

Chapter 3

Care Work vs. Career: Crisis of Middle Class Working Women

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ABSTRACT

Career is indispensable for woman to ensure their decision-making power to boost up their capability through active voice and participation. However, in Bangladesh most of the middle class working women are facing crisis to manage their double work. Keeping this in mind, this study explains how household related care work costs women's career. It reveals, most of the women have to face multiple problems to maintain their care and office work. Even, a good number of working women sacrificed their career to take care of children and family. Regarding these discriminatory social and institutional systems, most of the working women believe that, positive mind-set can bring a change for women to develop their career.

INTRODUCTION

Formal works are very essential for women's economic development, because it gives identity to establish them as economically empowered and independent. Today's market economy enhances more opportunities to ensure gender equality in labor force participation between men and women. In the last decade (1995-2003) women's employment in Bangladesh increases gradually, though they are only 26 percentage of total labor force (Bangladesh Labor Force Survey 2002-2003). Regarding this issue, anthropological work has addressed cultural factors that affected women's market work (Cain *et al.*, 1979). In this perspective, market work tries to improve gender equality in labor force participation between men and women but how far it will be possible for women to continue their market work with the burden of care work?

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3018-3.ch003

Though working women have to invest huge time to manage their double work (Islam, 2012; Islam and Jannat, 2016), patriarchal expectations prioritize men's career over women's career (Cha, 2010). In addition, most of the working women are feeling guilty to manage their work and family in a proper way due to our socio-cultural practices (Harcar, 2007). In this regard, it is an urgent situation to increase more opportunity for women to participate in a better style to achieve desired position, because there is a close relation between economic empowerment and women's labor force participation (Boserup, 1970; Chaudhuri, 2009), as they are the fifty percent to contribute for overall development (Khan, 1988).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

From the social definition of women as housewives follows the definition of the men as the breadwinners, the separation between the private sphere of the house, the sphere of production and reproduction and the subordination of the latter under the former (Mies, 2012: 59)

In this regard, Mahtab (2012) stated despite huge investments in time and labor by women, why is there so much discrimination and inequality in terms of women's economic development? However, this is an appropriate time to explore the behind scenario of impact of care work on women's formal work and their coping strategies to manage both the care and formal work.

In addition, there is a long debate between care and formal work, which work is perfect for women and how care work affects on working women's career? Due to our traditional cultural norms and practices, mostly household related works especially cooking, cleaning, and child care are identified as only women's work (Islam and Jannat, 2016). Therefore, gender division of labor operates discrimination not only in reproductive activities within the household but also in productive and community activities for women to achieve targeted position. Besides, to get the desired position, women have to face unequal hiring standards, unequal opportunities for training, unequal pay for equal work, unequal access to productive resources, segregation and concentration in female sectors and occupations, different physical and mental working conditions, unequal participation in economic decision-making and unequal promotion prospects compared with men (Ostin, 2002).

Despite the cultural barriers, due to extreme women's poverty in Bangladesh, we have had some impressive impression for females employment because since 1995 women's work participation rates have doubled though their number is extremely lower than men (Bangladesh Labor Force Participation, 2002-2003), because market work wants to ensure gender equality. In this aspect, market has introduced a lot of new sector to involve more women than previous to ensure women's participation in the labor force (Kabeer, 2012). Having all these facilities, now the question rises why most of the middle class working women failed to exercise their power and agency to get leadership position in the labor market? Because, women's formal work is considered as an extension of household work (Bhasin, 2000). In this regard, UNDP (1995) explores though middle class women are working, hold only 4 percent senior management positions and remain insignificant position within and outside the household. This unexpected situation triggers us to explore the impact of care work on working women to ensure their career.

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