on Women's Position in Decision Making

### 2.1.1 Blood and Wolfe

The dynamics of decision making in a marriage can be defined by classifying marriages in terms of the power relationships between a couple and the roles they play. Blood and Wolfe (1960) in their book "Husbands and wives: The dynamics of family living" started with the hypothesis that power is the most important aspect in a family structure, including decision making. The powerholder was determined by:

- I. who made the most decisions in different areas
- II. who had the most influence over the other's behavior
- III. who contributed the greater resources to the family

Blood and Wolfe carried out their research through a sample of wives who were asked how the final decision were made in eight different areas:

1. husband's choice of work
2. choice of car
3. whether to buy life insurance
4. choice of house or apartment
5. where to go on vacation
6. whether or not the wife should work
7. choice of doctor
8. expenditure of funds for foods

They observed that there were variations across families, classes and decisions. The husbands' and wives' areas of dominant decision makers can be linked to their gender roles played within

the family structure where the husband's job, car and insurance purchases were taken dominantly by the husbands, and the wives had dominance over decisions related to wife's work, food and choice of doctor. Blood and Wolfe classified families in four categories based on how these decisions in the aforementioned areas were made:

- a) husband dominant
- b) wife dominant
- c) autonomic (decisions made independently)
- d) syncratic (decisions made together)

In contrast to their hypothesis where the husband will be the major decision maker, Blood and Wolfe found 46 per cent of their sampled couples had autonomic and syncratic combined balances of power, 22 per cent of the husbands were dominant and 22 per cent of the wives were dominant. They did not identify any uniformity in the pattern of decision making, however, the husbands tended to be the final decision maker even among the couples that were autonomic or syncratic. (Madden, 1982)

Methodology utilized by Blood and Wolfe was criticized by many other researchers. Some criticized the selection of different areas in decision making as mostly male dominance with less emphasis on the female's domains. The major question raised was related to the lack of geographical or regional representation, and also the exclusion of individual personalities.

### **2.1.2 H. Rodman**

Rodman (1967) uses examples of different regions where women have dominance in decision making in different areas. Hessian (German) women have more power than women from Wisconsin (USA) in decisions that have more consequence over them such as the decisions related to land and farm animals. Kofyar (Nigeria) women show relative dominance in decision making even from with a male dominated society. These women have considerable power over where she works, lives and on her sexual activities.

Rodman reported that there are several studies that investigate the marital power in respect to the working status of the women. The results of these studies illustrate that working wives have more marital power than the non-working women. However, there are variations between these two groups of women based on the different areas of decisions, and sometimes no differences in

some of the areas of decisions. But, working women are more inclined to have control over major economic decisions than the non-working women.

The “theory of resources” is used by Rodman to further discuss on the dynamics and the factors contributing to decision making power. The theory of resources states that whoever has the greater resources, has the greater power. The theory of resource was first developed by Blood and Wolfe based on their study of an urban sample. This theory can be used to explain in any environment from a family structure to the capital market and economy. Whoever has the highest amount of resources will have dominance and control over the ones with less resources. Blood and Wolfe used the theory of resources to provide the explanations of their work on USA. The husband’s power and dominance increased with increase in education level, income and occupational status. Similarly, when the couples had a child together, the wife was more dependent on the husband which extended the dominance of the husband. As a working woman, the wife had more control over decision making because she had valuable resources contribution to the family. Rodman termed education, income and occupational status as resources from the perspective of a developed country and the comparative amount of such resources played the determining factor of distribution of power between the husband and wife. Findings from Germany, Belgium, Finland, Ghana, Denmark, France and Japan supported he theory of resources which supported the statement that the husband’s possession of resources was positively correlated with his power in the family structure.

But in Greece and Yugoslavia (the state has broken up to six different countries now), data show that the husbands, education, income and occupation was negatively correlated to his dominance in the family. Safilios-Rothschild (1967) reported that more educated the man was, he was more likely to play the role in decision making on equal grounds with his wife. Education plays a major role to determine the power struggle in decision making between a couple; however, the cultural differences established variations of results from different societies. This gave rise to the concept of “theory of resources in cultural context”. As a conclusion, Rodman formulated a theory on the balance of marital power by the comparative resources between husband and wife, and the influence of cultural expectations on distribution of power (Rodman, 1972)

The struggle for women rights has made significant changes in the last several decades. Not only women are playing an important key role within the household, they are actively participating in the development of economical, political and ecological environment. The effect of the limited role and social status of women in the past by tradition and religion can still be seen in many parts of the developing world where they have less opportunity in comparison with the men. The pattern of decision making is also determined on the basis of the gender status of men and women. Women's role as a housewife is the responsibility of their house care and children rearing.

Decision making power of a women within a family symbolizes one of the ways of women empowerment. Decision making dynamics within a family has changed over the years as the roles of women have also changed with increasing women's education and increasing participation of women in economic contribution. However, in Bangladesh women was particularly viewed as potential mothers and homemakers. And despite the importance of participation in decision making for women empowerment, Bangladeshi women's decision-making power is limited to some extent. Just like other patriarchal society, in Bangladesh men have the power and authority over the family and the wives by default of just being the men and the "head" of the house. The men have the complete authority over decision making and economic transaction as the prime ruler within the family. Women do not have the freedom to make independent decisions related to mobility, real estate, fertility control or savings. (Sultana, 2011)

### **2.1.3 S. R. Edgell**

Studies about decision making in a family demonstrates that male usually have the control over general economic affairs. Men have the power over financial resources. The fact is that women's power to make decisions may vary across different regions and cultures. A woman may have decision making power over some aspects of the household, such as child rearing, but at the same time she has less power regarding visits to friends or relatives and how much she can spend or over reproductive decisions. In his study, Edgell (1980) categorized two types of decisions:

- I. decisions which were very important
- II. decisions considered to be important for both man and woman

The sample for this investigation was men who had professional occupation and had wives. He found out that the financial affairs were usually handled by the men which was classified as an important decisions. Children's education was an important decision which was made by both man and woman. Women were mostly responsible for decisions which were considered unimportant by both man and woman, such as the interior household decorations. (Edgell, 1980)

In another study by Noller and Fitzpatrick (1960), decisions were grouped into five types namely, instrumental, affective, social, economic and technical. Instrumental decisions are based on the family members' money, health, shelter and food. Affective decisions are those that focus on the choices related to emotions and feelings such as decisions about marriage or pregnancy. Social decisions deal with those decisions related to values, roles and goals of the family. These decisions include whether the children will be raised religiously or how the working parents will manage taking care of a child. Economic decisions deal with choices about the utilization or collection of family resources such as how a grown-up child may get a job and contribute to the financials of a family or the choice of purchasing a car. Technical decisions are usually those smaller decisions needed to be taken to reach to the larger decision. For example, if a child decides to pursue a higher degree in a foreign country, there will be a series of smaller decisions which will need to be made so the larger decisions can take place. (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1993)

#### **2.1.4 David M. Heer**

There are several literatures that cover the effects of employment of a woman on the possession of power or control of resources by the woman. David M. Heer (1958) in his article "Dominance and the Working Wife" presented a study where he gathered data from 138 couple respondents through oral interviews in Boston. Four groups of couples were selected based on the wife's employment status and the family class:

- a) working class and working wife families
- b) working class and non-working wife families
- c) middle class and working wife families
- d) middle class and non-working wife families.

