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Working Women and the Transformation of Family Relationship Patterns in Bangladesh

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Abstract. The study focuses on working women and their changing forms of family relationship patterns in Bangladesh. The study was conducted from September 2020 to December 2020 to examine the socio-economic condition of working women, the transformation of family relationship patterns, and the obstacles of working women. The study was qualitative in which multiple case studies were employed. Results demonstrate that working women play a significant role as the important agents for the transformation of family patterns in Bangladesh. The results unravel the obvious outcomes of the patterns of family transformation from both functional and conflict points of view. The study observed that there are some noticeable changes within family for working women in where some are functional including: changing pattern of gender role, the transformation of family structure, modification of economic decision making, socialization of the children and individual freedom of women. This study also elucidates some changing patterns of the family that can be considered from the conflict point of view such as, negative impact on children, fertility-related problem, conflicting intimate relationship, extramarital relationships, divorce, separation, broken family, single parents' family, and so on. It also demonstrates a need to address some obstacles faced by working women and some potential strategies to create equilibrium within the family and workplace as well as enhancing the overall status of women in society.

Keywords. Working Women, Working Mother, Family Relationship, Challenges of Women

1. Introduction

The world is rapidly changing and families are also changing. Progress of the world's women evaluates the scale and scope of transformations in family life and their indications for gender equality and women's empowerment. Women's empowerment asserts that women contribute to the society and the economy and it is also important for these contributions to be adequately recognized (1). Nowadays women can exercise agency and voice within the family. These include protecting early marriage; getting social and legal recognition within the family and society; getting freedom in having children; and achieving economic autonomy (2). Working woman is a symbol of women's development and liberty. Progress and development of women lead to progress and development of society. Women's empowerment can be helpful for women's equality, dignity, rights, and fulfilling responsibilities (3). Women are now working in the workforce more than previous time that also associated with their education, age, social status, place of living area, opportunity, family structure, and so on. This study examines to know the socio-economic condition of working women and tries to find out the answer that whether socio-economic background influences women to do work in the workforce.

Women's labor market participation promotes their economic position and greater equity, and as a whole can also empower women in the socio-political arena. However, traditional gender norms and patriarchal values often constrict women's mobility and put down their activities in the labor market (4). Society imposes different roles and responsibilities on men and women based on gender which at times obstruct the development of individuals. Over the course of time, it was found that women's involvement has increased both in the public and private spheres, indicating that the gender role is in fact being changed. However, men's role as head of the family remains unchanged along with their share of household responsibilities of care work (5). Women's new gender role creates a new identity and their engagements for society as well as family (6). The family structure is gradually being changed including rising divorce rate and decreasing fertility rates due to women's involvement in the workforce and employment (7). The number of divorces has been rising in Bangladesh particularly in the urban area over the past few years. The working women cannot spend sufficient time with their family members which are considered as one of the reasons for divorce (8). Many families have been facing many other problems due to the involvement of women in employment. This study intends to explore the transformation of the family relationship pattern due to the rising involvement of women in employment.

2. Objectives of the study

This study aims to find out the actual scenario of working women and its relationship with the transformation of family pattern in Bangladesh society. The particular objectives are as follows:

- a) To acknowledge socio-economic condition of working women.
- b) To explore the transformation of the family relationship pattern due to the involvement of women in employment.
- c) To identify the obstacles of working women in society.

3. Methodology

The qualitative research method has been used to find out the relationship between working women and the transformation of family relationship pattern in Bangladesh. 26 working women from diverse socio-economic background have been selected purposively from September 2020 to December 2020 to examine the socio-economic condition of working

women, the transformation of family relationship patterns, and the obstacles of working women within and outside the family. Chattogram district has been selected as a study area of this research. The respondents and the study area are selected purposively due to the convenience of the researchers.

For the primary source of data collection case study method has been used to have a comprehensive understanding into the depth of the issues as it was important to know the perception of working women in details and how family members accept their work and what they actually face in their family relationship. Secondary sources such as articles, journals, reports, books, websites, etc. have been used to get the immense picture of the study. After the data gathering in the study, all data has been analyzed and organized in the thematic form of presentation. This study also has maintained all the ethical considerations.

