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# Psychological Pressure on Women and Work Performance in Urban Workplaces of Dhaka

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**ABSTRACT**

The impact of gender biased psychological pressure on women employees within urban work environments of Dhaka City, Bangladesh, was investigated in this study. This study followed a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with women from various work sectors. A comprehensive review of the existing literature and thematic analysis were used to determine the nature of gender bias in the workplace, psychological effects, and the effects on employee performance. The results have shown that women are often subjected to subtle but constant gender discrimination such as unequal recognition, fewer opportunities to lead, stereotypical assumptions, and more scrutiny of their work. These experiences lead to higher stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, self-doubt, and decreased confidence and impact on concentration, motivation, creativity, productivity, and decision-making. Participants used coping strategies like professionalism, documentation, and seeking social support, but organizational support was still not adequate. The study suggests that the adoption of comprehensive gender-equity policies, transparent performance evaluation frameworks, holding leaders accountable, providing mental health support, capacity building through gender-sensitivity training, and having gender-friendly workplace practices are ways to mitigate gender-biased psychological pressure and promote a women-friendly, productive, and equitable working environment in Bangladesh.

## 1. Introduction

Gender-related psychological pressure at work is a widespread yet largely unseen phenomenon that influences how women perceive work, the way they do their work, and the way they grow professionally. Social norms and organizational practices interact in Bangladesh to form environments in which gender bias may take subtle and overt manifestations and affect everyday interactions (Hasan et al., 2023). Gender attitude indicators in the country reveal that ingrained stereotypes are still prevalent, as a significant proportion of the population harbors the attitude that men are better placed to be in leadership and other business positions. These general social conventions percolate into workplace cultures and expectations and result in more psychological pressures on women who have to constantly haggle over competence and place in male-dominated areas (Adiba, 2024).

The psychological pressure that occurs due to gender bias manifests in various ways. It may be institutional and formal, which includes the inaccessibility of promotions, wage inequalities, and the lack of access to high-visibility posts. It may also be interpersonal, assuming the form of microaggression, daily incivility, sexual harassment, or covert sabotage by superiors and colleagues. Such experiences are not single irritations (Hing et al., 2023). They build up as chronic stressors that drain cognitive and emotional resources, hamper concentration, and undermine motivation. Increased anxiety, depressive symptoms, and burnout in women workers due to such pressure are demonstrated in an increasing body of literature, which lowers the persistence of task performance and increases the risk of absenteeism and turnover (Corrente et al., 2024).

The rate and magnitude of economic activity increase the issue in urban working environments such as Dhaka. Competitive expectations, working long hours, and exposure to a hierarchical form of authority characterize urban workplaces (Mondal et al., 2024). To the woman who has to cope with the pressures of the workplace and seems to be unable to escape the nagging pressure of household life, the outcome is what scholars refer to as a double burden. Presenteeism and the wish to seem tough

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may conceal severe health issues and maintain a pretense of dedication that eventually will cost companies in the form of lowered productivity and creativity (Chowdhury, 2024). The evidence from the international community shows that untreated gendered stressors lead to losing talent and incur unquantifiable, yet substantial, costs to the performance of organizations in the long-term perspective (Escudero-Guirado et al., 2024; Elsawy and Elbadawe, 2022).

Bangladesh is a country with certain sectoral dynamics that render this research incredibly urgent and crucial. Heavy concentrations of the female workforce in the readymade garments industry, healthcare, education, and service sectors are such areas where gendered imbalances of power are prevalent (Akter et al., 2024). There is empirical research in the country that reports high levels of harassment, lack of upward mobility, and workplace policies that fail to support gender-specific needs and family obligations. Such circumstances make the psychological pressure based on gender bias an occupational risk of women employees that is part of their routine, and it has consequences on mental health and the quality of organizational performance (BetterWork, 2022).

The question of how the relationship between gender biased psychological pressure and objective work performance losses can be made is important to theory and policy. In theory, it involves a combination of understandings of social psychology concerning stereotype threat and role incongruity and organizational studies of stress and performance. In practice, it identifies the interventions that vary between overt promotion practices and anti-harassment systems and anti-bias training and holding managers accountable (Sinkey, 2024; Hanek and Garcia, 2022). However, there are still gaps in the literature regarding context-specific, urban-level evidence in Dhaka. The majority of international studies focus on general correlations between discrimination and worse outcomes but fail to represent the lived experiences of women in highly networked urban working environments of a lower-middle-income nation. This restricts the locally appropriate policy development and denies the employer access to bespoke tools that may safeguard the employee wellbeing and enhance productivity.

The aim of the study is to investigate the impact of gender bias psychological pressure on the performance of women employees in Dhaka city urban workplaces. It maps the shapes of bias experienced by women, quantifies the psychological and behavioral processes that mediate the connection between bias and performance, as well as detects the factors in the workplace combined with the policy level that can alleviate harm. The study takes a deeper and broader investigation of the determinants of lived bias and performance by using qualitative interviews, which reflect the context as well as delicacy. The final objective is to generate evidence-based recommendations for employers, policymakers, and actors in civil society to alleviate gendered pressure, safeguard the mental health of women, and enhance the performance of organizations in Dhaka.

### *1.1 Research Objectives*

The research aims to attain a clear and systematic comprehension of how gender-biased psychological pressure influences the working performance of women workers in the urban workplaces in Dhaka. The purpose is to define and classify the various types of psychological pressure that women face in various industries, such as garments, medical care, education, and services. The second goal is to determine the impacts of these pressures on cognitive ability, emotional wellness, motivation, and daily task performance. Another objective of the study is to investigate the mediating psychological and behavioral processes, including stress, anxiety, burnout, and role conflict, that mediate the relationship between gender-biased pressure and productivity and professional development.

