

Motherhood as a Barrier to Re-entering Employment: Negotiating Tactics of Dhaka's Affluent Urban Mothers

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ABSTRACT

Motherhood is a phenomenon that is an integral part of our lives, and we are all connected to and impacted by it in different ways. Employment is also another integral part of the human life, providing a means to living, personal growth and development, and self-identity. When these two worlds come together, they are either in harmony or in conflict, depending on the individual and their background.

In Bangladesh, it is a cultural norm to see women give up careers, all for the sake of their children and families. This has been in practice for generations to come and one would expect that this ideology would change with time and education, but that isn't true. This is a phenomenon that is still occurring and will continue to do so unless there is an immense upheaval in people's thinking and mentality. This study aims to take a look at the situation of Dhaka city's urban mothers, who have had careers and find out exactly what factors cause them to discontinue employment after having children. There was very little literature present in the Bangladesh context on this topic, and thus, the study was exploratory and descriptive in nature. With the aid of in-depth interviews and using the case study method, the stories of these mothers were revealed. Interviews with employers were also conducted, in order to see their perspective on the situation as well.

The best theory to describe this phenomenon was the Social Construction Theory of Reality, based upon which it was shown that motherhood as a barrier to employment was indeed a socially constructed occurrence.

The research was concluded with the understanding that without support (from family and employers) and government intervention, circumstances prevent Dhaka's urban mothers to reach their full potential.

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**MOTHERHOOD AS A BARRIER TO RE-ENTERING EMPLOYMENT:
NEGOTIATING TACTICS OF DHAKA'S AFFLUENT URBAN MOTHERS**

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NEGOTIATING TACTICS OF DHAKA'S AFFLUENT URBAN MOTHERS**

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Lastly, I would like to thank my family: my husband, my daughter, my parents and my in-laws, for being the pillars of support that they are. It is only with all their prayers and support that I have come this far and I am forever indebted to them.

Thank you.

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UniSocial (A concern of Unitrend Ltd)

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Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves

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Translations, website contents, proofreading, video narration contents (2008)

North South University, Earth Club

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TVSHOWANCHOR

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MASTEROFCEREMONY

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The launchingceremonyofadramaserialontheusageofBabyZinc(2008)

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REFERENCES

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Nationality: Bangladeshi

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Women play many roles in their lifetimes, and these roles transcend race, culture, religion and backgrounds. The role of the ‘mother’ is heralded as the most difficult and yet the most rewarding for every woman. ‘Motherhood’ by definition is “the state or experience of having and raising a child” (Yourdictionary.com, 2015) but the word itself is a subjective term, meaning different things to different individuals. Adrienne Rich (1976) wrote “all human life on the planet is born of woman”; and despite being such a revered ‘role’, mothers all over the world face many types of barriers. One such situation is when women decide to re-enter employment after becoming a mother¹. The responsibility of raising a child is a process that changes the way in which a woman is perceived in society and her workplace. Through employment, a mother gains financial independence and feels complete as a woman. Taking care of a family and working at the same time requires significant social and personal adjustments, necessitating a woman to taking more than available leave options and putting her job security at risk (Poduval and Poduval, 2009).

This is also an issue in Bangladesh, as there is a tendency to discontinue or not seek employment after a woman has a child. Bangladesh has a dominantly patriarchal society and an “environment with pervasive gender discrimination, so girls and women face many obstacles to their development” (Women and girls in Bangladesh, n.d.). Abeda Sultana (2012) states that, “discrimination against women

¹A detailed discussion of the types of barriers mothers face while seeking employment has been presented in Chapter 2.

has emerged as one of the most evident social issues in Bangladesh in the last twenty years.”

From the above discussions, it can be assumed that the barriers to re-entry into employment that mothers everywhere face are socially constructed. The Bangladeshi society as a whole, comprising of family members, peers, employers, etc; all have an ideal for how a typical Bangladeshi² mother should act and what her priorities should be. Lori Walls (2007) illustrates this scenario through the lens of the Social Constructionism or the Social Construction of Reality³. In short, this theory examines the development of jointly constructed understandings of the world. Social constructionism articulates two interlinked points: (1) the assumption that human beings rationalize their experience by creating a model of the social world and how it functions and (2) that language is the most essential system through which humans construct reality (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). Here the social construction elements describe motherhood as a barrier to employment, which is relevant for this proposed study. However the missing element here is ‘language’. If people are using language to construct reality, this also means that they are ‘communicating’. This leads to the research puzzle, “If motherhood is seen as a barrier to re-entering employment, then how exactly are the factors (that cause motherhood to become a barrier) communicated to the mothers?”

To answer this puzzle, while perusing relevant literature it was found that there were limited researches conducted in Bangladesh regarding motherhood as a barrier to re-entering employment. Searching further, it was also found that there

²Naila Kabeer’s observations of the Bangladeshi household have been discussed in Chapter II.

³ The Social Construction theory has been discussed in detail in Chapter II.

were no researches that dealt with the communication perspective of this issue. This reinforced the notion that a research on this matter could prove to be significant in Bangladesh.

A secondary reason for conducting the research is the researcher's personal experience as a mother. Motherhood began for her at the age of twenty-four with the birth of her daughter. The journey which followed tested many aspects of her motherhood, which included putting her career on hold and raising her child without any nannies, home tutoring elementary schoolchildren while caring for her child and last but not least, pursuing academic endeavours while being a parent.

The lack of research combined with the researcher's own experience as a mother were the driving forces to find out whether there were other mothers out there who faced similar obstacles as she did, and how they overcame these obstacles. Therefore, this paper will be exploring what the factors are that make motherhood a barrier that Dhaka's affluent urban⁴ mothers face while re-entering employment; how the factors communicate or are communicated to the mothers; and how these mothers are negotiating with the factors.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

- What are the factors that cause motherhood to become a barrier to re-entering employment for Dhaka's urban mothers?
- How do these factors communicate or are communicated to the mothers?
- How are these mothers negotiating with these factors?

⁴ The description and reasoning for the chosen target group has been presented in Chapter III.

1.3 Study Objectives

1. To explore the factors that make motherhood a barrier to re-entering into employment for Dhaka's affluent urban mothers
2. To find out how these factors communicate or are communicated to the mothers
3. To examine how the mothers in question are dealing with these factors while re-entering into employment

1.4 Significance of the Study

Over the years, motherhood has been a target for media campaigns, commercial gain, organizational policies, and has remained an integral part of culture and creation of culture (Jewell, 2014). Academics and researchers such as Naila Kabeer (2012), Rumana Liza Anam (2008) and Ashiya Akter (2014), have extensively argued over the plight of the female rural population, maternity leave issues and the impacts on economic growth. Mothers themselves have shared their motherhood experiences on social media and blogs, such as The Bong Momma (Ahmed, 2015). However, in the Bangladesh context, seldom has there been any discussion or discourse on motherhood as a barrier to re-entering employment or even the communication perspective of it. On a micro level, the research will contribute to informing Bangladeshi women on the issues at hand and how to deal with them; and on a macro level the research will contribute to new learning in gender and communication studies and hopefully one day result in policy changes that aid mothers and not restrict them from seeking employment.

1.5 Scope and Delimitation

The scope of this study is to make contributions to different fields of communication and sociology - namely social constructionism, interpersonal communication, cultural communication, gender and communication, and gender discrimination, and labour studies.

Delimitations of this study include research within Dhaka city only, and among the urban, educated, middle class/upper middle class income group. Other limitations include the sample size and technique. In-depth interviews (as part of qualitative research) resulted in a smaller number of respondents. Due to logistical difficulties, a large portion of the interviews with mothers were taken over the phone, instead of face-to-face interviews. Also, the organization representatives, who couldn't be reached for face-to-face interviews, responded via emails.



CHAPTER II

STUDY FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Literature Review

Dhaka's urban mothers – a population that is seemingly overlooked by researchers in Bangladesh – are a melting pot of potential, but more than often these talents go ignored by employers or become quashed under the pressure of society and family obligations. In this chapter, the definition of “barriers” has been discussed in reference to this study. The researcher has also taken a historical view at the barriers mothers face, examined the present barriers to re-entry into employment for mothers in the rest of the world, and lastly, looked at the available literature in the Bangladesh context.

Brown and Barbosa (2001), describe a barrier as any obstacle that prevents forward movement or any event or condition that makes career progress difficult. Barriers are significant factors in the career development process, and the onset of such barriers frequently begins when women are children, due to the patriarchal society and gender roles that are present in Bangladeshi society.

Historically, society believed a woman's place was in her home, caring for her husband and children, as opposed to the workplace. Valued feminine traits such as a meek nature and submissiveness were feared to be lost if women entered the workforce (Astin, 1984; Nieva and Gutek, 1981). In Bangladesh, “male domination and women's subordination are the basic tenets of Bangladeshi social structure (Sultana, 2012, p. 11). Sultana (2012) further states that, “all forms of discrimination constitutes the social, political, economical, religious and cultural differences between men and women, thus establishing a male dominated society. It also eliminates women's equality with men, forms women's subordination and constructs a social system which produces women's subordination”.

Within this social system, these patriarch driven families form certain expectations from women. Sultana (2012) explains how from the very beginning, girls are seen as burdens to their families, only as a temporary asset until they are married off. Sons are seen as the real asset, who will stay home, earn and take care of the parents. On the other hand, when the girl is married off and enters the husband's home, he sees her in a subordinate position, and feels more powerful than her. And thus the cycle of oppression and discrimination begins again, just with a different set of people. This oppressive experience "destroys women's self-respect, self-confidence and self-esteem and sets limits on their aspirations" (Sultana, 2012).

Women were expected to perform duties as wife and mother, in addition to fulfilling their professional responsibilities. Because women's work and family demands were simultaneous, these demands had a significant impact on women's careers (Valdez and Gutek). As stated by Heins et al., "Achieving professional status may be more difficult for women than for men" (p. 455).

In 2013, Judith Warner wrote an article called "The Opt-out Generation Wants Back In", in response to controversial New York Times article, "The Opt Out Revolution". Warner interviewed women who had given up promising careers in favour of a domestic life. She found that many women had difficulty re-entering the labour force, particularly those who did not have the highest education levels or highly connected social networks, or those who had divorced (Bowness, 2013).

In her thesis, author Whitney B. Schott found that (for women having at least one child and data from the National Survey of Family Growth) "motherhood led to a decline in participation (in employment) by 26 percent overall for married or partnered women, and a decline to 4.8 percent for the number of months worked in the last year, in comparison to childless women" (2011).

In the publication “Mothers’ Decisions on Workplace Reentry”, author Julia Jewell (2014) used both quantitative and qualitative methods to conduct the research. The quantitative data concluded that “many mothers feel that they can return to the workforce when they want” - the factors to this decision were: (1) Some mothers would return to work after their kids when to school; (2) Some mothers would home-school their children and thus return to work after the kids went to college; (3) Some mothers believed that the choice to stay home shows support to the children; and (4) Some mothers felt that they were yet to find the right employment to meet their needs. However, the qualitative interviews showed that “mothers differed about the workplace re-entry, if the lapse will affect them, feelings of biases and personal issues with returning”. The factors behind this are: (1) Some mothers felt that career goals either helped or hurt their children/families; (2) The employers viewpoint of re-entry to workforce was a biased one; (3) The feeling that being a stay-at-home mother was not valued (2014).

