

The Effect of Children and Work-family Conflict on the Career Advancement of Women Academics: A Study on Private Universities of Bangladesh

Md. Johirul Islam¹ and Md. Atiqur Rahman^{2*}

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims at investigating how the children and the work-family conflict affects the career progression of female faculties at private university in Bangladesh.

Methodology: Using convenience sampling technique, 201 female faculties of 15 private universities in Dhaka city of Bangladesh have been surveyed. Structural equation modeling technique has been used to analyze the hypothesis of the study.

Findings: This study has found that the children have significant effect on the career stagnancy of female academics in teaching at private universities, whereas work-family conflict has not found to be significantly influential on the career stagnancy of the respondents.

Limitations: Our sample consisted of 201 female faculties serving in 15 private universities located at Dhaka in Bangladesh may limit the generalizability of the results. The female faculty members of the private universities located outside Dhaka did not participate in this study.

Practical Implication: In Bangladesh, a little research work has been done on addressing the pitfalls for which private universities' female faculties cannot progress in their career. This research will contribute to existing literature in describing two major challenges of women academics' career progression, i.e., children and work-family conflict. In future, researchers may additionally use other challenges that relate with career advancement of women academics.

Originality: This paper will help the stakeholders realize the fact that women are facing difficulties in their career progression due to children, i.e., childrearing mandate. It will also assist to identify pragmatic interventions to minimize the consequences derived from childrearing on female academics' career advancement.

1. Introduction

Work life and family life touch each other in so many ways. Work-family balance is a hot topic on the nation's social agenda. Many individuals are simultaneously pursuing a career and committed to a family relationship. Studying women academics in Bangladesh is very interesting because in this country the religious norms are very strongly maintained that affect the women career. In south Asia, this country is treated as a religious country where women enjoy freedom and autonomy very little (Punia & Kamboj, 2013). Different studies have found that women in different positions like managerial, academic, marketing etc. are facing various organizational and familial challenges and barriers that seriously affect their career success. Career progress of women in management may be defined as the career advancement in the managerial hierarchy, or it may be the perception of career success and career satisfaction (De Sousa, 2013). Although the contribution of women in diversified sectors to the national

* Corresponding Author

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Bangladesh University of Business and Technology (BUBT), Dhaka, Bangladesh, E-mail: johir251@yahoo.com

² Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Bangladesh University of Business and Technology (BUBT), Dhaka, Bangladesh, E-mail: aqr11013@gmail.com

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economy is beyond description, the under-representation of women in the administrative and managerial positions is also visible. Despite promising starts, women's career advancement is halted because of social, familial or situational factors (Campopiano, De Massis, Rinaldi, & Sciascia, 2017).

From the very beginning of the industrial civilization women are trying to get the equal opportunity in every field. Though they are working hard in every sector in a parallel way to men, they are not getting their rights as expected (Coban & Irmis, 2016). In recent years, women are trying to break down the concept that women are not enough capable of holding the higher positions in an organization. (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). But still women are significantly underestimated at the top level of an organization (O'Neil, Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2008). The National Labor Force Survey 2013 conducted by the Bureau of Statistics showed that women occupy only 12 percent of the decision making jobs in industrial and service sectors (Rahman & Khan, 2016). In the education sector where about 41.23 percent teachers are female, the gender gap in terms of holding senior or administrative positions is more pervasive (Robin, 2018). The excess demands of every family are making the women not to utilize their time, energy, and commitment that are necessary for work (Kirchmeyer, 2006). It is a normal scenario in South-Asia specially in Bangladesh that women have some extra familial responsibilities in this traditional male oriented society and it has an adverse effect on their career progression (Akkas, Hossain, & Rahman, 2015). Relatively low work effort will decrease the better opportunities for better career outcomes and performance (Lobel & Clair, 1992).

