

A research on “Factors influencing women’s decision to choose their career”



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Abstract

Female employment plays an important role in development of any country. Involvement of women in workforce helps socio-economic progress of a country. Participation of women in work force can change the dynamics of entire labour market. In compare to last decades though the rate of women employment are increased but it is still very low in compare to global progress. It is urgently needed to increase female employment rate of Bangladesh for a sustainable development.

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Factors influencing women's decision to choose their career.

2. Introduction:

I had met with five working women, when I used to live in hostel. Every day they to undergo various pressure from every direction including families. Two of among the five women had to let go of their job because they couldn't continue with their job because of social pressure. My concern is to find out why women are forced to leave their job.

In recent years, the developing countries of the world including Bangladesh have been focusing attention on the women empowerment. A society cannot afford to waste half of its human resources by discrimination on grounds of sex. For this reason government are now focusing on increase opportunity for women and trying to ensure a secure work place for female.

Now a days women are more concern about their career then before. Parents are more liberal to their female child. They want to see their female child in a leading role of country. Parents do not differentiate male and female child to bear their expenditure now a days. If we compare with 90's female education we will notice a tremendous growth of female education. According to an article by UNICEF "With a population of 130 million Bangladesh has around 19 million children of primary school age (ages 6-10). Almost half are girls. Tremendous efforts in the past decade have been successful in getting more girls into school, resulting in gender parity in enrolments in primary and lower secondary schools"(Unicef). This shows us that females are getting lots of opportunity to prove their caliber in development of country.

Unfortunately with the growth of female education female employment rate are not increasing in this decade. The gap between male and female employment rate are still high. According to Bangladesh labour force survey 2010 the participation of women in workforce is 36% where men's participation is 82.5%. In spite of living in the 21st century the ratio of gap between men and women in workplace still remains the same. I want to know why there is such gap still exists.

3. Objective:

In order to find that I want to conduct a research among young women ageing between 23 to 30. This is the age when people tend to look for the suitable career options. Why these women cannot overcome the obstacles to move ahead with their career.

I want to gather some information to find out the reasons behind the present condition of female participation in workforce.

First of all are there any obligations from their families which prevent them to work. Secondly, whether they are facing any pressure from their in law's or to be in law's in case of being involved in employment. Thirdly how do they balance their family and professional life and is it easy to maintain family life and professional life equally.

So basically the main motive of researching in this topic is find out why women our country is lacking behind men in job sectors with race of time.

4. Methodology:

I have conducted my research on the group of seven women aging in between 23 to 30. My experimental area was my surrounding which also includes my family and friends. I have interviewed five unmarried women, four married and one divorced women.

I have decided to select a panel consist of 5 people. With this panel I have made a focus group discussion. I asked some random questions to the five women and discussed about their personal life and professional life. I also came to know about their planning for career and family. Among five three are helped me to know some main concerns about balancing family and professional life. I got some important fact from rest two about why some women still don't interested to build their career. This discussion helped me to identify some main concerns of my research and depending on the outcomes I will make an outline of my questioner.

In this research I have use exploratory research method. This is research method conducted for a problem that has not been clearly defined. It often occurs before we know enough to make conceptual distinctions or to posit an explanatory relationship. Basically my research topic is finding out some major facts behind women's career choosing decision. In compare of last decades why women till now think twice while choosing their career. I did not identify any

specific reasons behind this issue. Even when I was studying my secondary courses I did not find any specific facts behind my research topic. I just tried to finding out some major facts behind my topic though I could not defined any specific problems and solutions for my research.

The Interview type is not structured. I did not use a specific questioner and interviewed people according to their life experience. But gathered some questions according to my focused group discussions and my questions was open ended. The questions varied on person to person.

Basically I interviewed ten women where some of them were married some of them were unmarried and divorced. According to their marital status I asked different questions and try to find different facts.

My observation method was non-participant observation. I did no go for observe my sample group by participating their daily activity. I have collected data with some specific questions where I was not involve in their activity directly. Basically I picked some random women from my surrounding and it was a face to face interview. Though I did not observe their activity for long time but I tried to observe their feelings and opinion while I was asking questions.

