

Married Women Labor Supply Decision-Making Strategy: Perception of Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

The participation of women in the labor force is becoming extremely important in modern society for economic growth. The educational and concerned family background makes it simpler for women to participate in the labor market and get employment. However, women's engagement in the job market is less common than men's, particularly for married women, for whom family restrictions and housework provide challenges. Based on 210 data obtained in 2022 via an interview survey, this study tries to pinpoint undergraduate students' decision-making strategy and perception about how they evaluate the idea of married women being employed, the barriers and other insights.

Keywords: Married women, Female labor Supply, Male dominance, Higher education.

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I. Introduction

1.1 Introduction:

Nowadays women's participation in labor force has become very difficult, especially in an underdeveloped country or developing country like Bangladesh. Bangladesh is a country of rapid population growth. So, it has a huge barrier to economic growth. If women participate in labor force, that will reflect very nicely in our labor market and our economy.

One of the greatest challenges in Bangladesh is unemployment. Recently the unemployment rate in Bangladesh has started rising again. According to the World Bank, the unemployment rate in Bangladesh in 2021 was 5.4 % while in 2019 it was only 4.4 %. We will understand the scenario better when we will look at Pakistan which is a country behind us in terms of economy. Their unemployment rate is lower than ours which is 4.3%. In Nepal, it is only 4.7% and for Bhutan, it is 3.6%. Even in Myanmar, it is 1.1%. We will have to find out what are the reasons behind the unemployment problem in Bangladesh, the reasons why there are so much for jobless people. Also we need to follow the model other countries follow to overcome this unemployment problem.

There are hundreds of literatures on the factors that influence the rates of female workforce participation. There are so many developing nations where women are paid less than men on average (Grosh et al., 2012). All these create a wrong social perception. A large portion of people thinks that women are less productive compared to male. Some people think that female has less education so they might be less capable. Women still get less education than males in so many developing countries. There are lots of positive effects of higher levels of education which may give them better quality and can put them in a higher standard of life. (*International Day of the Girl 2022*, n.d.) According to the labor market theory, the labor supply is typically influenced by one's own wage, one's spouse's wage, and non-labor income. Women's engagement in the work market is restricted by social views, working environment, imbalance of family and work life or some different views of the family.

According to the World Bank's development indicators, the primary and secondary school life expectancy of females was 11.51 years in 2018. The data has been collected or derived from officially recognized sources. There is another important topic, the gender wage gap has been explained in lots of economic research. The research papers have explained the reason why women are paid less. Some previous research has linked gender income disparities to inequalities. All these have been based on women's level of experience, working life cycles and children's responsibilities. (Heather Joshi, et al., 1999). From certain

research (Hazan, 2010), we can see that this society evaluates women as less worthwhile to educate. This wrong concept may lead to women having lower educational qualifications than males.

Another extreme factor for gender wage discrepancy is discrimination against women in the working sector. Because of this inequality, women who already have the same skills as men are paid less than men just because they are “women”. From a policy standpoint, it is actually very difficult to find out the basic causes of gender inequality.

In terms of both number and job categories, female employment participation has increased in so many nations, especially in a developing country like Bangladesh. The shift in labor market structure creates a shift in the entire workforce. It creates a rise in the proportion of women working. According to some studies on labor supply, education has an amazing impact on a woman's ability to enter the workforce. According to some research, in the 1960s and 1970s, there was a huge rush of female laborers with little experience and poor skill levels. This scenario has created a decline in labor quality and has reduced labor productivity (Smith & J.P, 1989). The average wages have increased and stayed steady over these last two decades.

The decision-making process of women is generally strongly influenced by the household members on whether women choose to participate in the labor force or not. They make decisions about whether women will participate in the labor force, especially those who are married. A working woman will help the family financially by supporting the family and bearing domestic expenses. Still working outside the home basically reduces the amount of time spent with kids and on household work. This will decrease household benefits. For all these, the decision-making mostly depends on their family members.

Another factor that affects decision-making is the market salary as an economic incentive. Development of technology and gender discrimination also affect the decisions too (Ismail, 2014). There are also some researchers who have looked at the connections between the availability of female labor and household decision-making (Basu, 2006). A study by Atal (Atal, 2010) described that labor force participation decisions are highly affected and generated endogenously among household members. The strangest thing is the amount of money that women earn for their families actually impacts their power structures in most families. The more money she makes, the more influence she has in the home.