The other important goal is to explore organizational and environmental conditions that worsen or alleviate gendered psychological stress, such as workplace culture, management attitudes, reporting arrangements, and support provisions. The study also aims at understanding the intersectional determinants of age, marital status, job role, and sector on the experience of bias and its effects on performance. Lastly, the research is expected to generate evidence-based, practical recommendations to employers, policymakers, and civil society actors and ultimately to reduce gender bias, enhance mental wellbeing, and create equitable and high-performing work environments that support the wellbeing and performance of women in Dhaka.

## 2. Literature Review

Gender-conformity pressure refers to the personal and interpersonal stress to act in gender-conforming ways (Mezzalira et al., 2022). In the field of youth studies, this pressure has been associated with negative psychosocial adjustment, such as low self-esteem, peer rejection, and other mental health issues (Mezzalira et al., 2022). Pressure to conform to masculine norms is prevalent, with 56.4% of sexual and gender minorities reporting this pressure, and linked to increased likelihood of depression, anxiety, and poor mental health in their own eyes and by others in sexual and gender minorities and non-binary people (Cooper et al., 2023). Studies in recent years have come to a similar conclusion: Gender bias in the workplace persists and is continuing to limit women's access to training, employment, promotion, pay, and other benefits (Heilman et al., 2023). There are descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes that both punish and discourage women from engaging in non-stereotyped behaviors in their roles (Heilman et al., 2023).

Social-psychological explanations also suggest these presumed expectations of women can restrict the work environment and influence both external control of women's behaviors and women's own preferences and choices at work (Hanek & Garcia, 2022). Gender discrimination can be structural, interpersonal, or implicit, and impacts occupational functioning in the workplace and society (Lausi, 2026). Perceived gender discrimination at work has been consistently associated with negative psychological outcomes such as stress, emotional exhaustion, negative affect, and poor mental health (Triana et al., 2018). In a large-scale study in Korea, women who reported gender discrimination at work had an increased risk of depressive symptoms for hiring, promotion, work assignment, pay, and termination, and this association was stronger in women under age 40 (Kim et al., 2020).

Increased depressive symptoms were predicted by perceptions of workplace gender discrimination even after controlling for personal experiences of discrimination and extrinsic job satisfaction, which buffered the association (Rim & Kim, 2023). This pattern is further confirmed by the association of perceptions of workplace gender discrimination with higher depressive symptoms, even when controlling for personal experiences with gender discrimination, and buffering by extrinsic job satisfaction (Rim & Kim, 2023). In a male-dominated environment, women's experiences of bias are correlated with reduced productivity, feelings of depression and anxiety, and low self-esteem, all of which are linked to such experiences as abusive behavior, unfair treatment, and lack of recognition (Lekchiri et al., 2019).

The mediators suggested in several studies are self-esteem and work-family pressures. The self-esteem of professional women was negatively influenced by workplace discrimination, and self-esteem partially explained the relationship between discrimination and satisfaction (Tabasum et al., 2025). Findings from a gendered exposure model indicated that women were more exposed to work-to-family conflict, less likely to have decision authority, more likely to be single parents, and less likely to feel good about their self-esteem, which resulted in higher levels of psychological distress (Bilodeau et al., 2020).

Mental health is impacted by gender-biased pressure in many interrelated ways. There is a correlation between workplace injustice and lower psychological and physical health, as well as a higher prevalence of exposure to workplace injustice for minorities and adverse effects on psychological and physical health (Okechukwu et al., 2013). There is also consistency in the research on sexual harassment and its effects on women, in that they are likely to suffer serious psychological, health, and employment outcomes due to workplace sexual harassment, without formally reporting the situation to an authority (McDonald, 2012).

Women in leadership are also subject to a unique type of psychological burden as leadership is perceived as a masculine attribute, placing women in leadership roles at risk for stereotype threat in negotiations and decision-making, among other areas (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Internalized doubt is also passed on by organizations: Gender bias and stereotypes can cause women to doubt their abilities and restrict their aspirations to more difficult positions (Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi, 2023). Intersectional reviews reveal that a one-size-fits-all approach fails to capture the intersection of race and other social locations that create stereotypes, the prevalence of harassment, and the emotional effects (Rosette et al., 2018). In addition, other studies on women's workplaces in Asia reveal multiple sources of stress, including sexual harassment, insecurity of employment, low wages, "glass ceiling" effects, as well as mental-health issues related to discrimination for women in urban labour markets (Zhu & Wang, 2023).

The available database for Dhaka city does not contain workplace studies conducted within the city. The literature, though less direct but more contextual, reveals that women's mental health is impacted by patriarchal norms, limited self-expression, dependency, and a combination of family and social pressures (Niaz & Hassan, 2006). The safest statement is one that's contextualised: the international workplace literature is robust in its support of harmful effects, and there is evidence from South Asia that these effects are likely to be exacerbated in contexts where patriarchal gender norms are robust (Gupta et al., 2023; Niaz & Hassan, 2006).