A lot of talented female employees may have to quit their jobs in the middle of their career because of performing familial responsibilities. It is usual that men can pass more time at work without having too much worry about home, but for women it is not easy to travel far away for official purposes or continue at night (Lobel & Clair, 1992). It is because, the burden of family responsibilities at home are often much more than their male counterpart (Zheng & Wu, 2018). This asymmetric household responsibility keeps women lag behind in pursuing the career. The lack of institutional support to make a proper balance between family and career is another important driver that limits opportunities for women's advancement in career (Buddhapriya, 2009). Stiff organizational rules and regulations often create complexity for women to take care of family-related issues (Slan & Chen, 2009). Conversely, strong societal expectation is another accountable for women's stifled career progress (Saadin, Ramli, Johari, & Harin, 2016). Sometimes, careerist women experience severe abuses from society when the motherhood mandate is disturbed a bit (Powell, 2017). These two diverse extremes- stiff organizational regulations and strong societal expectations- often force women towards a dilemmatic situation.

Still women in East-Asia especially in Bangladesh are failing to reach higher organizational levels though they are increasing their participation in the formal employment sector (Rahman & Islam, 2019). Under this circumstance, it is needed to research the relationship among children, work-family conflict and career progression of women academics. Although, children could be one of the components of work-family conflict, it has been considered separately as a challenge in this study to determine how the childrearing mandate has had an effect on women academics' career advancement. Therefore, this study has made an effort to investigate the work-family conflict and the children and their impact on the career progression of women academics at private university in Bangladesh. For this purpose, the researchers have surveyed 201 female faculties of 15 private universities in Dhaka City of Bangladesh so that it could be understood better about the relationship among the children, the work-family conflict and the career progression of women academics.

Some researchers have identified in their study that work family conflict has a negative impact on women career progression (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011; Trachtenberg, Anderson, & Sabatelli, 2009; Punia & Kamboj, 2013). It is also revealed in different researches that women career development is predominantly controlled by the demands of the family (Powell, 2017; O'Neil et al., 2008; Mayrhofer, Meyer, Schiffinger, & Schmidt, 2008; Lobel & Clair, 1992). Again socially accepted roles and behavior also influence the women's career expectation. According to Lobel and Clair (1992), Human Capital Theory said that women's family responsibilities have a direct and negative impact on work effort and also an indirect impact on performance outcomes at work place.

However, there are 105 private universities in Bangladesh (Akteruzzaman, 2018). A good number of well-qualified female faculties are serving these universities from the very beginning. But the rate of their career advancement is not high as yet compared to men (Rahman & Islam, 2019). It is even more regrettable that female faculties in private universities are seldom found in such senior academic positions as Professor or Associate

Professor. Despite promising starts, women's career advancement is halted recurrently. There is hardly seen that female faculties are participating in different national or international seminar, workshop, symposiums etc. or giving more time in research purpose which could be beneficial for them to climb up at upper level in university teaching (Bain & Cummings; 2000).

This study, however, has been conducted to describe two major challenges: children and work-family conflict and also to identify their degrees of influence on advancing the career of female academics serving different private universities in Bangladesh.

2. Literature Review

The issue work-family conflict restricts or slows down a woman's career accomplishments. Women may incur a family penalty because their extensive family responsibilities limit their career progression. Women's career achievement is restricted due to the work family conflict. Work and family are the two most important domains for most of the people. In family responsibilities, gender plays very important role. Gender roles affect the conditions and consequences of the work-family conflict (Carlson & Kacmar, 2000). Although we are living in the era of modern age; women are still far behind from the world of corporate and the world of beyond house. Still they are responsible for homemaking and child rearing responsibilities (Mayrhofer et al., 2008). Even when women are employed there has been occurred very less change in household chore and women work more than men (Mahitivanichcha, 2003; South & Spitze, 1994). Career progression means not only the internal improvement i.e., increasing the level of knowledge, experience, and expertise within the person himself or herself, but also some external growth i.e., getting more responsibilities and earning a higher salary (Akkas et al., 2015). The development is not a one-day process rather it is a gradual process in different aspects of a person's career. Sometimes it is called a micro-development in career related issues. Gradually person shapes his or her strengths, weaknesses, and changes certain roles and tries to adapt with the new and changing roles. Family responsibilities are important factors influencing the amount of time and energy that individuals are able and willing to devote to work (Namasivayam, & Zhao, 2007). Although, the time, energy, and attention are finite, they may be expended. And if they are expended in one domain, then other domain will remain vacant. This situation can create a negative relationship between work and family world (Mayrhofer et al., 2008; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Getting married, having babies, child-rearing mandate, care giving to other family members, conservative mindset of the family and society, insecure surroundings etc. often make the women demotivated to exert high level of effort towards the career goal achievement (King & Hill, 1993). Therefore, it is a very normal scenario that women experience more work family conflict than their male counterpart. So, family responsibilities are considered more in women career progression than that of men (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Women are more caring about their children because they give birth their children and they carry the main responsibility for their children and consequently their careers are becoming interrupted more than men. "Many women professionals and managers carry a heavier work burden than most men, a "triple burden" of home, career and an often sexist workplace" (Acker, 2009).

