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## Career Duality and Work Performance: Insights from Women in Bangladesh

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### ABSTRACT

This study looks into how women's professional success in Bangladesh is affected by career dualism, work-life balance, and cultural expectations. Data were gathered from thirty women in Dhaka who worked in the public, private, and self-employed sectors using a qualitative study methodology. The research utilized semi-structured interviews and theme analysis to effectively capture the intricacies of the participants' perspectives, underscoring the subjective aspect of work-life balance. The participants brought to light considerable difficulties in juggling dual responsibilities as careers and professionals, which are made worse by inflexible gender stereotypes and restricted access to childcare facilities. The results show that women's ability to balance conflicting demands is greatly aided by family support, especially that provided by mothers and spouses. However, respondents said that the lack of maternity benefits, childcare services, and flexible schedules were substantial barriers, and that workplace regulations frequently lacked the flexibility required to meet women's multiple obligations. The study also looks at the post-pandemic trend towards remote employment, which brought difficulties since it blurred the lines between home and professional life even while it offered flexibility. The critical need for institutional reforms-including the implementation of family-friendly workplace practices like paid parental leave, on-site daycare, and remote work options-is highlighted by this study. It also emphasizes how crucial cultural changes are to ease the burden on women who want to advance professionally but are under pressure to live up to conventional norms. To investigate the effects of career duality on professional women's long-term career growth and well-being, longitudinal research approaches should be used in future studies.

**Keywords:** Career duality, Work-life balance, Family support, Professional women, and Workplace policies.

### INTRODUCTION:

The number of women working in a variety of businesses and sectors worldwide has significantly increased in recent years. Advances in education, shifting social standards, and the need for dual-income households on the financial front have all contributed

to this change. The global pandemic has made it more difficult for women to fulfil their disproportionate share of domestic and childcare tasks, despite these encouraging improvements. The International Labour Organization (ILO) found that women worked three times as many hours on average as men did on unpaid

household chores in 2022. This finding had an influence on women's capacity to grow in their careers and fully participate in professional jobs. Due to sociocultural expectations and a lack of institutional support, women's professional opportunities are further restricted in developing nations, where this mismatch is especially noticeable. The issue of career duality in Bangladesh, in which women handle the majority of family chores and their professional jobs concurrently, is a reflection of these global trends with some extra, particular complexity. Though women's economic contributions are becoming increasingly important, the nation's traditional gender norms still place women primarily in the role of careers. Bangladesh has made great progress towards having more women in the labour force-the World Bank estimates that this percentage is currently about 36%-but there are still issues because of the dual job of household career and professional. Women are expected to manage the house and their careers to the highest standards set by society, which can result in greater stress, decreased job satisfaction, and occasionally decreased productivity at work.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between career duality and professional women's work performance in Bangladesh, with a particular emphasis on the confluence of institutional, sociocultural, and economic issues. The post-pandemic surge in remote work arrangements has also brought new dimensions to the discussion of work-life balance, presenting opportunities and difficulties for women trying to juggle career and caregiving responsibilities at the same time. Although working remotely allows for greater flexibility, it also frequently blurs the lines between work and home life, placing additional pressure on women to balance numerous jobs without breaks. These global trends pose particular issues in Bangladesh, where gender norms still heavily impact family interactions and workplace culture. The lack of maternity benefits, insufficient childcare facilities, and inflexible work schedules that many Bangladeshi women experience at work make it much harder for them to successfully manage work and home life. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to comprehend how these women manage career duality and how it affects their

professional results. It will also look into the official and informal networks of support and coping strategies that enable women to balance raising their families and pursuing their careers.

Understanding the wider ramifications of professional duality is crucial for promoting gender parity as well as increasing workplace productivity and well-being as more women take on dual roles globally. Employers need to understand the value of family-friendly policies, flexible work schedules, and fair career prospects in order to help women balance work and domestic obligations, especially in developing nations like Bangladesh. This study will shed light on how these variables either help women succeed or obstruct their advancement, and it will make recommendations for institutional and policy changes that can help women balance their dual careers.