This research tries to look at the variables that affect the availability of married women's labor based on the topics above. Thomas Sankara said, “He who feeds you, controls you”. Somehow females are motivated by the fear of the instability of marriage. According to a recent survey, right now in Dhaka, every day there are more than 39 divorces on average. According to a survey, from 2010 to 2019, around 50 to 60 divorce applications were submitted daily only inside Dhaka. A recent survey of 2022 says that 0.42% of people are divorced in Bangladesh. So after watching all these worst situation around us, having fear about marriage is very obvious. Females sometimes show less interest in getting married at the appropriate age because of these consequences or negative reviews. We are interested in researching how undergraduate students respond to this decision-making. We have collected data from both males and females to know their perceptions. We have taken samples from a population of undergraduate students because they are already in the process of higher studies and most of them will participate in our labor force.

1.2 Background of the Study:

According to Bangladesh, women's participation in the labor force has increased in recent years as families are more concerned nowadays. The lowest female labor force participation rate recorded to date was 29.92% in the 1990 period. But if the talk about labor force participation rate in 2019, it was 84.76% for males and 36.31% for females, though it is the highest for females till now. The 2020 global average is 69.25%, based on 181 nations. (Ismail, 2014). According to general literature, economic development and education have a big impact on how the labor market's supply is distributed. There are lots of factors that affect the entire labor force participation rate, especially for married women. The most important factor is education. That's why this research has been done on students who are pursuing tertiary education.

1.3 Objectives:

- To find out the factors that affect married women labor supply perception and decisions of undergraduate students

1.4 Research Question:

- What factors affect married women's labor supply perception and decisions of undergrad students?

1.5 Limitations:

Due to time and resource constraint the study was conducted on only one faculty of two universities in Bangladesh. The sample size was not large enough to represent the whole population. The paper is not based on income level of the respondents. This study based on income level can be another good research.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Literature Review:

Education can boost the labor supply in an excellent way which has been found in numerous research. A rise in educational attainment has created an increase in labor supply in Ghana's rural farms and the agricultural industry in Sudan. (Jolliffe, 2004). This result supports the human capital theory, which says that there is a strong relationship between labor supply and educational level. It also says that having more education increases one's chances of making money. In our research, we have worked on the same thing where there are responses from undergraduate students who are on the way to getting employed. They must have a very positive view of female employment.

By assuming the value of time, the workforce participation of women is positively correlated with marriage value. If a woman's marriage has high-value features, she is less interested to work in some cases (Grossbard-Shechtman, 1988). According to a recent study on women's choice of employment (Hazan, 2010), there was a common pattern of employment among women in the 1960s and 1970s. Women were more interested to enter the workforce in the very early stage of their lives, even when their income was comparatively very low. Most research on this topic worldwide has focused on women's characteristics, especially in domestic work. (Ismail, 2014). Here, this paper has also tried to find out if female values staying home more or working outside. In the existing research, they did not consider the values of upcoming generations, which should be worked on.

Important findings have been collected from research, (Saget, 1999) that the spouse's characteristics, levels of education, and income have an impact on the availability of female labor. For single females, it depends on their education, and wage rate. (Oliver, 2005). A study based on Hungarian women says that the income of the family and the husbands do not affect the labor availability of Hungarian women. This result contrasts with Canadian wives' labor supply. Research done in 1980 says that Canadian wives' labor supply was closely correlated with their husband's salaries. According to the study, an increase in female employment is caused by an increase in educational attainment. This caused a 40% increase in female employment and a 33% of growth in female employees. (Manser, n.d.). In our paper, we have not taken responses from married women, so there is no way to measure their spouse's income, but we have considered several assumptions related to this issue in the questionnaire part.

There are signs of societal influences on women's employment which is shown in various studies (Ismail, 2014), where they mentioned, women's participation in the labor market is typically not of their own choosing. Male family members oversee or make these choices. This system is constrained by societal attitudes and practices. Even society does not regard women's domestic activity as employment (Ismail, 2014). According to a psychologist of Bangladesh, Yahia Amin, as our society has never appreciated or valued a woman being a homemaker or a mother, that's why women do not want to be mother too. All the developed countries like Canada, USA, they have less labor force just because they focused on having one child for so many years. Somehow, not appreciating females as a homemaker or mother has pushed them to work outside even though sometimes, they need to sacrifice their valuable time with their child too. In our paper, we have tried to find out if the same things happen in our country or not.