In Australia, despite having legislation that protects a pregnant employee’s legal right to return to the same job, workplace discrimination is a regular occurrence. An Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) review regarding discrimination found that “one in two mothers reported workplace discrimination at some point during pregnancy, parental leave or on their return to work. One in five mothers surveyed that they were made redundant/ restructured/ dismissed or their contract not renewed at some point during the pregnancy or post-birth period” (Maley, 2014).

In a study by RMIT university lecturer Sheree Gregory⁵, the author interviewed 82 women from the state of Victoria in Australia, and found that “in order to return to paid work, a woman as a worker-carer must go through multiple layers of negotiation” (2015). These women had to “manage paid work, unpaid work, childcare arrangements within the household, in the workplace with her employer, and among networks of extended family, community and other childcare providers” (2015).

In the UK, Georgina Joseph⁶ wrote in *The Telegraph*, “14 percent of the 340,000 women who take maternity leave are unable to return to the job they had because of discrimination by employers” (2013). Joseph herself was a victim after having her first child, when she made the mistake of making informal part-time work arrangements with her boss. The offer was later rescinded, reasons being due to “cutbacks”. If Joseph wanted to return to work, she had to either go back to a full-time work week or not return at all. Stressed and exhausted from post-partum vulnerabilities, Joseph decided to quit. Even Yvette Cooper, the first government minister to take maternity leave while in office, faced discrimination as well. She was quoted as saying that senior civil servants treated her maternity leave with hostility, made it hard to keep in touch and tried to change her job and work arrangements in her absence (2013). Such high numbers of women getting discriminated against in the UK is alarming. But what these figures don’t explain is how many mothers had the option to go back to work, but decided that they couldn’t or wouldn’t return to work because they faced barriers of not seeing their children much, or lack of childcare provision or rigid working hours.

⁵ The article was published by the author in the website, Theconversation.com

⁶ Name was changed by the *The Telegraph* to protect identity.

On the other hand, in a survey by Ernst & Young on 1000 female professionals in the UK, the respondents were asked what the employer could do to remove the barriers, the women replied that they needed “more support after returning to work after childbirth” (Zainzinger, 2012). The women also looked to the government for help, seeking “affordable childcare and policy guidance on flexible working for UK businesses” (Zainzinger, 2012).

In South Asia (India), the educated female talent has been an important factor in allowing India to become one of the world’s fastest growing economies, as explained by Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Ripa Rashid (2011). The obstacles Bangladeshi women face are also dealt with by our Indian counterparts, as highlighted by a survey carried out by Nielsen⁷. The survey revealed that the respondents blamed the difficulty of juggling multiple roles at home and work. Career opportunities for women in “the New India” are rapidly expanding, but family expectations and social obligations remain rooted in tradition (Hewlett and Rashid, 2011). Indian women are pulled by demands from relatives as they attempt to conform to the paradigm of “ideal daughter,” “ideal wife,” and “ideal daughter-in-law.” Among the many interviews conducted in researching the book, it wasn’t at all rare to hear of successful professionals who woke up at 4:30 a.m. to make breakfast and lunch for children and parents-in-law, put in a full day at work, then returned home to clean up after the extended family and prepare dinner (Hewlett and Rashid, 2011). The article further states how ambitious women end up overcompensating at work, trying to counter the ingrained perceptions about their commitment or

⁷ Nielsen Holdings N. V. is an American global information measurement company (Yahoo! Finance, 2014)

competence. The workplace culture doesn't help either, where female employees are expected to put in more "face time", rather than receive "flex time" as in their right. The authors describe these stressful situations as having serious implications in the long run for India's continued economic growth. Almost 55 percent of the survey respondents consider quitting, reducing ambition, and scaling back their career goals due to the stress (Hewlett and Rashid, 2011).

Prachi Pinglay of the Hindustan Times elucidates that there are many women who take a break after having a child, and the gap in job experience also tends to create a barrier to re-entry and influence the type of job the woman might take up. Experts say that women also need to be accepted at par with men when it comes to performance reviews and senior level opportunities after the break (2012).

In a study by Bharathi Ravindran and Rupashee Baral on "Factors Affecting the Work Attitudes of Indian Re-entry Women in the IT Sector" (2014), the authors claim that despite having great career opportunities, women continue to quit their jobs. Some choose to re-enter after a break, but most choose to quit because of the difficulties they face (from work and home) while trying to re-enter. The authors further claim that "although there are a few studies on re-entry women in other socio-cultural contexts, hardly any study is found in the Indian context" (2014). They also wrote that information is barely known about the main reasons for women quitting and trying to re-enter, and the factors, challenges, barriers and opportunities at the individual, family, and organizational levels for women trying to re-enter. There is also a lack of qualitative research which inhibits the emergence of new ideas about re-entry women. This study in particular revealed that "the career outcomes and attitudes of Indian re-entry women are directly related to

organizational factors” (2014). They authors conclude by suggesting that organizations should “provide the right kind of support to these women by revising their policies and making the workplace environment and culture more supportive and inclusive for women returners” (2014). In the study it is also mentioned that the most often cited reasons for career interruptions by Indian women are child care, elder care, spousal relocation and safety and travel issues (Ravindran and Baral, 2012; Centre for Talent Innovation, 2013; Hewlett and Rashid, 2010).

In a report titled “Second Innings: Barriers Faced by Indian Women on Re-entering the Corporate Workforce” by CII Indian Women Network, a survey conducted on 179 women revealed that among reasons for leaving previous job: “37 percent of women opt out of their job due to maternity childcare issues and 18 percent due to spouse relocation, followed by 9 percent due to long work hours, organizational politics and marriage” (Timesofindia.com, 2015). Among the barriers to re-entry, the survey found that: (1) For about 35 percent of respondents it took more than a year to get another job, indicating entry barriers; (2) 35 percent of respondents felt that childcare was an obstacle while trying to re-enter into the workforce, while 33 percent feel it was the long career breaks (2015). Among solutions: (1) More than 40 percent wanted flexible work schedules upon re-entering; (2) more than 65 percent wanted pick up and drop facilities; and (3) 33 percent would benefit from crèche and day care facilities (2015). As it is seen, the Indian context is a showcase for what Bangladeshi mothers, especially Dhaka’s urban mothers are facing.

Similar to the discussion above, also found was a severe lack of qualitative data regarding the issue of barriers to re-entering employment in the Bangladesh context.

Rafiqul Huda Chaudhury (1979), an author who has written many books and articles on the urbanization aspects in Bangladesh, elaborates how women in urban nonagricultural occupations in Bangladesh were the pioneers, voluntarily or involuntarily, to have rejected traditional domestic roles and enlarged the horizons of women's participation in the economic development of the country. Chaudhury's report focuses on the determinants of the labor force participation of urban married women Bangladesh, and his study was limited to one urban area, the then Dacca. In the late 70's, 30 percent of the urban female nonagricultural labour force lived in Dacca, and the city was considered the most representative center of urban nonagricultural workers (Chaudhury, 1979). This also strengthens my reasoning for carrying out the research in Dhaka only, as recent statistics show that the adult female labour force population has been on the rise, with 55.5 percent in 2005, 56.9 percent on 2010 and 57.3 percent in 2012 (data.un.org, 2014). The report points out how an educated, married working woman was an asset to her parents, but is expected only to contribute to her husband and children, and any action otherwise creates tension in the household (Chaudhury, 1979). Chaudhury further explains that women's participation in economic activities in urban Bangladesh may depend on changes in social values. Religion is no longer a barrier, but most men in Bangladesh still want their wives to be subservient and expect that household and domestic activities are the most apt "jobs" for them. He concludes that unless these social values shift, one cannot expect any major change in female participation in the labour force.

One cannot discuss employment in Bangladesh without first highlighting the existing workplace or corporate culture. In Bangladesh, the corporate society is a newly established social system and both national and international corporations maintain and the true culture of Bangladesh within their corporate strategies in order to harbor a harmonious working environment (Hasnat, 2016).

Uddin, Luva and Hossain found that well-established companies like GrameenPhone are strong believers in being goal oriented and objective, and often changes its rules, regulations and policies in order to provide a “friendly and supportive working environment” for its employees. The company “ensures that the rules and regulations of the organization are well defined and not a burden to its employees.” (2012).

On the other hand, Ahmad, Habib and Kamruzzaman (2015) found from their research that multinational companies and government employees are more satisfied at their organizations than employees of local private companies. They also found that MNCs provided better organizational leadership than government and private sector organizations. However, it was also found that organizations don't always accept the opinions and suggestions of their employees, which results in frustration.

The environment isn't always positive, as explained by Ameena Ahmed, a human resources professional, who writes that “Managers and higher officials in the Bangladesh corporate sector are in desperate need of behavioural training” (2014). She greatly stresses on the lack of a proper channel for employees to express their grievances, and the absence of a third party to deal with such issues.

Ashiya Akter has done a research on the implications of the Bangladesh Labour Law 2006, the maternity leave policies within, and how they affected female garment factory workers. Her research revealed that there was a lack of awareness among women workers about the policies; they feared losing their jobs; factory owners avoided hiring married female workers; factory owners create their own rules that are inconsistent with the Labour Law, including shortening maternity

leave duration, not re-enforcing Labour Law policies, and having a negative attitude and being unsupportive towards the female employees (Akter, 2014). Akter also found that organizations that work for women rights and empowerment are also not vocal enough about the issues these women face; and the media isn't very active to address these issues either (2014).

Another researcher, Rumana Liza Anam, also wrote a paper on maternity leave policies throughout the world, with a special focus on Bangladesh. She found that, "only a handful of organizations have recently started to offer their female employees on-site child care" (Anam, 2008). The author also found that, "facilities such as flexi-time, personal leave days, four-day work week etc are unheard of in Bangladesh" (Anam, 2008).

Kanti Ananta Nuzhat (2012) explores the increased participation of women in the urban labour force in a study based on the economic profiles of Bangladesh's urban women. In her literature review, she explains how difficult it was for her to find sufficient literature as there was no direct work done on urban women and their economic activities. There were many analytical discussions about women in general, but there was a lack of focused discussion on urban women and available studies were too few in number to adequately support the research.

In conclusion, we can see that women, especially mothers, face many barriers and difficulties while trying to join or return to work. The literature review goes to show how little research has been done on employment issues of Dhaka's affluent urban mothers in Bangladesh.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This research will be based on the theoretical framework of the Social Construction Theory of Reality (1966), by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. The central concept of social constructionism is that people and groups interacting in a social system create concepts or mental representations of each others' actions over time, and these concepts eventually become habituated into reciprocal roles played by individuals in relation to each other. When these 'roles' become available to other members of society to 'play out', the reciprocal interactions are said to become "institutionalized". Through this process, meaning is rooted into society. Subsequently, knowledge and peoples' belief of what is reality becomes attached to the institutional fabric of society. Thus, reality becomes "socially constructed".