According to Balaji (2014), family-work conflict and work-family conflict has negative influences on the family life and it results the life dissatisfaction and greater internal conflict within the family. Some issues like the size of the family, the age of children, the work hours and the level of social support impact the experience of work-family conflict and family-work conflict. It is a surprising result that women succeed in both career and family in spite of all the stress they undergo at work place. Women employees with excellent quality and experience perform in their selected jobs with the flow of their fellow colleagues, but many females still face lots of difficulties to achieve the highest position because of their 'glass ceiling' image. It is usual that women concentrate on their family obligations much more than their professional responsibilities. According to Anker (1997), when women work they also bring their domestic responsibilities to the work place and that is why most of the women prefer such types of jobs that offer flexibility in their work and also in entry and exit. Buddhapriya (2009) mentioned in her study that, women employees, sometimes, have to take career interruptions or reduced working hours due to fulfilling the demand of their family obligations which in many cases minimize their chances for achieving the highest position at the job. The issue of work-family conflict (WFC) is treated as the most important issue in today's business world (Burke & El-Kot, 2010; Grandey, Cordeiro, & Crouter, 2005). Among lots of issues, WFC issue has been an increasing interest in the field of research. Recent studies highlight the conflict experienced by the

individuals between their roles in the family and at work which is covered under the heading called work-family conflict. Researches also revealed that work and family are not two separate domains rather they are interdependent and have a dynamic relation with one another. Here, family life is affected by work life and also work life is affected by family life (Trachtenberg et al., 2009; Namasivayam & Zhao, 2007).

However, women's career challenges and their progression is a hot focus amongst the today's researches. A number of researches on the said field were conducted so far by the researchers of different countries. In Bangladesh, there also had been a lot of works done on that issue (Zaman & Riyadh, 2014). But the focusing areas were mainly on bankers or other corporate companies' female employees. There are a few studies conducted so far on the private universities' female faculty members who are experiencing huge challenges at work and thus their career progression is being disturbed repeatedly (Rahman & Islam, 2019). Therefore, this study aims at exploring how the children and the work-family conflict affect the progress in career pursue of the female faculties in private universities of Bangladesh.

3. Study Objective

The objective of this study is to determine the level of influence of the children and the work-family conflict on the female faculties' career advancement in the private universities of Bangladesh.

4. Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis

This study assumed women's career progression at private universities as dependent variable and the children and the work-family conflict as independent variables. The model presented in figure-1 shows the paths associated with the relationships between the variables. The outline of the conceptual model of the study is shown in the figure-1.

4.1 The Conceptual Model

Figure 1 is the conceptual model relating to the constructs with each of their corresponding items where CB= Children; WFC= Work-Family Conflict; CP= Career Progression.

