

Socio-Economic Status and Empowerment of Professional Women: A Case Study on BelkuchiUpazila of Sirajganj District in Bangladesh

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Abstract:

The study explores the socio-economic status and empowerment of professional women in BelkuchiUpazila of Sirajganj District, Bangladesh. It highlights that although women in Bangladesh have historically faced discrimination and exclusion from development, a small but growing number have entered various professions such as teaching, government service, NGOs, and healthcare. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality, women remain underrepresented in high-competition sectors due to societal and

structural barriers. Most professional women are young, married, and live in nuclear families, often juggling dual roles at work and home. Many face workplace harassment and lack familial support, though some are inspired by spouses or parents. While their financial contributions are significant, decision-making over their earnings often remains limited. The study concludes that though professional women in rural Bangladesh face numerous challenges, they are gradually gaining visibility and empowerment through education, employment, and social change.

Keywords: Socio-economic, Women, Development, Empowerment, Local Government.

INTRODUCTION

Women in Bangladesh are a backward community. Women, who are victims of discrimination since birth, do not get the opportunity to develop their personality. Despite being a normal human being with a complete intellect, women have been forcibly excluded from all kinds of development activities just because they are women or because of their gender (Rahaman, A. H. M. A., 1990). But despite this, many women in Bangladesh have broken through the barriers of this social inequality and have come out in various income-generating activities, i.e., professions or fields of work. They are performing various professional duties, at least with honesty, efficiency and efficiency. In a society where women are human beings, not only the women themselves, but also other parts of the society were almost forgetting (Choudhury, L. H., 1987). In that society, today women have entered various professions, from secretaries to judges, district administrators, police superintendents, police station officials, land managers, banks and various important economic institutions. And since they are professionals, their socio-economic status and empowerment are naturally somewhat different from other women in the society. However, the rate of these professional women is very low. Although Article 27 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh guarantees equal rights for men and women and Article 28 ensures the elimination of discrimination (Mashreque, M. S., 2002). Besides, Article 29(1) states, "There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in the matter of appointment or obtaining office in the work of the Republic." (Bertocci, P. J., 1996). Again, Article 29(2) states, "No

citizen shall be disqualified from, or be discriminated against in, any appointment or position in the service of the Republic on the sole ground of religion, profession, race, sex or birth." (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2008). However, they are lagging behind men in every aspect of society (Ahmed, A., 1979). They are lagging behind in terms of employment in the profession. In this case, although the question of qualification is often raised, it is not in the real sense. In a male-dominated society and after breaking the shackles of a long day, they are not able to easily come out of the house. Nevertheless, in recent times, due to the reservation of quotas at different levels of government jobs in Bangladesh and the increase in the rate of women's education and the development of women's awareness and skill in various fields, a good presence of women is being observed in government administration. The presence of women in the non-governmental sector is also noticeable (Jather, R.V., 1964).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is the main source of any research. The present study has used mixed methods. Both qualitative and quantitative data have been used to meet the set objectives. The researchers believe that there is no alternative to mixed methods to conduct this research work efficiently. Therefore, mixed research methods have been chosen to conduct this research work. In addition to questionnaires for data collection in Belkuchi Upazila of Sirajganj district, which was selected as the project area, information about women's perspectives and attitudes on various issues was collected through personal conversations.

Research Area

Belkuchi's geographic location is at Sirajganj District. It has a total size of 525 km² and 49693 households. This Upazila is situated in the Rajshahi Division, one of Bangladesh's seven administrative divisions, in the country's north-central region. A number of upazilas, including Chowhali, Shahjadpur, and Sirajganj Sadar, around it. Geographical Situated on the banks of the Jamuna River, Belkuchi serves as the hub for the locals' commerce, communication, and way of life. The most well-known sector in the Upazila, Hand looming is very beneficial to the economy and employs the majority of the people particularly women.

Belkuchi is made up of both rural and semi-urban areas, as well as a number of unions and villages. Literacy Rate: More girls are becoming literate these days as a result of irregular increases in the BelkuchiUpazila school system. There have been notable advancements in the region's road communication, health, and education infrastructure development. However, amidst economic endeavors and development agendas, socio-economic problems such as poverty, inaccessibility to higher education, and gender inequality surfaced.