All the families had at least one child of elementary school age. The working class and the middle class were classified based on the husband professions. The families with husbands who

were professional, manager, proprietor, official, sales or clerical worker were grouped as middle-class families, while the husbands who were a craftsman, foreman, operative, service worker, or labourer belonged to the working-class families. Working wife was defined as one who was employed and working at least ten hours a week, or one who has been employed for at least two years or plans to remain in employment for at least two years. A non-working wife was not employed or had no working experience for at least two years before the interview. He found that working class working wife had more participation and influence in family decisions making than the middle-class working wife. His hypothesis was that as the both the husband and wife would be earning an amount approximately similar to each other unlike that of the middle-class working wife, working class working wife would have more say in decision making process along the family structure than her counterpart. To test his hypothesis of whether the women influence over a family is predominant or an effect of her employment status, Heer designed a set of “Yes or No” questions for the couples, and the answers were given scores. The study showed that the degree family decision making by the wife was dependent on the working status of the women. This finding was more significant between the working-class group for working and non-working wife, than the middle-class wife groups. He found further association between the number of children and the degree of wife’s decision-making power in the family. He wrote that not only did her employment status affected her influence over the family, but her influence was indirectly also affecting her work status. It was demonstrated that families that had fewer children experienced greater feminine influence. With fewer children to care at home, the women would easily remain in the labour force. (Heer, 1958)

### **2.1.5 Blood and Hamblin**

Blood and Hamblin (1958) conducted a study where they tested if husband dominance was more equalitarian as a result of the wife’s employment status. The researchers used quota sampling for sample selection to collect data to test their hypothesis according to the following features:

- I. half of the wives in the sample were employed
- II. each couple were married for at least one year but not more than six years
- III. the wives were either employed or unemployed for at least one year prior to the interview.

The data was collected through a questionnaire which was designed to measure several independent and dependent variables as well as control variables. The following eight control variables were used for their research:

- i. socio-economic class
- ii. comparative education of husband and wife
- iii. absolute education of wife
- iv. independent unearned income of wife
- v. number of children
- vi. degree of affiliation with religion
- vii. number of years married
- viii. number of years wife in the present role (employed or unemployed).

The results showed that the working wives mostly practiced equalitarian authority and the housewives played a more traditional role of authority. The husbands of working wives also practiced equalitarian authority and the husbands of the housewives were more biased towards the traditional authority. Another component of the study was to investigate the division of labour. Since a working wife was sharing the economic contribution to the family, she was more confident to appeal for her husband to also share household chores. In contrast, the housewife was less confident to appeal for her husband's help in house work due to her lack of financial contribution. However, Blood and Hamblin specifically mentioned that this finding cannot be interpreted as proof of the wife's capacity to force her husband to help against will so much as his voluntary response to share the responsibility in a situation where the wife is unable to cope with the housework without some help. (Blood & Hamblin, 1958)

Several literatures have covered different dimensions of decision-making process and the power play between a husband and wife associated with gender roles in a family. The studies indicate that there are certain patterns of factors that causes the changes in the results of women's decision-making power. Women are more aware of their rights now than they were fifty years ago. And the changes in socio-economic factors are providing several benefits to gradually improve women status in the world.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework for this study is based on the theories of Feminism and Gender. These theories are considered the basis of women's freedom in decision making involving her rights, reproductive decisions, income level, and so on.

### 2.2.1 Feminist Theory

There are many theories that agree or disagree the participation of men in the movement for feminism. As suggested by Allison M. Jagger in the book "Feminist Politics and Human Nature", men need to learn the text of feminism theory first. This learning does not mean the reading of different theories and works by feminist authors but the social learning and understanding of the discrimination from female perspective. (Jagger, 1992)

Brian Klocke states that men can never be feminists, the same way whites cannot be black nationalists. He uses the racial analogy to explain men's role in feminism. He says; however, men can be pro-feminist and anti-sexist, the same way whites can be pro-black nationalists. To be a feminist, one must a member of the targeted group (i.e a woman) not only as a matter of classification but as having one's directly-lived experience inform one's theory and praxis. (Klocke, 2013). Feminist theory refers to the importance of experiences of women in patriarchal system of domination. Feminist movement arose from the victimization of women due to male dominance and sexism expressed in everyday activities. It is true that there were a lot of anti-male sentiment when they first feminist movement took place, but it needs to be mentioned that the movement was a reaction to the male dominance with anger. Women's representation was almost zero.

The first feminist wave is linked to the liberalization of women and property rights in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the US and Europe. It was voice against the domestication of women, not meeting the husband's needs and for equal access to resource. It is also known as the "equal-opportunities feminism". This was also a fight against male dominance over women. The second wave of feminism is dated between 1960s to 1990s. This was the rise of feminism among minority groups as well as among the third world countries. This wave was declared as increasing radical where sexuality and reproductive rights were the dominant issues which



brought about further social movements. Around this period, sex and gender were given the proper definition where one is associated with biology and the other a social construct. The third wave emerged from the mid-90s which is also known as “New Feminism” which focused on body image, violence against women and sexual harassment. It was redefining feminine beauty without being objectified in the patriarchal system. It promoted to embrace the femininity of womanhood without being losing your intelligence.

Male involvement is essential in the revolutionary movement for women rights. There needs to be social movement where boys and men are taught about the injustice of inequality, sexual violence and sexism for a societal transformation. For example, some schools in Kenya and Nairobi run different programs such as “Your Moment of Truth to boys” and “Sources of Strength” in Kenya, and “Safe School for Girls” in Rwanda. These programs cover everything from sex education, to challenging rape myths, consent, and how to intervene if the boys witness an assault taking place. While girls learn about investment to achieve financial independence and reproductive health to control the size of their families in later years, the boys are taught how to report abuse and how to respect the girls and women in their lives. This has resulted in an increase in the percentage of boys who intervened when they witnessed a physical and sexual assault rose from 26 per cent to 74 per cent. (Donovan, Wangari, and O'Neill, 2018)

Vogue India, a fashion and lifestyle magazine, launched a powerful social awareness campaign to deliver the message of empowering women, and that it starts with every individual. It was titled “Start with the Boys” where it focused on scenarios with crying boys being told “boys do not cry”. “Women's empowerment is not about women alone, which is why I pledged to create a short film that communicates clearly the need to change the mindset of boys before they become men,” managing director Alex Kuruvilla of Condé Nast India (which owns Vogue India), told Vogue. While the video attempts to address the traditional statements from society which makes crying or being sensitive unmanly, and subtly refers these acts as feminine, there is not much evidence illustrating the necessity of gender equality. But it also necessarily does not make it a priority that girls need to be as strong as men emotionally and changes the societal movement to also involve the male members of the world. May the changes in nurturing males to respect women and see them as equal will create a difference for equal rights. (Patel, 2014) Bangladesh

is in dire need of awareness from the grassroots level, where the gender discrimination and violence against women is more severe.

### **2.2.2 Gender Theory**

The Gender Theory also helped to understand how the social construction of gender affects dimensions of decision making and the women's participation within a family. While women are given some freedom to make decisions regarding household chores or members, men take the major control over the decisions which include external factors as well as internal.

The concept of gender is difficult to grasp by many even though it is so imbued in everyday activities. We are so oblivious to gender we perceive it is part of our gene. The construction of gender starts on the basis of the sex category. However, gender and sex are two different concepts: one bound and dictated by society, while the other by biology. Gender is the result of nurture, and sex is the result of nature. Even children are exposed to certain roles dictated by their gender which are linked to their biological sex. In the global culture, masculine roles are usually associated with strength, aggression and dominance, while feminine roles are associated with passivity, nurturing and subordination. This association to gendered roles starts at birth by applying colour coded gender labels when we cloth the male newborns in blue and the female newborns in pink. We also buy "gender-appropriate" toys for children, such as guns or cars for boys and dolls and dressing accessories for girls, even though there are "un-gendered" toys such as puzzles and playdough. The concept of gender has transformed into a script of a playwright where anything harsh or emotionless is manly, and timidity or submissiveness is feminine. The society adheres to this prescribed script where the men and women are expected behave as per their gender roles.