Women's experiences of workplace discrimination in Bangladesh are pervasive and significantly different from those of men, most prominently in pay, promotion, safety, maternity rights, and daily treatment, in both public and private sectors, formal and informal work (Iftakhar et al., 2024). Systemic and subjective discrimination have long plagued women's recruitment, placement, promotion, mobility, and training in the public sector, and promotion is highly subjective and favors male applicants (Iftakhar et al., 2024). Social devaluation in public institutions in Dhaka was found to be a reason for decline in productivity, absenteeism, mistrust, and dissatisfaction among the women in the middle-level positions (Shahadat & Kabir, 2020). Women in the Bangladeshi workplace are subjected to a great deal of production pressure, verbal abuse, harassment, and coercive supervision, particularly in garment factories (Gibbs et al., 2019).

There are studies in the literature that indicate adverse psychological effects of stress on women in the workplace on both the mental state and work productivity. The most direct route is through cumulative stressors (high demands, harassment, family-role pressure) to stress and depression to reduced productivity, satisfaction, attendance, and career stability.

## 3. Research Methodology

The research design employed in this study is a qualitative design that seeks to understand the impact of gender-based psychological pressure on the work performance of women who work in the urban workplaces of Dhaka. The qualitative approach is suitable as it provides the opportunity to understand deeply and in a rich context the lived experiences of women, their interactions at work, and the nature of bias that is not possible to measure fully using quantitative methods. The method also assists in the discovery of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of psychological pressure that are at the center of the research questions.

### *3.1 Data collection*

A wide variety of reliable academic and professional sources were used to gather secondary data, including peer-reviewed research articles, journal articles, and publications by international bodies. The relevant literature is also identified using databases like Google Scholar, ResearchGate, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, and other online academic sources. The secondary information helps in supporting the conceptual basis of the research, explaining the gaps that exist, and also informs the formulation of the interview questions. It also assists in putting the findings in the context of gender, discrimination in the workplace, and organizational psychology discussions in the national and global arenas. After a primary search of the articles, 141 research papers were collected from different databases for screening. 11 duplicate articles and 29 low-quality articles were found and removed for better data choice for this study. Lastly, after observing and screening titles and abstracts of the study, 88 articles are finally selected for fetching information and insights.

Open-ended interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire are used to collect primary data. The method is selected as it enables the participants to narrate their experiences in a free manner, and all the essential themes pertaining to gender bias, psychological pressure, and work performance will be consistently addressed. The population to be targeted is women who are already working in different organizations located within Dhaka city, including the garment industry, education, health, financial sectors, corporate offices, and the service sector. The participants have at least one year of work experience. The participants are chosen based on purposive sampling and comply with the research requirements. Face-to-face and online interviews are conducted on the basis of feasibility and the preference of participants.

### *3.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria*

Peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, government reports, and publications from trusted organizations have been reviewed and included in the literature review, with the majority of publications found from 2016 to 2026. Research on gender bias, workplace discrimination, psychological stress, women's mental health, work performance, organizational behavior, and workplace equality was taken into account. All literature relating to Bangladesh and international literature has been incorporated in the studies for contextual and theoretical support. Only publications in the English language and that provide easy access to the full text were included. Research that was not related to workplace gender issues, articles with no empirical evidence, opinion articles, editorials, duplicate publications, and literature specifically about men or non-working populations were not included in the review.