For this research, it is imperative to show that the idea of 'motherhood' and its related components are indeed socially constructed phenomena. In her book, "Understanding Depression: Feminist Social Constructionist Approaches", author Janet May Stoppard (2000) writes that the "occupation" of housewife for women began to take its current shape in the early 1900s, when people started becoming concerned about the health and welfare of children as future workers in the factories of the industrial revolution. Thus it became established that a good mother was one who took care of the house, acted like a nurse, and educated the children. Stoppard then argues that even though "women no longer face legal constraints to combining motherhood and employment outside the home; women are still expected to be good mothers once they have a child" (2000). Stoppard elaborates how women were judged about their mothering skills by looking at the children's appearance; if the children looked good and were well-behaved, it signified that the woman was a good

mother. If the children of working mothers looked shabby and misbehaved, it not only made the mother look bad, it also reflected negatively on her mothering abilities (2000). It can now be understood how the establishment of the ideal mother led to women being judged and judging themselves, and thus falling short of the culturally defined ideal of the good mother.

In the *Social Construction of Reality*, it is stated how 'roles' are created in society, eventually materializing into a part of societal culture itself. Berger and Luckmann (1966), say that institutions are embodied in individual experience by means of roles. The roles, objectified linguistically, are an essential ingredient of the objectively available world of any society. By playing roles, the individual participates in a social world. By internalizing these roles, the same world becomes subjectively real to him. (pg. 74). This importance granted to roles highlights the significance of the particular "social distribution of knowledge" (pg. 77) of a given culture, which is above all related to its "division of labor" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

Corollary to this, it is the creation of roles in the Bangladeshi culture that has paved the way for behavior of and towards women in society. As mentioned earlier in Chapter I, Bangladesh is a strongly patriarchal society, steeped in a culture that promotes the man and oppresses the woman. Abeda Sultana (2012) explains this further, stating that, "Women's dependency upon and subordination to men is conditioned by a whole range of institutional practices embedded in the family and kin-group" (p. 12). She elaborates how certain beliefs within the familiar system have become part of the social structure. Among them - preferring male children over female, giving food preference to the males in the family over the females,

placing the burden of household chores on the women only, providing better education to the males, giving the males in the family more freedom and mobility – are just a few (Sultana, 2012).

To strengthen this argument, here are a few observations from research by renowned British-Bangladeshi professorial fellow Naila Kabeer:

Kabeer states that for married women seeking employment in Bangladesh, the “resistance by husbands was found to reflect fears about public opinion, anxieties about wives’ sexual fidelity, concerns about possible neglect of their own and children’s wellbeing and the conviction that access to an independent income would threaten to destabilize their authority” (2007). In order to keep peace in the household, married Bangladeshi women, “often handed over their wages to their husbands so that his role as breadwinner remained symbolically intact” (2007). The author concludes that a shift in ideology occurred in the husbands when more and more urban wives started seeking employment, “Women’s paid work meant that their views and preferences were more likely to be taken into account by husbands, regardless of who ‘controlled’ the wages” (2007). Therefore the man’s need to present himself as the ‘breadwinner’ leads to gender inequality, and subsequently, gender discrimination.

When exploring gender roles of women in Bangladesh, it was found that, “Women are primarily expected to be wives and mothers engaged in undervalued work like reproducing and rearing children, cooking, cleaning and looking after the household. Otherwise, they are expected to work in areas considered suitable for women: in the agricultural sector, this includes sowing, husking, reaping etc. and in

the non-agricultural sector, teaching, sewing, knitting, crafts and embroidery, etc” (Bhattacharya, 1994).

Lopita Huq (2013), states that, “Given that strong patriarchal norms, socially entrenched gender roles and lack of economic opportunities colluded to exclude women from participating in the workforce and confine them to household, women’s economic participation is seen as a conduit to their empowerment.”

The Social Construction Theory creates a connection between micro and macro, by analyzing micro (images, words, actions) level to explain a macro (structures, institutions) process (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). With the gender roles present in Bangladeshi society and with research showing that gender roles become a barrier to employment, it is clear that the Social Construction Theory of Reality is significant in describing that the gender defined role of being a “woman” and “mother” in Bangladesh indeed becomes a barrier to re-entering employment.

Another viewpoint that supports the Social Construction of Reality Theory is the lifecycle perspective. Genilo, Akther and Haque (2013) elaborate on the life cycle perspective, stating that it “brings forward the sequencing of stages in an individual’s life, which moves along differing pathways. A person experiences transitions, trajectories, life events and turning points in their life courses”. (p. 127).

In terms of transitions, trajectories and life events, Castaño and Webster explain that:

‘transitions’ are changes in roles and statuses experienced by individual women or men; ‘trajectories’ are long-term patterns of stability and change that involve multiple transitions in an individual’s life; ‘life events’ are significant occurrences involving relatively abrupt change that may produce serious long lasting events in an individual’s life; and ‘turning points’ are a substantial change or discontinuity in direction that is not temporary, but lasting. (Castaño and Webster, 2011)

Correspondingly, women in Bangladesh face many life cycle developments, in their family life, in their job life and as women in general. The different turning points in a Bangladeshi woman's life cycle end up having a large impact on women's career decisions. In general Bangladeshi culture, a woman is expected to serve her parents, gain education, find a good husband and have kids. For the affluent urban woman, important life events may include anything from gaining an education abroad, to a high-ranking post in an organization, to marrying into an influential family. The different paths and roles that women take vary from person to person, and result in different impacts on their lives.

When one speaks of gender role creation in society, it is difficult to ignore the implications of these roles. It has come up time and again about how there are gender roles that women have to play out, and the gist of the matter is how these women handled being in these 'roles' and managing the life cycle changes in their lives.

As can be seen from the above discussions, and through this study, the researcher has showcased exactly how the this 'role' was created (through the discovery of the factors that cause motherhood to become a barrier); how it impairs Dhaka's affluent urban mothers from re-entering employment after motherhood; and lastly how the mothers are dealing with these issues.



CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, motherhood as a barrier to re-entering employment for Dhaka's affluent urban mothers was explored. The purpose of this chapter was to describe the research methodology of this study, explain the sample selection, describe the procedure used in designing the instrument and collecting the data, and provide an explanation of the information collected.

3.1 Research Design and Method

The research methodology is based on the following research questions:

- What are the factors that cause motherhood to become a barrier to re-entering employment for Dhaka's affluent urban mothers?
- How do these factors communicate or are communicated to the mothers?
- How are these mothers negotiating with these factors?

The research took on a qualitative approach and the study was exploratory and descriptive in nature. A look at the research questions reflect attitude ("barriers"), behavior ("communicated") and experience ("negotiating") and are therefore the building blocks of a qualitative research. As the research did not fall under any typical qualitative research methodology, the best approach was to follow the Case Study method. Here the women's experiences were taken as different cases – generalized perceptions were found and then the data was analyzed by making comparisons of the findings.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The population for the study was Dhaka's affluent urban women, who have had at least one child and are:

- a). Mothers who could not return to work after having a child;
- b). Mothers who did return to work after having a child and
- c). Mothers who sought others means of employment.

Since it was not possible to consider the entire population, Purposive⁸ sampling was done, and the population was divided into the above mentioned groups. After forming the three clusters, Snowball⁹ sampling was used in order to accumulate similar respondents within each group.

3.3 Locale of the Study

Due to logistical and time constraints, the study was carried out in Dhaka city only. The reasoning for this is that Dhaka city is the most representative hub of the urban women's population.

3.4 Research Instrument

Based on qualitative approach, the following research instruments were used:

Semi-structured interviews In this type of interview, one wants to know specific information which can be compared and contrasted with information gained in other interviews. Here an interview schedule was produced. This included a list of specific questions or a list of topics to be discussed. This was taken to each interview to ensure continuity.

⁸Purposive sampling, also referred to as judgment, selective or subjective sampling is a non-probability sampling method that is characterised by a deliberate effort to gain representative samples by including groups or typical areas in a sample (Research Methodology, 2016).

⁹ In Snowball sampling, existing study subjects are used to recruit more subjects into the sample (Dawson, 2002).

3.5 Sampling, Respondents and Resource Persons

The population included the following stakeholders of this research:

- Dhaka's urban mothers
- Employers:
 - i. Government organizations
 - ii. Non-government organizations
 - iii. Private organizations

The main respondents were women, aged 25-45¹⁰ years, married, with children, affluent¹¹ (coming from upper middle¹² income households), educated, and were (a) Mothers who could not return to work after having a child; (b) Mothers who did return to work after having a child and (c) Mothers who sought others means of employment. Since the research followed a qualitative approach, a large sample size was not necessary. And, as the Case Study method was followed, it was not feasible to make comparisons within a very large sample size; so a sample of 13 women was interviewed. Among the other resource persons, 4 people out of the above-mentioned list were attained.

Regarding socio-economic status, the research was initiated with middle income in mind, but results showed that all the respondents fell into “upper middle income” category, as per the definition of upper middle income by World Bank (*see footnote 12*).

¹⁰ Median age at first birth among women 25-29 (2011 est) (indexmundi.com, 2014); % of female earner in urban household is 20.3 of total population (BBS, 2010); Highest % of urban female employed population is in the 25-39 age range (see Appendix)

¹¹ The researcher has defined “affluent” as living in Dhaka city, coming from upper middle income households, and having at least an undergraduate degree.

¹² According to World Bank, Bangladesh falls into Lower Middle Income range, with a GNI of \$1,046-\$4,125 per capita. Upper Middle Income ranges are from \$4,126-\$12,735 (Data.worldbank.org, 2016).

3.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The following procedures were used to gather data:

3.6.1 Methods of recording. Handwritten notes were taken during the in-depth interviews.

3.6.2 The interview schedule. The Interview Schedule included the following questionnaires:

3.6.2.1: For mothers. This questionnaire was divided into three sections: the first section contained questions regarding the respondent's profile; the second section contained questions regarding "motherhood as a barrier"; and the third section contained questions regarding "communication and negotiation". The interview schedule contains the list of respondents along with information such as age, education attainment, marital status, occupation, the organization they work/used to work at, income and date/time/place of interview taken. See Appendix B for the detailed questionnaire and Appendix E for the Interview Schedule.

3.6.2.2 For employers. This questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first section contained questions regarding the respondent's profile; the second section contained questions regarding "company information regarding female employees". The interview schedule contains the list of respondents along with information such as age, sex, educational attainment, occupation/designation, the organization they work at, and interview date/time/place. See Appendix C for the detailed questionnaire and Appendix E for the Interview Schedule.

3.7 Data Analysis Procedure

3.7.1 Transcriptions. The interviews were typed into transcripts, which made the data easy to keep track of and analyze.

3.7.2 Choosing a type of analysis. For the study, a Case-Oriented Understanding was followed. This is an understanding of social processes in a group, formal organization, community, or other collectivity that reflects accurately the standpoint of participants (Schutt, 2011).



CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study tried to find out the factors behind motherhood becoming a barrier to re-entering employment, and the subsequent negotiation tactics of the respondents to return to or gain employment. The findings have emerged out of the in-depth interviews conducted in parts – firstly on a sample of Dhaka’s affluent urban mothers, and secondly on personnel (who are involved in human resources) from various organizations. The findings and discussion of this research paper have been divided into the following sections:

- Profiles of the respondents
- Motherhood: Understanding the concept
- Factors behind motherhood as a barrier
- Respondents’ response (mothers and employers)
- Motherhood as a social construction
- Communication and negotiation

Some sections are further divided into several sub-sections to provide an in-depth analysis of the factors behind motherhood becoming a barrier to re-entering employment among the respondents.

4.1 Profile of the Respondents

In this section, a profile of the respondents has been provided. The respondents were divided into two groups, the first being the primary respondents, i.e. the mothers; and secondly, the employers.

Table 1: Respondent profile: Mothers

Sl.	Age	Highest educational attainment	Marital status	Occupation/designation	Organization	Combined income
Respondent 1	30	MA in English language teaching	Married, joint family	Senior coordinator, Teacher development	English in Action, Mott MacDonald	Tk. 50,000+
Respondent 2	33	MSc	Married, nuclear family	Sector Specialist	BRAC Education Programme	Tk. 70,000+
Respondent 3	30	Master's in education	Married, nuclear family	Senior material development officer	English in Action, Mott MacDonald	Tk. 50,000+
Respondent 4	39	2 Masters	Married, joint family	Assistant director, Executive office	Independent University, Bangladesh	Tk. 100,000+
Respondent 5	36	Bachelors	Married, nuclear family	Involved in family business	Self-employed	Tk. 100,000+
Respondent 6	45	Masters in corporate communications	Married, nuclear family	Housewife/Freelance consultant	Self-employed	Tk. 50,000+
Respondent 7	38	MBA, IBA	Married, joint family	Housewife/Freelance consultant	Self-employed	Tk. 50,000+ (no contribution from husband towards herself and kids)
Respondent 8	30+	MBA, NSU	Married, joint family	Marketing communication manager	Aviation Plus Ltd.	Tk. 100,000+
Respondent 9	29	BBA, NSU	Married, joint family	Housewife	N/A	Tk. 100,000+ (husband only)

Respondent 10	35	MBA	Married, joint family	Housewife	N/A	Tk. 100,000+ (husband only)
Respondent 11	35	Bachelors in Computer Science and Business	Recently divorced, lives with parents	Freelance IT Consultant	Self-employed	Tk. 50,000- 300,000 (project based, single income)
Respondent 12	26	A levels	Married, joint family	Playgroup teacher	Toddler's Teaching Centre	Tk. 70,000+
Respondent 13	33	MBA	Married, joint family	Brand Manager	Unitrend Limited	Tk. 100,000+

There were a total of 13 of Dhaka's urban mothers whose interviews were taken. Among these mothers, I sought after (a) Mothers who could not return to work after having a child; (b) Mothers who did return to work after having a child; and, (c) Mothers who sought others means of employment. The profiles were presented in descriptive form, in terms of the following criteria: age, highest educational attainment, marital status, occupation/designation, organization, and combined income.

The 13 respondents were between the ages of 26-45 years old. Only two respondents were below the age of 30. Seven respondents were between 30-35 years old, and three were between 35-40 years old. Only one respondent was 45 years old.

In terms of occupation, all 13 respondents were employed before having children. After having children, among the 13 respondents, seven were able to return to work. Among the remaining six, four were self-employed and the remaining two were unemployed.

All 13 respondents were educated women, but only one respondent was unable to go further than 'A' levels. In the remaining 12 respondents, three had bachelor's degrees. The remaining nine respondents all had master's degrees or MBA degree.

In terms of marital status, only one respondent was recently divorced and living with her parents, and the rest were all married. Among the 12 married respondents, eight lived in joint families, and the remaining four lived in nuclear families.

To assess socio-economic background of the respondents, I asked them their combined income per month, i.e. income of both husband and wife. Among the 13 respondents, nine stated that they had combined incomes with their husbands. One respondent stated that only her own income was used to pay for herself and the kids. One respondent was the sole earner as she was recently divorced. And two respondents depended on their husbands' income. For income ranges, three respondents had a combined income of Tk. 50,000+ per month; two respondents had a combined income of Tk. 70,000+ per month, and six respondents had a combined income of Tk. 100,000+. One respondent claimed her own income was Tk. 50,000+ and she didn't receive monetary support from her husband, and another respondent didn't earn a monthly income, rather worked on project basis that generated an income of anywhere between Tk.50,000 -300,000. The incomes of the respondents showcase the socio-economic status of themselves and their families. A majority of the respondents earn enough money to hire maids, or send their kids to day care, and yet they are still facing problems.

As the study was based in Dhaka city, all the respondents were residents of different areas of Dhaka city. Among the 13 respondents, two lived in Gulshan, four lived in Uttara, one in Segunbagicha, one in Shantinagar, two in Nakhhalpara, one in Wari, one in Mirpur, and one in Bashundhara.

Table 2: Respondent profile: Employers

Sl.	Age	Male/ Female	Highest education attainment	Occupation/ designation
Respondent 1	32	M	MBA	Officer HR
Respondent 2	26	F	BBA, IBA	Assistant Manager, Group Talent Management
Respondent 3	28	F	BBA, NSU	Coordinator, Talent Management
Respondent 4	60	M	PhD	Director General (PRL)

Interviews were initially conducted on three companies – one non-government organization, one government organization, and one private firm. All three were completed, plus one more private firm, since a variety of scenarios seemed more appropriate, as the first private firm interviewed had daycare facilities, and the second one didn't.

The interviews were conducted with relevant persons in the Human Resources departments, or of relevant positions in the organizations. The first interview conducted was with an HR officer from a very well-known international NGO of Bangladesh. The second interview was with a Talent Management specialist of a well-known private telecom of Bangladesh. The third interview was with a Talent Management coordinator of a private graphic design firm of Bangladesh. The fourth interview was with a retired government official from a government organization of Bangladesh.

4.2 Motherhood: Understanding the Concept

Motherhood can mean different things to different people, and our own definition of it is largely defined by our individual beliefs and experiences. To one person, motherhood might mean the act of raising children; to another, motherhood might be what makes them who they are. It is a very common thing to generalize the concept of “motherhood” and group together all the women into a stereotype, i.e. “being a mom”. In all honesty motherhood itself is a very subjective matter and is as unique as an individual’s fingerprints. It affects us all in one way or another, and that so it was important to know what our respondents thought of this concept. Let’s take a look:

Table 3: Description of motherhood by the respondents

Type of respondent	Description
a) Mothers who could not return to work after having a child	Respondent 9: She says that motherhood is a special bond with her child and she can sacrifice anything for them.
b) Mothers who did return to work after having a child	<p>Respondent 2: She found motherhood to be a big experience, an attainment. For her this experience brought many changes to her life. She believes that there are many obstacles for women in our society. However, she also believes that one forgets all their troubles once they look upon the face of their child.</p> <p>Respondent 1: She did not think of this concept too deeply. She said it involves raising a child, being affectionate, and she also thinks that raising a child is not just about making a child grow; it involves making a person more humane.</p> <p>Respondent 5: She feels that motherhood is a big responsibility, requires maturity and is a beautiful thing. She does not regret a single moment of it.</p>
c) Mothers who sought others means of employment	Respondent 7: She finds that motherhood to her is a massive responsibility, constantly having to be on one’s toes, and to show the right path, learning to set boundaries and volumes of work for the mother.

As we can see from the table, different mothers had different opinions on the concept of motherhood. Some mothers thought very deeply before responding, and for some, the words came naturally. From the conversations, it was evident that two things were in common among all the mothers - that motherhood was a big, difficult and life-changing experience, and carried immense responsibility. One respondent said that, "Motherhood is the best thing that happened to me and it is a glorious feeling."

Among all the respondents, five said that motherhood was an "experience." As part of their experience, the mothers also spoke about, "unconditional love", "maturity", and "fulfillment". Five mothers also mentioned that motherhood was a big "responsibility", and that they had "no regrets" despite the "hardships".

One respondent wrapped up her emotions really well when she said, "I feel that motherhood is a spiritual experience for me. It is having the ability to raise a child, mirror my ideas, and make a better version of myself."

Humans, as a whole, are truly bound by a common goal: to raise the next generation to the best of our abilities under the circumstances at hand. Whether the mothers returned to work or not, or found some other way of income, their feelings towards motherhood transcended every other need. To these mothers, motherhood itself was a positive thing, placing their love and affection for their children above everything else.

4.3 Motherhood as a Barrier

Barriers come in many forms, and this study delved into finding out whether Dhaka's urban mothers felt that motherhood was a barrier to them in anyway.

Table 4: *Motherhood as a barrier to the respondents*

Type of respondent	Description
a) Mothers who could not return to work after having a child	Respondent 10: She was surprised at how differently people viewed parenthood in her work place. She could not return to her job because her organization thought her performance would decrease after having the child and got rid of the post.
b) Mothers who did return to work after having a child	<p>Respondent 2: She could not return to work (for several years) after having her child, as there was no one to take care of the child other than herself. Family and friends would look down at her for choosing to stay home, and they would offer no help and pass comments instead.</p> <p>Respondent 5: She found that motherhood became a barrier in the professional sense. She had to quit a full time job due to discrimination from her workplace even before she became a mother.</p> <p>Respondent 8: She faced problems during her pregnancy from her work place; she feels that women become trapped in a male-dominated society.</p> <p>Respondent 12: She couldn't finish her higher education or return to full time work after the birth of her first child, as he was diagnosed with Thalassaemia, a genetic blood disorder that required blood transfusions every month and full time care.</p>
c) Mothers who sought others means of employment	<p>Respondent 7: She doesn't believe that motherhood is a barrier to her personally, in order to be a good mother one must make sure that she has the capacity to do it. Circumstances didn't allow her to go back to full time employment.</p> <p>Respondent 11: She feels that motherhood was an automatic stop to everything that she wanted to do, career-wise. She used to work abroad, and after conceiving, moved to Bangladesh. After a recent divorce, there was no one to help take care of her child. She moved in with her parents but they weren't of much help either.</p>

Out of the 13 respondents, two mothers claimed they could not return to work at all after having a baby. But between them, the 'factors' as to why they couldn't return were different. The factors are further explained in section 4.4.

From the mothers who did return to work, four mothers claimed that they faced problems or discrimination from their co-workers and/or organization during and after their pregnancy. One respondent said, "During my pregnancy I used to stay at Wari at my in-laws house, my husband was helpful and I had no problems going to work. My line manager often asked me why I was still there and not moving to my parents place. This was very annoying. Why should it matter where I stayed at all?"

The same respondent also claimed, "My job included a lot of travel, so during my pregnancy, I was allowed to fulfill my responsibilities from the head office, and travel less. My colleagues could not accept this, and often passed comments that I was getting more privileges than others."