Gender inequality is termed as the devaluation of "women" and the social domination of "men" by Judith Lorber. She continues on the definition by saying that the gender inequality is not the result of sex or genetic predisposition, but the result of social process and structure built deliberately and purposefully. In societies that creates the biggest gap in gender difference, women are bound by coveralls to hide from the eyes of other men, not allowed to move freely without a male companion outside their homes, has no civil rights, often create a community within the same gender. Even in countries with where gender discrimination is discouraged,

women and men spend most of their time with people of their gender because many of the major roles and interests are still gendered such as child rearing or fashion for women and military or sports for men. (Lorber, 1994)

The study attempted to analyze how urban dwelling middle class men view the process of decision making solely by women or the extent of which the men believe can be “allowed”. The dimensions which may affect the men’s view were investigated based mainly on the different socio-economic factors such as career of the wives, the education level of the women, social class, and so on. The conclusion of the study provides whether the men controls the women’s decision-making power to what extent, and the factors that contribute to such situation. The foundation of the study was based on the concepts and theories and their evolutions or modern forms available from different literatures of experts in the fields of feminism and gender which were associated with civil and personal rights, and that revolutionary movement to improve the global conditions of women will need a joint effort by everyone irrespective of their gender.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Women's decision-making power in their family may seem to vary depending on their socio-economic status in common understanding of the population. However, it is also important to understand how men may view women's participation in major decisions related to family matters. It is crucial to explore whether they believe women needs to be concerned with only household activities without any contribution to the major decisions, or whether men are rejecting the archaic societal nature of oppressing women and accepting them as equal members in their families and society, at least among the modern dwellers of the city. The chapter discusses how the research was designed to address the research questions through both quantitative and qualitative research method, and also illustrates the sample group, sampling and data collection procedure and the basic information of the respondents.

### **3.1 Methodology**

Mixed research method was used to collect data from respondents through a quantitative method using questionnaire and a qualitative method by gathering information through one focus group discussions. The quantitative approach to data collecting included close-ended information which were statistically analyzed with numerical representation. The qualitative data was more open-ended using the same questions used in the survey, but which also initiated conversation among the participants of the focused groups. The mixed method approach allowed the study to analyze how the male participants in the focused group discussion interacted with each other that may or may not have changed their collective individual responses in the survey. This method was used to validate the outcome of the focused group discussion when compared to survey responses.

#### **3.1.1 Mixed Method**

Mixed methods studies have been defined by several authors as studies aiming to integrate qualitative and quantitative elements. The authors of the journal "Toward a Definition of Mixed Methods Research" analyzed 19 different definitions of mixed method provided by experts in the

field. Based on their analysis, they offered a general definition of mixed methods research where components of qualitative and quantitative are used together for producing more accurate results that reflect the underlying elements. “A mixed methods study would involve mixing within a single study; a mixed method program would involve mixing within a program of research and the mixing might occur across a closely related set of studies.” (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007)

A balance between the quantitative and qualitative approach must be maintained, and the level of balance varies from one researcher to the other depending on their study or field. Many studies on mixed method focuses on the constrains of the capability to balance both the approaches. There are situations where one approach will be given priority over the other, but it depends on nature of the study and the skill of a researcher on how the integration is done between quantitative and qualitative data to produce definitive results from the studies. The complexity of this mixed approach lies in the nature of the data involved and it requires robust solutions to strike a balance between the qualitative and quantitative elements.

### **3.1.2 Quantitative Research Method**

Data was collected through primary data sources using a developed questionnaire with close-ended questions. The quantitative method is used to reflect the qualitative data collected from the survey in numerical representation. Quantitative method is used for measuring something or variables used by a researcher in association with statistical techniques. Quantitative findings can be used to generalize a whole population, or a sub-population in case of this study, as it involves a larger sample size which is selected based on different sampling procedures to complement the field of the study. However, quantitative approach fails to understand the deeper underlying meanings and explanations based on the data received. This is where qualitative method is used to fill the gaps due to the shortcomings of quantitative studies.

Survey research was used to obtain data for the study. Survey research is one of the most important areas of measurement in social research. A questionnaire was developed to collect data from primary sources. The socio-economic factors of the women that was used to develop the questionnaire included: employment and income level, education level, educated family, assets ownership and wealth of the family. The study also explored the fields where men either make or

believe they should make the decisions alone, jointly or the wives make the decisions. These fields are: major household purchases, wives' movements, her healthcare, child related decisions, reproductive decision, residential decisions, attending higher education, employment, and how they spend their earnings.

### **3.1.3 Qualitative Research Method**

Qualitative approach focuses on the quality of the variables of research questions. Qualitative data was collected through one focus group discussion. Qualitative method helps to gather information from relatively smaller samples but helps to identify underlying issues and explanations related to the field of study, which otherwise would not have been collected through quantitative data collection. However, as many of the data collected are in narratives and descriptions, a researcher must carefully analyze the data and provide results that can draw a conclusion. Focus group discussion is frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues. Focus group discussion usually yields both qualitative and observational data where analyses can be demanding.

### **3.1.4 Sampling and Data Collection Procedure**

The study is designed to collect the perception of the men on women's decision-making power within a family. To focus the study on a smaller group of homogeneous individuals, married middle class men were selected to participate in the survey as well as the focused group discussion.

#### **Defining Middle Class**

According to official documents or publications in Bangladesh, middle class category has not been defined in terms of income or wealth. However, a recent study by BIDS puts the number at 20 per cent of the population with a definition that, "A person belongs to the middle-class category when his/her income ranges between \$2 and \$3 per day". This amounts to only \$60-\$90 monthly income, i.e. BDT 5,040- BDT 7,560 per month. It is hard to imagine such a range for the current middle-class members living in Dhaka.

According to Marx in the mid-19th century, the bourgeoisie grew out to become the owners of industries and exploited the workers. And, as growth and development of industries took place, this class grew further to become managers and other professional, thus emerging out as the middle class. The German sociologist, Max Weber, classified the middle class almost in the same manner as Marx. He identified three aspects of class: “(i) a specific causal component of actor’s life chances (ii) which rests exclusively on economic interests and wealth, and (iii) is represented under conditions of labor and commodity markets. The possession of material resources, accumulated by advantage in the marketplace, results in distinctive qualities in terms of the standard of living” (Shortell, 2014)

In this modern 21<sup>st</sup> century, the defining middle-class has become even more complicated. In the USA, the middle-class is not defined only in terms of income. Sociologists and economists use other variable besides income, education and occupation to define this class. The CNNMoney, is a financial news and information website operated by CNN, states that there are five different ways that economists, federal agencies and even the White House measure and characterize the middle class.

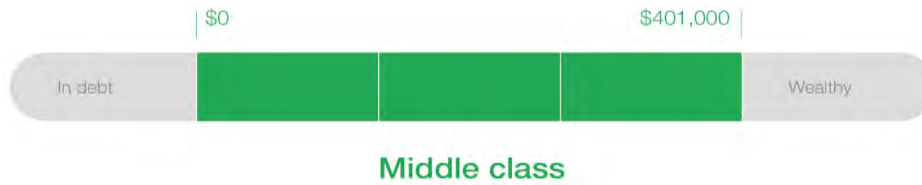
- I. **Income:** The class is defined as per income by the population who falls in the middle fifth of the nation's income ladder. Another broader characterization is to include everyone but the poorest 20 per cent and the wealthiest 20 per cent. Displayed below is the Pew Research Center's definition, which is two-thirds to two times the national median income for the household size.