4. Conceptual Framework

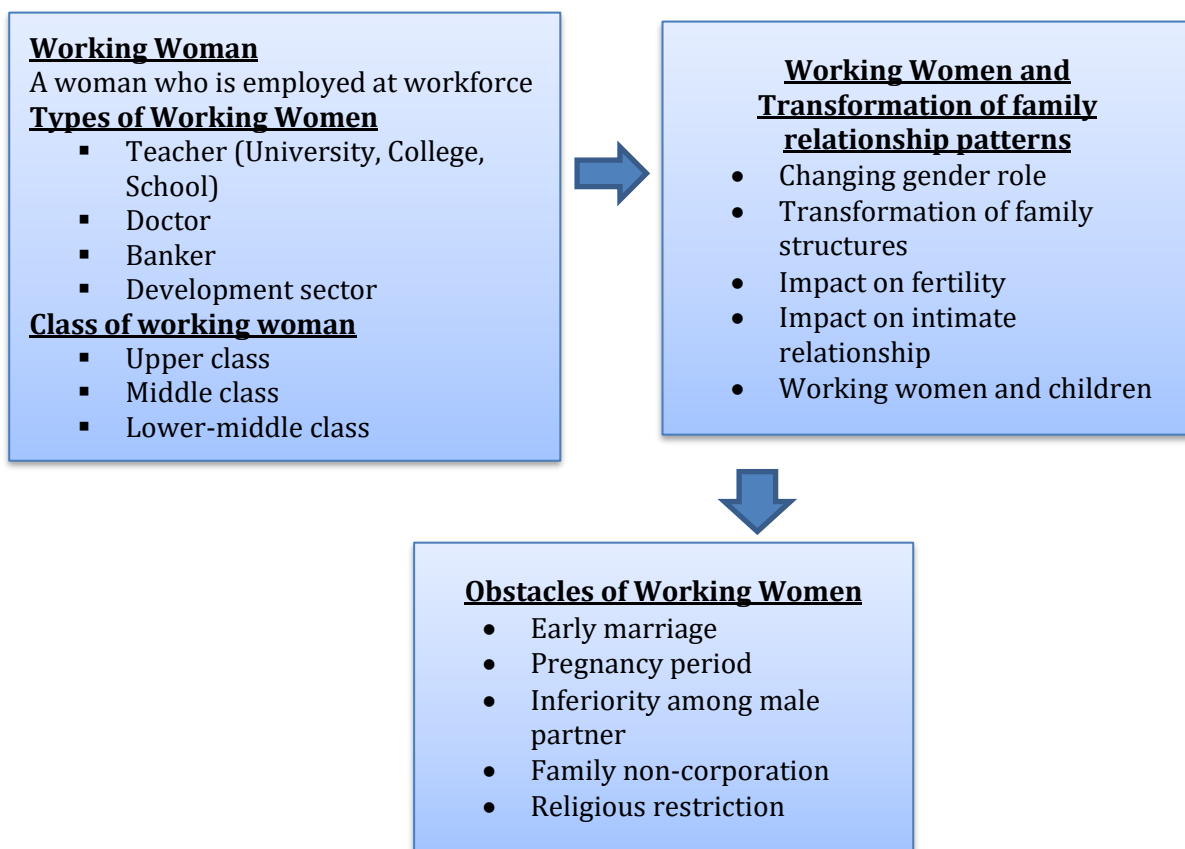


Figure-2: Conceptual framework of the study

The above conceptual framework shows the cause and effect relationship between working women and the transformation of family relationship patterns in society. For the transformation of working women, they face some obstacles not only in Bangladesh but also almost everywhere.

5. Result and Findings of the study

5.1 Socio-economic condition of the respondents

To dig out the different points of view and ideas of working women, 26 working women have been selected in the study concerning their socio-demographic and economic perspectives.

This study concerns marital status, occupation, income, family type and social status as socio-economic condition of the respondents. This study shows that out of twenty-six respondents maximum are married, three are unmarried, two are divorced and only one is separated. There is a notable variation in the occupational status. As table 1 depicts-seven respondents are the teachers (University, College, and School), six are government employees, four are working in the development sector and five are bankers, two are doctors and lawyers. All respondents' age ranges from 25 to 53 years old.