According to some research, there was a huge increase of female workers with limited experience and poor skill levels in the 1960s and 1970s. This scenario created a huge loss in labor quality and productivity. Earning money for the family is helpful for the home but on the other side working outside the home creates less time spent with the children and fewer household chores. This decreases the advantage of households. It depends on the household characteristics. (Eckstein & Lifshitz, 2011). Their study explains that the elasticity of the labor market supply, women's pay and the wages of their spouses - all have a huge impact on how they behave at work. The elasticity of the female labor supply also fell down quite dramatically between 1990 and 2000. This decrease in labor supply suggests that women are relying on the labor market more than before. The participation in female labor has been S-shaped, where the first stage is slow, the second stage has been swift and the third stage has been stable. The reason was women choose to work while caring for young children. Sometimes women think that their less spending time with children affect the negative future of those youngsters (Fogli & Veldkapm, 2008).

As the number of married women working increases, participation rates are growing at a faster rate and overall involvement rates are rising as well. The influence of the family structure on the availability of female labor is also considerable. (Newman & Gertler, 1994). In Peru, it has been discovered that there is a significant correlation between family structure and the availability of women to work. Numerous kinds of research have discovered that the supply of married women's labor is greatly influenced by children's ages (Gronau, 1973). According to the study, there is a negative impact on the supply of female labor, who has younger children under 6 years old. Similar findings were found in Malaysia, where married women's hours of employment in the sub-sector of handicrafts were lowered for children under the age of six and those old enough to start school (Rahmah & Fatimah, 1999, 27-56). Another Malaysian explained the impact of women's salaries on the

inequality in household income in Peninsular Malaysia between 1976 and 1988. The study finds that the wives' salaries help to decrease income inequality among Malaysian households (Shahina & Julie, 2004, 49-70).

There are limitations on female laborers' ability to work long hours due to their health and childcare responsibilities are another factor. 13% of senior American workers who left their jobs between 1992 and 2000 said they would return to their job again if their hours could be cut (Penner et al., 2002). Similarly, to this, 7% of Swedish workers aged 50 and over said they could keep their current employment until they reached the legal retirement age by cutting back on their hours of work. All these statements were given by them because by cutting off-work hours, their physical and health issues will be solved. (Wadensjo, n.d.)

At the end of World War II, since fewer women are having children, the rate of female labor participation increased (Coleman & Pencavel, n.d.). The findings of studies conducted in Mexico (Wong & Levine, 1992, 89-102) and the United States (Tienda & Glass, n.d., 381-394) support the notion that a rise in female labor participation will result in fewer children being raised in households. More specifically, if the likelihood of women aged 21 to 35 having at least two children decreased by 18%, this would result in a 21% rise in female labor force participation (Augrist & Evans, 1996). Women's participation in the economy can surprisingly improve their position overall and provide them with more power.

In order to achieve true gender equality, the ILO (ILO, n.d.) conducted a study that tries to demonstrate that society must recognize that both men and women have the right to care for others and the right to work. Gender disparities at work can only be eliminated by proper awareness and proper education. This should be promoted as well as between the family and society at large. According to (Chowdhury et al.) women are valuable contributors to the family and the socioeconomic development of the country. If there is an appropriate environment and opportunities, they can significantly contribute to the family's socioeconomic progress. Therefore, it is crucial to study and identify the crucial issues that women mostly experience during their job.

According to psychologist Dr Yahia Amin, we need the evolution of women's entrepreneurship. It is very much necessary for women between the ages of 25 to 45. When she is the mother of one or two children, and she has a career aspiration then she builds up an extreme level of frustration in her life which is very common. When she is entering motherhood, when she's enjoying motherhood then she feels like she is worthless in terms of a career. When she is going to her career then she feels like she is worthless as a mother, she has done nothing as a mother. So, she has to adjust and tries to find out the ways to make this adjustment. Now if we consider there are different psychology or ideas of a society. One party says that motherhood is more important than her job, her husband's salary is enough for her, so she needs to be a full-time mother. On the other hand, the other people say that, as both are educated then they should work. If she has scopes for jobs, then it is completely fine. But if she doesn't, then the best way will be entrepreneurship.

As most of the studies are based in western countries, they do not face harassment in their workforce compared to us. Women are disproportionately underprivileged and vulnerable in rural areas which are basically for their lack of proper education. Rural women are devalued in development initiatives. Lack of access to and control over various productive resources is one of the main obstacles to women's participation in labor force. Somehow all the things discussed in the articles have created obstacles to the process of human progress.

III. Methodology

3.1 Overview:

For this research, primary data have been collected among university students. Secondary data has also been collected from various articles, earlier research, and mass media. The greater concern was laid down on the data collection stage to ensure the quality and validity of the data.