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the nuanced challenges professional women in Bangladesh face in managing career duality. Given the subjective and complex nature of work-life balance, thematic analysis was chosen to capture the personal narratives of participants and identify recurring themes. Semi-structured interviews, supplemented by open-ended questionnaires, allow for in-depth exploration of how family support, societal expectations, and workplace policies shape women's professional experiences. This methodological approach aligns with prior research in social sciences, where qualitative insights provide a richer understanding of individual coping strategies and institutional barriers.

### **Review of Literature**

Women's Career Duality and Its Effect on Work Performance have Been Studied in Several Ways. Research on work-life balance, particularly in developed nations like the U.S. and Europe, has shown that supporting policies like parental leave and flexible work schedules greatly improve women's productivity at work (Smith, 2018; Taylor, 2020). Numerous academic investigations have underscored the significance of familial support and institutional adaptability in augmenting occupational efficiency and psychological welfare. Boiarintseva *et al.* (2022) demonstrate that, even for childless dual-career couples, striking a balance at work necessitates

independence and adaptability, supporting the notion that institutional policies need to be flexible enough to accommodate a range of individual circumstances. Studies conducted in developing nations such as India and Pakistan have brought attention to the extra load that cultural expectations place on working women, resulting in heightened stress levels and decreased job satisfaction (Ahmed, 2019; Khan, 2021; Akter S., 2020).

There isn't much research on Bangladeshi women particularly, but what is known about them indicates that familial obligations and sociocultural norms have a significant impact on how they pursue their careers. For example Yasmin, (2017) discovered that inflexible company regulations and a lack of family support frequently prevent women from achieving professional success. Many studies have been conducted on the idea of career duality, especially with regard to women's involvement in the labour sector. According to studies conducted in the West (Crosby, 1991), women who play various tasks often have lower stress levels because they have more self-esteem and are more financially independent. Jenkins and Harvey, (2019) point out that despite having access to family-friendly policies like flexible scheduling or work-from-home options, employees still struggle to strike a balance between their personal and professional lives because of the intensity of their workloads and bosses' expectations.

Hosain, (2024) highlights the twin hardship faced by Bangladeshi couples who have children, citing the scarcity of childcare services and the difficulty in preserving family time as major obstacles. Prior research on the topic of work-life balance in developing nations has highlighted the significance of workplace policies that support families in enhancing the productivity of employed women (Doble & Supriya, 2010). Yasmin, (2017) discovered that socio-cultural norms in Bangladesh put a lot of pressure on women to carry out their household responsibilities, which might impede their ability to advance professionally. But studies also show that women who are adept at juggling numerous tasks report better mental and job satisfaction than those who don't (Barnett and Baruch, 1985; Kammann, 1983). Traditional gender norms continue to have a

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significant impact on Bangladesh's labour market, as women are expected to manage both their careers and homes. Zaman, (2013) pointed out that the country's economy may benefit from increased family support and better social perceptions of working women. But even with women's rising involvement in the industry, there are still a lot of obstacles to overcome, especially when it comes to discrimination based on gender and the absence of flexible work schedules.

### **Aim of the Study**

"What is the impact of career duality on the work performance of professional women in Bangladesh, and how do socio-cultural factors and support systems affect their ability to balance professional and household responsibilities?"

### **Specific Objectives**

- 1) To identify how women manage both work and household responsibilities.
- 2) To suggest ways to improve workplace policies for women balancing career and family roles.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

### **Research Design and Method**

Using a social constructivist methodology, this research examines the lives of middle-class, highly educated working women by concentrating on the viewpoints of the participants. To capture their viewpoints and difficulties, semi-structured questionnaires were used in a descriptive approach. In accordance with Creswell's, (2007) theory that qualitative research investigates the interpretations individuals make of their experiences, in-depth interviews were carried out in Dhaka in March and April 2016. A few important metrics are looked at in the study to determine how multiple occupations affect professional women:

- 1) Support and Career Success Systems
- 2) Managing Roles in the Family
- 3) Difficulties and Obstacles

### **Study population**

Employees from the public, private, and self-employment sectors make up the population. According to Agyedu, Donkor and Obeng, (1999) precise demographic definitions are necessary for focused study.