Table 1: Socio-economic condition of working women

Name	Marital Status	Occupation	Monthly Income (Approximately)	Family type	Social Status
Respondent no: 1	Unmarried	University Teacher	35,000/=	Extended	Middle Class
Respondent no:2	Married	Development Worker	60,000/=	Nuclear	Upper Middle Class
Respondent no:3	Married	Government Employee	28000/=	Nuclear	Lower Middle Class
Respondent no:4	Unmarried	Government Employee	45,000/=	Nuclear	Middle Class
Respondent no:5	Married	Private Banker	30,000/=	Extended	Lower Middle Class
Respondent no:6	Unmarried	High School teacher	26,000/=	Extended	Lower Middle Class
Respondent no:7	Divorced	University Teacher	67,000/=	Extended	Upper Middle Class
Respondent no:8	Separated	Lawyer	50,000/=	Nuclear	Middle Class
Respondent no:9	Divorced	Private School Teacher	29,000/=	Nuclear	Lower Middle Class
Respondent no:10	Married	Lawyer	80,000/=	Nuclear	Upper Class
Respondent no:11	Married	University Teacher	56,000/=	Extended	Upper Middle Class
Respondent no:12	Married	Banker	50,000/=	Nuclear	Middle Class
Respondent no:13	Married	Government Employee	45,000/=	Nuclear	Middle Class
Respondent no:14	Married	Civil Service	56,000/=	Nuclear	Upper Middle Class
Respondent no:15	Married	Private Banker	78,000/=	Nuclear	Upper Class
Respondent no:16	Married	Development Worker	60,000/=	Nuclear	Upper middle Class
Respondent no:17	Married	Doctor	90,000/=	Nuclear	Upper Class
Respondent no:18	Married	Development Worker	70,000/=	Nuclear	Upper Middle Class
Respondent no:19	Married	Civil Service	67,000/=	Nuclear	Upper Middle Class
Respondent no:20	Married	College Teacher	45,000/=	Nuclear	Middle Class
Respondent no:21	Married	Development Worker	85,000/=	Extended	Upper Class

Respondent no:22	Married	Government Employee	40,000/=	Nuclear	Middle Class
Respondent no:23	Married	University Teacher	54,000/=	Nuclear	Upper Middle Class
Respondent no:24	Married	Govt. Banker	45,000/=	Nuclear	Middle Class
Respondent no:25	Married	Doctor	65,000/=	Nuclear	Upper Middle Class
Respondent no:26	Married	Private Banker	66,000/=	Nuclear	Upper Middle Class

Source: Collected data from the Field

The most obvious thing is that there are lots of arguments about the measurement of social class from the sociological point of view. Despite all arguments over the theory of social class, Sociologists generally posit three categories of social classes: upper, middle, and working (or lower), in where the upper class is defined by the ownership of large amounts of property and the income; the middle class is engaged in technical and professional occupations, supervisors and managers, and some self-employed workers; the working class is those persons who hold low-paying, low-skilled, nonunionized jobs in such industries (9). This study is not dealing with the highly complex and dynamic social phenomenon of the measurement of social class; however, it only focuses on the respondent's opinions about their social class based on their monthly income. In this study, monthly income below 30,000/= taka is considered as lower middle class, respondents those who are earning between 30,000-50,000/= taka are considered as middle class, those monthly incomes are 50,000-70,000/=taka are considered as upper-middle class. On the other hand, those monthly incomes are above 70,000/= taka, they have claimed themselves as upper class. In this study, most of the respondents are included in the upper class, and middle class. This study does not find any lower class. Remarkable diversity was also found in classifying social class. About ten respondents have claimed themselves as upper-middle class, eight are lower-middle, four are middle class, and the other four have claimed themselves as upper class.