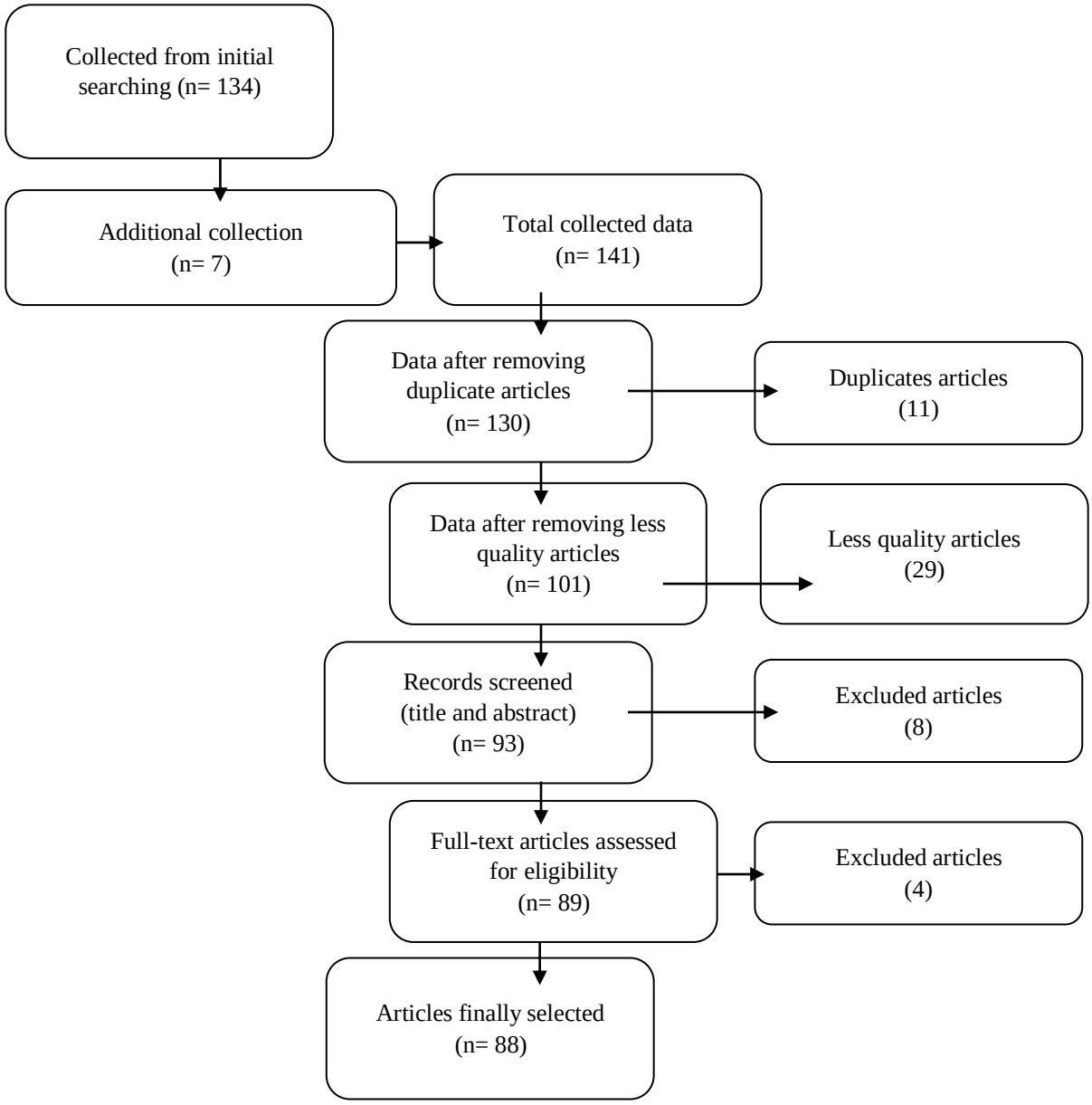



**Figure 1.** Literature selection flow

This study involved women workers aged 18 years and above who were employed for at least one year in an urban workplace in Dhaka City. Participants included individuals from a cross-section of society with experience of gender-related interaction at the workplace, from corporate organizations, banking, education, healthcare, media, government and private institutions. The interviews were limited to people who had volunteered. Male workers, women who are self-employed, unpaid workers, interns, temporary workers who have less than one year of experience, and women working outside Dhaka City were excluded. Those who refused to give informed consent or did not complete the interview were also excluded from the study.

### *3.3 Data analysis*

The thematic analysis (Terry et al., 2017) is used to analyze and interpret the primary and secondary data in the study. This method allows locating recurrent patterns, categories, and themes that show common experiences of the participants that are unique. Several steps are followed in the analysis, such as familiarizing with the data, creating a first set of codes, breaking down codes into wider themes, reviewing and refining the themes, and developing a narrative of psychological pressure on work performance. The thematic approach is applicable in the study of complicated psychological and social processes, including stress, burnout, interpersonal relationships, and organizational culture.

### *3.4 Ethical considerations*

Ethics are thoroughly observed during the study. The involvement is voluntary, and informed consent are taken out of all the respondents. Transcripts and reports are anonymous and confidential since identifiable information is eliminated. The subjects also reserve the right to withdraw at any point without giving any explanation.

## 4. Results

### *4.1 Gender-biased experiences in the workplace and psychological pressure for women*

Gender biased experiences on the job are prevalent across sectors, including evidence of pay inequity, harassment, restricted opportunities for promotion, and limited redress mechanisms (Iftakhar et al., 2024; Akter et al., 2024; Raihen et al., 2023). The study reveals differences in structural drivers across sectors, in addition to some commonalities, such as patriarchal norms, organizational cultures, and gaps in policy implementation (Kundu & Tabassum, 2023; Nasir, 2022; Kundu, 2025). National data highlight higher discrimination against women with functional difficulties, and sector studies reveal specific vulnerabilities for internally displaced women and amongst younger unmarried garment workers, but these are not well linked together (Chowdhury & Uddin, 2023; Kabir et al., 2025). Although numerous studies note the dysfunction of complaint systems and regulatory inadequacy, few assess the effectiveness of organizational changes to decrease bias and increase retention (Sultan, 2023; Hasan, 2026).

It was clear in almost all of the interviews that there was differential treatment in the workplace. A large number of participants noted that their ideas, opinions, and professional work were not acknowledged as well as that of men with similar roles. One individual commented that significant decision-making and leadership roles were more likely to be given to men, and women were expected to do support, administrative, and coordination work. These experiences indicate that there are still deeply rooted gender role norms at play in the organization. Those inequities were felt to hinder their professional development and their accessibility to the organization. Meanwhile, divorced women are in more serious situations in the workplace, as their male counterparts tend to confront them with personal problems verbally at the workplace.

**Table 01:** Sectoral patterns in Bangladeshi workplace gender bias.

| Sectors | Main Gender-Biased Experiences | Representative Evidence |
|---|---|---|
| RMG | Lower wages, limited promotion, harassment, forced overtime. | (Siddiquee, 2025; Haque et al., 2020). |
| Media | Salary discrimination, sexist abuse, threats, silence. | (Kundu & Tabassum, 2023). |
| Civil service and public institutions | Biased postings, leadership exclusion, childcare barriers. | (Nasir, 2022). |
| Banking | Bullying, harassment, weak career continuity. | (Milon & Al-Amin, 2022). |
| Construction and manufacturing | Low wages, unsafe conditions, verbal and sexual abuse. | (Alam, 2021; Haque et al., 2019). |

The garment industry is the largest industry, and throughout the literature, women make up a significant proportion of the workforce but are consistently confined to the bottom of the pay scale, lower-power roles, and subjected to persistent harassment and poor promotion levels (Siddiquee, 2025; Haque et al., 2020; Kundu, 2025). Newer RMG workers add to this, noting that automation fear and poor anti-harassment systems are now components of women's workplace vulnerabilities, particularly in the absence of anti-sexual-harassment cells and/or when night shifts are prevalent (Siddiquee, 2025; Kabir et al., 2025). The same pattern is evident in other areas, outside RMG. Women journalists also experience unequal responsibilities, lack of representation in decision-making, wage gap, and violence both in and out of work, and rarely speak out because formal protection mechanisms are not trusted (Kundu & Tabassum, 2023). In civil service and public institutions, bias manifests as career allocation bias, which is concrete in the form of postings and leadership moves, project access, and inadequate child care support (Nasir, 2022; Shahadat & Kabir, 2020).