### Example and Method of Sampling

Simple random sample and convenience sampling are used in the study to choose 30 participants, aged 26 to 40, from middle-class Dhaka homes. To guarantee relevance, the respondents were selected according to their level of education, employment, and marital status. Sarantakos, (2005) highlights that new data must be used for analysis to be effective.

### Data Sources

Open-ended questions in the surveys and interviews enabled respondents to offer in-depth explanations of their observations.

### Method of Data Collection

The survey, entitled "The Story of Working Women," included of open-ended enquiries. Participants in the one-on-one interviews received confidentiality instructions. With consent, some interviews were taped, and the information was then transcribed for thematic analysis. The results were enhanced by secondary data from journals and research publications.

### Data Analysis and Tools

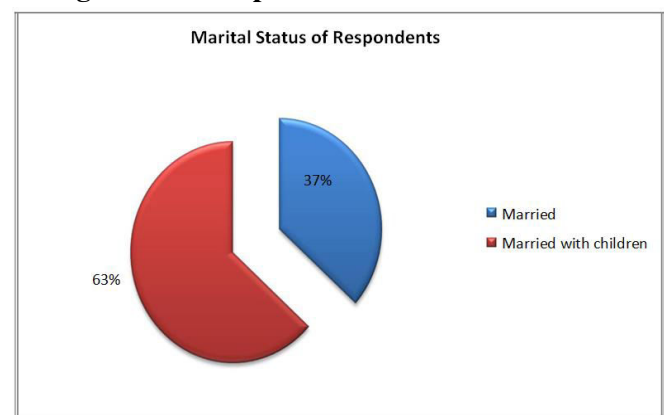
Thematic analysis was employed for the transcription and analysis of all interviews, adhering to the protocols established by Braun and Clarke, (2006). In order to find important themes that represent both unique coping mechanisms and more general cultural effects, the data had to be coded. Codes were arranged and visual summaries of the results were produced using Excel. This research offers comprehensive, contextual insights into the lives of professional women in Bangladesh through the use of qualitative methodologies, facilitating a fuller comprehension of the junction between personal and professional duties. The study's goal is to examine how career duality affects job performance and to provide workable strategies for successfully balancing both responsibilities. The methodological approach assures alignment with this goal.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the duality of career and personal responsibilities experienced by women in Bangladesh. The results reveal that familial support, particularly from

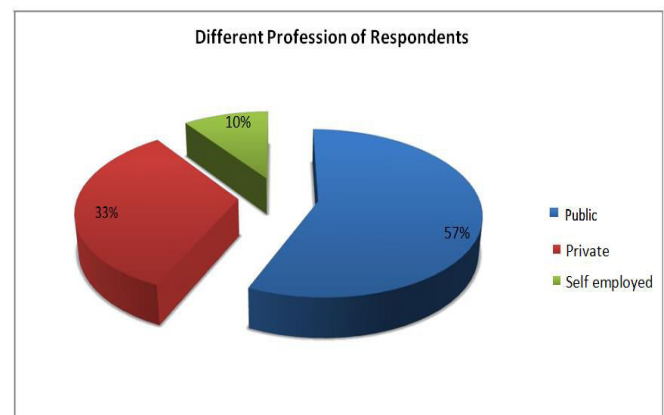
husbands and mothers, plays a pivotal role in advancing women's careers. Notably, 40% of the participants credited their husbands as the primary facilitators of their career development, while 30% highlighted their mothers' support. These findings align with existing literature, such as Silberstein's, (1992) work, which demonstrates that husbands' involvement in household duties positively impacts women's professional growth. However, as some respondents indicated, this support-while appreciated-remains the exception rather than the norm, reflecting deep-rooted gender expectations.