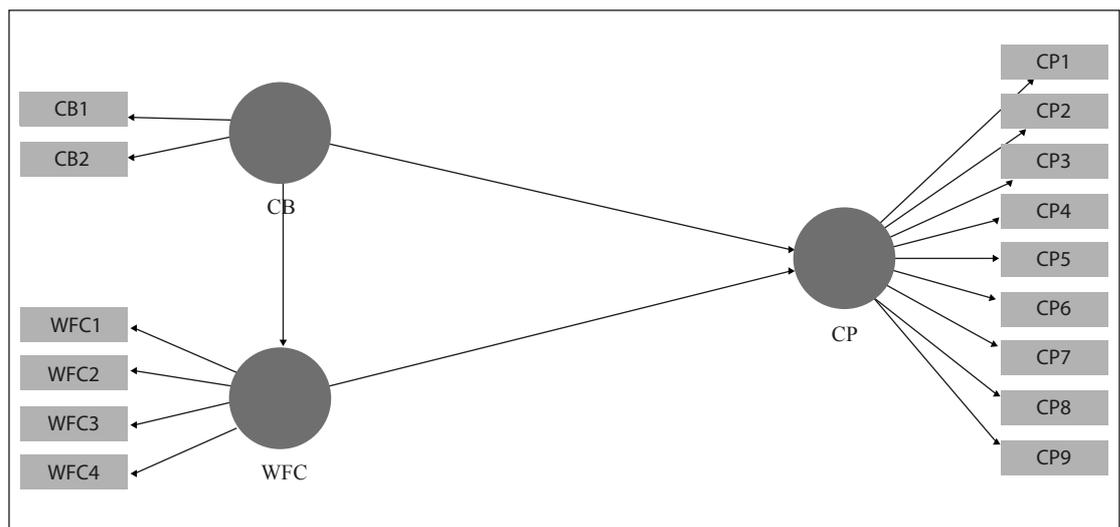


Figure 1. The Conceptual Model of the Study. Source: Authors' creation based on structural equation modeling technique

4.2 Hypothesis

In order to test the degree of influence of the children and the work-family conflict on the career progression of women academics at private universities in Bangladesh, this study drew the following two hypotheses:

H1a: There is a significant influence of the children on the career progression of female faculties at private universities of Bangladesh.

H2a: There is a significant influence of the work-family conflict on the career progression of female faculties at private universities of Bangladesh.

5. Methodology

5.1 Sampling Area and Sample Selection

This study was based on a survey method. In order to collect data, 201 female faculties of 15 private universities located at Dhaka City of Bangladesh were selected. Convenience sampling technique was used to pick up the sample because of the convenient accessibility and proximity to the investigators. A questionnaire survey was administered from November 2019 to January 2020. The list of the surveyed universities with the number of respondents is given below-

Table1. The List of Surveyed Universities with the Number of Respondents

Name of the Surveyed Universities	Number of the Respondents
I. Bangladesh University of Business and Technology (BUBT)	55
II. Green University	12
III. Prime University	10
IV. Eastern University	07
V. Daffodil International University	17
VI. World University	11
VII. Presidency University	18
VIII. Southeast University	12
IX. Primeasia University	12
X. Dhaka International University	05
XI. North South University	04
XII. Independent University of Bangladesh	07
XIII. American International University of Bangladesh	13
XIV. East West University	05
XV. United International University	13
Total: 201 respondents of 15 private universities.	

Source: Authors' Creation based on Survey

5.2 Sources of Data

Both the primary and secondary data were used in this study. Secondary data was collected from the existing literature and different published reports in the related field and the primary data was collected through a comprehensive questionnaire survey.

5.3 Questionnaire Design

A structured close ended questionnaire was used for collecting primary data. For the closed ended questions five point Likert scale was used, where 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral (neither agree nor disagree), 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire included two parts. The first part covered the demographic

profile of the respondents and the second part covered the statements relating to the children and the work-family conflict as barriers experienced by the private university female faculties in their career pursue.

The career progression of the female faculties was expressed in the questionnaire (see appendix) which would ultimately measure the career stagnancy in a specific position for long time of the respondents. Career progression is the dependent variable, whereas the children and the work-family conflict are the independent variables of this study.

5.4 Tools and Techniques

Structural equation modeling (through Bootstrapping) technique was used to analyze the paths or to test the hypothesis of the study. Statistical package for social science (SPSS version 16) software was used for data processing and Smart PLS was used to analyze and interpret the results.