5.2 *Changing gender roles and transformation of family structure*

The need for work and family life balance is a critical issue for every working woman. At the workplace or home, the recognition of women's capabilities is something society finds hard to accept. Women's participation in the labor force has increased manifolds over time in Bangladesh. Compared to 4 percent in 1974, female participation in the labor force has increased to 35.6 percent in 2016 (10). As family life is increasingly influenced by labor market developments, family changes and transformation of gender roles is increasingly recognized in the contemporary family where women's new roles are predominant and there are changes in men's role enforced by women's emancipation (11).

Extended families are breaking up because of the participation of job sectors of women. Nuclear families have replaced joint families, easy carefree dad has replaced fearful head-of-house father and working mom has replaced stay-at-home mothers, love marriages have replaced arranged marriages (12). In current times, grandparents don't get an opportunity to stay with their grandchildren even if they want to live with them (13). This study shows that women were dependent on their father and husband at the previous time, but the situation has greatly changed. The role of men and women has been changed especially for working women. Working women can help their families economically rather than their male counterparts. One respondent mentioned that,

Because of being a working woman, I get the opportunity to serve my parents. Though I have my elder brother, he does not look after our parents. I reckon that boy or girl anyone can take the responsibilities of our old parents.

Women's status is changing in home and society because of the participation of workforce. One of the respondents stated that,

After joining the job, I got the opportunity to take the duties of my entire family. I came from a middle-class family. Earlier I used to drink tong's tea and now I realize that I feel more comfortable having one cup of coffee at any reputed Coffee shop such as Gloria Jean's Coffee shop. Since I am successful in my profession, everyone evaluates my decisions and opinions.

Nowadays, men are also supportive of their life partners in the family because their better halves are busy with their work both at home and office. Without their active participation, women cannot maintain their homes (14). This study depicts that some respondents got a supportive life partner. Their husband always tried to help them as they can both financially and mentally. Some respondents also shared their hurtful information experienced by their mother and grandmother who were trying to work hard for their husbands, but at the end of the day, they did not get good behavior from them. In this regard one respondent expressed her opinion,

I saw my father that he did not do any help in household work rather he used to dominate my mother. My father looked at my mother as his domestic servant. But my husband always tries to help me, for example: hanging mosquito nets, wash dishes, look after our kids. He also tries to cook special dishes on holidays. He is very positive working together.

Some respondents have given interesting outcomes. They opined that many husbands are now interested to work together with their wives in contemporary society, still they are influenced by other family members and relatives. One respondent opined,

Since I am a working woman, my husband tries to support me. But when friends and relatives come to our house, he feels reluctant to help the household works.

Gender roles are the roles of men and women from different expectations based on each society's values and beliefs about gender to occupy based on their sex. Traditionally, men are expected to be the primary breadwinners, leaders, and heads of households by providing financially for their families and making important family decisions. Women, on the other hand, are expected to nurture their families by working full-time within the home rather than taking employment outside of the home (15). Gender roles are changing day by day because of the participation of women in job sectors. Women's monthly income is not considered as a secondary need, rather it is considered as a primary need. Women's traditional roles are also changing in Bangladesh. Men, now, help women both within the home with household chores and outside the home. Women are contributing to their family not only providing economic benefit but also giving important decisions about family affairs.

Working-class women historically have had much stronger connectivity to the workforce because of the necessity of their incomes to their families' economic well-being (15). This study has examined that even if working women are outside of their family, their decision

is evaluated. Most of the working women cannot live with joint family for their workplace distance. Some are passing their whole life without connectivity of joint family. Most of the nuclear family used to meet with their joint family during the period of vacation and also get together during family programs. One respondent opined,

Since I have to change places frequently for my job, I have no scope to stay with my joint family which is situated in my hometown. Sometimes my parents, siblings, and relatives come to visit our small house.

In the mid-eighteen centuries, women started to work away from home. After that, they began to work outside and played a significant role both for family and also for the country. The participation of working women has been increased in the present era and for this reason, their family and social status have been changed (16). The recent days, Bangladeshi families are seeing a drastic change. As both parents go to work, and more and more people move to urban areas, the social structure and our dynamics with families have also taken a change (12). However, working women have a strong position in the family in Bangladesh. One respondent mentioned that,

Because I earn money and I can take care of my family, so I have a contribution to my family. I take decision about family affairs along with my husband. My husband also gives priority to my opinion.