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

5. Literature Review:

I have use some related secondary sources which helped me to understand the present situation of women in labour force. In compare to last decade still women are having lots of problems to show their caliber both in family and professional life. Among hundred women more than half women are willingly leave their career for balancing their family life.

“Women in Labour Force” anarticle by K.M. Mustafizur Rahman. This paper tries to give a clear idea about the growth of female participants in work force in Bangladesh. Author tries to show the changes between last two decades regarding contribution of female in workforce. In the very beginning of this paper author show that women employment rate are increasing day by day and

women are more conscious to their own identity in society. This paper helps me to get some important data on employment and unemployment rate of women. He mentioned that though employment rate are increasing in comparison of 1990s, but unemployment rate also increasing day by day. According to Rahman “The number of women not in labour force increased from 27.3 million in 1999-2000 to 29.3 million in 2002-2003 with a rate of 2.44 percent per year at national level and this rate had been slowing down for the next couple of years” (Rahman, 2013). In my paper I also wanted to show that though the rate is increasing but this development growth is very slow in comparison of global world. Here author also mention that in urban areas the employment rate of women are decreasing where in rural area more women are getting involved in income sector. But I did not get any clear idea about why in urban unemployment rate are not increasing. He only mention that the unavailability of opportunity is the reason behind it.

From my interview I got some mentionable facts behind women’s decision in their career choosing. Maternity fact is one of the major fact behind this slow development of women empowerment. I got a writing by Farhana Rahman with title “বাংলাদেশের নারীর সম্মতা ও কর্মসংস্থান”. This writing was a very informative writing by Ms. Rahman. She talks about the low wage of women in workforce and also mentioned the things related to maternity. Which is a core problem behind the female unemployment. She wrote that females are more hard working then men though they don’t get facilities which they really need. That’s why most of the women get discouraged to involve in workforce. She boldly mention about problems like Maternity leave, day care center, physical and mental harassment etc. Her mentioned points are very relevant to my research work, I also wanted to identify the core reasons behind the female unemployment. From my interview I got an outcome where I also got same facts like maternity leave, day care center, harassment etc.

I read another secondary source which wrote by Rushidan I. Rahman and Rizwanul Islam and title is “Female labour force participation in Bangladesh: Trends, Drivers and Barriers”. From this article I got lots of information related to my research. Though I had some disagreement with this writing but it was a helpful source for me. This report try to show the current situation of female participants in labour force. Where authors argue with “U” shape policy between economic growth and female employment. Authors shows the data on development of female participation in workforce. This paper gives lots of data about female employment growth, even

it also mentioned division wise employment rate which gives a clear comparison between last two decades. I am not agree with paper in a point that, though the rate is increasing but the progress is very slow which author did not mentioned at all. Another thing is, this paper only gave data on garment and Agriculture based employment where employment rate are noticeably increasing but they does not mention about any other job sectors report of Bangladesh.

Another report I have read which published by ADB with the title “Women in the workforce an unmet potential in Asia and the Pacific”. This report helps me to come up with my major facts like work environment, low wage, lake of skill etc. Same facts I got know from my interview as well. According to ADB report, it says females who were interested to go with any organization are offered with low wage. It has also been discussed, women lacks in skills then men. Since women has to take up more responsibilities than men, thus they tents to have minimum time allocates for workforce. However women require more security than men. The location of jobs may not be safe and sound for women. Women have some boundaries, which often creates conflicts between social norms and labour market politics. This paper also discussed the possible solutions to promote the female in workforce. I think this paper will help in my research by specifying the reasons of why women are unwilling to be with any workforce and how can we take possible measures to increase te participation of women in labour market.

6. Analysis:

From my interviews I find that there are so many factors influencing women to choose their career. I have interviewed seven women in between age of 22 to 30. Among of them three are married, three are unmarried and one divorced. In comparison with previous decade till now women have to go through various factors before choosing their career. Very few women are determined with their career goal and rest of them still in confusion what should they do priority most. Among seven four are employed and rest three are unemployed.

From my seven interviewees I got lots of facts behind slow development of women empowerment like family issues, maintenance of children, office environment, harassment etc.