3.2 Population and study sample:

Sampling is a process by which a researcher selects samples from the population. For this research, simple non-random sampling has been used. (Kumar, 2010, 231). If we talk about its category then it will be judgmental or purposive sampling. It gathers a selection of items based on the researcher's own judgment, expertise, and own knowledge. As our population is undergraduate students of social studies in Bangladesh, we have a large population. We have taken samples from NSU and BUP. The population is unknown.

Since the total population is unknown, $n = \frac{z^2 \cdot [p \cdot q]}{d^2}$ is the formula to find out the sample size (Mann, 2007). Here, the z score for the confidence level 95% is 1.96. P is the estimated proportion of the study variable and q is (1-p). In this case, the value of p and q is 50% and 50% respectively. d is the margin of error which is 5%. Putting all the values in the formula, the sample size of 384.16 is found. If we keep confidence level 90% which is 1.645. and margin of error 10%, sample size will be 329. Due to time constraints, we kept the sample size at 210.

3.3 Sources of data:

The sources are 2 universities: Faculty of Arts and social studies students of BUP and Faculty of Humanities and Social Science students of NSU

3.4 Collection of data:

We have made around 14 related question for our study and have collected the data by giving them google form links. All the datasets were collected online.

3.5 Data management:

We have put the data in excel files and irrelevant data is not considered.

3.6 Data analysis strategies:

We have done data representation using Microsoft Excel and SPSS. The analyzed data is presented via graphs, charts, tables etc.

3.7 Research Gap

From the literature review, it is observed that majority of the research have been conducted on males or females, but they did not focus on any specific group whether they are married or unmarried. Some of the researchers have found out the factors of labor supply decline nowadays.

But in the context of Bangladesh, there seems to dearth of literature about decision making and perception of undergraduate students in this matter. Thus, the study has made an attempt to find out the factors.

IV. Result And Discussion

We have 14 questions and had the objectives mentioned in the questionnaire set. There was the flexibility of not participating if someone wants. Anonymousness and privacy have been strictly maintained. The independent variable is education level here. Where the dependent variable is Female employment. The extraneous variables are - job environment, family supports, spouse mindset etc. – those variables can be manipulated, changed or controlled so we can call these active variables. Here the attribute variables are- gender and university as they cannot be changed. First, we will look at the attribute variables.

4.1 Demographic information of respondents:

Gender

Here we have taken 210 datasets where there are 130 male and 80 female respondents. If we talk about the percentages, 38.1% of them are female and 61.9% of them are male.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	80	38.1	38.1	38.1
	Male	130	61.9	61.9	100.0
	Total	210	100.0	100.0	

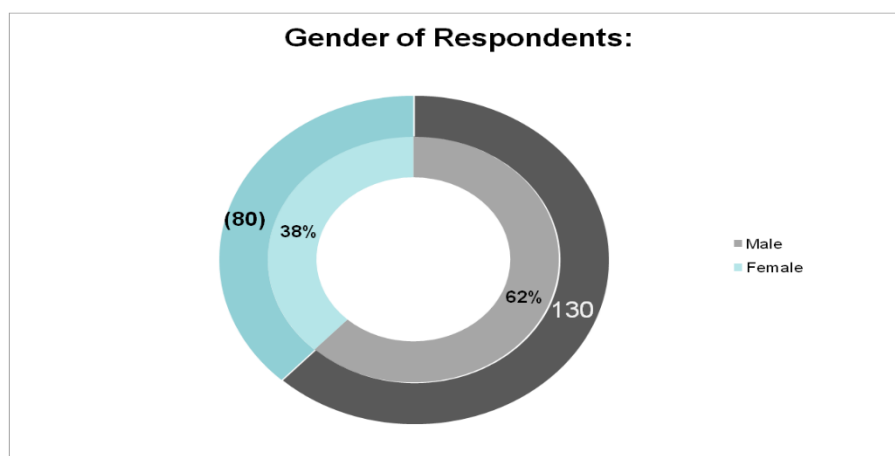


Figure 4.1: Gender of the respondents

University

Among all the respondents, 66.2% of them are from BUP whereas 33.8% of them are from NSU.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	BUP	139	66.2	66.2	66.2
	NSU	71	33.8	33.8	100.0
	Total	210	100.0	100.0	

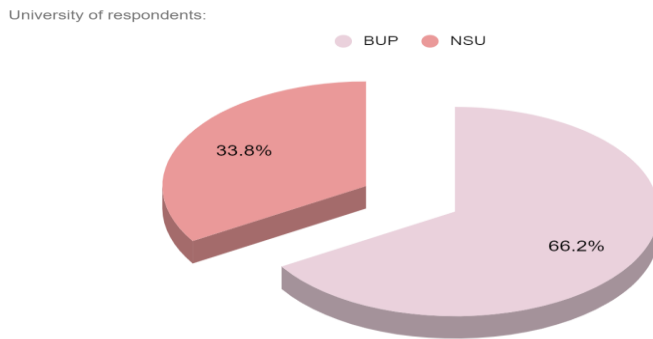


Figure 4.2: University of respondents

Likert data

There are basically three questions on Likert data response. The respondents have been asked whether they think females should be financially stable after marriage or not. Most of them have agreed here very strongly. Almost one-fifth of them said that they are neutral in this case. Very few people have disagreed and strongly disagreed with this situation (Hazan, 2010). This response is very relevant to our literature review.