\*ANNUAL INCOME FOR A FOUR-PERSON HOUSEHOLD; SOURCE: PEW RESEARCH CENTER

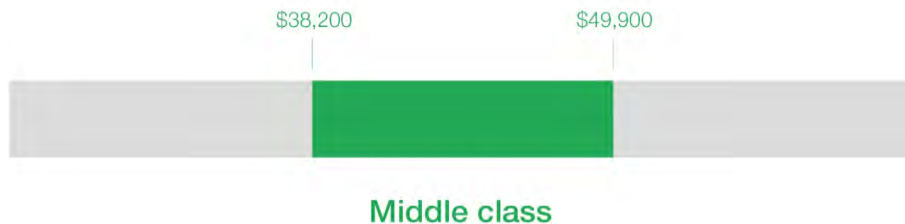
- II. **Wealth:** Middle class can also be defined by their savings or investments other than their income. This is usually the scenario for retired people living off their retirement savings. So, some experts prefer to use wealth as the determining factor. New York University

Professor Edward Wolff, for instance, defines middle class as the middle three-fifths of the wealth spectrum. Anyone below that range are in debt and above are wealthy.



\*NET WORTH; SOURCE: EDWARD WOLFF, NYU

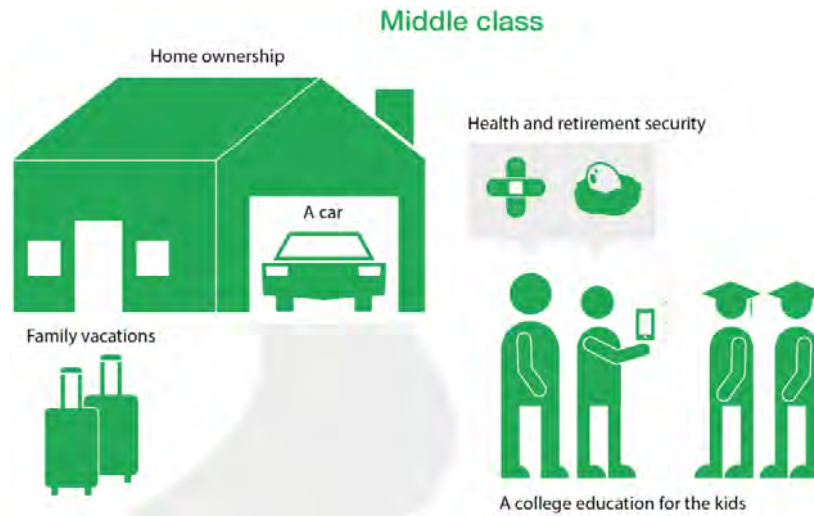
- III. **Consumption:** Another way to define middle class is by expenditure. This reflects the well-being of the people since income does not take into account non-cash government benefits, such as food stamps, or savings and can fluctuate greatly from year-to-year. The consumption indicator used by Notre Dame Professor James X. Sullivan includes expenditure on food, transportation, entertainment, housing and other items. However, it does not consider health care expenses and education, which Sullivan categorizes as investments. He defines the middle class as those in the middle fifth of expenditure.



\*ANNUAL SPENDING FOR A FOUR-PERSON HOUSEHOLD; SOURCE: JAMES SULLIVAN, NOTRE DAME

- IV. **Aspirations:** In 2009 after Barack Obama was elected president, he created a task force with the goal to improve the living standards of the middle class. To define the middle class they used aspirations such as owning a house and car, family vacations, health and retirement security, and college education for children.





\*SOURCE: WHITE HOUSE TASK FORCE ON THE MIDDLE CLASS

V. **Demographics:** The St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank takes a more complicated approach. A combination of elements of sociology with economics were used to define the middle class. Economists did not appreciate “annual income” as an indicator because it can vary widely over time. So, they proposed three demographic characteristics — age, education and race — that are more stable than the income. The middle class is generally made up of people who fit some combination of the three. The Fed describes those doing better than the middle class as thrivers and those doing worse as stragglers. (Luhby and Baker, n.d.)

The British society was defined more in terms of economic, social and cultural capitals in a study with a very large sample of 161,000 people. The study identifies not three (working, middle and higher class) but seven classes in the UK. The classes are from the top: the elite, established middle class, technical middle class, new affluent workers, traditional workers, emergent service workers, and precariat (precarious proletariat) at the bottom. (Savage, et al., 2013)

Islam (2017) classified the middle-class in three categories: 1. Middle class of professionals (doctors, engineers, lawyers, artists and media personalities etc.); 2. Salaried Middle Class (government officials, professors, college and school teachers, executives in banks, corporations and NGOs, managers in factories and buying houses etc.); Business Middle Class (entrepreneurs, retailers, traders, shop owners, small scale industrialists etc.). The definition of Salaried Middle-class men was used in this study as the sample for both the quantitative and qualitative study.

Islam’s definition of middle class was used for data collection in this study, specifically the subset of middle-class defined as the “Salaried Middle Class”. The BIDS data based on World Bank information was ignored as they have held the income range at a very low level which contradicts current development of the population in Dhaka. Also, no other definite income range, or any other variables or factors, is available to classify classes. The only income numerals available in terms of different class or categories was provided in an empirical study by Power and Participation Research Centre in 2016, which divided the population of Dhaka city and other areas (Urban and Rural) in 3 income groups: Bottom 40%, Middle 50% and Top 10% (Power and Participation Research Centre, 2016). The study provided the average monthly income and annual income per capita of each group for 2015 of Bangladesh:

	<b>Bottom 40%</b>	<b>Middle 50%</b>	<b>Top 10%</b>
<b>Average monthly income (BDT)</b>	14,421	37,323	306,567
<b>Annual income per capita</b>	555	1436	11,791

**\*SOURCE: PPRC GOVERNANCE AND ECONOMY SURVEY, 2015**

### **Sample Size and Sources of Information**

Purposive sampling procedure was used for the study. This procedure was used to collect data from respondents with certain similar characteristics, thereby receiving information from a homogenous sample. After identification of the sample size characteristics, samples were chosen to participate in the data collection procedure from different job sector groups. The sample size was chosen to be 54 due to the time constraints and lack of resources as the study was done for a master degree thesis and conducted on a small scale. The study targeted the middle-class family category as it is the expanding class category which will over 25% of the population (The Daily Star, 2015). This category was also used to attempt to portray the situation of the women as decision makers in Dhaka. Middle class will demonstrate the truest form of the investigation because looking at a lower income family will not be viable as an indicator of empowerment as the women in these family has to work and make major decisions due to the absent husband who

works all day, or has migrated in search of job, or mainly they just earn enough to survive. The perception of higher income class will the represent the majority of the citizen, and hence was also omitted as being considered as the sample of the study.

### **Data Collection Tools**

A survey questionnaire was designed to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was developed in English language. An online survey link was created for the convenience of response collection. The questionnaire consisted of sixteen questions including questions on basic information of respondents. All the questions were close-ended questions, except for two which were left open ended and used to further collect opinions of the respondents outside the given options. The main research questions were asked to score from 1 to 5, where 1 meant least preferred and 5 meant most preferred. The respondents were presented with a set of twelve fields and asked to score the fields from 1 to 5, 1 meaning the least preferable and 5 meaning the most preferable, on how they preferred the decision making on the areas of different household matters. The analysis of the responses is given in Chapter Four where the average scores for the fields demonstrate the preference of the respondents in decision making. A focus group discussion was also arranged with six participants who were asked questions on the general view of women as decision makers in their households as all their opinions reflected the situation of Dhaka. Survey questionnaire is in APPENDIX A and FGD questionnaire in APPENDIX B.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Respondents' Profile

The basic information collected from the respondents comprised of their age, employment sector, working or non-working wife and number of children. The details of the respondents are given in the following sections.

#### 4.1.1 Survey Respondents

The majority of the respondents were from the age group of 22-29 years old forming 39% of the total respondents. 56% of the respondents are earning between BDT 50,000- 100,000 a month with 76% of them working in multinational companies, government institutions and development sector. More than half of the respondents reported to having a wife who has a job. Using these parameters of age, income, employment sector we can define the middle-class group of Dhaka. Figure 4.1 presents the basic information of respondents who participated in the questionnaire survey.