Some of the respondents also reported that they did not always feel as though they were treated as a person. While they proved to be competent performers and to have positive work experiences, they did often hear more questions about their abilities than did their male peers. The recurring need to prove themselves was causing frustration and discouragement. There was a general impression among many participants that male employees were automatically considered to be more competent when it came to assignments that were more complex, leadership, and stress. As a result, women had to work harder to obtain equal recognition and trust to their male colleagues. One other major discovery was undervaluing. Several people mentioned that they have felt demeaned sometimes due to being female. They did not see the credibility and authority of their professional skills and achievements as solely dependent on their professional competence but also on their gender. This perception helped to

decrease employees' confidence in work and decrease satisfaction with organizational support. While respondents recognized that overt discrimination was not always apparent, subtle differences in treatment over time had an important impact on their experience at work. Some respondents reported that their work colleagues or supervisors were more likely to give difficult tasks to males because they thought that males were more able to cope with work-related stress. These assumptions restricted women from showcasing their potential and let their expectations for job performance be unequal.

Frustration, silence, and career damage are often used to assess mental health, instead of measuring it directly. Other studies, if any, provide quantitative measures of depression, anxiety, and/or stress outcomes among Bangladeshi working women (Pavel et al., 2026). In Bangladesh, the psychological stress of women is caused by the dual burden of work in professional life and their primary role in domestic work (Akhter et al., 2017; Uddin, 2021; Raihen et al., 2023). Almost everyone reported feeling constant psychological stress due to the requirement to demonstrate competence. Throughout, it was reported that participants felt compelled to achieve high performance to be as credible as male colleagues. But it caused a lot of emotional pressure and tension in the workplace, as they always had to prove themselves. Harassment is one of the most consistent sources of psychological strain for women in the workplace (Ahmed et al., 2022). Every day devaluation is another form of psychological pressure. Institutional employees report that attitudes that demean women have a negative impact on productivity, mental satisfaction, and work performance or dropouts (Shahadat & Kabir, 2020). It is also noted that there is pressure on women due to behavioral discrimination, the absence of women-friendly facilities, and poor recognition of women's competency at work (Rezina & Mahmood, 2016). Female accountants who resign in response to gender bias are less likely to advance in their careers, whereas better mental health and inclusive social measures help to mitigate the effects of resignation due to gender bias (Jabin, 2025). In Bangladesh, social norms influence external pressures and internal uncertainties, creating emotional labor (Islam et al., 2025) for women entrepreneurs. Respondents reported that they frequently had to put in more effort than was required just to prove their worth for the job. Being consistently pressured to do more than minimum standards caused constant mental fatigue and lowered the level of job satisfaction.

A clear theme that came up in the interviews was a feeling that mistakes by women were more harshly judged than mistakes by men. Even if it was only a minor error, respondents felt that this criticism was heightened, and in some cases was taken as an indicator of women's competence as a whole. Participants expressed anxiety about making mistakes, as they thought that they might strengthen the stereotypes of women's capabilities.

Gender-based psychological pressure is not incidental but is built into the structure. Fear, self-censorship, and career stagnation are all fostered within the context of a system of norms that takes the shape of patriarchy, weak enforcement of the Labor Law, gender-blind work practices, and unpaid care burdens. (Kundu, 2025). The COVID-era and general South-Asian findings further confirm that there is an increase in women's stress during periods of increased caregiving needs and decreased organizational support (Sarker et al., 2023; Ullah, 2025).

The interviews showed consistent experiences in the urban workplaces of Dhaka City, which were gender-biased experiences of the female employees working there. In every interview, the interviewees reported that they often felt their competence, authority, and contribution to the workplace were judged differently than that of their male counterparts. While the magnitude of these experiences was different for each respondent, one consistent finding was that women were likely to encounter less obvious than more obvious types of discrimination. All in all, these experiences left a lasting impression of psychological stress, affecting their self-assurance, job engagement, and productivity.

### *4.2 Effects of psychological pressure on physical and mental health, and work performance*

There is the strongest direct evidence that harassment, bullying, overwork, and caregiving responsibilities are associated with anxiety, depression, burnout, sleep issues, and somatic complaints from studies in the garment sector and supporting evidence from nurses, journalists, and newer studies on working mothers (Akter et al., 2024; Tohan et al., 2026). Headaches, back pain, poor self-rated health, and general health risk are some of the mental health outcomes reported in several studies in Bangladesh, while mental health outcomes are measured more frequently and directly than physical sequelae (Dreher et al., 2022; Yuan et al., 2022; Naznin & Thornthwaite, 2025). Among garment workers, there was a very high burden of symptoms (58.7% had symptoms of depression, 73.6% anxiety, and 19.9% stress) and a high demand for long hours and high productivity, and women had higher odds than men in the same occupation of depression and anxiety symptoms (Pavel et al., 2026). Depression increases with workplace violence, bullying, burnout, long hours, untimely salary, absence of rewards, and lack of violence training among Bangladeshi nurses, suggesting that the negative work system adds to mental health risks (Chowdhury et al., 2022).