The second question covered their opinion if they think marriage will affect their career negatively or not. Most of them have strongly disagreed with this question. One-seventh of them disagreed and only one-third of them were neutral. Very few people said that they agreed with this statement.

The last question of Likert scale evaluates the idea of students about what they think females should do when they do not get proper support from in-laws. The respondents had to give their opinion if they prefer females to leave their employment or just fight for it. Most of them said that they should continue in such a vulnerable situation too.

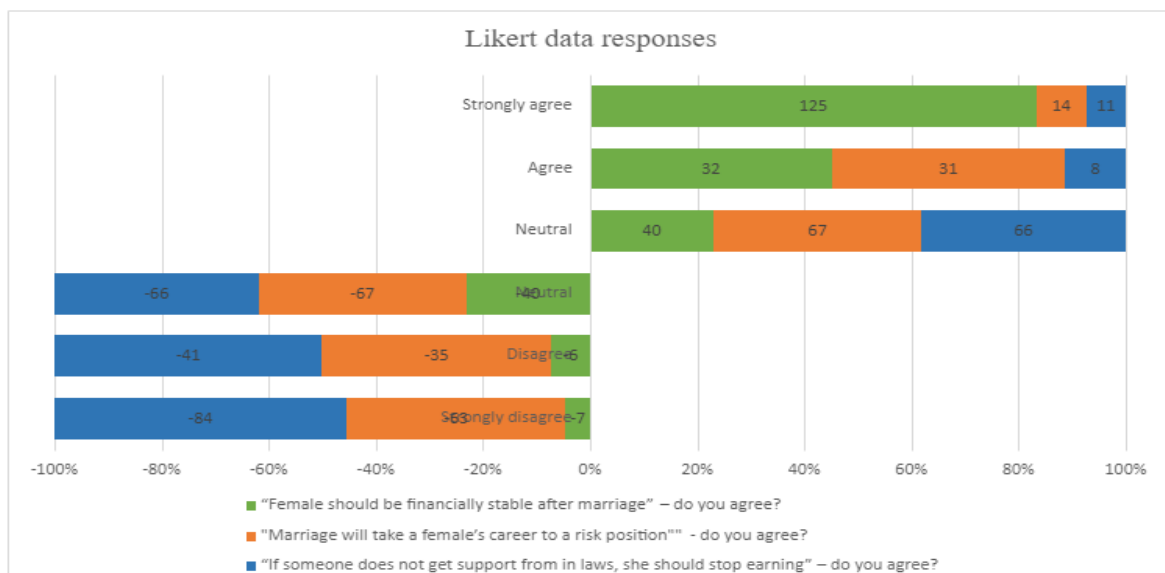


Figure 4.3: Likert data responses

Reasons why women should get employment

To find out the reasons why females should be employed, there were checkboxes in one of the questionnaires with eight options. For most of the respondents, 63.60% said that females should earn just to ensure their lifetime security (International Day of the Girl 2022). A huge number of respondents also said that females should earn for self-satisfaction and to look after their parents. 43.20% of them said that females should ensure their happiness by doing jobs (International Day of the Girl 2022).

Unfortunately, the fear of divorce has increased in our society horribly. We can find it in our survey too. A significant amount of them, around 40.30% said that uncertainty of marriage should be a reason for a female to be employed. A small number of people admitted that females must contribute to the family which might be a reason for their earnings. A very small number of respondents said that females should fulfil their family expectations which is a reason for them to be employed. The smallest number of respondents said that being employed as a female is a trend in society.

Overall, we can see that the largest number of respondents are positive about female employment. As we have taken undergraduate students as our samples. That’s why they are very positive here.