### Background of Respondents



**Fig.1:** Marital Status of Respondents.

From **Fig. 1** it can be seen that out of the 30 respondents, 37 percent were married and 63 percent were married with children.



**Fig. 2:** Different Profession of Respondents.

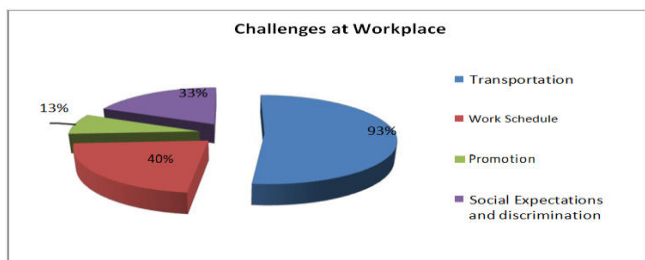
From **Fig. 2** shows that out of the 30 respondents, 57 percent doing government job, and 33 percent were doing private job. From this, 10 percent were doing their own business.

### Descriptive Analysis

A semi-structured, open-ended questionnaire was used for the interviews with the respondents. Below are analyses of the respondents' responses:

#### Transportation and Safety

The examination of the interviews highlights a number of significant difficulties that Bangladeshi women have when juggling two careers. Significant concerns were transportation and safety, with 93% of respondents mentioning problems getting to and from work, particularly at night. Concerns about safety were voiced by a lot of women, which makes it difficult for them to work late hours or make long commutes for work.



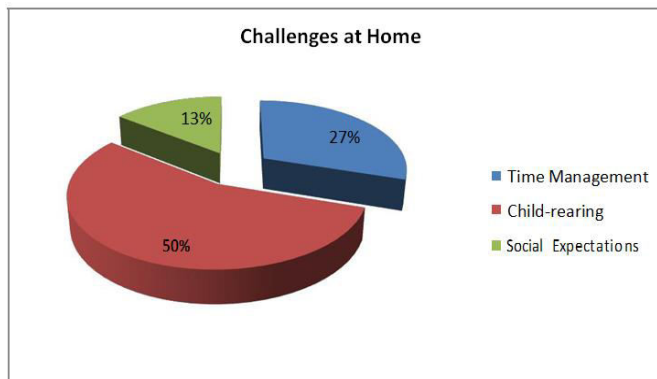
**Fig. 3:** Challenges at Workplace.

A working woman who frequently returns home late shared her concerns: “At night when I return home, I hesitate-should I take public transport or walk? Both feel equally dangerous given the current situation.” The Bangladesh Bank’s directive to avoid keeping women at the office after hours has provided some relief. “It has become easier for women in the banking sector since the circular was issued,” said a banker. However, challenges around work schedules persist. “I have to leave earlier, so I work harder to complete tasks on time. But people only notice the early departure, not the effort behind it-it’s frustrating,” another banker shared. The issue of workplace promotions remains sensitive, with only 13% of respondents willing to discuss discrimination in promotions, highlighting a reluctance to openly address the topic.

#### Childcare and household responsibilities

Childcare and household responsibilities were identified as major challenges, particularly for women with young children. Respondents emphasized the need for better childcare support at the workplace, as

60% of married women with children expressed difficulties in managing their dual roles due to the lack of such facilities. This finding aligns with previous studies, which have shown that child-rearing responsibilities are a significant factor in work-life imbalance for women (Schneider & Waite, 2005). **Fig. 4** showed that, 27% of the women said that time management is the main problem. 50% cites childrearing and 13% says problems with social rules and expectations.



