

Women and Outside Work in Bangladesh: An Analysis

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Abstract

Despite of the equality of man-woman ratio in Bangladesh, the importance and potentialities of women have been disregarded in socio-economic developments till today. Right from their birth women are neglected in food sharing, education, work, independent thinking, right to property, choice and matters of decision making. But now everybody realize that without the contribution and participation of women the proper development and prosperity of the country cannot be possible. Empowerment of women in economic, political and social fields is considered one of the preconditions for ensuring equal participation of women in all sphere of life. If women can hold socio-economic and political power, then they will be able to gain control over their lives and social institutions those regulates all aspects of their lives. So to improve the backward and in awareness situation, government and non-government sector takes various initiatives to empower women. As a result it is observed that significant achievements have been made in terms of increase in female literacy and life expectancy rates and reduction in mortality rates. However, it needs to examine to what extent they have become empowered. An attempt has been made here to highlight the impact of these empowerment initiatives on women. More specifically, in this paper author tries to find out female students attitudes towards participation in outside work.

Keywords: Women, Outside, Activities, Development

Introduction

Women can play an equal and vital role in all sorts of development activities of a country. Approximately half of the total population of Bangladesh is woman. Like one cannot ignore the contributions of woman in the question of expansion of society and civilization, similarly sustainable and fruitful development cannot acquire without the participation of women. Women are suffering in every respect in this country. Women have inadequate access to

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the law, due to illiteracy, lack of legal literacy, information and resources, insensitivity and gender bias. They are also lack awareness of women's rights in general. Patriarchy still controls all institutions of the society, the parliament, military establishments, judiciary, education, and benevolent organizations etc. (Sultana, 2005:1). Socially and culturally determined concepts of gender roles prevent women from becoming self-reliant. Women are primarily expected to be wives and mothers engaged in undervalued work such as reproducing and rearing children, cooking, cleaning, and managing the household. Otherwise they are expected to work in areas considered suitable for women; in the agricultural sector, this includes sowing, husking, and reaping, whereas in the non-agricultural sector, it includes teaching, sewing, knitting, and embroidery (Panday, 2005: 164). Non-recognition of household work shows almost half the population as unemployed and inactive (Ahmed, 2001: 8). There is an impression that the good women stay at home and look after her husband and her children. Whereas, the workingwoman is portrayed as morally lax and the cause of disintegration of the family, of social values and of society in general. From a long time, this trampled situation makes women apathetic and unconscious about her country, society and herself (Sultana, 2005: 1). Following the adaptation of the Jakarta Declaration for the advancement of women in Asia and the Pacific (1994) and the Beijing declaration and the platform of action (1995), A growing number of women are also succeeding in empowering themselves through effective participation in national machineries and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). However, formidable challenges exist, many which have been compounded by the present economic, political crisis and the social adjustment process. The task of economic, political and social empowerment of women therefore remains a priority area of concern for Bangladesh (Rahman, 2005: 199).

Objectives of the Study

The broader objective of the study is to understand how female students are drawing their career plan. More specifically, this paper will try to:

- To know the attitude of the female students towards work outside the home
- To understand the impression of their male classmates about female students career
- To find out the main barrier to do job outside home

Methodology

The study was conducted on the basis of primary as well as secondary data. Primary data was collected from the students of the Public Administration Department of Rajshahi University. The survey technique was used for

collecting data and structured questionnaire was distributed among the respondents. Questionnaire was distributed among 50 students of the department. Among them 25 were female and 25 were male students. From each year (1st year to MSS) 10 students were chosen randomly (5 male and 5 female). But total 46 questionnaires were collected (23+23). Secondary sources basically included different books, and research articles.

Study Findings

Both male and female students were taken as sample. The following table shows the sex of the respondents.

Table 1: Sex of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	23	50
Female	23	50
Total	46	100

Among respondents 50% was male and 50% was female student.

Women can do different types of job, but someone has reservation to go outside home for earning. The following table shows the opinion of female and male students in this regard.

Table 2: Opinion about Working of Women outside the Home

Opinion	Frequency		Percentage	
	M	F	M	F
Yes	22	23	95.65	100
No	1	0	4.35	0
Total	23	23	100	100

95.65% of the male students mentioned that women should go outside for job and 4.35% of them said that women should not do that. On the other hand 100% of the female students reported that women should go outside home for work. Both male and female respondents showed reasons for working of women outside home.