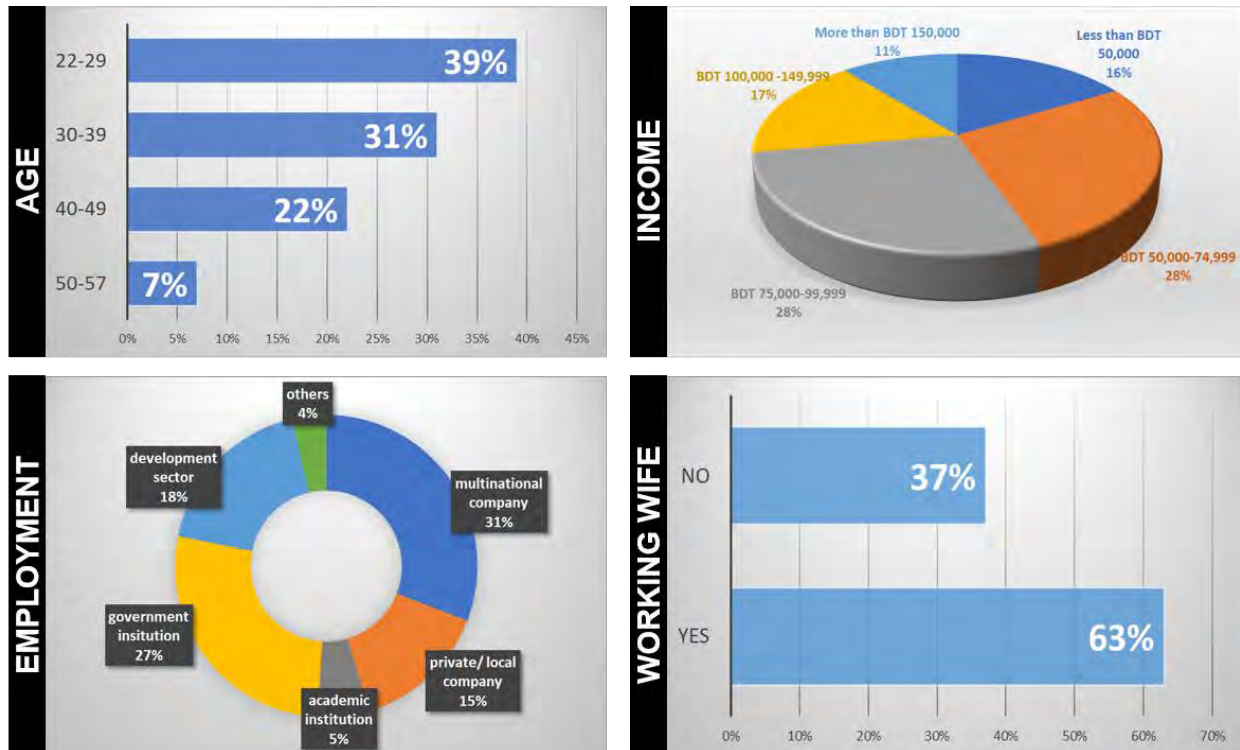


FIGURE 4.1: BASIC INFORMATION ON SURVEY RESPONDENTS

A summary of the respondents' personal data:

- Age range: 22- 57
- All surveyed men are employed in:
  - Multinational companies
  - NGOs
  - Local companies
  - Government Institutes
  - Educational Institutes
- Number of children: 0-3

#### **4.1.2 Focus Group Discussion Participants**

A focus group discussion was arranged with middle class married men all working from the development sector. Six participants were present at the discussion who were asked questions on the general view of women as decision makers in their households as all their opinions reflected the situation of Dhaka. To make sure the discussion was not biased towards a development sector's perspective in women's empowerment, different participants were selected outside of development project officers who worked in the administration and other functions of the organization. A summary of the personal data of the discussion participants is as follows:

- Number of Participants: 6
- Age range: 31-55
- Participants all employed at NGOs
- Number of years of employment: 8-30
- Number of years married: 2-25
- Number of children: 0-2

## 4.2 Important Socio-Economic Factor

The respondents were given a set of socio-economic factors and were asked to score between 1 to 5, where 1 means least preferable and 5 means most preferable, the socio-economic factors that are important for a woman to have for decision making within the household. Figure 4.2 illustrates the average score of each of the socio-economic factors. It is observed that 'Higher Education' received the highest score (4.4), followed by 'Career' and 'Secondary Education' respectively. In contrast, 'Wealthy Background' (2.6), 'Physical Appearance' (2.8), and 'Owning Assets' (2.9) have been reported as three lowest scoring socio-economic factors. These findings show a pattern of how the men are judging a woman to have a decision-making role in the family. It is a development in the sociological manner as men are giving more importance to achievement-oriented factors rather than family-based values regarding women. A move towards a more progressive and modern society can be depicted from these scores and away from the traditional society and the trail of thought.

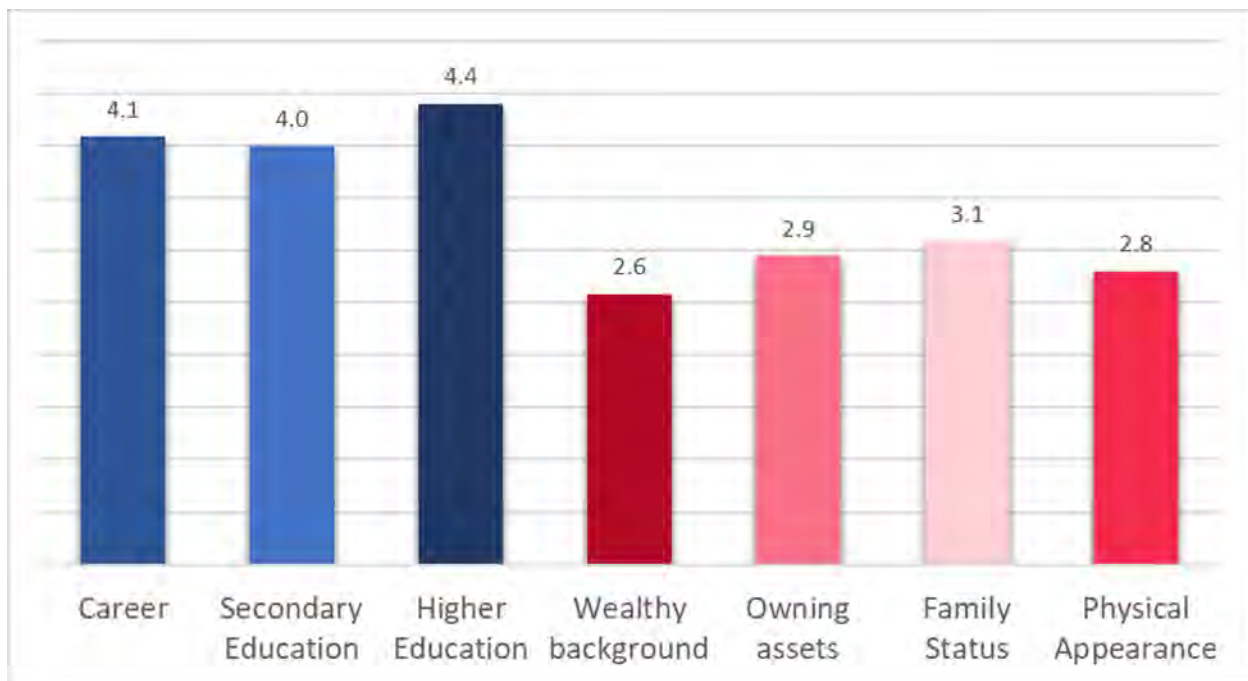


FIGURE 4.2: SCORE FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

There have been significant changes in women development and empowerment in Bangladesh in the last couple of years. Women are more career-oriented and more educated instead of being only focused to having a family. Women are managing both the families and their jobs. Even

families are also involved in encouraging women to be part of the progressive society. However, women still face discrimination and harassment in this society by those who prefer that women should only stay home. This can be seen in the popular movement #Metoo, which initiated almost a year ago globally but only has reached Bangladesh. Many encounters of what women face at their homes, workplace or in commute have been published on the social media by the victims. Even though is economic development for women, gender inequality is persistent in the socio-economic conditions of the country.