One respondent opined differently

My family dislikes working outside from home for women. That's why my decisions of working in workforce are considered negatively. Since I didn't follow their instruction, I am considered as arrogant, feminist, indecent, etc. and my all opinions about any family affairs have been taken negatively.

Patriarchal social structures and implications for women's legal status and social positions are related to each other. In developing countries, patriarchy is being faced by some contradictions and challenges for women's economic development, women's increasing educational attainment, and overall development of women's social status (17). In the patriarchal system of Bangladesh, the father is considered as the powerful leader of the family and they are the head of the family. Another respondent described that her husband was not supportive of her job because of his patriarchal mentality. She sadly commented that,

My husband thinks that he has enough income. So, I don't need to work. I try to give more time to my kids and my husband. He always told me to quit my job. I think that though I hold a better position in my job than my husband he suffers inferiority and sometimes he treats me badly without any reason. In our patriarchal society, it is not easily accepted that a wife is more advanced than her husband. Sometimes it creates a conflicting relationship between husband and wife.

5.3 Working women and their contradictions within family

Working women face some conflicting situations within their family relationship by maintaining paradoxical and contradictory demands associated with a career and a mother. They continue their life with the coexistence of role pressures from work and family spheres (18). Women's economic independence stands as one of the most crucial factors in family contradiction. Women's participation rate in the labor force with their financial independence

in Bangladesh has increased freedom among Bangladeshi women in their personal lives today (19). One of the respondents reported that,

There is no chance to live together by tolerating painful family relationships. I tried my level best to minimize all the contradictory situations in my life. My husband and also my in-laws endeavored to insult me in front of my children and neighbors. Finally, I recognized myself as an individual identity and thought that working women can take their own decision and they should not tolerate any kind of injustice and they are aware of their rights. Working women can lead their life smoothly even if they are divorced, separated, or widows. Now I am divorced and I am very much happy with that.

In Bangladesh, the rate of divorce and separation is dramatically increasing. In some cases, divorce can bring relief from endless suffering, however, in almost all the cases their dreams are shattered and broken their family's hopes and aspiration, and they along with their family face intolerable suffering and press their future uncertainty. There is a close connection between divorce and the socio-economic and cultural causation of Bangladesh (20). Another respondent stated that,

There are some disagreements between me and my husband. My husband was attached to an extramarital relationship. He tortured me mentally and physically in the time of quarrelling. My parents advised me to compromise because of my future life. I thought that I am a working women and I have the ability to maintain my own life by fulfilling all the demands of my loving child. We decided to live separately without divorce. Now I am living my own life and he also, hopes that he is comfortable with his new life.

The above-mentioned statements indicate that working women can make their self-identity and give respect themselves as an individual. They are capable to manage all the conflicting situations within their family life and also fight for any kind of injustice. The majority of the working women face many problems in the family because they work. Sometimes husbands in the family see themselves as inferior to their wives if wives earn more money than them that creates huge misunderstanding within their relationship. Therefore, the rates of divorce, separation, single mother or father family, and broken family have been increasing at an alarming rate in Bangladesh. Good conjugal family life can be terminated because of not compromising attitudes among both husband and wife.

Marriage is the bondage and development of lifetime family relationships which is the base of commitment with love and responsibility for peace, and happiness (21). Working women cannot maintain their marriage life in one place for a long time because of some transferable job that creates long distance in conjugal relationship. Career is much important for most of the working women. For the betterment of their career, they did not give sufficient time to each other. One respondent stated,

We both are career-oriented. We can't give much time to one another. When I give time, my husband may busy with his work. Sometimes we miss each other, but we can't express our emotions due to excessive work pressure both at home and workplace. We are always busy balancing our time by not fulfilling our eager feelings that hamper our intimate relationship.

Some working women are much concerned with their studies and job rather than doing marriage at right time. Due to late marriage, they are facing some fertility problems. One respondent shared her experience like that,

I was determined that I will not get married before getting a job. After getting the job I got married, but unfortunately, I and my husband's workplace are different. For this reason, we can't live together. Despite desiring to have a baby, we do not have the opportunity to live together for an ovulation period. Now I am becoming frustrated and I want to leave my job.