Table 3: Opinion of Male Students

Rationale	Frequency	Percentage
Economic empowerment of family and state	4	22
Equal participation	8	44.44
Women's right and security	2	11.11
Self employment, status, and equal participation	3	16.66
Awareness and improvement of status	1	5.55
Total	18	99.76

Among 18 respondents, 4 (22%) supported for economic empowerment of family and state, 8 (44.44%) for equal participation, 2 (11.11%) for ensuring women’s rights and social security of women, 3 (16.66%) for self-employment, improvement of social status, and equal participation. Rest of the respondents that mean 1 (5.55%) supported work outside home because of consciousness raising and improvement of the status of women.

Table 4: Opinion of Female Students

Rationale	Frequency	Percentage
Self-dependency, self-identity, and social position	3	16.66
Self identity	4	22.22
Consciousness raising, financial reasons, and status of family	2	11.11
Economic reasons, utilization of education, self-identity, and self-dependency	2	11.11
Self-dependency	3	16.66
Utilization of education and increasing of family status	3	16.66
Equal participation and adaptation with globalisation	1	5.55
Total	18	99.97

16.66% of the female students supported outside work because of self-dependency, self-identity and improved status in a society, 22.22% for self-identity, 11.11% for awareness building, financial reason and improvement of the family status, 11.11% for financial reason, utilization of education, self-identity and self-dependency, 16.66% for self-dependency, 16.66% for utilization of education and for increasing family status. On the other hand 5.55% for equal participation and adaptation with globalisation.

Now day’s women are doing different types of work and men are also become accustomed to see them in various profession. There were variations in choosing profession. The following table shows male and female students opinion on types of work.

Table 5: Types of Work

Types of Work	Frequency		Percentage	
	M	F	M	F
Business	2	2	8.69	8.69
Service	19	18	82.60	78.26
Others	2	3	8.69	13.04
Total	23	23	99.98	99.99

The above table depicts that 8.69% of the respondents (both male and female) preferred business, 82.60% of the male students and 78.26% of the female students preferred service, 8.69% male students and 13.04% of the female students preferred other types of job (did not mention any type of job).

Female students have mentioned the reasons for choosing particular type of job. Their answers are condensed in the following table.

Table 6: Reasons for the Interest of Particular Type of Work

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Financial Reasons	1	4.34
Time pass	0	0
Utilization of education	6	26.08
Self-identity	13	56.52
Financial utilization of education, self-identity	1	4.34
Financial, self-identity	2	8.69
Total	23	99.97

The table shows 4.34% for financial reason, 26.08% for utilization of education, 56.52% for self-identity, 4.34% for financial, educational and self-identity, and 8.69% for financial reason and self-identity. No one is interested to work only for time pass.

While asked what type of service they prefer 14 (60.86%) male and 10 (43.47%) female students preferred government service. Where as 3 (13.04%) male and 4 (17.39%) female students liked non-government service. 2 (8.69%) male and 7 (30.43%) female students gave opinion in favour of private sector. 4 (17.39%) male and 2 (8.69%) female students did not mention any particular type of service.

Table 7: Types of Services

Types of service	Frequency		Percentage	
	M	F	M	F
Government	14	10	60.86	43.47
Non-government	3	4	13.04	17.39
Private	2	7	8.69	30.43
Others	4	2	17.39	8.69
Total	23	23	99.98	99.98

Respondents also reported the rationale for interest for particular type of services

Table 8: Government Service

Rationale for Government Job	Frequency		Percentage	
	M	F	M	F
Fixed time	2	1	14.9	10
Fixed time, security	2		14.9	
Financial, social security	2		14.9	
Security, status, opportunity, less risk, permanency	6	9	42.86	90
Others	2		14.9	
Total	14	10	102.46	100

2 (14.9%) male and 1 (10%) female students preferred government job for fixed time, 2 (14.9%) male students for fixed time and security, 2 (14.9%) for financial reason and social security, 6 (42.86%) male students for security, status, more opportunity, less risk and permanency and 9 (90%) female students liked for the same reasons. In addition to that, 2 (14.9%) for some other reasons preferred government job.

Table 9: Non-Government Service

Rationale for Non-government Services	Frequency		Percentage	
	M	F	M	F
Wider work scope	1		33.33	
Evaluation of experience and skills	1	2	33.33	66.66
Others	1	1	33.33	33.33
Total	3	3	99.99	99.99

3 male and 3 female students have chosen private job. Among them 1(33.33%) male student for wider work scope and salary, 1 (33.33%) male and 2 (66.66%) female students for evaluation of experience and skill development supported non-government job. Except these, 1(33.33%) male and 1(33.33%) female student did not mention any cause for supporting non-government service.