Four other mothers claimed that they had faced a lot of difficulty returning to work, as there was no one to take care of their child. Only one respondent said that she couldn't return to work after the birth of her first child, who suffered from a genetic disease.

From those respondents who sought other means of employment, two respondents didn't believe that motherhood was a barrier for them, but other problems stopped them from returning to employment. One respondent felt that motherhood had a negative impact on her career, she said, "When I lived abroad, I had high-paying jobs that involved a lot of travel. After I got pregnant, I moved back to Bangladesh and that was an automatic stop to everything I had wanted to do."

Another respondent who faced discrimination at work ended up quitting altogether and sought other means of employment. She says, “I used to work at a well-known international organization. After returning from maternity leave, they kept me hanging as to whether they would renew my contract or not. Unable to bear the humiliation, I quit for good, and went into freelance consultancy.”

Swanson and Voitke (1997) indicated barriers partially explain the gap between the abilities of women and their achievements, or these barriers could explain the inhibitions of women’s career aspirations. From these responses, we can see that motherhood itself wasn’t a barrier to the respondents on a personal level; rather it became a barrier to re-entering employment, and created difficulties in the workplace and home after childbirth. Swanson and Voitke also acknowledged that barriers could be overcome, although successfully conquering a barrier depended on the type of specific barrier and the individual’s personality.

It is also seen that an unspoken barrier is present among all these women, is their conflict with themselves. Heins, Hendricks, and Martindale explained this well when they stated that, “some women experienced feelings of guilt or selfishness if they put their career interests first” (1982). The respondents in this study try to balance work and home life, try not to feel guilty about leaving their kids at home with family or servants, try to do the right thing - and this is a struggle that they face every day, every moment.

4.4 Factors Turn Motherhood to a Barrier

As we saw in the previous section, motherhood itself was not a barrier to the respondents, but there is presence of some factors that turn motherhood into a barrier. As elaborated in Chapter II, Rumana Liza Anam (2008), in her research, found that with the increasing lack of care-centers and care-givers, “it is even more difficult for women without the support of their extended families (mainly the child’s grandparents) to get back to work”. Anam also sheds light on how some mothers are bound to leave their children with servants and this poses a safety threat to the children in case of emergencies (2008). Valdez and Gutek describe family responsibilities as also being a reason why women face challenges in their careers (1987). Nieva and Gutek, found that women, as female employees, were not taken seriously by their bosses, colleagues or society (1981).

Let’s take a look at some of these factors elaborated by the mothers:

Table 5: *Factors that cause motherhood to become a barrier*

Factors	Description
1. Non-cooperation from organization/colleagues	Respondent 1: “I wanted to take maternity leave as late as possible, but my company’s policies forced me to take leave earlier, which resulted in my staying home for a prolonged period of time and subsequently developing pregnancy diabetes. The diabetes complicated my pregnancy and I had to have a hysterectomy after the delivery.”
2. Comment passing/negative remarks from colleagues/relatives	Respondent 2: She never went back to work after the maternity leave, and all people could ask her was, “Why aren’t you doing anything? What was the point of gaining so much education? Life doesn’t stop after having a baby!”
3. No one to take care of child	Respondent 4: “My in-laws were too elderly to help take care of my child, so I considered quitting work for good.” Respondent 13: “My husband and I both worked so there was no one to help take care of my child after delivery. It became a problem when I had to return to work.”

4. Discrimination at work/home	Respondent 5: “When I was pregnant, my workplace refused to give me leave before delivery. I was asked to resign if I did take leave.”
5. Non-cooperation/no support from family/in-laws	Respondent 6: “There was no one to help me after my kids were born. So I quit work to take care of them, and my husband would ask me how long I would be at home, and that I had to go earn money.” Respondent 9: “I live in the same building as my in-laws, but they refused to help me after my kids were born.”
6. Health problems of mother/child	Respondent 12: “I used to work part-time before I got pregnant. After my child’s birth and diagnosis of the genetic disorder, I had to take care of him fulltime and there was no scope to return to work.”

As it can be seen from the table above, six factors were found through this research. From the 13 respondents, it was found out that:

Three respondents found non-cooperation from organization/colleagues to be a factor. One respondent said, “The work hours at my organization were very long. When I got pregnant, I used to be sick most of the time, so I couldn’t give proper time to the organization. My bosses wouldn’t understand my difficulties and give me strict deadlines.” This factor was also found by researcher Rumana Liza Anam in her research on maternity leave policies. She states, “Women who do decide to work are offered virtually no help by their organizations to balance their work-family responsibilities” (Anam, 2008).

Two respondents found comment passing/negative remarks from colleagues/relatives to be a factor. When asked how she felt after hearing such negative comments, one respondent remarked, “Of course I didn’t feel good. They weren’t commenting seriously, they would mean it as a joke, but it was still insensitive and hurtful of my feelings.”

Similarly, in the literature review, Maley (2014) further elaborates that “the AHRC report also found 36 percent of mothers experienced discrimination when they returned to work, in the form of negative comments from colleagues and managers, or discrimination related to pay and conditions.”

The largest amount of respondents, seven, found that there was no one to help take care of their child as a factor to motherhood becoming a barrier. One respondent said, “My organization was very adamant that I return to work as soon as possible after delivery. But I live in a nuclear family, and there was no one to help take care of my child.”

Another respondent said, “After my twins were born, I was left alone to fend for myself. Despite living in a joint family, no one helped me raise my children, and I ended up getting very stressed and having nervous breakdowns.”

Three respondents found that discrimination at home or work was also a factor. Among them, one respondent said, “My mother-in-law would do everything for my sister-in-law, but leave me helpless. She wouldn’t even let me hire a nanny.”

The second largest number of respondents, six, found that non-cooperation or no support from family or in-laws was another factor. Among them, one respondent said, “Sometimes I would want to go out and meet friends. But I couldn’t trust any of my in-laws to help. Once in a while when I did go out, my mother-in-law would soon call me and make me feel guilty about leaving my child at home.”

Two respondents found health problems of the mother/child to be a factor. One respondent said, “When I was pregnant, I got diagnosed with hypothyroidism. This has affected me till date, and it was a constant struggle to raise my child without help while taking care of myself as well.”

From this it is understood that the two biggest issues important to the respondents are the fact that they do not receive support from family or in-laws and that there is no one to help take care of their children when they need to go back to work.

4.5 Respondents’ Response

Now we take a look at the communication and negotiation aspect of this research. There are basically two types of communication, verbal and non-verbal. Verbal communication entails the use of words in delivering the intended message. The two major forms of verbal communication include written and oral communication. Written communication includes traditional pen and paper letters and documents, typed electronic documents, e-mails, text chats, SMS and anything else conveyed through written symbols such as language. Oral communication is the spoken word, either face-to-face or through phone, voice chat, video conferencing or any other medium. Nonverbal communication entails communicating by sending and receiving wordless messages. These messages usually reinforce verbal communication, but they can also convey thoughts and feelings on their own (Nayab, 2015). In this section I found out the types of communication that takes place, how the mothers dealt with the factors, and lastly, how they negotiated with the factors.

Table 6: *The way the factors were communicated to the respondents*

Type of Communication	Description
Verbal	<p>Respondent 1: Her colleagues would say things like, “Oh we are getting so tanned running around at the field level, and you have to do nothing at all!” Even if she wasn’t doing field visits, her work was equally tough. Relatives would pass comments insinuating that she was taking advantage of her parents by keeping her child with them, even though they themselves never said anything.</p> <p>Respondent 8: Her in-laws had said no to daycare, and the respondent says their overall mentality was like that. They wouldn’t help and wouldn’t let her get any help either. Whenever the respondent visited her mother, she would hear things like, “Your sister-in-law doesn’t go anywhere, and we can never find you at home”. She did everything to please her in-laws, but it never seemed enough.</p> <p>Respondent 10: She used to work at an international Chamber of Commerce and her foreigner boss directly expressed his disappointment that she would be going on maternity leave. She reassured him that she would definitely return, and the company was okay with it. After 3 months maternity leave, she sent her office an email, to which she got no reply. Perturbed, she called her colleague and was informed that, “This position is no longer available, please apply again.” It was not said directly to her, but she knew the underlying message: “You cannot give your full effort because you have a baby.”</p>
Non-verbal	<p>Respondent 7: During her maternity leave, the respondent became aware that no one was going to help her raise her children, and realized that they (her in-laws) didn’t want her to go back to work. They left her alone to fend for herself and the kids, with no rest and no help. The respondent was afraid that if she went back to work, then the kids would be raised by servants, and since she was totally against that, she quit work to raise her children. The respondent saw that her mother-in-law was very partial towards her own daughter, and would provide all help to her, whereas leaving the daughter-in-law (the respondent), helpless. Seeing her in-laws non-verbal cues, the respondent ended up having several nervous breakdowns due to anxiety and lack of rest. Her own parents were old and lived far away, so they couldn’t help. The respondent’s mother-in-law also did not like the fact that the respondent had tried to hire a nanny and to show her displeasure, she didn’t talk to the respondent for several days.</p>

Out of the 13 respondents, 9 mothers faced verbal communication exclusively. Only one respondent faced both verbal and non-verbal communication. Two respondents faced non-verbal communication only.

In terms of verbal communication, 10 respondents received oral communication. Among these 10, six respondents complained of receiving negative comments and remarks from their family and friends or colleagues. One respondent said that she never went back to work after the maternity leave, and all people could ask her was, “Why aren’t you doing anything? What was the point of gaining so much education? Life doesn’t stop after having a baby!” When her husband and she would meet friends, someone would ask her husband, “What is your wife doing?” and her husband would respond with a “nothing”. He never really let her feel that even if she wasn’t working, it was *okay*. She is sure that internally he felt ashamed or embarrassed and wished that it would have been better if she had been working.

The respondent also mentioned, “My in-laws didn’t believe in daycare and wouldn’t allow me to go for it. She would tell me, ‘You don’t need a job; take care of your child’. My own parents told me to work, but at the same time they also wouldn’t support me in taking care of the child. My husband was also working out of Dhaka and he couldn’t help me either. He would say, ‘I’m not there, my mother isn’t there, if something happened to the child, what will you do?’”

After she recently joined work after many years, her mother-in-law would say things to her like, “Oh I just spoke to our granddaughter and can hear how unhappy she sounds.” These comments would create a mental pressure for the respondent, and she

hopes that the respondent will succumb and leave her job as her daughter is “suffering”. The respondent never spoke to her mother-in-law in person after returning to work, as they live outside Dhaka.

Another respondent mentioned, “Relatives would not allow me to bring my kids to their house by saying things like, ‘Oh no kids will be present, and this party is for adults only.’ And when I couldn’t return to work, my husband used to pass comments and frequently ask, ‘How long will you be at home? You need to earn money.’”

One respondent faced negative feedback from her manager at work during a performance review after returning to work.

Another respondent spoke about non-cooperation and no support from her in-laws, “My mother-in-law flat out told me that, ‘I cannot take care of your child for you, leave your job or find a maid.’”