Empowerment: Compared to previous years, professional women from the Belkuchi block are now more actively participating in small businesses and NGOs in the health and education sectors. By helping to make decisions at home and contributing to the household income, they have also elevated their social standing. This example illustrates whether social and economic conditions in the local sociocultural environment of BelkuchiUpazila have an impact on the empowerment of these kinds of women.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD

This study utilizes both primary and secondary sources for data collection. A structured questionnaire was designed to gather primary data. Before finalization, a draft version of the questionnaire was pre-tested, which helped refine and enrich the final version. Each question included a set of possible answers to facilitate consistent responses. The finalized questionnaire was administered directly to the selected female respondents, and their answers were recorded accordingly. Secondary data was obtained from a wide range of sources, including theoretical and general books on women's socio-economic status and empowerment, seminar articles, annual statistical reports, the Bangladesh Development Survey, Development Steps, Social Monitoring publications, resources from the Public Administration Training Center, British development news broadcasts, publications from the National Publishing Council and Bangla Academy, daily and weekly newspapers, the annual report of the Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, as well as various published and unpublished reports, articles, journals, and magazines.

DISCUSSION

Women in Bangladesh have not yet strengthened their position as essential workers in the workplace; there has been a great change in the role of women in

Bangladesh recently. Outside the home, in politics, government management, police administration, and in all aspects of society, women are being observed. A significant number of women are becoming school, college, and university teachers, doctors, nurses, and lawyers. In addition, they are being employed as cashiers, clerks, receptionists, computer operators, etc. in various government institutions, banks, insurance companies, NGOs, and private organizations (Mathi, J., 1915). Although most women are still solely engaged in housework or domestic chores, there is a positive attitude toward women's work in both urban and rural societies (Rahman, M. M., 2000). However, it is less in rural areas. As the number of educated and trained women in urban areas has increased, a relatively large number of women are getting employed in various professions. From the sample obtained by conducting research work in the research area, it is seen that 52 women are engaged in government and private sector work and various professions. They are 20% of the total women.

The table below presents a situational picture based on the presence of women in various occupations in the study area:

Table: 1
Professional women in the research area

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Teaching	20	38.47
Government Jobs	08	15.38
Garments	08	15.38
NGOs	07	13.46
Bankers	02	3.85
Doctors	02	3.85
Nurse	02	3.85
Lawyers	01	1.92
Sales Representatives	01	1.92
Computer Operators	01	1.92
Total	52	100.00

Source: Information collected from BelkuchiUpazilaSadar, March 2025.

The table above shows that 38.47% (10.0% of total women) of professional women are employed as teachers, 15.38% (4% of total women) as government employees, 15.38% (4.0% of total women) as garment workers, 13.46% (3.5% of total women) as NGOs, 3.85% (1.0% of total women) as bankers, 3.85% (1.0% of total women) as doctors, 3.85% (1.0% of total women) as nurses, 1.92% (0.5% of

total women) as lawyers, 1.92% (0.5% of total women) as sales representatives, and 1.92% (0.5% of total women) as computer operators.

From this, it can be said that the rate of women is low in all professions where there is intense competition and no separate quota reservation for women. Due to the low rate of higher education of women and their marginal position in social and family spheres, they cannot survive in these positions, let alone participate. On the other hand, the government has reserved 60% quota for the appointment of teachers in government primary schools and relaxed the educational qualifications of women compared to men, which has led to the entry of a large number of women into this profession. Currently, the profession in which the majority of women are involved in Bangladesh is the garment industry. Women are dominant in this field because they can do more work for less pay. In this study, a special section of women is involved in this profession. In recent times, NGOs have developed significantly in Bangladesh. Here, generally, educated, skilled, and tax-efficient applicants are given priority. And it is seen that women are given more priority. The research in question also shows that a special section of women is involved in the NGO sector than in other sectors. In addition, there are several professions in society that are very challenging. Women in the research area are also involved in these professions. Therefore, it can be said that the number of women involved in higher-level professions is increasing recently, in line with the increase in the rate of professional women.

Socio-Economic Status of Professional Women in The Study Area

Professional women live in a society and they also have an economic and social status outside of their profession. In our study, the following factors were considered while investigating the economic and social status of women in the area.

Age-Based Position of Professional Women

The age of a professional woman reflects the length of her employment, her professional ability, and her physical and mental strength. The age-based picture of professional women is presented in the table below:

Table:2
Position of professional women

Age class gap	Age	Percentage
20-30	26	50.00
30-40	15	28.85
40-50	10	19.23
50+	01	1.92
Total	52	100

Source: Collected from the research area, April 2025.

The table above shows that the percentage of professional women aged 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, and 50+ years is 50% (13.0% of total women), 28.85% (7.5% of total women), 19.23% (5.0% of total women), and 1.92% (0.5% of total women), respectively.