5.5 Validity and Reliability

The reliability was assessed by considering Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). Theoretically, the reliability is considered to be satisfactory when composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha have value greater than 0.70 (Hair et al, 2012). Table-2 shows that all the constructs have composite reliability values of more than 0.7 which is higher than recommended value and almost all the constructs have Cronbach's Alpha values of more than 0.7, except WFC (0.629). Since, work-family conflict is advocated as one of the most influential barriers on women career progression in many literatures, this construct is retained in this study nevertheless its alpha value is below 0.7. Thus, the constructs are deemed to have adequate reliability.

Table 2. Alpha, CR=Composite Reliability and AVE (Average Variance Extracted)

Constructs	Alpha	CR	AVE	CB	CP	WFC
CB	0.963	0.982	0.964	0.982		
CP	0.713	0.715	0.548	0.384	0.681	
WFC	0.629	0.792	0.567	0.172	0.119	0.753

Source: Authors' Calculation Using Smart PLS.

The validity was assessed by considering convergent and discriminant. The Convergent validity is considered to be satisfactory when measurement constructs have an average variance extracted (AVE) of at least 0.50 and items loading are well above 0.50 (Hair et al, 2012). Table-3 shows the item loadings. The item loadings, ranged from 0.532 to 0.982 are greater than the recommended level and the AVE (in the table 1), ranged from 0.548 to 0.964 which are also higher than the recommended value. Therefore, conditions for convergent validity are met.

Table 3. Items' Cross Loadings

Items	CB	CP	WFC
CB1	0.981		
CB2	0.982		
CP1		0.831	
CP4		0.645	
CP7		0.532	
WFC1			0.818
WFC2			0.849
WFC3			0.557

Source: Authors' Calculation using SmartPLS.

The discriminant validity was assessed by considering the square root of the AVE and cross loading matrix. For satisfactory discriminant validity the square root of the AVE of a construct must be larger than its correlation with other constructs (Henseler et al. 2015). The square root of the AVE of each latent construct, bolded on the diagonal, shown in Table-2, is greater than their corresponding correlation, representing that the data used for this study has good discriminant validity. And all other inter-item correlations are below the .80 threshold (Sarstedt, 2014) indicating the distinctness of each construct.

5.6 Model Fit Indices

The goodness of fit of the model is measured by two fit indices as: Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and Normed Fit Index (NFI). A value less than 0.10 or of 0.08 (Hu and Bentler, 1998) is considered a good fit. The NFI is then defined as 1 minus the Chi² value of the proposed model divided by the Chi² values of the null model. Consequently, the NFI results in values between 0 and 1. The closer the NFI to 1, the better the fit. NFI values above 0.9 usually represent acceptable fit (Lohmöller, 1989). Table-4 shows the value of model fit indices of the model. It shows that the value of SRMR for the estimated model is 0.042 which is lower than the model fit threshold and the value of NFI is 0.919 which is higher than the model fit threshold.

Table 4. The Model Fit Indices

Fit indices	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.042	0.042
d_ ULS	0.049	0.049
d_ G1	0.021	0.021
d_ G2	0.019	0.019
Chi-Square	9.385	9.385
NFI	0.919	0.919

Source: Authors' Calculation using SmartPLS.

5.7 Testing of Hypotheses

The structural model was constructed to identify the path relationships among the constructs in the research model. Bootstrap method was used to test the hypothesis. The study tests the relationship between endogenous and exogenous variable by t-statistics and P value. The study found that CB (t = 4.186) had significant effect on the career progress of women faculties in private universities of Bangladesh since it had the t value of more than 1.96, while WFC (t = 0.427) had no significant effect on the career progress of women faculties at private universities in Bangladesh. Therefore, from the hypotheses, H1 was supported. On the other hand, hypothesis H2 was not supported. The remarks and results are shown at a glance in table-5.

Table 5. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Paths	Hypotheses	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Remarks
CB -> CP	H1a	0.387	0.090	4.186	0.000	Supported
WFC -> CP	H2a	0.193	0.110	0.427	0.120	Not supported

Source: Authors' Calculation using Smart PLS.

5.8 The Structural Model

Figure 2 shows the structural model of the study. It shows the t values for every path and the corresponding items under each construct (variable). With the comparison of the theoretical model, the corresponding items of some constructs are eliminated because of their poor loading values in order to get a good model fit.