**Fig. 4:** Challenges at Home.

Childcare is a significant expense for dual-career families. Hertz, (1986) notes it as a major budget item, and Schneider and Waite, (2005) suggest that families with higher disposable incomes often associate higher costs with better quality or convenience. In this study, most participants factored financial concerns into childcare decisions. Five families opted for more expensive childcare. One couple prioritized spending on childcare over their mortgage, valuing a "premium experience" for their children. Another participant admitted paying more for babysitting to ensure quality. A woman with a full-time nanny acknowledged the high cost but found it essential for balancing her career and family life. Some families chose less expensive options, such as daycare centers or transitioning to home daycare with the birth of a second child to reduce costs. Participants also shared social views on career expectations for women. Teaching is often seen as a "safe" job for women. One respondent, a primary school teacher, recounted how her father encouraged her to take the job but doubted he would have supported a journalism career. Another woman mentioned that her mother-in-law accepted her job because teaching is socially acceptable. Conversely, an engineer noted that after marriage, she reduced her

fieldwork since her in-laws were uncomfortable with her being out in the field.

### Primary Supporters in Career Growth

Several respondents noted that support from family members, particularly husbands, was crucial in enabling them to pursue their careers while managing household duties. Figure 5.5 showed 70% women said family is the most helpful supporter of their career (including parents and husbands) among them 30% said about their mother and 40% mentioned their beloved husband, 20% claimed they themselves are their most staunch supporter. 10% cited friends, relatives or other people.

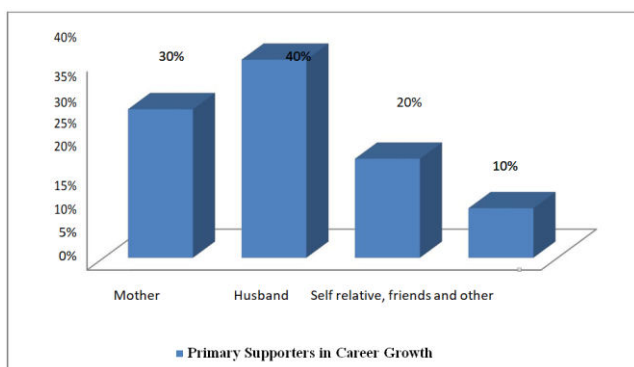


Fig. 5: Primary Supporters in Career Growth.

Respondents shared various perspectives on career support. Many credited their hard work and dedication as the key to their success, while others acknowledged the help of relatives or friends at crucial moments. However, most respondents named their mother as the primary supporter in their career journey, with a larger portion crediting their husbands for their success. Several participants shared personal stories. One mentioned that her uncle helped her secure a bank job right after graduation, where she continued working while pursuing a postgraduate degree. Another respondent got her desired job at an MNC with the help of a senior friend forwarding her CV. A self-employed participant shared that she received no assistance and built her clothing business independently after graduation. While many highlighted self-motivation and perseverance as critical, several noted that their husbands provided exceptional support, using terms like “incredibly” or “totally supportive.” One respondent said her husband takes pride in her career achievements, while another felt supported

because her husband came from a family of educated women. Similar findings align with Silberstein’s, (1992) study, where a third of women mentioned that their husbands' involvement in household chores and childcare helped their careers. However, none of the men in that study acknowledged their wives' contributions as facilitating their own careers. Some participants in this study expressed gratitude for their husband’s help, though one remarked that such support should be the norm, not luck.

### Balancing work and family life

Balancing work and family life emerged as a critical theme, with 80% of respondents stating that achieving balance is possible but requires careful planning and significant personal sacrifice. Women in public sector jobs reported having more flexibility to manage family responsibilities, while those in private or corporate roles struggled with longer working hours and higher expectations.

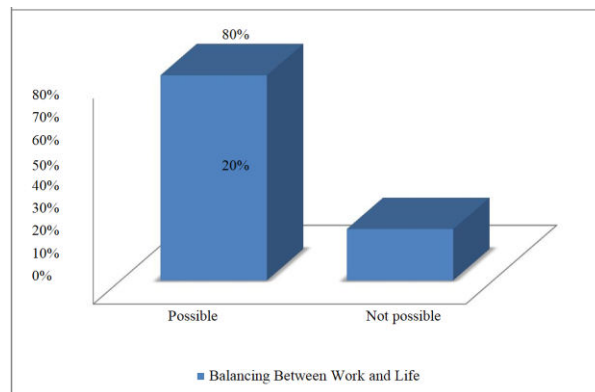


Fig. 6: Balancing between work and life.