Among seven three of them are very determined about their goals. They are ready to manage both family and professional life equally. They took it as a challenge how says that it is really

tough to manage both together. Among these there determined women only one does not have any problems to choose her career. Her own family encourage her to go ahead with her goal, does not matter what society says or others says. One did not mention her family opinion about her major subject and career. But she mentioned about her relationship problems and her partner leave her for choosing “Hotel Management” as her major subject. Another one sheared some family issues that they have problems with her career goal. She wanted to choose her career in NGO but her family does not appreciate with this job. They told her that this job is not suitable for after marriage life and also told about some societal problems as well.

Among the rest three one was divorced. From her interview I got to know that she is thinking about a bright career but her mother does not support it. Though she is the only earning member of her family, till her mother wish that someday she will quit her job and will remarry someone. Because it is a bit shameful to her mother to live with daughter’s income. Society does not accept divorced women in a respected way and if that women are job holder it will be a curse for her. So she feels indecision because of her mother’s opinion.

Rest three are not thinking about their career. Two of them are married and they are bound to obey their in law’s decision. Their husband’s family does not appreciate with their career goals. One them got permission only for government job though she does not get time for getting prepared for government service after taking care of full family. Now a days she is not thinking about a career any more. Another one had to quit her job because of her baby. Her husband’s family also did not appreciate with her job and when she got pregnant they did not help to manage her health and office together. After her son’s birth she had quit her job. Here she mentioned that if in private services have enough maternity leave system and available day care centres she could manage her job with all other things.

Rest one was unmarried and she planning to marry soon. She told that her family never stop her to plan for a career but they showed her the negative side of private jobs. She is agree with her family and thinking about to be a family women in future. She believes that, Job and family never can be managed in a parallel way.

So the analysis supports my topic in many way. Still women are thinking twice before choosing their career. Still now so many families fist think about their daughter’s marriage and after marriage life. They does not advised their daughter how to manage both together. Families are

concern about their daughter's harassment and office environment as well but they does not teach them how to handle this situation smartly. Till now so many family does not accept a job holder daughter in law. They does not encourage their daughter in law to be independent women, they try to find out a women who will only taking care of their family.

7. Findings:

From these seven interviewees I tried to find out the answers of my research questions. I got some major facts behind the women's decision to choose their career.

7.1. Obligations from their families:

Among six of my interviewees only two of them said they did not facing any problems about their career goal from their family. But four of them had obligations from their family to choose their career.

Social acceptance is one of the major obligation from their family. For choosing career of their female child most of the family first think about what society says about that career field. For example: marketing job, hotel management job etc. is not society accepted job field for women. Still now society does not accept women in this kind of job sector. In some cases husband's family reject someone only for doing job in these sectors.

Another thing family thinks about office environment. They have a fear of harassment of their female child. They discouraged their female child to choose their own career instead of teach them how to handle it. It is very true that our office environment till now is not safe for women. They have to face lots of problems by their upper level employees. Mainly in the time of promotions female employee have to face mental harassment. For this reason companies are losing talented female employees in significant role.

So many families are very concern about their daughter's future family managing problems. Some of the parents try to show a negative side of doing job after getting marriage. Among six three of them told me that their own family influence them not to go for a job after marriage. Most of the parents and family are still believe that female only can play a role of wife, role of mother and a role of a perfect family women. Till now a portion of our society believe that family and professional life both never go in a parallel way.

7.2. Pressure from in low and plan for future in low:

Three married women told that they have faced career related problems from their in low. One of them waiting for a government job because her in low only will appreciate for government services. Another one had to quit her job because of family managing problems. There is a mentality observed by our society that, if a daughter in low is government service holder it would be pride for in low's. From my married interviewees I got know that most of the time in low's are not supportive.

Among my interviewees I got three unmarried women. One of them are ready to accept what her in low wants. She will give priority to her family and child and then will focus to her career if it is possible. Another two will find out someone who will support their career goal. I personally know lots of women who are very determined about their career instead of getting married.