Almost all participants reported higher levels of stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion as a consequence of chronic stress at work. The respondents reported that the constant need to demonstrate competence, to explain decisions and to overcome stereotypical assumptions was a constant factor in their psychological stress. Several participants reported that these experiences eroded their confidence so that they were not keen to offer an opinion, be actively involved in a discussion, or take up leadership

roles. Many women were not impressed with their accomplishments, but constantly doubted whether there was justice in the assessment of their performance.

These physical sequelae are plausible based on evidence from research conducted in the nearby South Asian countries where measures exist in the Bangladesh context. In addition to anxiety and depression, insomnia, fatigue, anorexia, body pain, and high blood pressure have been reported in studies of sexual harassment outside Bangladesh (Jha et al., 2023; Blindow et al., 2024), and there is consistent prospective evidence of poor mental health following sexual violence and harassment in the workplace (Blindow et al., 2024).

One other emotional result that emerged from the interviews was a sense of doubt. Some of the respondents indicated that they became less confident in their profession due to the cumulative impact of being undervalued or overlooked. The respondents were very resilient with regard to the use of positive coping strategies. A popular strategy was to be very focused on work quality and professional performance. The participants stressed the need to work in a bias-free manner by producing high-quality work consistently and letting the work products reflect their competencies. Some respondents felt professionalism was the best approach to take when dealing with unfair treatment and keeping things from getting into conflict.

Women who face psychological pressure at work report higher rates of absenteeism from work, lower job satisfaction, and lower productivity, which is supported by the most recent studies on working women in the banking sector and multi-sector studies of working women, and not large samples of working women in large corporations (Basak, 2021; Shanjabin et al., 2022). The evidence is more solid for workload stressors, insecurity stressors, and deadline stressors, with few direct causal intervention studies conducted in the corporate context in Bangladesh (Das, 2016). Das (2016) found that 43% of the women aged 20-29 and 62% of the women with 1-5 years of experience had high stress levels in one of the banking samples of Dhaka, which indicates that they are particularly vulnerable at the beginning of their careers. A larger study of Bangladeshi banks revealed that the stress level of the banking population was high overall, and all the stress factors were statistically positive with absenteeism (Shanjabin et al., 2022). Bangladeshi women employees are also affected by menstruation-related stigma, and this has a significant negative impact on their performance, in part due to the effect of non-work stress (Zaman & Mohiuddin, 2021). In a multi-sector study of Bangladesh, a study concerning the pandemic COVID-19 revealed that the pandemic had the maximum impact on women's work stress, job satisfaction, and productivity (Basak, 2021), thus confirming the performance cost of poor management of work-life balance among women. Deep-rooted norms again make women primarily responsible for care and household duties, which is an inter-role interference and has a negative impact on their performance (Uddin, 2021).

**Table 02:** Main factors linking psychological pressure to women's work performance in Bangladesh.

| Factors | Effects on Performance | Representative Evidence |
|---|---|---|
| Workload and deadlines | More stress, more absenteeism. | (Shanjabin et al., 2022). |
| Career insecurity | Lower motivation and strain. | (Das, 2016). |
| Dual home-work roles | Lower performance and satisfaction. | (Uddin, 2021). |
| Gendered stigma | Lower employee performance. | (Zaman & Mohiuddin, 2021). |
| Violence and bullying | Lower satisfaction and poorer performance. | (Chowdhury et al., 2022). |

The respondents gave consistent responses that psychological pressure interrupted their full concentration on tasks related to the job. A substantial part of the participants' mental effort had been dedicated to coping with the perceptions of others in their workplaces rather than only their own duties. This constant feeling of being judged differently from others often made them lose focus on regular activities at work and couldn't work efficiently. Some of the respondents described how they felt they were not receiving adequate recognition for their work or that their efforts were consistently undervalued, and as a result, they were not motivated to push themselves beyond their basic duties.

The qualitative results show that the psychological pressure faced by women is gender biased and has ripple effects on their emotional health and productivity in urban workplaces of Dhaka City. It is notable that the interviews show how the subtle aspects of workplace bias can lead to persistent stress, anxiety, reduced confidence, and self-doubt. To cope with these challenges, women use various coping strategies, such as keeping professional, keeping notes about their accomplishments, accepting social support, and focusing on personal development.

### *4.3 Factors influencing gender-based bias and overcoming strategies*

Family-role strain is the most pervasive factor, and age and marital status exhibit some significant relationships across sectors and life phases (Akhter & Mahmud, 2025). In Bangladesh, there is psychological pressure on women, but this varies according to the context of the gender. The older age groups report greater distress across a variety of studies, particularly when stress tends to build as work duration increases and family responsibilities and demands increase (Himel et al., 2026). Some participants felt that younger women were more likely to have their competence challenged, while women in more senior jobs were subject to greater scrutiny, as they were in positions where males are more likely to be in authority. In the case of garments, older age was independently associated with depression, anxiety, and stress (Pavel et al., 2026). Age was also identified as one of the most significant sociodemographic factors associated with psychological distress among women in the studies, with anxiety increasing after the age of approximately 25 (Amin et al., 2025). But, in other instances, women aged 18-25 who were married had greater anxiety during COVID-19, and younger unmarried garment workers were exposed to practically twice the amount of harassment compared to older married workers (Sagar et al., 2022; Kabir et al., 2025). Marital status is an important indicator of marital status but primarily because of the quality and stability of women's relationships. Marital instability, early marriage, less support from husband/wife, and in-law pressure are likely to be associated with increased anxiety and distress in Bangladesh (Tohan et al., 2025). Assumptions about women's availability, commitment, and career aspirations were often based on personal factors and/or actual work performance rather than other factors, participants explained. For instance, married women or those with family responsibilities felt that they were sometimes seen as less serious about their careers, regardless of their accomplishments.