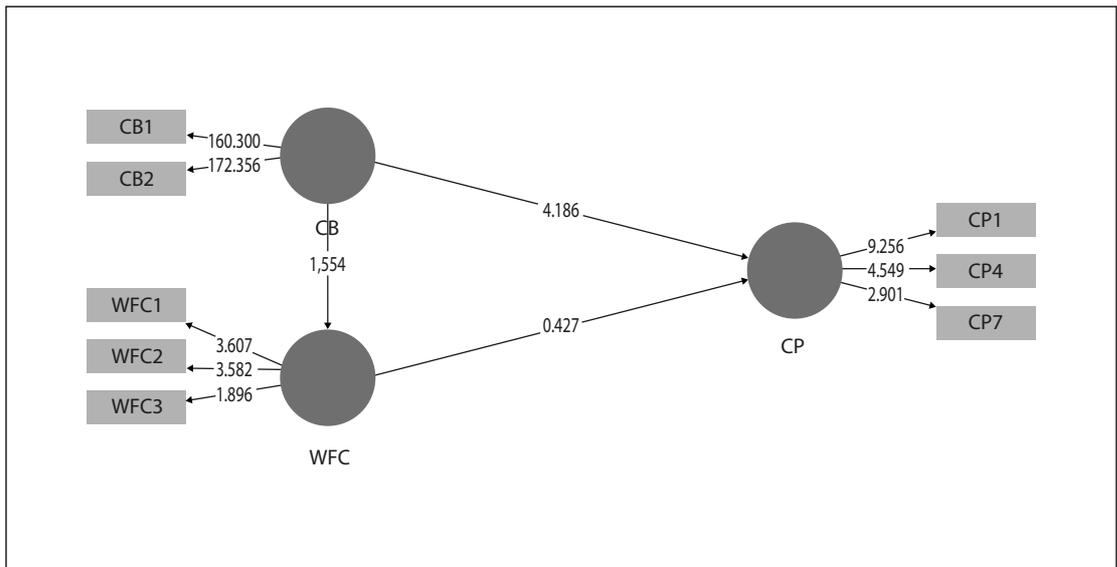


Figure 2. The Structural Model of the Study. Source: Authors' Creation based on Structural Equation Modeling Technique

6. Discussion

This study has found that the children, i.e., childrearing mandate have significant effect on the career stagnancy of female faculties at private university of Bangladesh. In this study, most of the respondents have agreed that they cannot pay too much attention to their career progression because of taking a lot of care of their children. They have also found it difficult to perform their assigned duties and responsibilities because of nourishing their children with care. Another finding of this study is that, work-family conflict has not found to be significantly influential on the career stagnancy of the respondents. In this study, a considerable number of female faculties have recognized that, unlike other employment sectors, work-family conflict is not so acute in university teaching. It is because they enjoy some degree of freedom in determining their work schedule. Moreover, female faculties of private university have also expressed their opinion in this survey study that, they are now getting all-out support and cooperation from their family to engage in employment like teaching.

The findings of this study will help the female faculties serving different private universities of Bangladesh to be concern, aware and care about the rearing of the children as a challenge towards their career progression. It will also be useful to the concerned authority of the university, family, and society at large to realize the fact and improve the overall culture to lessen the negative consequences of the childrearing on the career advancement and thus help continue and advance the teaching career of the female faculties without having many hurdles.

Like other studies, this study is not free from limitations. Our sample consisted of 201 female faculties serving in 15 private universities located at Dhaka in Bangladesh may limit the generalizability of the results. The female faculty members of the private universities located outside Dhaka did not participate in this study. The study could be strengthened by increasing the sample size as the data analysis results and findings might differ significantly when the sample size is increased or decreased. As only 15 Dhaka based private universities do not represent the whole private universities in Bangladesh, the inclusion of more universities both inside and outside Dhaka would create a more diffused results and findings. Besides, the questionnaire consisted of only some limited challenges (children and work-family conflict). There might have more challenges influencing career advancement which need to be reported in the future study.