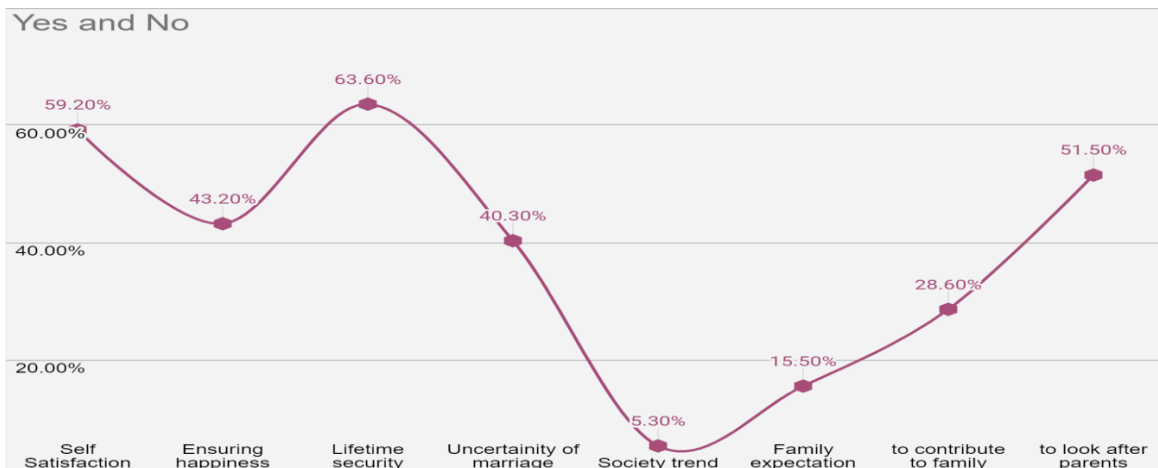


Figure 4.4: Reasons why female should be self employed

Reasons why women should not get employed:

As it was not a compulsory question, 59 respondents left this question blank as they think there might be no reason for a female to not work. In this specific question, one of the respondents mentioned that the reason may vary on the place. Moreover, most of the respondents, 69.10% of them said that children of working women are mostly deprived of proper love, care and guidelines which is related to lots of previous studies on our subject (Fogli & Veldkapm, 2008). A huge number of respondents, 67.10% have blamed harassment in the workforce as the main reason why females should not work in Bangladesh. A small number, 22.40% said that conservative women face worst situation in workplace. A very small number of 7.20% said that their children cannot learn anything (Fogli & Veldkapm, 2008). Another small number, 3.90% said women are not equivalent to men (Hazan, 2010) which is a wrong concept found in previous articles too.

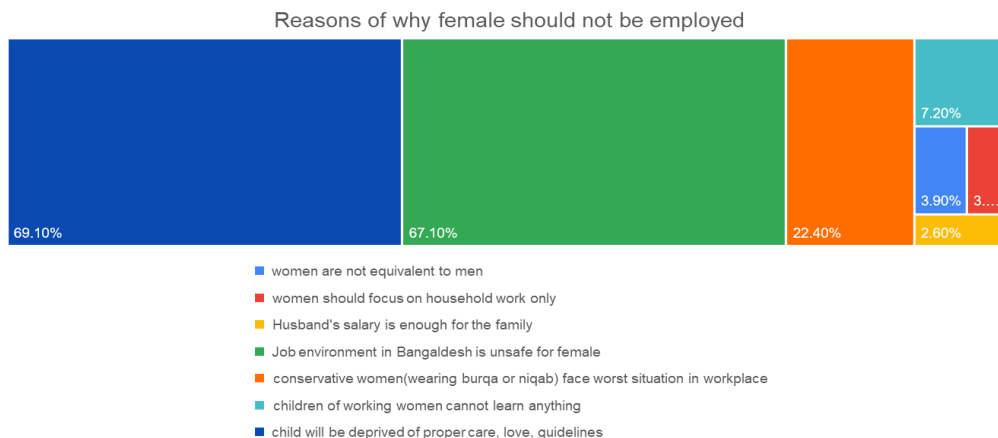


Figure 4.5: Reasons why female should not get employment

Career decision

Most of the respondents, around 90% think that females' employment decisions should depend on themselves only (Ismail, 2014). A significant number, 36.20% of them said that the decision should depend on their spouse (Atal, 2010) whereas a very small number of respondents, 3.30% said it should depend on their in-laws. This household decision was described in some previous articles too (Basu, 2006).