One respondent, working as a deputy chief and part-time faculty, described her routine as "working-life" rather than work-life balance, as she has no free time, working both weekdays and weekends. Another participant stated, "Between work and life, work always wins." Similarly, a doctor explained that balancing studies with her profession leaves her with a hectic schedule and little personal time. A territory officer at an MNC shared that her career demands most of her time, so she prioritizes work. In contrast, government employees mentioned they have more time for family and can balance responsibilities. Bank employees reported having some personal time, but the majority of respondents, especially those with children, expressed a need for better childcare

facilities at work, with 60% of respondents and all married mothers highlighting this concern. A mother of a three-year-old stated, "I call at least three to five times a day to check on my child, who stays with my in-laws. If I could keep him closer, it would be much easier."

The responses reveal that women in government roles generally have more time for family and personal activities, managing work-life balance effectively. In contrast, those working in MNCs, private organizations, or healthcare struggle to find time for themselves, often relying on family for support with responsibilities. With limited breaks—often just a one-day weekend-time management emerges as the central challenge for maintaining a balance between work and life. Financial independence emerged as a critical determinant of decision-making power within households. Participants reported that their professional involvement enhanced their influence over familial decisions, underscoring the intersection of economic empowerment and agency. However, despite increased autonomy in financial matters, respondent's acknowledged that domestic responsibilities remained predominantly theirs, reflecting ingrained societal expectations. These findings align with research suggesting that even in dual-career households; the burden of unpaid domestic labor continues to rest largely on women (Hochschild & Machung, 2012).

This study highlights the complex realities faced by women in Bangladesh, where familial support and financial independence positively influence career trajectories but are not sufficient to mitigate structural and cultural constraints. The findings underscore the need for institutional reforms, such as the integration of workplace childcare facilities and enhanced public safety measures, to foster a more enabling environment for dual-career women. Additionally, these challenges demand a broader societal shift in gender norms to ensure equitable distribution of both professional opportunities and domestic responsibilities. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to examine the impact of policy interventions on career sustainability and work performance for women navigating dual roles in Bangladesh.

## **Key Findings**

Key findings of the study include:

- 1) **Impact on Work Performance:** Career duality has a significant impact on work performance, with many women feeling overwhelmed by the competing demands of work and family.
- 2) **Family Support:** The study reveals that family support, particularly from husbands and mothers, plays a crucial role in enabling women to manage their dual roles.
- 3) **Workplace Challenges:** Transportation issues, work schedules, and societal expectations create significant barriers for women in balancing their careers and personal lives.
- 4) **Coping Strategies:** Many women have developed coping mechanisms, such as meticulous planning and time management, to manage their dual roles effectively.

## **Recommendations**

To effectively address the challenges faced by professional women in balancing career duality and work performance, the following detailed policy recommendations are proposed:

### **Flexible Work Arrangements**

**Models of Flexibility:** To assist employees in juggling their professional and caregiving responsibilities, organisations should provide flexible working hours, hybrid work models, and reduced workweeks. Employees may be required to be present for some hours but given the flexibility to handle the remaining hours under a "core hours" scheme, for instance, or they may work staggered shifts. **Policies for Remote Work:** Establishing structured standards for remote work, together with adequate infrastructure support, is vital to guarantee efficiency while upholding work-life balance. Supervisors must be trained to advocate for remote work as a long-term solution rather than only a Band-Aid solution.

### **On-Site Daycare Centers**

**Implementation of Workplace Childcare Centers:** To lessen the childcare burden on working parents, organizations—especially major employers—should think about constructing on-site childcare facilities. These facilities have to be open during regular business hours and provide emergency drop-in services.

Partnership Models: To provide employees with subsidized childcare services, small and medium-sized businesses can work with neighborhood community daycare centers or with outside childcare providers.