Here it can be seen that the rate of women aged 20-30 is high. From which it becomes clear that the increase in the rate of participation of women in various professions is not a long-standing history. Moreover, from the overall age position of professional women, it can be said that these women are physically capable, capable and energetic. Through this, it is also possible to carry out professional responsibilities efficiently.

Marital Status of Professional Women

In urban areas of Bangladesh, women between the ages of 20 and 25 are usually married. Since the data obtained in this study show that all women involved in the profession are over 20 years old, it can be assumed that all of them are married or of suitable marriageable age. The following table illustrates the marital status of professional women:

Table: 3
Marital Status of Professional Women

Occupation	Number	Percent
Married	36	69.23
Single	10	19.23
Widow	04	7.70
Divorced	02	3.84
Total	52	100.00

Source: Data from the study area, April 2025.

The table above shows that out of the 52 professional women used as a sample in the research, 36 (69.23%) were married, 10 (19.23%) were single, 4 (7.70%) were widowed, and 2 (3.84%) were divorced.

Occupation Of Husbands of Professional Women

Of the 52 professional women in the study area, 36 are married. Therefore, by knowing the status of their husbands, one can get information about their family tradition and integrity. It is presented in the following table:

Table: 4
Husband's occupation of professional women

Occupation	Number	Percent
Employment	26	72.22
Business	03	8.33
Agriculture	01	2.78
Day laborers	05	13.89
Unemployed	01	1.78
Total	36	100.00

Source: Data from the study area, April 2025.

The above table shows that the occupation of the husband of married professional women is 72.22% employee, 8.33% business, 2.78% agriculture, 13.89% daily wage laborer and 1.78% unemployed. From this it can be said that employed men are more involved in their wives' profession or employed men are aware that women can work outside the home without being confined to the household. However, it has been seen here that the wives of employed people are generally educated and many times the family does not survive on the income earned by their husbands, and in many cases, when the husband goes to the office, the wife has problems finding time alone at home. The wives of employed men are liberal in joining any job.

Family Typology of Professional Women

The smallest unit of society, the family, indicates the socio-economic status and empowerment of women. The family typology of professional women in the study area is shown in the table below:

Table: 5
Family typology of professional women

Family type	Number	Percentage
Single	34	94.44
Joint	02	5.56
Total	36	100.00

Source: Data from the study area, April 2025.

The above table shows that 94.44% of professional women's families are single and the remaining 5.56% are joint families. From this it can be said that the family structure of professional women has been touched by modernity. Because single family is the family of the modern era.

Portrait of Children of Professional Women

Picture of children of professional women: Professional women always want to keep their families small. And for this reason, they also have fewer children. The table below shows this:

Table: 6
Child status of working women

Number of children	Number	Percent
00	05	13.89
01	08	22.22
02	15	41.67
03	07	19.45
04	01	2.78
Total	36	100.00

Source: Data from the study area, April 2025.

The table above shows that 13.89% of married women have no children, 22.22% have 1 child, 41.67% have 2 children, 19.45% have 3 children, and 2.78% have a maximum of 4 children. So it seems that professional women are determined to keep their families small. That is why they are not interested in having more children. Professional women are always busy with work and it will be very difficult to have and raise more children to cope with the extra pressure of work. That is why they do not want to have more children.

Inspiration for Professional Women

Various factors have served as a source of inspiration for professional women in pursuing their respective careers. Some women have received inspiration from

various sources to pursue careers or are receiving inspiration to fulfill their professional responsibilities, while some women do not receive any inspiration from anywhere. It is presented in the table below:

Table: 7
Sources of inspiration for women to pursue careers

Source of inspiration for finding a career	Number	Percentage
Husband	11	21.15
In-laws	02	5.77
Parents	09	17.01
Children	01	1.92
Others	08	15.39
Not received	20	38.46
Total	52	100.0

Source: Data from the study area, April 2025.

The above table shows that 21.15% of women got inspiration from their husbands, 5.77% from their in-laws, 17.01% from their parents, and 1.92% from their children to engage in their profession and are currently receiving support in carrying out their professional responsibilities. 38.46% of women did not receive any encouragement or support from anyone in this regard. From this, it can be said that most of the women got involved in these professions not on their own merit; rather, they got involved in these professions on their own motivation and efforts without any encouragement from anyone else. In this regard, the reason behind the male members of the family not giving encouragement can be assumed that they may not want women to come out of the family, become economically self-reliant by getting employed in any profession, play a role in various fields including decision-making in the family and society, and rise in the power structure.