7.3. How they do balance family and professional life:

Work load is one of the major fact behind women's decision about their career. Three of my interviewees told about office work load. The load of work is too high that it is too difficult to manage family and professional life equally.

Family support is another major issue. After marriage most the women don't get support from their family to manage both equally.

Almost all of my interviewees said that in private sector the amount of maternity leave is not sufficient for a new mom to maintain a new born.

They also mention about there are very few day care centre in our country and they not that much reliable. Because of a reliable day care centre some women have to quit their job.

8. Challenges:

Overall the research I had to face some challenges like in my literature review part I did not find any specific data till 2016 about female employment rate of Bangladesh and got very few articles and research related my research topic.

Another main challenges was my interview part. Most of the women refused me to give an interview about their family and professional life.

9. Conclusion:

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

10. Appendix:

10.1. Focus Group Discussion: (discussion with five women)

– Sara Tania

She is a Last year Student of Pharmacy. Her career goal is to be a pharmacist in any reputed pharmaceutical company. If her future husband permit her to go abroad for higher studies only that case she wish to go aboard for higher study. Her family support her to build a good career if her future in laws will permit.

Her thinking about after marriage that, she will give priority to her own family and Child. After managing these if she has enough time to think about career then she will for a job. According to her It is really tough to maintain family and job together.

– Nishat Rahman

Currently she is studying and working as Privet tutor. After finishing her study she wants to go abroad for having her higher studies. After finishing study she return to her motherland and set up a engineering organization of her own. Her family members wants to see her at the zenith position in engineering sector. She is married and her in laws are pretty much comfortable about her study. But future they wish to see her as a completely family person. In that case she won't compromise her career fulfill her in laws wish.

– **FahanaFatema**

Currently she is studying. She wish to go abroad for higher studies. On returning she will try to join in a top position in one of the best multinational company. Her parents wants see her in an area which she have dreamt for. As she is married, her in laws are not comfortable with her career goals. They want her to complete all the steps of studies and higher studies. However, they want her as a family woman.

Her thinking about career is, since her in laws are not in support of her career, thus she is having some conflicts regarding the issue from the day of her marriage. As she was brought up as a career oriented person, so she will build her career, no matter what happens.

– **Nusrat Jahan**

Currently she is doing a job in Dhaka Regency, Hotel And resort in a post of sales division. Her career goal to get a position in Banking Sector. But nowadays she is also comfortable with her current job. If she will get a better position here will think to build career here. Her family are not in support of her current job, they think that Hotel job is not perfect for a woman and also society won't take this type job a standard job. So here she is having a conflict with her family to choose this job. As she is unmarried, she is thinking to choose someone how will respect her career goals.

– **Shanta Islam**

She is just finished her study and looking for a job. Her family only support her build career in teaching profession. She is not married yet. She is not that much worry about her career and she prefer to be a perfect Mother in future.

10.2. Interview:

– Interview 1:

DilAfrozeZishan. She is 27 years old. She has completed her BBA and MBA from university of Chittagong.

She has married from 2014. From the very beginning of her study life she was very determined about her career and she wanted to build her career in Marketing in any multinational companies.

After completing her graduation and post-graduation she joined in Banglalink as marketing executive. She had to work on banglalink customer service outlet. Her family was totally against to her job. They only wanted to see her in Government job sector.

I asked that why her family does not appreciate her first job in marketing dept. She replayed that, customer service job is not suitable for women and also society does not see this kind of job as good for female. After six months she had to quit from that job because not a single person of her family was appreciate her choice. They encouraged her to take preparation for government service examinations.

After year later she got married to her maternal cousin. She thought that she will get much more flexibilities then others because her in-law is her maternal relative. Unfortunately they also don't support her marketing field.

I asked to know about her husband's support and she answered, her husband supports her a lot. But he is bound to obey his family's decision. Lots of privet service opportunity she got but they did not permit her to join.

I Questioned her that why they does not support her to join in private sector. The reasons she showed me that, the environment of private sector is not so safe for women. Senior employees are very abusive toward female employees. In marketing sector there is a high possibility to abuse by clients. Another reason they showed, after taking baby it is really tough to maintain a baby with doing a private job.