When the role demands higher pressure, the longer the tenure, the greater the job pressure, and the higher the performance expectations, the more pressure. The best evidence of the workplace is found in nurses and bank workers, not in the corporate hierarchy generally (Islam et al., 2021). Family responsibilities are the most consistent and strongest association with psychological pressure. There is gendered unhappiness about having paid work and domestic production tasks piled on top of childcare and elder care, as well as domestic production not hindering paid work (Haque et al., 2023; Uddin, 2021) across occupational and national studies. Some of the respondents identified women being expected to juggle work and household duties, placing extra pressures on women as compared to many of their male counterparts. Supervisors sometimes assumed that women put family needs ahead of work, and that was factored into promotions, leadership opportunities, or assignment to challenging projects, participants explained. Poor mental health odds were approximately 11 times higher in the case of women who experienced constant work overload, 9.4 times higher when family members expected to do as much housework as women who were not working, and 8.2 times higher when family members challenged women for working (Haque et al., 2023) among married working women in Dhaka.

While respondents recognized that some colleagues were supportive and respectful to individual colleagues, they uniformly indicated that organizational focus on mitigating gender bias was limited. Some respondents mentioned colleagues were supportive and accepted emotional or professional support when difficulties arose. However, the respondents stressed that this support was more of an attitude than formal practice. As a result, in the case of gender issues, women often depended on personal contacts rather than on institutional channels.

Organizations are expected to create and sustain credible reporting mechanisms; and if a prevention committee and/or formal complaints process is not trusted by women, they may not report. (Sultan, 2023) Participants strongly agreed that gender equity policies need to be established in all responses, and that they should be clear and transparent. Employers indicated that they should have written policies encouraging equal opportunity, merit-based performance assessments, and equal recognition of employee performance without regard to gender. Promotion and rewards based on transparent evaluation systems were considered as being especially important, as it could minimise the effects of unconscious bias on evaluation and ensure that promotion and rewards were based on performance. Studies suggest that complaint boxes, stronger measures against offenders, and increased trust in formal complaints mechanisms are recommended alongside women relying on their own informal coping strategies (Sultan, 2023). Counselling and access to mental health should be clearly recommended for psychological support, especially when harassment has an impact on women's psychological lives (Saif et al., 2025). Many of the behaviours in the workplace were thought to be unconscious stereotypes rather than deliberate discrimination. Therefore, gender equality, respectful communication, and inclusive leadership education programs may be a valuable way for employees and supervisors to identify and deconstruct implicit bias. Respondents recommended that awareness programs should reach everyone in the organization, from the top to the bottom, to foster changed culture more effectively than to address individual behaviors. Investing in leadership training and networks to remove barriers, including women's identification of weak support networks and limited training, is recommended as a remedy and is a part of capacity-building that requires investment (Hasan, 2026). They should not, however, only focus on the legal aspects; where discrimination is ingrained in broader norms, they are advised to also engage in collaborative dialogue with workers, communities, and other actors (Fontana, 2020). Additional transportation equipment, additional day care facilities, and additional overtime compensation for both men and women were also recommended by the respondents.

The qualitative results show that supportive colleagues can alleviate some forms of gender based psychological pressure, but broader institutional and policy-level changes are needed for more lasting improvements. Limited institutional support, demographic factors, and workplace stereotypes were identified as key factors that create psychological pressure for women employees.

## 5. Discussion and Recommendation

The results of this study show that psychological pressure is not only a problem for individual women but also a problem for the organization as well, which directly affects women's emotional feelings, motivation, self-confidence, and work output. The qualitative results and available literature support the existing evidence, which shows that women are still under-represented in leadership positions, have stereotypical assumptions made about them, receive fewer leadership opportunities, less organizational support, and fewer complaint mechanisms. These are the difficulties that add to stress, anxiety, decreased productivity, and decreased job satisfaction. Thus, the intervention to decrease the psychologically biased pressure on women should be a multi-faceted approach that engages organizations, policymakers, human resources departments, supervisors, and workers.

### *5.1 Develop and Enforce Comprehensive Gender Equality Policies*

Clear and enforceable gender equality policies must be put in place that explicitly prohibit workplace bias, gender discrimination, harassment, and bullying. Even though there are laws about labor in Bangladesh, there are not many effective internal mechanisms in place that are able to bring these standards to life in the day-to-day lives of organizations (Sultan, 2023; Hasan, 2026; Basharat & Alam, 2024). Policies should be clearly communicated and state the unacceptable behaviors, reporting, disciplinary procedures, and employee rights. Most importantly, policies are not purely documents; they are policies that are being implemented. (Akter et al., 2026)

It is essential for organizations to have regular policy reviews to make sure they meet the national labor laws and international standards for equality in the workplace (Uddin et al., 2022; Syed, 2024). All employees should be provided with easily available information on policy handbooks during their orientation, and management should be regularly communicating what is expected of them for respectful workplace behavior (Uddin et al., 2022). Consistent policy implementation helps decrease uncertainty, enhance organizational justice, and limit opportunities for discriminatory practices (Uddin et al., 2022).