Problems in Performing Professional Duties

The study in question shows that a significant proportion of women have entered the professional world today. Although they have entered it by facing intense competition and adversity, their employment situation in the future is not at all satisfactory; rather, it is full of hardship. They have to face various problems in carrying out their official duties constantly. The table below presents information on this:

Table: 8

Problems faced by professional women in fulfilling their responsibilities

The nature of the problem in performing professional duties	Number	Percentage
Yes	33	63.46
Roughly	12	23.08
No	07	13.46
Total	52	100.0

Source: Data from the study area, April 2025.

The above table shows that 63.46% of professional women face problems in performing their professional duties, while 23.08% of women face problems in this regard either severely or occasionally. The remaining 13.46% of women do not face any problems or difficulties in this regard. This information shows that most of the professional women are not able to perform their duties comfortably. Whenever they leave their homes for the purpose of office, they have to face various unexpected situations. Starting from the transportation to the office, men look at women with lustful eyes, make rude comments. Sometimes, incidents of physical touching also occur. However, professional women in the Research area said that this situation has improved considerably.

Relationships With Colleagues and Senior Male Officers

People live together in society in social and political life and develop mutual relationships with each other. Professional women, while performing their daily official duties, develop relationships with their assistants and superior male workers. Which is good in some cases, fair in some cases and bad in some cases. The table below shows:

Table: 9

Relationships with assistants and senior male colleagues

Nature of the relationship	Number	Percentage
Good	16	69.23
Fair	32	26.92
Bad	04	3.85
Total	52	100.0

Source: Data from the study area, April 2025.

The table above shows that 30.77% of women have good, 61.54% have fairly good and the remaining 7.69% have bad relationships with their colleagues and superiors. Since most of the women have good and fairly good relationships with their colleagues, it can be assumed that these women can demonstrate their skills and abilities by performing their duties with ease. And it is normal for women who have bad relationships in this regard to face various problems in performing their professional duties. The reason for the bad relationships with their colleagues and superiors is attributed to their different behaviors, attitudes and sexual nature.

Fulfilling Professional and Family Responsibilities

Various factors related to karma nature affect women. In the social system of Bangladesh, men usually support the family and women do everything from maintenance, performing all the household chores, raising children and cooking. Today, it has become an unwritten law or custom that even professional women have to perform household chores in addition to performing official work. It is difficult to fulfill this dual role and in such a situation they feel oppressed or pressured (Choudhuri, M. A., 1969). In many cases, this pressure or stress can cause mental distress (Siddiqui, K. (Ed.), 1994). People who work non-stop are more likely to develop depression, anxiety, and personality disorders (Ud-Doula, M. S. N., & Ahmed, J. M., 2001). Meanwhile, gender discrimination in the workplace, coupled with greater household responsibilities than men, negatively impacts their career advancement and causes them to experience psychological distress (Humes, S., & Marteen, M. E., 1961).

The study in question shows that professional women perform all the household chores along with their professional duties. That is, they have to play a dual role. All the household chores, child-rearing, housekeeping, cooking and other related tasks fall on women, even if they enter the profession like men today, they are not free from performing those family responsibilities. All the professional women taken as samples in the study in question perform more or less household or household chores. However, many women may not be able to do household chores after finishing their day's office work. The table below illustrates women's ability to perform household chores in addition to performing professional duties:

Table: 10

Women's ability to perform household chores in addition to performing professional duties

To do household chores	Number	Percentage
Able	36	69.23
Quite capable	14	26.92
Not capable at all	02	3.85
Total	52	100.0

Source: Data from the study area, April 2025.

The table above shows that the majority of professional women (69.23%) are capable of performing household chores in addition to their professional duties, 26.92% are fairly capable, and only 3.85% of women are not capable.

This clearly shows that professional women in Bangladesh play a dual role. Although household work is not valued economically, that labor remains completely ignored. Which is not included in the national income. The study shows that in the United States, the amount of labor invested by women in the home is equal to one-fourth of the gross national product (Najmanara, M., & Ahmad, M., 2003). However, women in Bangladesh spend more labor than this on the family without any effort. And professional women face various problems while doing so. The table below highlights the nature of the problem of women playing dual roles.

Table: 11

Problems faced by women in playing dual roles

The nature of the problem in playing a dual role	Number	Percentage
Nature of the problem	35	67.30
There is quite a problem.	11	21.16
No problem.	04	7.69
Not capable of playing a dual role	02	3.85
Total	52	100.0

Source: Data from the study area, April 2025.