I asked for her opinion about maternity leave and day care centre in our country. She is not satisfied with maternity leave which provided by private companies. In this pint she has support her in lows that in private sector maternity leave is too short and work load is so high that it is

very tough to maintain a new born. About day care centre she is not satisfied with day care centre of our country, there are very few day care centre we see in our country and they are not reliable enough.

Now a days she is only thinking for government jobs but unfortunately she don't get enough time for taking preparation after doing all the responsibilities of her family.

– **Interview 2:**

Sharmin Islam. She is 27 years old. Currently doing jonGrameenphone customer care sevice. She is not married yet but planning to marry soon. She has completed her graduation at age of 25. She has a plan to build her career in NGO. The reason behind to choose this career is, she does not like desk job at all and she wants to work in that kind of organization where she can do field work and can roam around different places.

Her family does not support to her choice, they even don't want to see her as working woman.

I asked to know the reasons behind their opinion, she replied that, her family thinks that women should only focus on their family and child. A working woman never grow her child properly.

But sharmin does not appreciate to her family's choice. She told me that "I know it is very wrong to hurt my parents, but I believe that it is not wrong to be self-dependent, infect it is mandatory to be self-dependent".

She is very determine about her career and now she is looking for a life partner who will support in her career plans and also supportive to maintain family together.

I asked her about the office environment where she currently working. The answer was, in every workplace there are some people who always try to underestimate female employees and some are all time ready to harass female employees. She mostly faced mental harassment in her present office but she did not specify the harassments.

Her opinion is "We have to face problems for a fruitful outcome" If women won't go for build career in fear of these harassments, the problems never be solved. They have to handle it with strong determination.

– **Interview 3:**

Fahmidakabir. She is 23 years old. Currently doing her under graduation in Hotel management and tourism and also doing a part time job in hotel and resort. Before choosing this major subject she had to face lots of questions such as, why this subject? After getting chance in any other subject why she choose this subject? As a girl she need to think more about this subject and future career of this major. Why her family allow her to go this field? Etc.

But she was very determined because she dreamt to build career in this field from very beginning of her study life.

She sheared an incident of her life, she had relationship for three years. After completing HSC she was planning to admit in Hotel Management and Tourism. Her male friend was totally against of this decision. He tried to convince her to admit in another subject which she got in public universities. She was determined in her own decision and got admitted in Hotel Management and Tourism. After five months her male friend left her and the cause he showed that, his family won't accept her future career.

As I mentioned before she is currently doing a job in a hotel and resort as a part time sales executive. She is very comfortable in her job sector but facing problems sometimes. Clients don't behave well all the time. But she already learned how to handle them in a proper way.

I asked what kind of bad things she had to face by clients.

They offered her for sleep with them and also offer big amount of money for this. Sometimes some clients call her personally for a day long date and when refuse some of them use slangs.

After all of these problems she does not lose her hope to build career in this sector. She does not bother what society says and also don't so much worry about her future in lows. She thinks that, marriage is not necessary thing for her. If someday she fined someone who respect her choices, only in that case she will think about marriage.

– **Interview 4:**

Paromita Das. She is 25 years old and not married yet. She has completed her under graduation with marketing major and now planning to do her post-graduation. During her four years under graduation programme she was determined about her career in marketing sector. Now a days she

is thinking to change her career goal. According to her corporate sector is such a smart life for women if a women can handle it very carefully. But it is really very tough for a women to manage family and career equally after marriage. Lots of women now a days maintain their family and job smoothly but in her case it will not so easy to maintain both equally. She is thinking about teaching where she will get enough time to maintain her family. Basically her first priority will be her family and children.

I asked that, is this decision of changing career goal comer from her own or her family motivate her to change her decision. She told me that her family never forced her to change her goal but they showed her the negative sides of marketing sectors and private jobs as well. And also encouraged her to build career in teaching.

I wanted to know which negative side they showed. First of all in job sector work load is too high now a days, secondly the timing is not perfect for a women to manage both family and work equally, thirdly environment is not safe like harassment, promotion process, in some place have to maintain a personal relationship with boss for better position etc. another thing is maternity leave is not enough for maintain a new born.