Authors of this study hope that this work would be of further help for researchers to identify pragmatic interventions in order to:

- I. Minimize the negative consequences derived from childrearing and work family conflict on female academics' career advancement at private universities in Bangladesh.
- II. Create a safe and women-friendly environment helpful to continue a smooth career and climb to the top of the professional ladder.

7. Conclusion

On the whole, childrearing mandate and work-family conflict (WFC) are not myths and they are common factors which are unavoidable in an individual's life. These factors should not be eliminated from the lives of working people altogether. This study focused that spending considerable amount of time in taking care of the children is a significant factor preventing female faculties' career advancement at private universities in Bangladesh. Women have to play the dual roles both in working station and family as doing the official duties as well as the responsibilities towards their children which create restrictions in their career advancement. If proper steps are made, then it is not a matter to care about imbalance among family and work environment. If the organization arranges a 'Day Care Centre', it will provide the women with a formal and structured environment to take care of their children that, in turn, will bring mental satisfaction at work. Social and family supports are also very much necessary for the career enhancement. Again, this study found that WFC has an impact on the career progression of women academics but it is not highly significant. It is widely recognized that work and family lives influences each other in numerous ways. Family experiences can either restrict or enrich one's career just as work experience can either restrict or enrich family life. Although there is less agreement regarding the role of gender in the work family interface, it is believed that gender may enter the wok-family nexus in complex ways through its interaction with other variables. As the children and WFC is a serious issue in a dual career couple family, to minimize this conflict some steps may be taken like understand the priorities regarding career, family, and other life roles; understand the nature of conflict; develop a plan and experiment with different approaches; monitor whether the plans are working and make change as necessary.

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Appendix: The Questionnaire

PART I: Respondent’s Demographic Information

- Age** : 1. 20-30 2. 30-40 3. 40-50 4. 50-60 5. 60-70
- Job title** : 1. Lecturer 2. Assistant Professor 3. Associate Professor 4. Professor
- Monthly salary** : 1. Below 50000 2. 50000-60000 3. 60000-70000 4. Above 70000
- Education** : 1. Graduate level 2. Post graduate level (Masters) 3. M Phil 4. Ph. D
- Job Nature** : 1. Permanent 2. Temporary 3. Part time
- Nature of Organization** : 1. Public university 2. Private university 3. International branches
- Experience** : 1. 1-3 years 2. 3-6 years 3. 6-9 years 4. 9-12years 5. 12-15 years
- Marital status** : 1. Unmarried 2. Married 3. Divorced

PART II: Factors Preventing Female Faculties’ Career Advancement

Following statements concern your perception/experience about your organization and the work-family issues. Please give tick mark on the right boxes against each statement.

Children (Statements relating children)

I have children 1. Yes 2. No

This part is only for those who have children

	1	2	3	4	5
I cannot pay too much attention to my career development because I have to take a lot of care of my child/children					
Sometimes I find it difficult to perform my assigned duties and responsibilities because of my child/children					

(1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree & 5=Strongly Disagree)

Work-family conflict (Statements relating to Work-family conflict)

	1	2	3	4	5
I find it difficult to manage between my work and my family					
I feel guilty for not spending enough time with my family					
I have made lots of sacrifices (e.g. social, family life) in favor of my career advancements					
My family responsibilities sometimes prevent me from responding to urgent work duties					

(1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree & 5=Strongly Disagree)

Career progression (Statements relating to Career progression)

	1	2
I have not got any promotion in this organization		
I have not attended seminar(s)/trainings arranged by this university		
I have not attended seminar(s)/training outside of this university (home or abroad)		
I have not obtained MS (foreign) or other foreign degree(s) during my teaching in this university		
I have not obtained (or ongoing) Ph D or M Phil degree(s) during my teaching in this university		
I have not got the chairmanship yet of my department (indicates less seniority)		
I have not acted chairman in charge in absence of the chairman of the department (indicates less seniority)		
I have not got the membership/advisorship/chairmanship of curricular/co-curricular/extra-curricular programs/organizations of this university		
I never get any responsibility as a chairman of any of the board or committee of this university		

(1=Yes and 2=No)

Thank you for participating in the survey.