

## Factors Driving Mental Health Problem of Female Employees at Workplace: Evidence from an Emerging Economy

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### Abstract

*The development of an economy depends on its workforce. Women are now the crucial contributors at workplace and plays an important role to excel the economic growth. Bangladesh is one of the emerging economies where the female participation rate in the workforce has significantly increased in recent years. However, women face many challenges to continue working at the workplace which results in mental health problems. The study aims to propose a model which can identify the factors that are causing female employees mental health problems at workplace. The study employed conflict with supervisors and colleagues, work family conflict, performance pressure and work stress are the major predicting variables which are negatively affecting the mental health of female employees at workplace. The research followed the deductive approach. The conceptual model can be operationalized by adapting prior measurement instruments and data can be collected through a survey questionnaire. The proposed model will be helpful to conduct further studies by academicians to explain the critical factors behind mental health problems. In addition, the model will help the Human Resource department of the companies to identify the core determinants of mental health problems of female employees and consequently implement proper HR policies to solve the problem.*

**Keywords:** mental health problem; conflict with supervisor and colleagues; work family conflict; performance pressure; work stress

### A. Introduction

Emotional, psychological, and social well-being are essential parts of our mental health. It influences our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Additionally, it influences how we respond to stress, interact with others, and make good decisions. Both physical and mental health are equally crucial to our overall well-being. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”

The female participation rate in the corporate offices of Bangladesh has emerged over the years (from 24.73 percent in 1990 to a maximum of 34.87 percent in 2021) contributing as a valuable addition to the economy. With this increasing involvement of women in this sector, the working environment has changed. But in most of the organizations this change has not

been in quite a favor of women. Almost all the women face discriminations in some way or the other, which has affected their mental health. Bangladeshi women traditionally have overseen the majority of home duties, while males are responsible for the financial support of the family and women's economic roles are deemed as secondary. Despite this tradition, Bangladesh witnessed a strong increase in female employment from 1983 to 2000. But majority of the women have to maintain both roles simultaneously which hampers their mental wellbeing. Some researchers found that, women tend to be adversely affected by mental disorders than male due to the social-cultural structure of our country. According to The Mental Health Foundation (MHF, 2008) mental health is defined by how individuals think and feel about themselves and their life, and that it affects how an individual copes and manages in times of adversity. Therefore, mental health of female employees is a fundamental element in their overall health and that poor mental health can lead to physical illnesses like hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular conditions (Bhugra et al., 2013). As a result, it extremely affects their ability to contribute profoundly in both their personal and professional lives.

There are several factors that affects mental health of female employees at workplace. The objective of this study is to find out the factors that are affecting the mental health of female employees in workplace. The research result will be valuable for further studies for academicians and perhaps the research findings and suggestions could be executed by corporate offices in their workplace.

## **B. Methods**

This study will apply deductive approach because quantitative research requires to identify relationships of different variables. The study starts with the theoretical foundation followed by hypothesis development then collect the data from the sample and confirm the results from the analysis. The research data will be acquired through qualitative research method.

The study will apply judgmental non-probability sampling because judgmental sampling selects the subjects who are most favorably placed or in the best position to provide the information requested. It is applied when reliable information of the population number and location are not available. Purposive sampling involves the researcher relying on his or her experience and judgement to choose the sampling units. The sample size can be determined using the table developed by Sekeran and Bougie (2016). About 34.87% of the total workforce of Bangladesh are the female employees who are working in around 611 companies. Most of

the corporate head offices are in Dhaka. So, data can be collected from female employees of different sectors located at Dhaka the capital of Bangladesh. For further analysis structural equation modelling can be used to operationalize the research model.

### **C. Results and Discussion**

It is becoming more widely acknowledged that an employee's mental health plays a significant role in determining their overall health and that pressures at work can contribute to a variety of physical ailments, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and hypertension. Additionally, poor mental health can result in employee burnout, which has a significant negative impact on their capability to make a meaningful contribution in both their personal and professional lives. Several researchers have already worked on mental health of female employees. Research considered different factors that affect the mental health of female employees at workplace. Some of the factors they used in their research as such conflict with superiors, relationship problem with colleagues, work-family conflict, performance pressure, and work stress etc.