One respondent faced a lot of discrimination at work, during her pregnancy. Her colleagues would pass comments, and disturb her at home by calling on the phone (oral communication); and emailing and couriering documents (written communication). Her colleagues would also ignore and outcast her at company gatherings (non-verbal communication).

In terms of non-verbal communication, both respondents in this category were communicated to via behaviour and body language. One respondent claimed that she did not receive any help from her in-laws after childbirth, and that she was left alone to handle everything on her own, which resulted in stress and nervous breakdowns.

Another respondent said, “The company I worked in, like many other companies in Dhaka, did not provide flexi-time. I feel that women become trapped in this male-dominated society. The men in the company would not understand my difficulties (since I was sick a lot during my pregnancy) and give me strict deadlines. Prior to this pregnancy, I had had a miscarriage before, due to all the stress from my work.” She also mentioned, “I stay with my in-laws, in the same building, but they didn’t provide any support to me during or after my pregnancy. I also didn’t have a maid, as I didn’t want maids raising my kid. I could have kept my child with my own mother, but my in-laws didn’t like it and would make their disapproval apparent, so I wasn’t able to do it.”

The other respondent complained of non-cooperation from her organization when she was pregnant. They would be wary of her situation and give her strict deadlines and stress at work. At home, her in-laws provided no help themselves, and they wouldn’t allow her to get any help either. She was not allowed to keep a maid, nor take help from her own mother.

There were two respondents who did not have any negative communication experience. One respondent’s family is quite supportive, but she couldn’t go back to full time employment because of her ill child. And no one told the other respondent anything directly; she herself understood that her in-laws couldn’t help her in her situation. That is why both these respondents do not fall into any communication category.

As we can see from the responses, a majority of factors that made motherhood a barrier were communicated orally to the respondents. It is proof of how crippling a few said words can be to an individual, creating mental pressure, stress, and impairing decision-making abilities.

Table 7: Mothers' response of how they dealt with the barriers

Type of respondent	Description
a) Mothers who could not return to work after having a child	Respondent 9: She had started an online boutique after her first child but had to end it after the birth of her second child. She is currently job hunting and is planning to go full time after her second child goes to school.
b) Mothers who did return to work after having a child	Respondent 1: She stays with her parents during weekdays and keeps her child with them when she goes to office. Whenever the colleagues make a comment, she laughs it off, or replies accordingly. Respondent 3: Moved houses from Segunbagicha to Nakhalpara to live near her sister, who helps take care of the child when the respondent goes to work. Respondent 5: Left full time job and joined family business in order to have more flexible time with her child, and leaves her child with her mother whenever she has to attend important work.
c) Mothers who sought others means of employment	Respondent 6: Avoided contact with family who would discriminate against her and made more child-friendly friends. Also became self-employed (as a freelance consultant) when she realized she couldn't return to full time employment. Respondent 11: She lives with parents and works as a freelance consultant to help support herself and her son financially. She now has a nanny to help but does most of the child's work herself. She plans to join full time work as soon as her child goes to school.

We are all aware how difficult it is to deal with people in our society, especially with members of the in-laws for a woman in Bangladesh. So respondents dealt with the various situations the best way they could, by taking help from whatever source they could find.

Among the 13 respondents, eight respondents take help from their family (husbands, parents, siblings) and housemaids to take care of their child, and are able to go to work. One respondent said, "My health problems are still there, but I can manage with the help of my husband and a maid. It is only because of them that I am able to work after a gap of so long." Another respondent elaborated how her family helped her to return to work, "My sisters took turns in watching my child, and that's why I was able to return to work."

Among those who could not return to work, one respondent said, “I didn’t want to leave my child with servants, and can’t always rely on my in-laws to help. So that’s why I am home for now. I am on the lookout for a good job, and when I do find one, if I still don’t have house help, and then I will look for a good daycare center.”

The remaining three respondents went into freelance consultancy as a means of income. Among them, one respondent said, “After my kids grew up a little, I ventured into freelance consultancy. This way I am able to give time to home and earn money as well.”

From the above information, it is evident that to return to employment, Dhaka’s affluent urban mothers need any form of help to assist in taking care of their kids.

Table 8: *Negotiation tactics of the respondents*

Description
Respondent 2: After a prolonged maternity leave, she applied for a job, but only to meet her husband’s disapproval. She still went ahead and passed the written test, securing a job offer. She explained to her husband that if he helped her, then she would be able to manage everything. Acquiescing, her husband then explained things to their daughter, and even helped whenever he could.
Respondent 5: She tried to fight back, but there was no cooperation from the authorities. There was no one to complain to either, as the head of the department was behind all the non-cooperation.
Respondent 10: After the rejection from her previous workplace, she suffered from post-partum depression. Later, she looked around for other jobs, but not too seriously. Her mother-in-law helps to look after the baby, but the respondent’s husband is not too keen on her returning to work. He says that the baby needs her full attention. Now that the child is 13 months old, the respondent’s husband has relented a little. So she is now looking around for work.
Respondent 13: After she joined back, the respondent’s mother-in-law would take care of the child in her absence. Even then, the respondent had to make sure that her mother-in-law did not have to do much. She would do all the essential tasks at before going off to work, leaving only feeding the baby and making her sleep to her mother-in-law.

In the literature review, Gregory explained how the respondents in her research went through many layers of negotiation in order to deal with the factors that did not allow them to return to work. Gregory observed that the experiences of how the women actually managed all the factors before returning to work was still an unspoken issue, veiled as “private concerns or individual choices” (2015).

In this study, after facing the factors that caused motherhood to become a barrier to re-entering employment, some mothers were able to negotiate a better position for themselves, and some were not. Among the 13 respondents, six respondents actually managed to initiate any form of negotiation. One respondent who had relatives who discriminated against her said, “Whenever my relatives would send me an invitation and not allow my kids to come, I would tell them that I am sorry and that I’m busy, and would thank them for inviting.”

The remaining seven respondents were not able to initiate any form of negotiation. One respondent said, “I argued with my organization to get maternity leave as late as possible but they did not agree. “ Another respondent said, “My husband tried to convince my mother-in-law to help me, but she refused, leaving little scope for negotiation.”

Genilo, Akther and Haque (2013) found in their research that the female respondents, who were fortunate enough to have a supportive home environment, were able to cope up easily with pressures of work and home.

However, in this research, a majority of the mothers are dealing with factors that relate to a). issues with family and in-laws, and b). finding no one to help take care of their child. With more than half the respondents not negotiating, or unable to negotiate, this goes to show that it is very difficult for the women to negotiate with family members and in-laws, as the repercussions result in the disintegration of peace at home.

4.6 Motherhood as a Social Construction

In chapter II, we see that the Social Construction of Reality theory takes a look at the way social phenomena are created, institutionalized, known, and made into tradition by humans. Let's take a look at what the respondents have to say:

Table 9: *Motherhood as a barrier is a social construction*

Description
<p>Respondent 2: “A woman needs to get married, have children, and become independent. If a woman gives time to family life only, she ends up having no identity. I have given and slaved away seven years of my life to my husband and daughter, and what did I get out of it? No identity. In others' eyes, I have achieved ‘nothing’. Men these days are looking for working women as wives. This is the new trend. They also expect their family life to go smoothly as well. And also their children should be well taken care of. Then? How is all this possible without any help?”</p>
<p>Respondent 3: “For a productive working environment, every organization needs to have a crèche/daycare.”</p>
<p>Respondent 8: Before becoming pregnant, the respondent had been working in advertising for 5 years. The work hours were long, and after conceiving, she was sick a lot and so she couldn't give proper time to the company. She says, “If I were a man, I wouldn't have faced this problem.”</p>
<p>Respondent 9: Before her son was born, the respondent had given 3-4 interviews at various organizations, but the interview panel would question her career gap negatively and she didn't get any call backs from 3 out of 4 firms. The 4th firm was an advertising agency that the respondent decided to not pursue further as the long hours would not be suitable at all.</p>
<p>Respondent 13: “I think I can safely say that without a family's support, it would become nearly impossible for me to continue work.”</p>

Corollary to the description of Social Construction Theory of Reality, the mothers' responses show that most of the factors that cause motherhood to become a barrier are due to the fact that the concept of motherhood itself is a socially constructed phenomenon. The culture and tradition runs deep, with Bangladesh having a heavily patriarchal society (elaborated further in Chapter II). Women were expected to be submissive to the man of the house, bear his children, and take care of the family.

From the view point of social construction, constructs such as motherhood are assumed to be as the result of a process of typification that occurs through the passing on of beliefs and values from the social categories that define an individual's life. These typifications of perceptions tend to be thought of as truths without consideration of the potential for other possibilities and thus become institutionalized beliefs (Walls, 2007).

Freedman and Combs (1996) suggested that once a social construct is institutionalized, it starts to become legit and this results in the maintenance and perpetuation of this constructed 'truth'. Subsequently, men, women, parents, children, employers and anyone else who is a stakeholder of this construct accepts it as the inevitable truth, and behaves accordingly.

One respondent talked about people's attitude towards children's behaviour as well. The respondent compared the reactions of the society abroad versus people in this country. Foreigners allowed their children to be themselves and free and didn't complain as much as our people do. The respondent elaborated, "It is very difficult to raise children in this society, so to tackle this; I made child-friendly friends, and boycotted all snooty relatives. One has to be practical and can't let people walk all over

them. People have to be patient and generous with children, they are also bored and stifled in these concrete jungles and don't have any proper places to play." This strengthens the argument that all these things related to women, pregnancy, and children are all part of a social construct that has become ingrained into our systems.

Another point that shows that motherhood as a barrier is a social construct is people's mental perception towards pregnancy. One respondent talked about her experience at her organization: "I was working during my pregnancy, and at my office, a male colleague had a baby and everyone was congratulating him. But to me, everyone was trying to console me. Apparently, pregnancy was a bad thing for women."

In response to organization-related issues, some respondents strongly emphasized on the fact that families and organizations should be more understanding and provide support. One respondent comments, "If husbands and family members give support, a woman can do anything. There are terrible double standards in society, with mentality and behavioral problems. If more organizations provided flexi-time and daycare facilities, then women employees' productivity will definitely increase."

As it can be seen from the responses, the recurring point that keeps coming up is, in essence, society's mentality towards women, pregnancy and children. Women are accepted as homemakers and bearers of children, and therefore accepted as the weaker sex. When it comes to an organization, the mentality is the same, where male employees are seen as better workers and treated differently as well. An organization's attitude towards their pregnant employees is also questionable, as discrimination still takes place, in this day and age.

4.7 Employers

This section includes the responses of the employers of three types of organizations: government, non-government, and private.