### **4.3 Understanding the Decision-making Pattern**

The respondents were presented with a set of twelve fields and asked to score the fields from 1 to 5, 1 meaning the least preferable and 5 meaning the most preferable, on how they preferred to decide on these areas: 1) jointly with the wife, 2) alone as the sole decision maker and 3) wife as the sole decision maker. The twelve selected fields of decision-making were:

1. Major household purchases
2. Wife visiting her relatives or friends
3. Wife's healthcare
4. Child's healthcare
5. Child's education
6. Reproductive decisions
7. Wife's profession
8. How wife spends her income
9. Wife's education
10. Place of residence
11. Family Savings
12. Usage of wife's free time

The scores were collected from the respondents and an average score was calculated to present the results. (Questionnaire is in APPENDIX A).

### 4.3.1 Joint Decisions

The highest average scores belong to the following fields according to the responses for making decisions jointly with the wife:

- Child healthcare: 4.8
- Child’s education: 4.7
- Reproductive decisions: 4.7
- Major household purchases: 4.7

In contrast, “how wife spends her income” received the lowest score at 3.0. A similar trend was followed by both the sets of respondents having a working and non-working wife. Figure 4.3 presents the details.

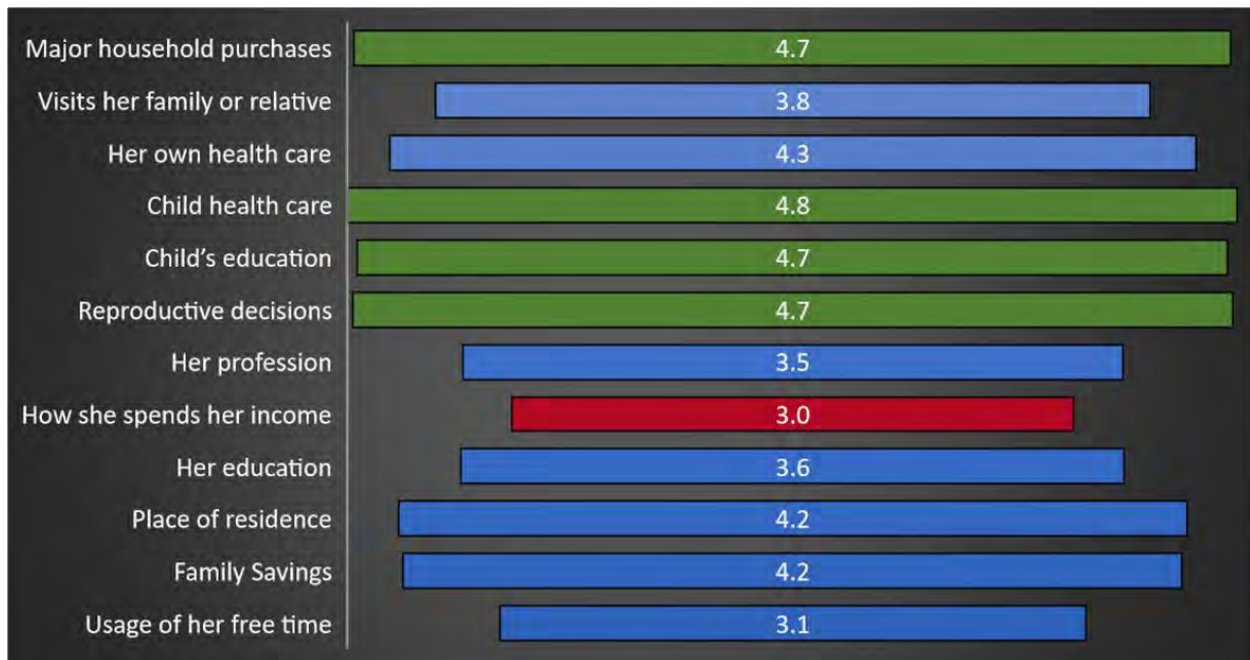


FIGURE 4.3: SCORES FOR JOINT DECISIONS

The high scores for child related decisions show that the modern fathers are more involved in child care and development. They are not only the breadwinner or the disciplinarian of the family. The scores demonstrate that the respondents prefer an involvement and participation in the lives of the children. This attitude is further highlighted with the high score for ‘Major household purchases’ which shows their interests in participation in homemaking activities. The



culture of fatherhood represented here is symbolic of a modern society, unlike a traditional society of strictness and only economic interests.

### 4.3.2 Husband Alone Decisions

All the fields for these questions scored less than the midpoint of the score with 2.2 the highest score for ‘Place of residence’ and ‘How she spends her income’ receiving the lowest score (Figure 4.4). Such low scores represent their reluctance in being the sole decision maker in the household. A similar pattern in scores was presented for all the employment sectors. However, there were some stark differences in responses from participants with working and non-working wife.

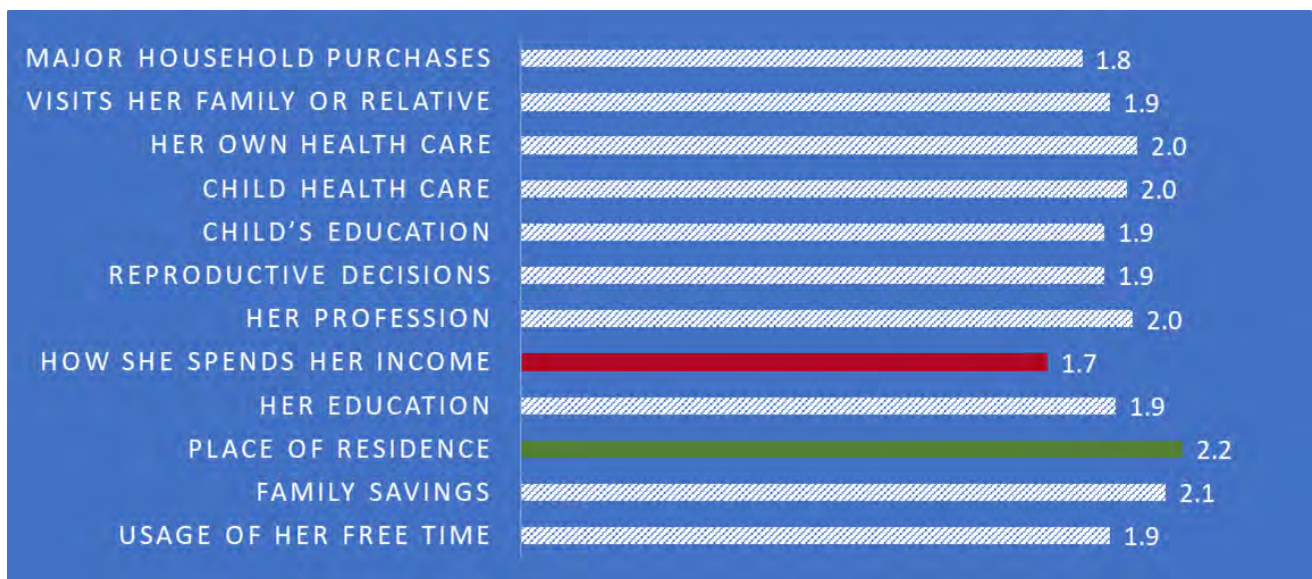


FIGURE 4.4: SCORES FOR HUSBAND ALONE DECISIONS

It is further observed that the ‘Place of residence’ field earned the highest score for both working and non-working wife respondents. However, with the non-working wife respondents, the first place of ‘Place of residence’ is tied with ‘Wife’s profession’ and ‘Wife’s education’. These set of respondents show some control over the achievement-oriented factors of a woman. The reason behind the high scoring field ‘Place of residence’ is a reflection of the societal features where a woman moves out their homes and into the house of the man after marriage in Bangladesh. Hence, this already illustrates a preset dominance of the husband on the location of their residence, which sometimes mean living with the family of the husband (that includes the father, mother, sibling and at times even an extended family).