The above table shows that 67.30% of women have problems in playing dual roles and 21.16% of women have moderate problems. Only 7.79% of women do not face any problems in this regard.

The nature of this problem is different. After working in the office all day, the body wants a little rest, a little entertainment, a little peace. Even though

her husband, the man, returns home after finishing his office work and gets rest, entertainment and peace, the woman has to immerse herself in household chores again. After working continuously all day, she has to go back home, clean the house, prepare dinner, take care of the child, and teach the child to study and go to bed to sleep; and through this, the woman gets rest. After waking up, she has to make breakfast in the morning, send the child to school and send her husband to the office, and then she has to go to the office.

Women's Role in Spending Earned Money

Many times, a professional woman does not have a say in how she spends her earned income. Many women spend their salary according to the wishes of their husbands or other family members. The table below shows this.

Table: 12

Effectiveness of women's opinions on money earned and spent

Women's opinions on spending earned money	Number	Percentage
Takes effect	45	86.54%
Fairly effective	05	9.61%
Not very effective	02	3.85%
Total	52	100.0

Source: Data from the study area, April 2025.

The above table shows that 86.54% of women's opinions are effective in terms of earned income, 9.61%'s opinion is fairly effective and 3.85%'s opinion is not effective at all.

Women generally do not have any role in managing family expenses and all financial expenses in Bangladesh. In addition to earned income of professional women, their opinions on managing other family expenses are given importance. That is, if a woman is financially independent, her role in managing expenses and economic activities is ensured.

Women's Success in Fulfilling Professional Responsibilities

Not all professional women are successful in fulfilling their professional responsibilities. However, most women have been successful in their fields and have been able to earn the satisfaction of the organization and the employer. It is presented in the table below.

Table: 13
Employer satisfaction with women's professional roles

The nature of satisfaction	Number	Percentage
Satisfaction	38	73.08
Fair satisfaction	22	23.08
Not satisfied at all.	02	3.84
Total	52	100.0

Source: Data from the study area, April 2025.

The above table shows that 73.08% of women are satisfied with their work and 23.08% are fairly satisfied with their work and only 3.84% of the employers are not satisfied with their work. However, the reason behind the women whose work the employers are satisfied with or not satisfied with is not the lack of qualifications or inefficiency of the women; rather, there are other subtle reasons behind it. Which include injustice and undervaluation of women? The table below illustrates this attitude of the authorities.

Table: 14
Background of authorities' satisfaction with women's professional roles

Reasons for the authorities' satisfaction	Number	Percentage
Expectations are high.	03	27.27
No recognition for work as a woman	07	63.64
Women's own lack of competence	01	9.09
Total	11	100.0

Source: Data from the study area, April 2025.

The table above shows that 63.64% of women consider their roles as female and 27.27% of women have higher expectations from their superiors in their work, even though they demonstrate more skills and talents than their male colleagues, their superiors are not satisfied with them and their work. As a result, even if women consider themselves successful in performing their professional duties, they are unable to do so due to lack of satisfaction or recognition from their superiors.

From this it can be said that due to the patriarchal attitude in the workplace, even though women demonstrate more ability and skill than men, their role is not recognized. Moreover, the dominance of patriarchy is also behind a section of women who do not consider themselves capable. The self-esteem and self-confidence of these women who grew up in a patriarchal society have been

weakened. And this makes them unable to be satisfied with their role even though they are worthy of their position. Although they do not demonstrate less skill and skill than a man in any way (Satter, E., 1975).

Therefore, from this picture, it can be seen that the impartiality, relentless efforts and even the continuous hard work of women officials have not been appreciated. There are many such women workers who, instead of wasting their time by chatting in clubs or playing cards, instead of going home in the middle of the night, take the unfinished work of the office home and finish it up at night. Despite this, the problem of women empowerment and backwardness in Bangladesh is revealed by not recognizing the role of professional women, that is, the labor and work (Jahan, R., 1975).

Participation in Professional Decision-Making Processes

To conduct any professional activity, decisions have to be made on various issues. If the higher authorities include all the employees in the decision-making process, then the decisions are better and more effective. It is seen in many departments that although the opinions of the employees are taken in the decision-making process, the opinions of the female employees are not taken. The study in question shows that most of the professional women cannot play any role in the decision-making process of their departments. A picture of this is shown in the table below:

Table: 15
Women's participation in professional decision-making

Women's participation in decision-making	Number	Percentage
Yes	18	34.62
No	34	35.38
Total	52	100.00

Source: Data from the study area, April 2025.