Table 10: Responses of employers regarding female employees

Question	Government org.	NGO	Private org.
No. of male and female employees in organization	Employer 4: There are a total of 452 employees, among which 384 are male and 68 are female employees.	Employer 1: In the head office there are a total of 2405 employees, among which 1761 are male and 644 are female employees. In the field level there are a total of 39,899 employees, among which 32,249 are male and 9650 are female staff.	Respondent 2: There are total of 1400 employees, among which women make up around 9-10% of the populations, around 150 female employees. Respondent 3: There are 240 employees in total, among which 210 are male and 30 are female employees.
No. of married female employees (with children) in organization	Employer 4: There are 52 female employees who are married.	Employer 1: We currently don't have this data in specialized documented form, like the "staff position". This information is available on individual profiles of female employees in the database. The information is updated as per employee discretion.	Employer 2: This data is not available. Employer 3: There are 8 married female employees in the organization.
Relevance of female employees having children to the organization	Employer 4: None.	Employer 1: No it does not. I would also add that there is no scope for racism or discrimination against differently abled or indigenous employees. It goes against our HR policies.	Employer 2: None. Employer 3: None.
Organizations' preference for unmarried/childless female employees	Employer 4: None.	Employer 1: There is no such preference, however, it is a common misconception that NGOs prefer females who are unmarried and without children, as NGOs function mostly on field visits. This idea is completely wrong as many of our Head Office and field level female staff have children and are still managing to work well.	Employer 2: None. Employer 3: None.

Table 10 covers the basic questions that were asked to the employers. As we can see, the outlook is very positive from the employer's side, towards their female employees.

When delving deeper and asking the employers whether the female employees who had children deteriorated in performance in any way, here's what the employers said:

Table 11: *Inconsistency of work performance of female employees with children*

Government organization	Employer 4: It cannot be generalized. A person who works full time and is sincere, responsible, and works with her full ability – might also have children to take care of. In our office even unmarried female employees have been seen as late-comers and early-goers; and if questioned they show several excuses for their activities. They are obviously underperforming. Marriage and children cannot be considered as criteria for performance and under-performance, as performance only depends on employees' willingness, sincerity, working condition of the work place and physical condition.
NGO	Employer 1: I think this depends entirely on the mentality of the female employee. What happens usually when an employee goes on a long leave, they have some trouble adjusting when they return to work. It is normal behaviour, for both men and women. Some people overcome the feeling and move ahead and some do not.
Private organizations	Employer 2: No, our organization provides a free daycare service specifically for female employees. This is completely free of charge and entire cost is borne by HR. According to Bangladesh Labor Law any employer with more than (25-50) female employees must provide day care facilities for their female employees within or near the office premises. To ensure compliance with Labor Law, our organization launched its daycare facility in 2012. We also provide 6 months paid maternity leave. Employer 3: None.

Two organizations believed that a female employee's work performance was entirely dependent on her proactiveness, personality and capability. Another organization claimed their female employees did not deteriorate in work performance in

any way as they had excellent facilities to help them. This organization also brought up information about the Bangladesh Labour Law, which states that, “Any employer with more than (25-50) female employees must provide day care facilities for their female employees within or near the office premises.” The NGO and the other private organization did not state anything about the labour law at all, but in Table 15 it can be seen that the government organization follows the labour law.

Table 12: “Motherhood” as a reason for leaving job and subsequent effect on organization

Government organization	Employer 4: None. Female employees left their jobs when they or their husbands had decided to move to another place either for immigration or for their husband’s transfer.
NGO	Employer 1: Our organization is a very pro-woman organization and we try our best to support women in every way. We provide paid* maternity leave for 6 months. After that we have one of the best daycare centers in the city, at a reasonable cost for employees. Both male and female employees are allowed to use the daycare. We also provide flexi-time to our employees, and new mothers are allowed frequent breaks so that they made nurse their babies. With so many facilities, it is very rare to see female employees leave their jobs after having children. I can tell you from all the exit interviews I have taken, what we do is consult with the female employee as to why they want to leave, and advise them and give them options to their problems. Most of the time the problems are solved, and the employee does not leave. In my experience, I have come across only one female employee who was absolutely determined to leave after having a baby. She could not cope with the pressure of work and home and so decided to quit. When any employee leaves, doesn’t matter is it male or female, of course it a loss for the organization. The loss is more in the short term as there is a loss of experienced staff. <i>*after confirmation</i>
Private organizations	Employer 2: It has rarely happened, none to my knowledge, and it has not affected the organization in any way. Employer 3: Yes, one female employee had left. She cited her reason as having no family support to help raise her child, so she had no choice but to quit. No effect on organization as yet.

Three out of four organizations claimed that none of their female employees have left their jobs, citing motherhood as reason for quitting. The remaining

organization, a private one, admitted that one female employee did leave citing motherhood as a reason. None of the organizations have been affected in anyway, but one organization was quoted as saying that, “The loss is more in the short term as there is a loss of experienced staff.

HR policies of the organizations

Two out of the four organizations were open about sharing their HR policies - they were the NGO and the government organization. The Government organization employee said, “Government rules are the following:

Rules ensure equality in every aspect in carrying out government responsibilities for the women. Female employees usually get the benefit of 'Day Care Center' and 6-months maternity leave which can be extended up to another two months showing reasonable and acceptable causes.”

The NGO employee said, “Yes all our HR policies are available for our staff at our website.”

One private organization did not share their HR policies, but shared their HR policies towards women. The employee said, “We are currently updating our policies and have not finalized it yet. If previous policies are shared, then it may implicate confusing connotations about our practices. In regards to our women employees, we provide 6 months paid maternity leave. Generally this does not effect 26 days annual leave and leave encashment of 14 days. The employees receive leaves and benefits based on work load and as per management approval.

The other private organization didn't share their HR policies citing confidentiality as a reason.

4.8 Cases

Presented in this section are the cases of three respondents from the sample that was interviewed. The first case is about a respondent who was able to return to work, the second case is about a respondent who unable return to work and the third case is about a respondent who chose other means of employment. Please note that the names used in the cases are not real.

4.8.1 Case 1. Seven years of silence: the tale of an unemployed woman.

When Zana married the love of her life eight years ago, she had harboured many dreams, and couldn't wait to fulfill them all with her new husband by her side. She moved in with her in-laws and worked in a NGO-run school, having completed her higher studies in Education. Within a year of marriage Zana found out she was expecting. With hope in her eyes and love in her heart, Zana looked forward to a bright

Fast forward seven years and Zana is a 33 year old woman living with her husband and child in Segunbagicha. Her daughter is now six years old, but when Zana was pregnant with her and even after, she ended up facing many problems. She used to live with her in-laws back then and Zana had a difficult time during pregnancy as she was also diagnosed with hypothyroidism and a working woman at the same time. Her in-laws didn't offer much in terms of support as they both worked outside of Dhaka, so her husband would try to help as much as he could.

After Zana's daughter was born, Zana had no one to help her raise her child. She chose to stay home and take care of her child instead and remained unemployed for the last seven years. Within these years, many had their two cents to put in. Family criticized the fact that she was wasting her education and talent by sitting at home. Friends would be busy with their own careers and ask embarrassing questions whenever they met her. Her husband, although he tried hard not to show it, was embarrassed that his wife did "nothing". Unable to convince anyone that taking care of her small family was a full time job too, Zana finally built up courage and went job hunting.

It was only recently that Zana was able to secure a job – and that was the easy part. With no one to help take care of her child, she had to coerce her husband to pitch in. With the additional help of her housemaid, she now manages home and work life. However, the same people who criticized the fact that she was home, now began criticizing the fact that she left her kid at home to go back to work. With no choice but to labour ahead, Zana struggles on, in search of self-identity and success.

4.8.2 Case 2. Pregnancy: death of career for a woman(?). Lara is a 35 year old woman living with her 13 month old daughter, husband, and in-laws in Shewrapara. Already successful for many years in the rapid world of advertising in Dhaka, Lara got married and soon after, switched to a job with an international company. Soon she and her husband were expecting their first child. While she was pregnant, what struck her as odd were her colleagues' attitudes. The male colleagues who recently had children would be congratulated, whilst they would speak to her patronizingly, as if with her

pregnancy, she has also announced the death of her career. She took maternity leave from work, assuring her organization that she would definitely come back.

Three months of maternity leave had passed and Lara decided it was time to prepare to return to work. She sent her office an email, to which she got no reply. Perturbed, she called her colleague and was informed that, “This position is no longer available, please apply again.” It was not said directly to her, but she knew the underlying message: “You cannot give your full effort because you have a baby.”

Lara was shocked at this sudden turn of events, and decided to stay home with her daughter until she found another job. At home, her mother-in-law would give her grief about leaving her baby at home with her and going out on certain occasions.

Combined with the rejection from work and dissatisfaction at home, Lara went into depression. Unable to find any support to help with her baby, she is unable to look for a job seriously. With day care as her last resort, Lara is waiting it out and testing the waters in the job market.

4.8.3 Case 3. Long road to success: from fulltime to freelancing. For Naaz, her life had been a road much less travelled by many. She is a 45 year old woman living with her husband and three kids in Bashundhara. This was her husband’s second marriage, and he has a child from his first marriage, along with two more with Naaz.

Naaz had a very successful career before having children, working for well-known international organizations. She had her first child 17 years ago, and after returning

from maternity leave at one such large organization, finding the organization very disrespectful towards her, by keeping her hanging as to whether her contract will be renewed or not.

Frustrated and humiliated, Naaz quit the job. However, once she was home, Naaz had no one to help her with the kids. She had no rest and had to be constantly vigilant. This had been stressful and culminated in depression. There were no daycare facilities 17 years ago, and Naaz didn't trust her maids enough to leave her child alone with them. So she couldn't even think about returning to a full time job. Her husband was of no help either; he passed comments and made her feel guilty about not earning money.

Over the years, Naaz tried to return to full time employment a few times but the tension of leaving her kids alone with maids was too much. So she quit her place of employment for good and then ventured into freelance consultancy. She was finally happy as a person and successful in life, able to give time to both work and her family.



CHAPTER V SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

The paper basically looked at the factors that cause motherhood to become a barrier to re-entering employment for Dhaka's urban mothers. It also looked into how these factors are communicated to the mothers and how these mothers negotiate with these factors.

From the interviews of mothers, the paper discovered the following barriers that the mothers faced:

- Motherhood itself is not a barrier to the mothers;
- Barriers came in the form of preventing return to re-entering employment, creating difficulties at the workplace after return to work, and disruptions in family life due to unavailability of support.

Likewise, the study also revealed the factors that caused the barriers. Among these factors:

- “No one to take care of child” had the most number of respondents;
- “Non-cooperation/no support from family/in-laws” had the second highest number of respondents.

Then the study discovered how the factors were communicated to the respondents.

It was found out that:

- There were two types of communication, verbal and non-verbal;
- Majority of the respondents faced verbal communication, at home and at work;
- The verbal communication that the respondents had to face had a big impact on them, resulting in depression, embarrassment, indecision, loss in confidence, stress and nervous breakdowns;
- Thus creating an invisible barrier that prevented the respondents from returning to work, or facing difficulties if they did return.

Next the paper showed how the respondents dealt with the barriers:

- The majority of respondents take help from their family and house help in order to return to work;
- Remaining respondents, either couldn't return to work at all, or sought other means of employment.

Regarding negotiation tactics, the paper discovered that:

- More than half of the respondents were not able to come to any negotiation with their family/in-laws/organization;
- The remaining were successful in returning to work through negotiation;
- The main type of negotiation used was verbal - the respondents would try to either argue or convince someone to come to an agreement.