### 4.3.3 Wife Alone Decisions

The respondents gave the highest scores for fields where they wanted their wives to make the decisions alone were:

- Her profession: 4.1
- How she spends her income: 4.1
- Her education: 4.1
- Usage of her time: 4.1

This demonstrates that the respondents would want their wives to have their own independence when making decisions that directly affect the wives. Details are presented in Figure 4.5

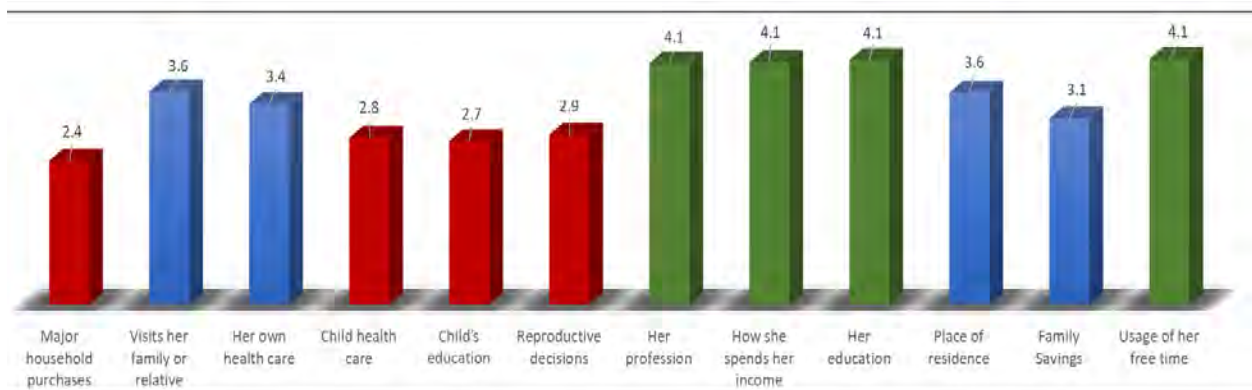
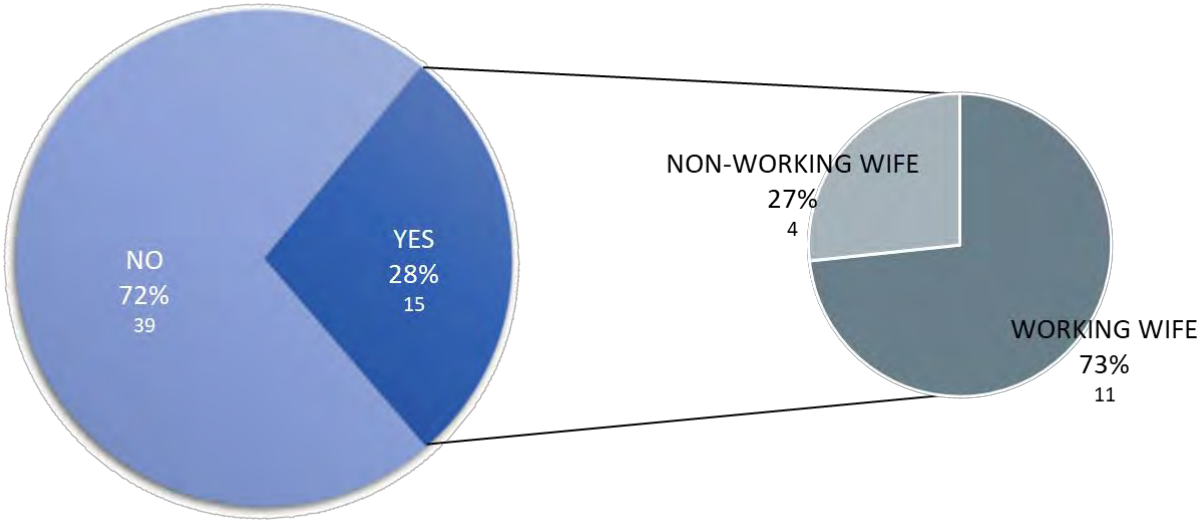


FIGURE 4.5: SCORES FOR WIFE ALONE DECISIONS

It is further revealed that the lowest scores were given to the child related decisions and ‘Major household purchases’ by the respondents. This is consistent with the scores from joint decisions where these fields were given the highest points. It illustrates that father wants to be more involved in the lives of their children and also for household matters. Fathers are becoming fore involved in domestic life. However, according to LaRossa, father wants to be involved in the lives of their children and home but they do not project this into their actual behavior. When they discover the difficulties and frustrations of being involved in the children’s lives and home, they become overwhelmed as they overestimated the ease of these dealings. (Larossa, 1988). However, with increasing number of women being career oriented nowadays, fathers are left with more responsibilities than two decades ago, even if they do not especially want to be involved.

### 4.4 Do Women Need a Source of Income to be Involved in Household Decision Making

An interesting finding from the study was revealed from the question “Do you think women need a source of income to take part in major decisions?”. While 72 per cent of the respondents answered ‘No’, 28 per cent of the respondents believe that a source of income is a necessity to be able to take part in major decisions for women (Figure 4.6).



**FIGURE 4.6: DO WOMEN NEED SOURCE OF INCOME TO MAKE DECISIONS**

Out of this 28 per cent who responded ‘Yes’, 27 per cent had non-working wives and 73 per cent had working wives. This section of respondents scored ‘Career’ as the most important socioeconomic factor for women in decision making with a score of 4.5, whereas the overall average score was 4.1. The highest scores for ‘Husband making decisions alone’ were given to: 1) visiting her relative, 2) her healthcare, 3) child healthcare, 4) her education. The lowest scores for ‘Wife making decisions alone’ were given to 1) major household decisions, 2) visiting her relatives. The trend for this section of respondents is different from the overall trend. While the overall trend reflects a more modern society, the answers for this section are for bound by traditional authority. The respondents tend to show dominance on the status of their wives.

An attempt was made to investigate and analyze a set of data separately received from respondents with the working life where both falls in the income range of BDT 50,000- 99,999

per month. But the sample was too small to be conclusive. The attempt was made with the intention to analyze if both the husband and the wife within this income bracket practiced an equalitarian authority in household decisions. Follow up studies can be designed to find the results for these questions. In parallel, studies can also be conducted to make a comparative analysis with an equal number of respondents with working and non-working wives to see if the theory of resources is valid for Dhaka city middle class families. The respondents from the focus group discussion mentioned that they made decisions in areas where they had the expertise, while their wives made the decisions where they were the experts. This dominant form of decision making according to expertise shows consistency with the studies of Blood and Wolfe (1960) where they linked this dominance in different areas to the gender roles. Though, the discussion did not venture further into what expertise they meant, but it can only be deduced that they were also restricted to gender roles. Another interesting finding from the discussion was they believed women also hesitated in making decisions without running it by their husbands. Women are afraid of the consequences they might have to face if they made the decisions wrongly. While all participants said they encouraged their wives to make household decisions, some said they “let” their wives make the decision depending on the relevancy of the situation. In a sense, instead of accepting their wives as final decision maker in the fields, they felt they allow their wives to make the decisions. Finally, the findings from the study may be used to encourage women to participate in economic activities more actively.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Around the world, women now have more influence over the decisions that affect their lives. Even in the most conservative societies, feminists and gender advocates have been able to forward more equitable policies and outcomes. Women in the world has been fighting alone too hard for too long.