The table above shows that while 34.62% of women are able to participate in professional decision-making, 35.38% of women cannot play any role in this regard.

Problems

Limited Educational Opportunities: While things are slowly getting better, many women in Belkuchi are still unable to pursue further and technical education because of poverty, early marriage, or traditional gender conventions.

This kind of gender discrimination at work can take many forms, such as paying women less than men who are equally valuable to the company, giving a woman a higher-paying job but giving it to a man who is less qualified, or just not giving women the same opportunities for advancement as men who have the same or even lower qualifications.

Patriarchal culture: Women have historically been denied autonomy over their lives, freedom of movement, and the ability to make decisions for their families and careers.

Economic Opportunity: Despite Woman joining the workforce, Belkuchi offers little professional career prospects, forcing them to take on low-paying or part-time work.

Unbalanced Work-Life Women frequently balance taking care of their families with working outside the home, and they may be urged to give up their careers in order to prioritize their families.

One of the main reasons working women choose to stay at home is a lack of affordable childcare. Women cannot work unless they can arrange a timetable that works with their partner's schedule if the family cannot afford nursery services or has no other family members accessible to help with childcare.

Limited Access to Credit and Financial Services: Due to their marginalization in formal financial services, many women find it challenging to launch their own firms or make investments in their professional growth.

Inadequate Transportation and Infrastructure: Women are unable to visit workplaces due to unsafe or inadequately serviced transportation options, particularly in Belkuchi's hinterland.

Low Involvement of Women in Decision-Making Roles: Women do engage in some professional activities, but they are underrepresented in positions of leadership or decision-making in both public and private organizations.

Recommendations:

Encourage Access to Higher and Technical Education: Establish more institutions for both academic and technical training to prepare women for careers.

Adopt Gender-Responsive Workplace Policies: Encourage companies to implement inclusive recruiting and promotion practices, maternity benefits, equitable pay, and harassment prevention measures.

Improve Legal Services and Awareness: To ensure that women know what to do in the event of discrimination or injustice, awareness programs about women's rights and legal protections should be conducted.

Support Women Entrepreneurs: Provide training, grants, and loans to women who aspire to manage their own companies.

Provide Safe and Reliable Transportation: Improve local transportation options while maintaining safety, especially for working women who must commute to workplaces, educational institutions, and medical facilities.

Encourage Community Daycare Services: Establish affordable daycare centers to assist working mothers in juggling their responsibilities to their families and their careers.

Boost Women's Involvement in Local Governance: Promote and assist women's involvement in local decision-making organizations, including development committees and Union Parishads.

Educate to Unchain Gender Stereotypes: Run school-based initiatives and community awareness campaigns to challenge patriarchal conventions and instill a belief in gender equality in both sexes from an early age.

Expand Opportunities for Networking and Mentorship: Provide avenues for female professionals to connect, exchange, and receive guidance via mentorship connections.

Work with NGOs and government initiatives: To make an impact at the local level, we should strengthen our collaborations with NGOs and government projects that support women's

CONCLUSION

The socio-economic status and empowerment of professional women in Belkuchi Upazila of Sirajganj District reflect both notable progress and persistent challenges. Women in this area have gradually stepped beyond traditional roles, making commendable strides in education and professional engagement across government, private, and NGO sectors. Despite the constitutional promise of gender equality, systemic inequalities and deep-rooted patriarchal norms continue to impede their advancement. The research shows that young, educated women are entering the workforce, predominantly in teaching and garment sectors, supported in part by quotas and changing societal attitudes. However, many still face significant obstacles, including lack of family support, workplace discrimination, and the immense pressure of fulfilling both professional and domestic responsibilities. The dual burden affects their physical and mental well-being and hinders career progression.

Married professional women mostly come from nuclear families, and while they show strong capability in managing household duties, their unpaid labor remains unrecognized. A large portion do not receive external motivation or support, suggesting a continued resistance to women's financial independence within families. Nonetheless, a growing number of women are becoming influential decision-makers in their households regarding the use of their income. Their increasing visibility in the public sphere, coupled with their economic contributions, marks a slow but meaningful transformation in gender dynamics.

To sustain this progress, institutional support, societal awareness, and structural reforms are essential. Women's empowerment must not be limited to access to employment—it must include control over resources, decision-making power, and societal respect. This study underscores both the resilience of professional women and the urgent need to eliminate the structural barriers that constrain their full potential.

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