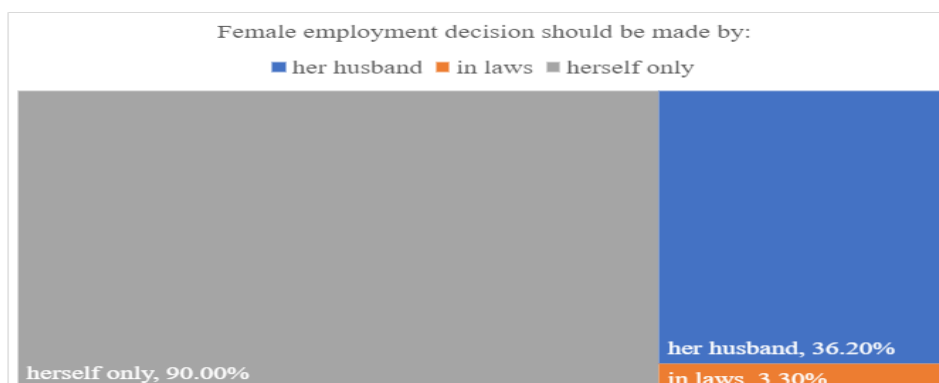


Figure 4.6: Career decision should depend on

Decision after having children

Most of the respondents, 92.40% agreed that women must continue jobs after having children though 7.60% think the opposite.

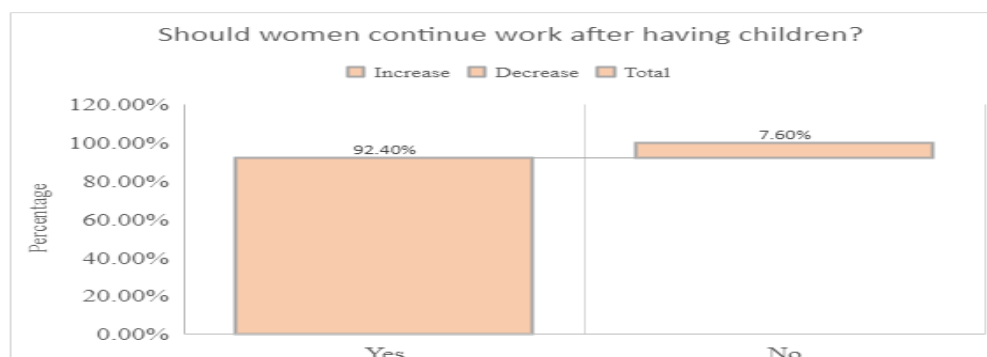


Figure 4.7: Perspective of respondents' weather women should continue job after having children

Married women labor supply declining factors

The most significant number of respondents, 57.80% blamed harassment in the workplace as the main reason behind the married women labor decline in Bangladesh. Though it is not applicable to married women only. All the females of our subcontinent are very much unsafe in the workplace. The second largest proportion of respondents, 53.60% said that females cannot manage family and work at the same time (Eckstein & Lifshitz, 2011) (Heather Joshi., Pierella Paci, & Jane Waldfogel, 1999). This might be another main cause of the female labor supply decline, especially after marriage. Three other major reasons have been selected by the respondents- male dominance (Basu, 2006), (Atal, 2010), in-law's issues (Atal, 2010) and having a baby at the peak point of career which is in different articles too. (Gronau, 1973) (Heather Joshi., Pierella Paci, & Jane Waldfogel, 1999).

A very small proportion of the respondents think that we have fewer job opportunities in Bangladesh. There are reasons discovered by Fahim Mashroor, chief executive of bdjobs.com. This one includes an interesting paradox. That is, the type of jobs available in Bangladesh does not get a proper or capable applicant for the post. Also, the people who are starting job seeking every year, do not get a proper or satisfying job for them. Another very small number of people blamed wage rate as the reason which was described in different literature too. (Oliver, 2005). (Grosh, Ninno, Tesliuc, & Ouerghi, 2012)

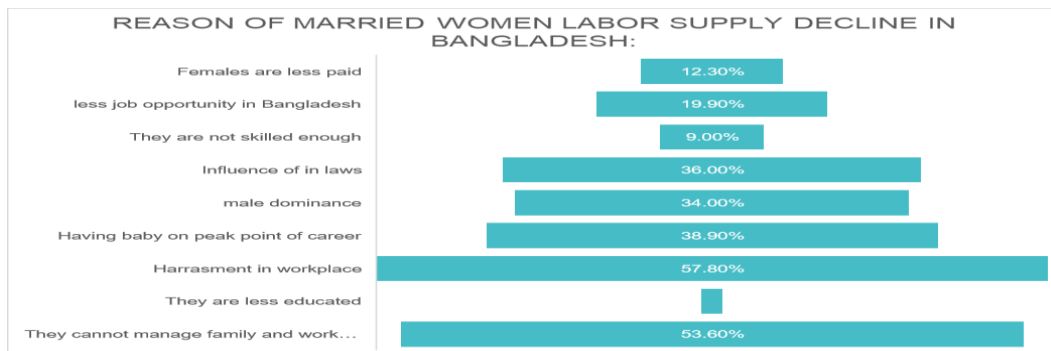


Figure 4.8: Reasons of married women labor supply decline in Bangladesh

Perspective of males for their future wife

Most of the males said that they will let their spouse go for employment wherever they want. A large proportion also suggested that females should go for freelancing or self-employment. Another large proportion suggested that females should take care of their family first, and after that, they should go for employment. A very small number of males suggested that they want their spouse to work in day shift only. The smallest part does not want their wives to be employed or they rely on their parents or surroundings for the decision (Atal, 2010).