One of the major factor that come into play to affect the mental health is work-family conflict. (Kahn et al., 1964) defined work family conflict as a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family spheres are mutually incompatible. Such incompatibility is indicated by the fact that participation in the work role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family role and vice versa. (Zhou et al., 2018) used Pearson correlation analysis, structural equation modeling, and multiple mediation analysis on a sample of female employees to examine the relationships between work– family conflict, negative affect, perceived stress, and mental health. This study revealed that, work-family conflict has a noteworthy negative impact on mental health of female employees as they duel between work pressure and family responsibilities.

Humans are sociable beings by nature. As a result, having bad interpersonal interactions at work has the potential to be a significant source of work-related stress. Conflict with supervisor and co-workers crucially impact the mental health. Interpersonal work conflict refers to a disagreement among individuals. It is often associated with negative emotions due to a perceived divergence of views, goals, interests and proposed courses of action (Darling, 2001). A model of interpersonal conflict at work was developed based on A. P. Fiske's (1992) general theory of social relations which was tested by (Frone, 2000) in a sample of young workers. It was found that, conflict with supervisors leads to some organization related

psychological outcomes like job dissatisfaction, organizational obligation etc. On the other hand, conflict with colleague leads to person related psychological outcomes like depression, lack of self-esteem etc. (Chouy et al., n.d.) Reported that there is a positive relationship between interpersonal conflict and stress using descriptive static analysis and correlation.

Impractical expectations, particularly during business reorganizations, which may subject workers to unhealthy and unjustified pressures, can be a major cause of stress and suffering (Rajgopal, 2010). An employee may genuinely get physically and emotionally exhausted because of an increased workload, extraordinarily long workdays, and strong pressure to perform at the top of one's game constantly for the same compensation. An employee's concerns may also include excessive travel and time spent away from family. In a study conducted on higher education staffs it was found that excessive workloads and workload models which frequently under-count time necessary for fulfilling tasks, and many tasks prove invisible to the workload assessors have triggered poor mental health among university staffs (Morrish, 2019).

Problems that cause out from ill Mental Health can impact on business directly due to increase absenteeism, dispiritedness in work which lead to decrease productivity and profits. Furthermore, they impact female employees' self-esteem badly. There are several factors that are affecting the mental health of the female employees. Based on the above discussion, this study proposes the below research framework in figure 1 to identify factors that triggers mental health problem among female employees at workplace.

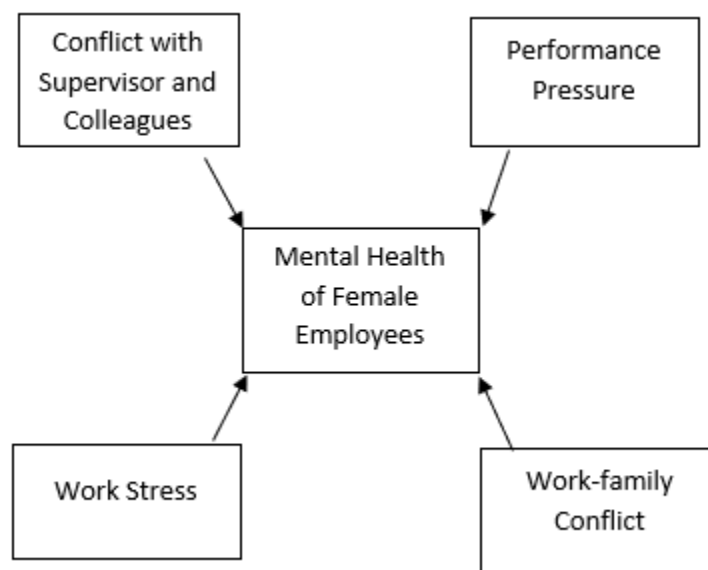


Figure 1: Research Framework

## D. Conclusion

Mental health problem is frequently linked to worse physical health and higher healthcare utilization. The negative effects of mental health problem on both employees and employers can include decreased work engagement, an increase in sick leave, as well as higher absenteeism and presenteeism. The goal of this study was to propose a model to identify the factors that are affecting mental health of female employees of Bangladesh. Based on the review from the prior literature this study has proposed a conceptual framework that can define the factors behind mental health problems among female employees at workplace in Bangladesh. This study proposed conflict with supervisor and colleagues, performance pressure, work stress and work-family conflict as the independent variables to measure mental health problem of female employees. An individual's performance and productivity at work are closely related to their general health and wellbeing, therefore, an organization's culture and values should place a priority on investing in and caring for the welfare of its employees. So, this research will help the HR practitioners to identify mental health issues at workplace in Bangladesh and develop appropriate HR policies to minimize the mental health problems which will help to improve the job performance of the female employees at workplace.

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