In terms of motherhood becoming a barrier as socially constructed phenomenon, the study found that:

- Mothers' responses show that a majority of the factors are socially constructed barriers;
- Bangladesh has a strongly patriarchal society, which accepts women as homemakers and child-bearers, thus establishing them as the weaker sex;
- Organizations do not empathize with their female employees, they are rather considered incompetent after childbirth;
- The respondents battle with negative attitude of society (at home and at work) towards women and pregnancy.

The paper also delved into finding out an employer's/organization's viewpoint:

- All the organizations had relatively less number of female than male employees;
- Not all organizations kept records of married female employees who had children;
- It didn't matter to any of the organizations whether their female employees had children or not;
- None of the organizations had any preference for unmarried/childless female employees over the married female employees with children;
- According to Bangladesh government's Labour Law, an organization with more than 50 female employees is required to provide daycare facilities. However, not all organizations provide these daycare facilities;

- They believed that a female employee's work performance was entirely dependent on herself and the organizations had no negative influence on it;
- Three out of four organizations stated that none of their female employees had quit citing motherhood as a reason;
- Two out of four organizations were willing to share their HR policies.

5.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.2.1 Conclusion. From the study findings, and keeping in compliance with the Social Construction theory, it is evident that all the factors that have caused motherhood to become a barrier are fundamentally systemic. The establishment of women as the weaker sex, the traditions, the norms, and the attitudes at home and in organizations, are, in totality, socially constructed standards that we, as men and women, have come to accept.

In the literature review, Schott (2011) had found that her research showed evidence of, "a direct, causal link from having children to working substantially less"; but that was not the case for Dhaka's urban mothers. Most of them were able to return to work, however, the respondents strongly believe that if they received more support from their families and from their organizations, then they, and other women like them, will be successful at both their homes and work places. Families are essential for mental and physical support; and employers need to provide organizational support by being more empathetic and other benefits such as flexi-time, day care etc.

Also in the literature review, Julia Jewell found in her research that there were two types of responses among those women who tried to return to work: the first, were among mothers who were “willing to sacrifice for the good of their children and feel staying home was the right choice for them”; and secondly, were among mothers who felt, “a return to work is what is needed” (2014). However, for Dhaka’s affluent women, the feeling was not two-fold. Findings showed that there was one unanimous desire: to go back to work. The respondents’ personal feelings made them feel guilty, but it didn’t stop them from trying to return to employment.

When it came to employers’ viewpoint, the organizations response was positive, but it differed greatly when compared to the mothers’ responses. The organizations seemed oblivious or remained quiet on the fact that gender discrimination does occur, and tried to show themselves in a positive light. From the discussion in the literature review, it was found that Bangladeshi companies have a mixed workplace culture, differing organization to organization. MNCs were found to have a better work culture than private and government organizations (Ahmad, Habib and Kamruzzaman, 2015, p. 186) and according to the mothers’ responses, private sector organizations were generally intolerant and non-empathizing.

5.2.2 Recommendations. In the literature review, Zainzinger (2012) elaborated on how women sought assistance from the UK government to bring about change in the policy level in order to remove barriers for working women.

Similarly, in Bangladesh, there are a few things that the government can do to ensure the success of these types of women. For starters, many companies are not even aware of, or choose to ignore the labour laws towards women. So the government should create awareness campaigns in order to spread the message to all.

The Bangladesh Labour Law 2006, Section 50 states that:

50. Restrictions on termination of employment of a woman in certain case.- If any notice or order of discharge, dismissal, removal or otherwise termination of employment is given by the employer to a woman worker within a period of 6 (six) months before and 8 (eight) weeks after her delivery and such notice or order is given without sufficient cause, she shall not be deprived of any maternity benefit to which she would be entitled under this Chapter if such notice or order has not been given. (The Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, 2015, p. 7921)

Another change on policy level would include a revision on current policy on day care provided for female employees' children. Section 94 states:

94. Rooms for children - (1) In every establishment, where 40 (forty) or more female workers are ordinarily employed, one or more suitable rooms shall be provided and maintained for the use of their children who are under the age of 6 (six) years. (The Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, 2015, p. 7939)

Instead of companies with only “40 or more women”; this law should be applicable to an organization with any number of female employees.

After revising the law, the government also needs to establish a proper monitoring system, in order to ensure that the law is actually being followed by organizations.

Since very little literature has been published on this topic, this study can be a promising start to bring changes to the future of Dhaka's affluent urban mothers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Guide for Mothers

Respondent's Profile

Key informant name: _____

Age: _____ Occupation: _____

Highest educational attainment: _____

Position/Designation: _____

Organization/Place: _____

Family income (husband+wife): (a) Tk. 30,000+ (b) Tk. 50,000+ (c) Tk. 70,000+
(d)Tk. 100,000+

Interview Date/Time: _____

Interviewer: Minu Ahmed

Motherhood as a barrier:

What do you understand by 'motherhood'?

Is motherhood a barrier to you in any way?

If yes, what are the factors behind motherhood becoming a barrier? And please explain why.

If no, briefly explain why not.

How have these factors that you have mentioned, become a barrier to re-entering employment?

Communication and Negotiation:

How exactly are these factors communicated to you?

Have you been able to negotiate with these factors?

If you were successfully able to negotiate your way out of this barrier, what tactics did you use?

If you were unsuccessful in your negotiating attempts, what were the reasons?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix B

Interview Guide for Employers

Respondent's Profile

Key informant name: _____

Age: _____ Male/Female: _____

Occupation: _____

Highest educational attainment: _____

Position/Designation: _____

Organization/Place: _____

Interview Date/Time: _____

Interviewer: Minu Ahmed

Company information regarding female employees:

How many female employees are currently working in your organization?

How many of these female employees are married with children?

Does it matter to the company, whether these female employees have children or not?

Is there any preference for unmarried or childless female employees?

Have the female employees who have children, deterred from their work performance in any way?

If yes, please explain how they have underperformed.

What percentage/number of the female employees leave their jobs after having children?

Were there any incidents where a female employee decided to quit, citing 'motherhood' as a reason?

Has this effected the organization? If yes, how?

Would you be willing to share your HR policies with us? If yes, kindly attach with this questionnaire. If no, please explain why.

Thank you for your time.

Appendix C

Key Informant Consent Form of Interview

For the study

On

“Motherhood as a Barrier to Re-entering Employment: Negotiating Tactics of Dhaka’s Affluent Urban Mothers”

Dear participant,

I am Minu Ahmed, a Masters student of Media Studies and Journalism (MSJ) department of University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB). I am conducting a dissertation titled “Motherhood as a Barrier to Re-entering Employment: Negotiating Tactics of Dhaka’s Affluent Urban Mothers”. You are selected as a resource person (respondent) of the study.

The interview will take approximately 20-30 minutes of your time and will be recorded via written notes.

The information you provide will be treated in a confidential manner. Only selected staff from the evaluation team will have access to your actual interview responses. You will not be identified by name in any report to the public.

If the above information seems appropriate to you, then please kindly sign this form indicating that you have read and understood the information provided to you and agree to participate in the interview.

Signature _____

Date _____

Thank you,

Minu Ahmed

ID: 142 054 030

Masters in Communication

Department of Media Studies and Journalism

University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB)

Appendix D

Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule for Dhaka's Urban Mothers

Sl.	Name	Age	Highest educational attainment	Marital status	Occupation/ designation	Organization	Combined income	Interview (date, time, place)
1	Rehnuma Akhter	30	MA in English language teaching	Married, joint family	Senior coordinator, Teacher development	English in Action, Mott MacDonald	Tk. 50,000+	16/11/2015 1:00 pm Gulshan 2 Res: Wari
2	Farzana Akter	33	MSc	Married, nuclear family	Sector Specialist	BRAC Education Programme	Tk. 70,000+	10/12/2015 2.30 pm Mohakhali Res: Segunbagicha
3	Zakia Sultana	30	Master's in education	Married, nuclear family	Senior material development officer	English in Action, Mott MacDonald	Tk. 50,000+	12/12/2015 7.00 pm Telephone Nakhla para
4	Romita Zaman	39	2 Masters	Married, joint family	Assistant director, Executive office	Independent University, Bangladesh	Tk. 100,000+	01/02/2016 2.00 pm Telephone Gulshan 2
5	Rizwana Azam	36	Bachelors	Married, nuclear family	Involved in family business	Self-employed	Tk. 100,000+	02/02/2016 5.00 pm Telephone Uttara
6	Mehnaz Khandaker	45	Masters in corporate communications	Married, nuclear family	Housewife/ Freelance consultant	Self-employed	Tk. 50,000+	03/02/2016 9.00 am Telephone

								Bashundhara
7	ShailaAlam	38	MBA, IBA	Married, joint family	Housewife/ Freelance consultant	Self-employed	Tk. 50,000+ (no contribution from husband towards herself and kids)	03/02/2016 4.00 pm Telephone Uttara
8	MehrinAfroze Chowdhury	30+	MBA, NSU	Married, joint family	Marketing communication manager	Aviation Plus Ltd.	Tk. 100,000+	05/02/2016 11.30 am Telephone Gulshan 1
9	TahminaTasnimNitu	29	BBA, NSU	Married, joint family	Housewife	N/A	Tk. 100,000+ (husband only)	09/02/2016 9.00 pm Telephone Uttara
10	Naima Hamid Leera	35	MBA	Married, joint family	Housewife	N/A	Tk. 100,000+ (husband only)	10/02/2016 10.30 am Telephone Mirpur
11	Tania Ali	35	Bachelors in Computer Science and Business	Recently divorced, lives with parents	Freelance IT Consultant	Self-employed	Tk. 50,000- 300,000 (project based, single income)	10/02/2016 7.30 pm Telephone Uttara
12	Nafisa Ahmed Badhon	26	A levels	Married, joint family	Playgroup teacher	Toddler's Teaching Centre	Tk. 70,000+	18/02/2016 9.30 pm Telephone Shantinagar
13	RatnaHalder	33	MBA	Married, joint family	Brand Manager	Unitrend Limited	Tk. 100,000+	21/02/2016 8.30 pm Telephone Nakhalpara

Interview Schedule of Employers/Organization

S l.	Name	Age	Male/ Female	Highest educational attainment	Occupation/ designation	Organization	Interview (date, time, place)
1	ShyamolKumerSarker	32	M	MBA	Officer HR	BRAC [NGO]	17/02/2016 9.00 am Mohakhali
2	UmmeAimanTasnim	26	F	BBA, IBA	Assistant Manager, Group Talent Management	Axiata Group Berhad (Robi) [Private organization]	18/02/2016 9.00 am Email
3	Mahenaz Chowdhury	28	F	BBA, NSU	Coordinator, Talent Management	GraphicPeople Ltd. [Private organization]	22/02/2016 12.00 pm Email
4	Dr. Sirajur Rahman Khan	60	M	PhD	Director General (PRL)	Geological Survey of Bangladesh [Government organization]	23/02/2016 8.00 pm Baily Road