Another respondent who experienced miscarriage one times shared that

During the period of pregnancy, women should concern about their health. If they do not careful, accidents can happen at any time. Working pregnant women have to be more careful than non-working women as they have to go to the office every day. I experienced an unexpected incident in my life. I was pregnant for about eight months; I went to the office everyday which was far from my home and the road was too bad. The incident of miscarriage had to be faced by me for the journey. After that occurrence, my all relatives forced me to leave the job, but my loving husband was with me. 5 years later, by the mercy of Allah, now I am the mother of two children.

Bangladesh is an Islamic predominant country where the majority are Muslim. Women are bound to adopt traditional religious practices by the religious community. There are some regions where Islamic groups show extreme attitudes especially, toward women. There are some negative opinions about working women by zealotry (22). One respondent opined that

Orthodoxy is a curse for society. As a daughter of a conservative family, the decision to participate in a workforce is not so easy. I came from a conservative family. I wanted to succeed in my life doing further degree from abroad. But my parents didn't want to continue my study and they tried to give marry forcefully without my consent. They stopped giving me financial support and I struggled a lot against my family. In spite of these difficulties, I was very much confident about myself, that's why I have touched my dreams.

5.4 Working mother and Children

Working mother's participation in the workforce has an immense effect on their children's behaviors and socialization. If working women face lots of pressure in the office, it may have a negative impact on children and other family members. On the other hand, when working women enjoy at their workplace, they pass through with a lot of pleasure with their children and family (23). It is very tough to balance for working women both home and workplace, but if husband and other family member support them, it can be possible to nurture their children and bring up as well socialized. Sometimes work pressure of mothers may affect their children attitudes and create problems of child adjustment. As working women face lots of family crises with their husbands and other family members, children of those families also suffer some conflicting crises. One of respondents said that,

Working mothers always hurry with finishing house and workplaces' activities. Since I am a working mother, I am bound to get help from a helping hand for my child care. After coming back home, I can't get sufficient time for my child. My child told me that he missed me a lot, he feels lonely, when he cries, I feel guilty and unfortunately, I have nothing to do.

As we know that conflict and a negative family environment may have a negative effect on children and place them at increased risk for behavioral and emotional problems. Intense parent-child conflict is associated with widespread maladjustment, including negative acting-out behavior, emotional upset (anger, fear), poor academic performance, defensive, inner

tension (sometimes suicidal ideation), and so on (24). There is a possible solution is that if working women stay with their parents or in-laws; their children do not suffer when they work outside the home (25). Children from working women's families do not always associate conflicting behaviors; they also associated with a lot of positive attitudes including self-dependent, sacrificing nature, courage, optimistic thinking, helping nature for their further life, and so on. One of the Respondents shared that,

Though I am a working mother, I always try to concern about my child's development and socialization process. When I go to my workplace, my mother-in-law cares for my son. Almost all holidays we all go around the restaurant or relative's house or other places where our child wants to go. I always try to spend quality time with my loving son and I have a very positive relationship with my child.

6. Discussion

It is evident that working women are playing a vital role in gaining some capabilities in the transformation of family relationship patterns in Bangladesh. This study found the overall scenario of working women with their socio-demographic and economic status, the transformation of family relationship patterns in society. The main finding of the study indicates that working women play an important role for the transformation of family relationship patterns in Bangladesh. The outcomes of the study elucidate the family transformation patterns in Bangladesh from both functional and conflict points of view. The findings show that remarkable diversity can be found in classifying social class claimed by the respondents themselves. The majority of the respondents are included in the upper-middle class, and some are lower-middle class and only a few are middle class and upper class. This study does not find any lower class.

The study observed that there are some noticeable changes within family for working women. The role of men and women has been changed especially for working women. Working women can help their families economically rather than their male counterparts. Women's monthly income is not considered as a secondary need, rather it is considered as the primary need. Women's traditional roles have also changed in Bangladesh where many husbands are now supportive to work household chores together with their wives; still, they are influenced by other family members and relatives. This study depicts that women are contributing to their family not only providing economic benefit but also giving important decisions about family affairs that are evaluated.