### *5.2 Promote Transparent and Merit-Based Performance Evaluation Systems*

Organizations need to implement transparent, objective, and standardized performance management systems that are solely based on measurable performance indicators. It is important that all employees have clear information on the criteria for evaluation prior to the evaluation period (Jilani et al., 2026). Supervisors' performance evaluations can be improved by multiple evaluators, so as to minimize individual evaluators' bias. All evaluation forms should be structured, all scoring systems standardized, and evidence of performance tracked to become a mandatory part of the appraisal process. It is also important to routinely review promotions and pay and compensation decisions to assess for gender inequity in promotion opportunities. Transparent systems of evaluation make employees feel fairer and less pressure from subjective managerial evaluations (Hasan, 2026).

### *5.3 Strengthen Leadership Commitment and Inclusive Management Practices*

For inclusive organizational cultures, there must be leadership commitment. Results from interviews showed that while colleagues tended to offer emotional support, supervisors were not as active in addressing gender related issues. Leaders of the organization must go one step further and advocate equality in the workplace. Specialized training for managers in inclusive leadership, unconscious bias, conflict management, and equitable decision-making. Supervisors should be assessed on both their operational performance as well as their ability to create respectful and inclusive workplace environments (Kuknor & Bhattacharya, 2022). Diversity performance indicators can be incorporated in leadership accountability mechanisms to motivate managers to focus on gender equity as part of an organization's performance (Chikwe et al., 2024). The senior leadership also needs to be more inclusive of women in strategic decision-making processes and leadership. Being visible in the female role within management goes against the stereotype of the female gender and acts as a role model for the young employees (Nasir, 2022).

### *5.4 Expand Mental Health and Psychological Support Services*

The qualitative results confirmed that the continuous experience of psychological pressure based on gender stereotypes has an impact on stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, lack of confidence, and self-doubt. The results align with earlier studies that reported on the psychological impact of workplace harassment and discrimination faced by Bangladeshi women (Pavel et al., 2026; Chowdhury et al., 2022). Employers should thus make mental health services in the workplace a priority, such as confidential counseling, psychological intervention, stress management programs, and Employee Assistance Programs. Mental health awareness programs should aim to desensitize the seeking of help and minimize the stigma surrounding mental health

(Najafabadi et al., 2024). It is also important that managers have knowledge of how to identify signs of employee burnout, emotional exhaustion, and distress. Early intervention can help mitigate the psychological effects for a longer period of time and increase employee retention and productivity (Saif et al., 2025).

### *5.5 Promote Flexible Work Arrangements and Work–Life Balance*

The research revealed that the psychological stress among the female employees increased considerably when they had family responsibilities. Past studies also show how women's burden of unpaid domestic work and caregiving responsibilities significantly impacts their mental wellbeing and stress levels at work (Uddin, 2021; Haque et al., 2023).

Adopt flexible working practices, as appropriate to the organization, including flexible working hours, hybrid working, family leave options, and supportive return-to-work policies after a birth (Yucel & Fan, 2023). Work-family conflicts can be further reduced with workplace childcare facilities or childcare support allowances, especially for working mothers (Ikazaki, 2026). Organizations also need to make sure that promotion and other career development opportunities are not based on employees' parental or caring duties. Flexible workplace policies should be thought of as strategies to enhance organizational productivity instead of employee benefits (Yucel & Fan, 2023; Ikazaki, 2026).

### *5.6 Strengthen Women's Leadership Development and Professional Mentorship*

Many of the participants commented that they were not receiving as many opportunities in their workplace to lead as their male peers. Leadership development programs should thus be designed, structured, and implemented in an organization to help women in their professional growth. Mentoring programs linking junior female workers with senior female mentors can enhance confidence, career development, networking and organizational visibility for women (Barkhuizen et al., 2022). Communication skills, negotiation, strategic decision-making, conflict management, and executive leadership development are all areas of leadership training that should be covered. In addition, organizations should strive for equal opportunities in professional training, participation in international conferences, technical assignments, and participation in influential projects in order to advance careers (Russell et al., 2023; Hasan, 2026).

## 6. Conclusion

This study examined the impact of gender bias psychological pressure on the job performance of female workers in urban workplaces in Dhaka City. The results from the qualitative interviews and a thorough literature search are presented to show that gender bias is entrenched in the organizational cultures of various industries in Bangladesh. It also shows that constant gender-based mistreatment can lead to higher stress levels, anxiety, emotional burnout, lack of self-confidence, and self-doubt among female workers. These psychological problems have a negative impact on concentration, decision-making, creativity, motivation, and job performance. Many of the participants indicated that they had to work harder than men to gain equal credibility, and that they were reluctant to speak up or take leadership roles because of fears of unfair evaluation and stereotypes. Marriage, organizational position, and family responsibilities, along with age, were also identified as factors that exacerbated psychological pressure by reinforcing typical gender roles. The study calls attention to the importance of addressing gender-biased psychological pressure as a matter of women's rights protection, as well as an issue of organizational and national development. Fostering gender equity and psychological safety at work helps women reach their potential and makes them happier, more productive, and a more sustainable economic force. Further study should use larger mixed-method and longitudinal studies in various parts of Bangladesh and in various sectors of job with the objective of understanding the long-term impact of gender bias reduction and women's work performance improvement strategies provided by organizational interventions.

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