– **Interview 5:**

Mehrin sultana. She is 30 years old and divorced for some personal problems. She has completed her undergraduate and worked in so many companies from last 10 years. Her father died when she was 20 and she had to take all the responsibility of her mother and younger brother. Basically from the age of 20 she is the only earning member of her family. Her relatives never come to help her family but they always criticize her about her job. She got married at age of 26 with businessmen and after one year of her marriage life she got divorced. This was another curse of her and have to face lots of criticism about that.

Her main problem is her mother's criticism. Her mother never took her dedication as blessing, she thinks that, it is very shameful that her daughter is the earning member of her family. Her mother wants that when her son will be able to earn for family Mehrin must have to quit her job and marry someone again.

I asked her in her job sector is she facing any problems or criticisms. She told that from the very beginning of her job life she had to face lots of problems and criticism. As she is not come from a good educational background, she had to compete with so many qualified persons. She had lots of knowledge gap but very few of her office staff come to help her. Many of them make criticism about her lacking of knowledge. After her divorce it was very uncomfortable to her doing office because every day she had to face lots of questions, criticism and mental harassment as well.

– **Interview 6:**

Sumaiya Akhter. She is 27 years old and completed her graduation and post-graduation one year ago. She has married from 2011 and has a 3 years old child. She was an employee of grameenphone customer service. After 3 years job life she has decided to left her job because of child and family. She joined grameenphone as a part time employee when she was a student of undergraduate. After marriage she tried to manage study, family and job together. When she got pregnant she had to quit the job because it was really tough to maintain her health and work load together. Here mentioned that, she had plan to take a baby after finishing her study but her in laws forced to take baby early.

I asked her about her previous office environment. She told that it was good but for part timer work load was too high and maternity leave system was not available for part time employees.

I wanted to know about her future plan for career. She is now busy with her family and child. Besides this she doing a fashion designing course. She have to manage all the family things of her own, she wish someday she will get chance to build her career in fashion designing. She wish to build a designing house of her own and her husband also supports her decision.

– **Interview 7:**

NajninNirjhar. She is 29 years old and married from last two years. She not have children yet. She is a service holder and currently she is working with an Indian company as a trainee officer. Her in law stays in Tangail and she have to stay in Dhaka for the job purpose. From the very beginning of her marriage her husband's family wants to keep her with them and they does not

agree with her career oriented thinking. But she is very proud that her own family never support that she will quit her job because of maintain family. She had a wish to go abroad for higher studies but in law does not support that. Before marriage her husband appreciated with her goal but now he is totally silent about her career goal and try to convince her to obey what his family wants.

Nirjhar is determine about her goal, she does not care what her in law wants. She told me that “It is a big pleasure that my own family all the way supports me to go ahead with my ambition”.

I wanted to know about her planning for balancing children and professional life. She told me that balancing both is not so easy. Her mother was a teacher and she had to maintain her four children with her job. It is not easy but it is not an impossible thing, if anyone have a strong determination only she can manage both equally.

10.3. Questions:

10.3.1. Demographic Data:

- Name:
- Age:
- Education:
- Marital status:
- Child:

10.3.2. Perception:

- Are you thinking of building your career?
a. Yes b. No
- If yes, which sector you want to go with and why?
- If No, What are the reasons behind it?
- If you are a job holder, are you comfortable with your job?

a. Yes b. No

- If no, what kind of problems are you facing?
- Did you involve with any employment?
- If yes, why do you quit from that job?
- What is your family's opinion about your career plan?
- What are your views about career?
- If you are unmarried,
 - Do you have any career plan after getting married?
 - How will you cope up your career after getting marriage?
 - If your future in law won't appreciate with your career, what will be your decision?
- If you are Married,
 - Are you facing any problems about your career plan with your in law?
 - If you are a job holder, are your in laws accept you as a working daughter in law?
 - How can you balance your career and family?
 - If you are not in a job yet, what is your plan about career?
 - After getting job what is your plan to manage your career and family?
 - If you have children, how can you manage them with your career?
 - If you don't have any children yet, what is your plan to manage your children and job in a balanced way?

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