### **Paid Time Off for Parents**

Standardized Parental Leave Policies: To encourage shared caregiving obligations, businesses should provide paid parental leave to both women and fathers. Policies extending maternity and paternity leave would lessen the strain on women to handle all childcare responsibilities. Top-Up Initiatives: Organisations can offer additional parental leave or financial top-ups to match full pay in situations where state-sponsored leave is available but restricted. This will ensure that employees do not lose money while providing care for family members.

### **Working together with industry partners and policymakers**

Public-Private Partnerships: Groups can engage with legislators to create labour laws at the federal level that support work conditions that are family-friendly. Trade groups ought to promote incentives, such tax breaks for businesses that provide daycare or flexible work hours.

Shared Best Practices: Through industry forums, public and private organisations may exchange successful models and promote the adoption of family-friendly workplace policies across all industries.

### **Leadership and Staff Development Programs**

Sensitivity Training for Managers: To promote inclusive workplace environments, managers should get training on gender-sensitive management techniques and work-life balance. This can lessen implicit prejudices and guarantee that flexible scheduling and remote work rules are not mistaken for a lack of commitment.

Work-Life Integration training: Employers can provide training to staff members on time management and coping mechanisms to manage two jobs at once, fostering well-being in addition to productivity.

### **Monitoring and Reporting Developments**

Performance Indicators: To assess the success of family-friendly policies and update stakeholders on developments, organisations should create key perfor-

mance indicators (KPIs). Ongoing employee feedback systems may guarantee ongoing development. Annual Reports on Inclusion: Work-life balance measures may be used by companies into their yearly sustainability reports to demonstrate their dedication to the well-being of their workforce. By putting these rules into practice, organisations may support workplace equity, lessen stress, and increase dual-career workers' productivity. Working together, employees, business groups, and legislators can bring about long-lasting change and make sure that family-friendly laws are not just implemented but also institutionalized throughout industries.

### **Ethical Clearance**

The study takes great effort to address ethical issues by obtaining informed permission from all participants and clearly communicating to them that their participation was voluntary and that they may discontinue at any time without facing any consequences. In order to preserve participants' privacy, personal identifiers were removed from the data, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity. In order to avoid causing emotional discomfort, the interviews were done in a courteous and non-intrusive way because the research required discussing private and sometimes delicate subjects. The information gathered was kept safe and utilized only for scholarly research, guaranteeing honesty and openness in the processing and dissemination of results. In addition, the researchers respected cultural conventions, framed questions correctly, and created a welcoming setting for participants out of consideration for cultural sensitivity.

### **CONCLUSION:**

This study emphasises the difficult obstacles professional women in Bangladesh must negotiate as they negotiate career duality, juggling both professional and caring obligations. The results highlight how much family support-especially from husbands and mothers-helps women satisfy these expectations. Work-life balance is greatly hampered, meanwhile, by the lack of paid maternity leave, daycare facilities, and flexible office rules. Furthermore aggravating these issues and restricting women's chances for professional development are societal expectations anchored in strict gender roles.



Institutional changes are very necessary if we are to create a more inclusive workplace. Employers should implement family-friendly policies include on-site childcare facilities, hybrid work models, and parental leave policies in order to fit the multiple responsibilities women must handle.

The report underlines how cooperation between legislators and businesses is necessary to institutionalize these changes and guarantee long-lasting transformation in several spheres. Redefining gender norms and relieving women of pressure to satisfy conventional expectations and developing in their professions depend on cultural changes as well. Longitudinal studies should be used in next studies to investigate the long-term effects of career duality on life satisfaction, well-being, and professional development. Moreover, broadening the focus of study to include male viewpoints and industry-specific experiences would help to offer a more complete knowledge of how dual-career homes could flourish. Dealing with these issues not only helps to achieve gender parity but also improves organizational performance by establishing encouraging surroundings that enable women to flourish at home and at business.

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#### **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:**

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to this research. All opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed in this article are solely from the author and all is presented with complete transparency and impartiality.

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