Table 10: Private Service

Rationale for Private Service	Frequency		Percentage	
	M	F	M	F
Security	1	0	33.33	
Freedom, self-development	1	3	33.33	42.85
Others	1	4	33.33	57.14
Total	3	7	99.99	99.99

Table 10 illustrate that out of 46 respondents 10 preferred private job. 1(33.33%) male student for security, 1(33.33%) male student and 3(42.85%) female respondents for freedom and self-development, 1(33.33%) male student and 4(57.14%) female students for other reasons preferred private service.

Table 11: Opinion about Service after Marriage

Service After marriage	Frequency	Percentage
Interested about service after marriage	21	91.30
Not to be continued	2	8.69
Total	23	99.99

Out of 23 female respondents 21(91.30%) told that they would continue their job after marriage and 2 (8.69%) will not continue.

Table 12: What should be done in Case of Objection

What should be done	Frequency	Percentage
Try to make positive	13	56.52
Give up job	3	13.04
Must continue	7	30.43
Total	23	99.99

13(56.52%) female students will try to make the family positive, 3(13.04%) will give up the job and 7(30.43%) will continue their job at any cost.

Table 13: Attitude of the Male Student towards Outside Work of the Female Member of the Family

Attitude	Frequency	Percentage
Support	22	95.65
Not-support	1	4.34
Total	23	99.99

Among 23 male respondents 22(95.65%) supported and 1 (4.34%) not-supported the outside work of the female member of the family.

Table 14: Presence of Women Professionals in Family

Professional Women in Family	Frequency		Percentage	
	M	F	M	F
Have	14	12	60.86	52.17
Have not	8	11	34.78	47.82
Total	22	23	95.64	99.99

The table depicts that there are workingwomen in 14 (60.86%) male and in 12(52.17%) female respondents' family. On the other hand no women are working outside home in 8(34.78%) male and 11(47.82) female respondents' family.

Summary of the Findings

Male students were equally interested to give opinion about female students' career. Not only that they were also very much concerned about women's career.

Though they were not sure whether they would be professional women or housewives, some of the female respondents expressed their desire to do another degree in addition to MSS in Public Administration. One of the respondents told "I want to do higher degree in Hotel management from abroad". Two of them expressed desire to complete post graduate/PhD degree in Public Administration. Some of them want to complete LLB and MBA. Few of the respondents expressed their intension in this way: "Rest of my life I want to involve myself in study", "I will continue my study as long as possible for me and for my family".

Maximum respondents believe that women should go outside home for job except few. One of the female respondents told, "It is not necessary that every woman should work outside the home but it is important that they have to be self dependent". Another respondent expressed that "I do not believe that every woman should work outside the house. Because there are many job to do inside the home which are very honourable for any woman. And they can earn money in this way". That means one thing is clear from their opinion that women should be self-dependent whether doing job inside or outside the home. The male respondents showed similar attitudes:

"In doing household activities, an woman only serves her family. But as a citizen of a nation she also has responsibilities towards the country. So I strongly believe every educated woman must do all possible jobs breaking the social and religious barrier".

In the same line another respondent told, "Women are the part of our manpower, so I believe, for greater interest of the nation women have to be involved with work outside the home. As a citizen of a developing country like Bangladesh, her only responsibility is not to stay home for only household work. They should take part in national development".

"Now a day there is no difference between male and female. Society has also recognized their equal rights and tries to provide equal opportunities at every respect of life. At the working place they have also proved their eligibility. From this perspective it can be strongly pronounced that, women should work outside the house. This will bring at the same time solvencies, prestige, and honour for them. I not only support but also fell proud of them who are working for the greater interest of the nation and the society."

"I firmly believe that every woman should work outside the house. Now a day it is nearly impossible for a general service holder to carry on his family by his own honest income. For healthy development of the country every person's effort is essential. So we must encourage them for coming out from the home".

"The human being refers to both the male and female. The female, have the ability to work whether in the house or outside the house. I strongly believe that if proper opportunities are given and right environment is created the female can also play a vital role in the progress and prosperity of the nation".

Negative impressions were also given by the male respondents. Some of these are: "It is the reality that unexpected environment or situation will be created where male and female are working together. So only the self-conscious and intelligent women can do job outside the house because they will be able to face any unexpected situation", "I don't believe that it is

essential for women to go outside for earning. They can earn by establishing dairy farm, poultry farm, cultivating vegetables, and work with handicraft”, “I do not believe that every woman should go outside for job because women’s first and prime responsibility is to maintain a happy and beautiful family. If every woman goes outside for job on the basis of the idea that man and woman are equal, then it will create a negative impact on the family and nation. Woman only can go outside if the situation is permitted her to do that”.