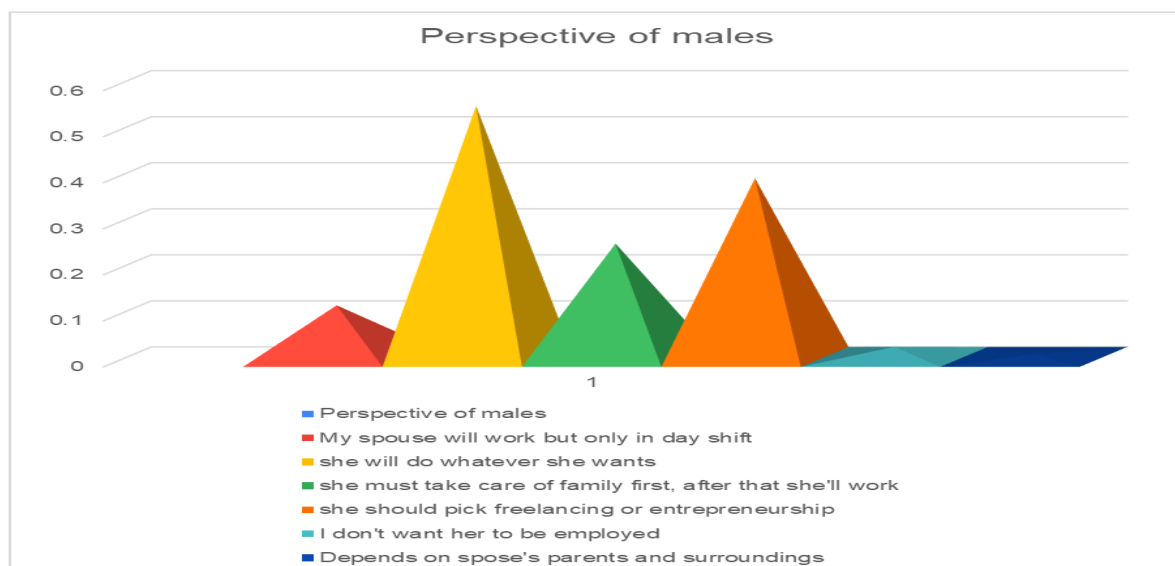


Figure 4.9: perspective of male respondents about their future spouse

Timetable:

It took around 3 months to complete this entire project.

V. Recommendation

5.1 Recommendation for government policymakers:

- Government should ensure safety for women in the private and public workplace
- Government should encourage awareness about freelancing and entrepreneurship
- Government should provide training programs more and more especially for female
- Salary of primary school teacher should be increased so that students get a very good foundation of their education, future planning and career path
- Government must ensure that all the women are completing higher education to benefit from the labor market because education is the primary condition of married women's labor supply

5.2 Recommendation for researchers:

- Researcher should increase the respondent's frequency for accurate findings.
- Researcher should incorporate more factors, such as income in this study

VI. Conclusion

The development of Bangladesh will increase greatly from increasing women's labor force participation and the standard of their employment. We must say, being a housewife is a very prestigious job; motherhood is invaluable. Someone may build her career, or some might not, whatever it is, it must be her personal choice, not a forceful decision. If a woman gets proper support from her spouse or surroundings after marriage, she will be able to give an amazing performance in the employment sector as well as in the household too. All the positive vibes will make her satisfied which will create an amazing positive reflection on her personal life.

As all our primary and secondary datasets show that there is a positive relationship between education and labor supply of women (Jolliffe, 2004). However, this study demonstrates that education level is the key variable because all our samples are undergraduate students, therefore they see the idea of being employed in a very positive way. Years of education have a beneficial impact on married women's labor supply (Manser). According to the government, women's employment in the workforce is highly encouraged, especially those with higher levels of education and skills which will boost our economy (Shahina & Julie, 2004). To implement all the policies, the importance of education is beyond description as it will work as an excellent equalizer of the entire economy.

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