The important finding here is that most of the working women can't live with joint family for their workplace distance. Women's status in Bangladesh has been also changed both at home and in society because of the participation in the workforce. This study found that patriarchy is a challenge for working women's development in society. The study indicates that working women making their self-identity are capable to manage and fight for all the conflicting situations within their family life. The rates of divorce, separation, single mother or single father family, the broken family have been increasing at an alarming rate because of working women in Bangladesh. Sometimes working women are bound to live a long-distance conjugal relationship that may hamper their intimate relationship. Due to late marriage, some working women have also faced some fertility problems. It is found that religious orthodox shows a negative attitude towards working women.

Findings show that working mother's participation in the workforce has an extreme impact on their children's attitudes and socialization. Maintaining the balance between both home and workplace is an important task for working women. Work pressure of mother play a

negative impact on their children attitudes and create problems of child adjustment with its surroundings. Children from working women's families do not always associate the conflicting attitudes; they also associated with a lot of positive attitudes including self-dependent, sacrificing nature, courage, optimistic thinking, helping nature for their further life, and so on. However, this study shows that working women change the gender role of society and play a crucial indicator for the transformation of family relationships in society by structural change.

7. Recommendations and Further Implications

The study has identified some recommendations and further implications. These recommendations may contribute to decreasing the obstacles of working women. The study observed that early marriage of women is the main barrier for being working women that should be strongly stopped by the guardian and also society. Working women often suffer from complications during the pregnancy period. A supportive work environment is crucial in the time of pregnancy and child-rearing helps working women to maintain both home and workplace (26). Though six months of maternal leave in Bangladesh has been given during pregnancy time but insufficient supports from husband, other family members and also work institution may sometimes bound working women to quit the job. So there is needed to minimize social and family related barriers to maximize working women in society. Authority should make some special arrangements such as a sufficient child care center with a healthy environment for the children so that working mothers are capable to concentrate on work.

Due to Modernization, extended families and joint families are breaking down into nuclear families (27). There is a possible solution is that if working women stay with their parents or in-laws. The women who are now in leading role faced a lot of cultural and economic barriers to moving forward. Women need strong willpower and self-confidence to move forward (28). There is also needed to change the inferior mentality among husbands if their wives earn more money. There should not be imposed anything on women in the name of religious orthodox in society. Finally, it can be said that a friendly attitude towards working women will be increased for the development of women's status in society.

8. Conclusion

The study addresses working women and their relationship with family transformation in Bangladesh. The number of working women is increasing gradually that indicates women's development and overall progress in society. In the last 20 years, Bangladesh has seen significant changes in the family structure. For the increasing number of working women in our country, the lifestyle of working women and their families has completely changed. In the olden days, the man was considered as breadwinner and woman was considered as homemaker but today everything has changed. Both men and women are maintaining equal responsibility in work and family (29). Women's traditional roles have also changed in Bangladesh where many husbands are now supportive to work household chores together with their wives; still, they are influenced by other family members and relatives. Women are contributing to their family economically and giving decisions about family affairs that are evaluated by society.

Patriarchy is ruining working women's development in society. Working women now capable to create their self-identity and can manage all the conflicting situations within their surroundings. The rates of divorce, separation, single mother or single father family, broken family are increasing at an alarming rate because of working women in Bangladesh. Because of a long-distance conjugal relationship, working women face a lot of problems in their intimate relationships. Due to late marriage, some working women are suffering from fertility problems. Religious conservativeness sometimes hinders working women to develop them. Working

mothers influence badly their children's attitudes and socialization. Both the negative and positive impacts have been observed among children. Therefore, working women change the gender role of society and play as a crucial indicator for the transformation of family relationship patterns in Bangladesh.

Nevertheless, In Bangladesh, working women are facing some obstacles including early marriage, an unfavorable environment in the pregnancy period both home and workplace, inferiority and masculine attitude among male partners, family non-cooperation, and religious restriction, and so on. There is needed for comprehensive attempts from different parts of society to minimize the obstacles of working women so that they can contribute to developing Bangladesh by giving their valuable services in society.

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