This is the era of time when women have the support of men as individuals being deprived of rights, not because of their gender. We need that support to begin in the households, in grooming their sons to honor and respect women. We have campaigns from development organizations, on social media, on television to urge for men to fight for the cause, to make people aware of the gender inequalities, of their impacts on women and men, and to encourage them to make a change in the every-day life as a united movement.

One of the specific objectives was to understand the factors that make women capable of decision making according to the men. Findings show that men believe ‘Higher education’ is the most important attribute in women for decision making with an average score of 4.4 out of 5, followed by ‘Career’ and ‘Secondary education’ at 4.1 and 4.0 respectively. Second objective was to find out how men would like their wives to take decisions in twelve selected areas within the household. The respondents answered with highest scores in (1) joint decision for child related decisions and major household purchases, (2) husband alone makes decision for place of residence, (3) wife alone makes decisions for her profession, how she spends her income, her education, usage of her free time. A summary of the scores is given:

	<b>HIGHEST SCORES</b>	<b>LOWEST SCORES</b>
<b>Social economic factors</b>	Higher education	Wealthy background
<b>Joint decisions</b>	Child related decisions Major household practices	How she spends her income
<b>Husband alone decisions</b>	Place of residence	How she spends her income
<b>Wife alone decisions</b>	Her profession How she spends Her income Her education usage of her free time	Major household decisions

Though the overall trend in both the quantitative and qualitative data show an evolution towards a modern society with equalitarian authority between wives and husbands irrespective of their gender roles, there are some aspects of their answer that reflect the traditional authority of a male dominated society. While the men believe they are encouraging their wives to be more independent in their decision making, they still bound their wives within the gendered decision-making areas. Or even in some cases, the women are not the final decision maker but rather playing the role of an advisor in the decisions. Thousand years of patriarchy will not be easy to erase from our society, but from the study we can conclude there are signs of women empowerment which are practiced from within the households. Not only through policies can we make changes in the country to improve conditions of the women, but also in our homes should we start first to practice equal importance for both male and female members of a household.

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## Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

Q1	Age: _____
Q2	In which sector are you employed?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Multinational company</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Private/ local company</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Academic institution</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Government institution</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Development sector</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Others: _____</li> </ul>
	Name of your organization: _____
Q3	What is your monthly income?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Less than BDT 50,000</li> <li><input type="radio"/> BDT 50,000-74,999</li> <li><input type="radio"/> BDT 75,000-99,999</li> <li><input type="radio"/> BDT 100,000 -149,999</li> <li><input type="radio"/> More than BDT 150,000</li> </ul>
Q4	How many children do you have? _____
Q5	Is your wife involved in any income generating activities?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Yes</li> <li><input type="radio"/> No</li> </ul>
Q6	What is her level of monthly income
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Less than BDT 50,000</li> <li><input type="radio"/> BDT 50,000-74,999</li> <li><input type="radio"/> BDT 75,000-99,999</li> <li><input type="radio"/> BDT 100,000 -149,999</li> <li><input type="radio"/> More than BDT 150,000</li> </ul>

Q7. Please **score** the following socio-economic factors provided below from 1-5 (*1 being least preferred and 5 being most preferred*) you think should be important for a woman to have decision-making power in the household?

<b>Decisions</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Career	O	O	O	O	O
Secondary Education	O	O	O	O	O
Higher Education	O	O	O	O	O
Wealthy background	O	O	O	O	O
Owning assets	O	O	O	O	O
Family Status	O	O	O	O	O
Physical Appearance	O	O	O	O	O

Q8. Please **score** the following fields from 1-5 (*1 being least preferred and 5 being most preferred*) where you want to **make joint decisions with your wife.**

<b>Decisions</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Major household purchases	O	O	O	O	O
Visits her family or relative	O	O	O	O	O
Her own health care	O	O	O	O	O
Child health care	O	O	O	O	O
Child's education	O	O	O	O	O
Reproductive decisions	O	O	O	O	O
Her profession	O	O	O	O	O
How she spends her income	O	O	O	O	O
Her education	O	O	O	O	O
Place of residence	O	O	O	O	O
Savings	O	O	O	O	O
Usage of her free time	O	O	O	O	O

Q9. Please **score** the following fields from 1-5 (*1 being least preferred and 5 being most preferred*) where you want to **make decisions alone**.

<b>Decisions</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Major household purchases	O	O	O	O	O
Visits her family or relative	O	O	O	O	O
Her own health care	O	O	O	O	O
Child health care	O	O	O	O	O
Child's education	O	O	O	O	O
Reproductive decisions	O	O	O	O	O
Her profession	O	O	O	O	O
How she spends her income	O	O	O	O	O
Her education	O	O	O	O	O
Place of residence	O	O	O	O	O
Savings	O	O	O	O	O
Usage of her free time	O	O	O	O	O

Q10. Please **score** the following fields from 1-5 (*1 being least preferred and 5 being most preferred*) where you want **your wife to make decisions alone**.

<b>Decisions</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Major household purchases	O	O	O	O	O
Visits her family or relative	O	O	O	O	O
Her own health care	O	O	O	O	O
Child health care	O	O	O	O	O
Child's education	O	O	O	O	O
Reproductive decisions	O	O	O	O	O
Her profession	O	O	O	O	O
How she spends her income	O	O	O	O	O
Her education	O	O	O	O	O
Place of residence	O	O	O	O	O
Savings	O	O	O	O	O
Usage of her free time	O	O	O	O	O

Q11	What other factors do you think should be important in your opinion for a woman to have decision making power in the household?
Q12	From what age do you think a married woman should have her decision-making power in general?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> 16-19</li> <li><input type="radio"/> 20-24</li> <li><input type="radio"/> 25-29</li> <li><input type="radio"/> 30-34</li> <li><input type="radio"/> 35-39</li> <li><input type="radio"/> 40-44</li> <li><input type="radio"/> 45-49</li> <li><input type="radio"/> 50 and above</li> </ul>	
Q13	Does a woman need to have a source of income to take part in major decisions in the household?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Yes</li> <li><input type="radio"/> No</li> </ul>	
Q14	How much do you think a woman must earn to be able to make decisions in her household?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Less than BDT 30,000</li> <li><input type="radio"/> BDT 30,000-49,999</li> <li><input type="radio"/> BDT 50,000-69,999</li> <li><input type="radio"/> BDT 70,000- 100,000</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Above BDT 100,000</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Nothing</li> </ul>	

Q15	Who do you think should decide how a woman is spending her income?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Father</li><li><input type="radio"/> Mother</li><li><input type="radio"/> Husband</li><li><input type="radio"/> In-laws</li><li><input type="radio"/> Herself</li><li><input type="radio"/> Others: _____</li></ul>	
Q16	What can you do to facilitate or improve women's decision making freedom?



## **Appendix B: Questionnaire for Focus Group Discussion**

1. What is your opinion about women's decision making in a household in our society?
2. Do you feel women can make decisions in a household same as men?
3. A) Do you feel women's position in decision making is different in Dhaka compared to other areas of Bangladesh? Why?  
B) Is it different among the classes, such as low, middle, upper class? What are your views?
4. What are the factors that affect a woman's position to make decision in a household?
5. What factors can help a woman to be involved in a decision-making process in her household?
6. What do you think you/ society/ policy makers can do to improve women's decision-making power in a household?