Maximum male students mentioned ‘equal participation’ as the first reason for working of women outside home. ‘Economic empowerment of family and state’ holds the second position. On the other hand, female students told that self-dependency, self-identity, social position, self-dependency, utilization of education and increasing of family status are the reasons for working outside.

Both male and female students reported that first priority is service and second position holds business. In answer to the question why their first priority is service, they showed different reasons, such as financial reason, time pass, utilization of education, self-dependency. But maximum students mentioned self-dependency as the cause of service. Most of the male and female students prefer government service. Second position holds by non-government service and the private service. Someone was in indecision. They could not mention any particular type of service.

In answering the question, what is the rationale for government service, variation was observed in female students answer. But maximum students prefer government service because of security, status, opportunity, less risk, permanency etc. Very few percent of student preferred government service for fixed time. On the other hand both male and female respondents preferred non-government service because of wider work scopes, evaluation of experience and skills.

Maximum female students are willing to continue their job after marriage. Some of the female respondents expressed that they will try to make the family positive about their job. But if the family is not convinced then someone will give up the job and few are very adamant to continue their job after marriage at any cost. Following are some example of their attitude: “At first I shall try to make them understand. I think at present national and global perspective they will accept it. If I shall fail to convince them I can at best change the job but will not give up the job”. “As a educated woman my first priority is my family. I do not want to do that type work for which my family will be deprived. On the other hand it is not possible for me to lose my dignity. So I shall try to balance the both”. “I want only to do job before

marriage”. “I have to obey my in-laws’ and husband’s opinion otherwise society will blame me and will treat me as a bad wife. Nevertheless I shall try to convince them”. “One of the unavoidable preconditions of my marriage will be the assurance of doing job. I shall not obey any objection”. “I must try to choose my life partner keeping similarities with the mentality of me. But if my husband interfere in my freedom and do not evaluate my potentialities then I shall be compelled to divorce him”.

There is a close relationship between ‘presence of women who are working outside home’ and ‘attitudes towards job’. It was observed that the students who have female family member working outside home have positive attitudes towards job.

Conclusion

Though in general both male and female respondents showed positive attitude towards women’s work outside the home at the same time it was reflected in their opinion that family is the primary and job is secondary concern to them. This is the reflection of our cultural values and norms. Involvement in family activities is the main barrier to participation in outside job. It is especially applicable for married women. They often suffer from guilt feeling for going out to do work. So they have to give more time and energy to balance professional and family life. People in our society like to see women as soft-spoken, submissive, passive, sacrificing, affectionate, supportive, marriage, and family oriented, non-competitive, and dependent. They also prefer that women will give up their job if conflict arises between family needs and professional needs. There is a clear division work of man and woman in Bangladesh. Traditionally, men’s responsibilities cover earning an income, maintaining the family, looking after parents, taking care of the family properties, cultivating lands, rearing cattle etc (Siddiqui, 2002: 42). On the other hand women prime duty is to do domestic duties, which involve home management, childcare, social commitments, responsibilities towards in-laws, taking care of family illness and managing everything in the absence of household help. Most family guide their children keeping in mind the prevailing division of labour between sexes. Parents try to prepare their son for job market where as daughters are prepared for marriage market. Women are learned that, the main objective behind educating them is to enhance their marriage prospects. In short, female students study chiefly to get certificates and not to acquire knowledge. Their certificates ensure their better marriage. Marriage is more important than acquiring knowledge because of the vulnerable position of women in our society and this indirectly prevents women from going outside home for job (Choudhury, 2002: 191). Consequently female students are now coming out of the university with good results and getting good degrees without any career

planning. This system forces women to be indifferent to career and deprives them of equal opportunity in every sphere of life. One female student surveyed has commented “One of the major problem in career planning of our female student is that most of the cases the family do not give importance on the career planning of the female member of the family. From very childhood the family is giving a lesson to every girl that you have to complete your education for a good marriage but not for a good career or self-dependency. That means the concerned family discourage the girl to be career oriented. As a result most of the cases the girls fail to build a good career despite their merit, good academic result and potentialities”. Socialization experiences of women directly affect their career planning, which was reflected in this study. The findings of the study demonstrate that both male and female respondents strongly believe in the traditional roles of men and women. However, some of the respondents (both male and female) of this study have deviated from the traditional beliefs of the society, which are very encouraging. For coming out from these suffocating situation women needs the immense support from all walks of life, especially the help of the male members of the family.

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