Discrimination against Women in Mid-Level Position in Workplaces: A Case Study of the Public Institutions in Dhaka City

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Abstract: This study attempted to find out the severity/degree of discrimination against women in mid-level positions at their workplace, especially in an urban setting of Bangladesh and existence of policy gap in the institutional framework, if any and then tried to provide some policy prescriptions to overcome the existing adverse environment faced by women at the workplace. This research was conducted in 2019 and used a qualitative approach using both secondary data and primary data collected through a semi-structured questionnaire with twelve female officials, working at mid-level positions, from three public institutions, e.g. civil service (CS), education sector (ES), and banking sector (BS). To have an in-depth knowledge of discrimination, secondary data sources including books, government reports, and journal articles were reviewed. It was found that, society assesses women as inferior to men and considers women to give birth and manage household services only, from the perspective of Bangladesh. These devaluations of women decrease their productivity and create an unwillingness for their works. Discrimination at the workplace links the dissatisfaction in the family. It increases absenteeism in the office and creates mistrust among colleagues. The traditional social system passing through hundred years causes different treatments for males and females. Lack of quality education and traditional mindset are another reason behind. Mental dissatisfaction also increases working errors and dropouts and reduces productivity. This research argues for a few considerations to eliminate discrimination including creating much awareness, adopting gender sensitization programs, ensuring enough women in management positions, increasing gender sensitivity, setting up at least one day-care center and personal space for women in all the government institutions, equitable share of the division of labor, ensuring quality education at all levels, and regular orientation on institutional policies and procedures between staffs.

Keywords: discrimination, institutional framework, participation, gender sensitivity, mid-level position, public institution
1. Introduction and Background

Bangladesh has shown tremendous achievements in increasing economic growth and reducing income and non-income poverty in the last few years. Despite these, Bangladesh was ranked 136th in the UNDP 2017 Human Development Index (HDI) with a value of 0.608 (United Nations Development Programme, 2018). Even though Bangladesh has a large portion of illiterate and unskilled population, development in growth and poverty alleviation could only be possible due to an increase in educational as well as economic opportunities. Women, consisting of a significant portion of the nation’s population, are found to get involved in several economic activities. However, the degree of women’s participation still not satisfying in the context of Bangladesh. Factors like societal dishonor, traditional and political barriers, insufficient application of legal and constitutional provisions, and absence of appropriate recognized and organizational settings and so on are mainly responsible for women’s lower participation in economic activities. In this advanced 21st century, many of the women living in rural and urban areas, as well, are being involved in managing households rather than economic activities despite having the same educational, and technical knowledge compared to their counterparts.

Sexuality norms (i.e. control over female interactions with related males other than household members) and social customs and discrimination between what is observed as a male-dominated space (e.g. village markets) and predominantly female space, limit options for participation in the labor market and paid employment for females. Additionally, high levels of domestic violence, as well as by intimate partners, are often experienced by women. Again, women working in the formal or informal sector also face some degree of significant discrimination, both physically and mentally, compared to their counterparts. Since its independence in 1971, women have made significant advances regardless of socio-cultural and structural obstacles. The type of progress that had been made by women is uneven and gender inequalities are still persistent. Legal changes were made due to different activities and actions taken by the state, non-governmental organizations, women’s rights organizations. It has accelerated the good condition of the health of women and created opportunities for their presence in sectors like politics, education and economic activities.

Through the formation of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA) and the National Policy for the Advancement of Women, the government of Bangladesh is committed to reducing all forms of discrimination against women in all areas and supporting gender parity in
sectors including education, health, nutrition, housing, economy, public administration, and political empowerment. To protect equal rights and opportunities, Bangladesh has also passed some laws at the state level, but their enactment and influence have not yet been confirmed. Ensuring equal rights to women and men in all spheres of life is directed in the Constitution of Bangladesh (i.e., Article 27, 28(1), 28(2), 28(3), 28(4), 29(1), 29(2) and 29(3) of the constitution) which are supplemented by several Acts and Ordinances which exist to protect women’s equal rights. This includes the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1980, the Child Marriage Restraint Act (amended in 1984) and the Family Courts Ordinance of 1985. These laws serve a portion of the essential legal framework to protect and promote equal rights of women in the public domain. However, improper implementation and monitoring of these laws result in considerable injustices faced by the women in the home and workplace as well.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) surveyed the predominance of violence against women (VAW) and found that the rate of violence was so high in number. This first national survey on VAW was perpetrated by the previous husband, current husband and non-partner perpetrators. Almost 87% of women who are married stated that they experienced violence in the last twelve months. The most common violence was psychological violence followed by physical violence among other types of violence. According to the report on VAW, the rate of sexual or physical violence is 67% by partners, psychological violence 82%, and economic violence 53%. Domestic violence is widely tolerated, even among women: one-third of women 15-49 years of age provided at least one justification for their husbands’ torture (such as arguing with him). The persistence of such attitudes suggests the deeply ingrained conservative gender norms and the importance of seizing all opportunities to promote respect for women’s rights, dignity, and their contributions to households and communities. Where women are not receiving proper dignity, rights and returns for their contribution from household and communities, the working women may face more difficulties including disrespect, dishonor, and discrimination, physical and mental assault and so on at their workplace. These inspire the researchers to conduct this study.

It was once thought that male was the asset and the women were the burden in society. Though technologically people of Bangladesh have made advancement in the early 21st century, they could not still get out of the concept of considering women as the liability. Over time, labor force participation of women (LFP) rates increased faster than men’s- from 26.1% in 2002-2003 to
33.5% in 2013, while men’s LFP rates decreased from 87.4% to 81.7% during the same period (Government of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Again, all the same, compared with men, women have lower LFP rates, higher unemployment rates, and much higher underemployment rates. In rural areas, LFP rates are higher than in the urban areas for both women and men. According to the report of International Organization (2012-2015), the LFP rate is 23.4% in urban areas whereas 76.6% in rural areas. It indicated the presence of discrimination against women at their workplace, especially in urban areas. This calls for a study aiming to assess the degree of discrimination faced by women. This paper focuses to determine the extent of discrimination against women in public institutions from Dhaka city, investigate whether any policy gap exists in the institutional framework concerning women’s rights, and identify the critical suggestions for protecting women from any discrimination within the workplace.

Development and Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination is not a new phenomenon. Women were paid attention to their roles as homemakers and mothers during the 1950s and 1960s though the economic dependency was on male workers. The researchers started to emphasize labor division based on sex and the influence of modernization policies and development on women. The concept of WID (Women in Development) came into practice during this period based on the fact that women lag and the existing gap between males and females can be reduced by the corrective measures that exist within the structures of the society. According to the WID approach women were acknowledged as actors directly connected with social, political, cultural and working life. However, there exists a high gender disparity in Bengali society as the birth of a baby boy is welcomed joyfully, and only baby girls are greeted if a family already has boys and no girl. Boys are seen as the source of income, but girls are seen as burdens. Girls require a dowry in their marriage. The role of women is not that much highlighted in the economic activity of official measures despite working in varied roles in paid and unpaid productive labor. Existing law and traditional patriarchal restrictions weaken female economic life which results in deprivation of equal pay, financial and family benefit, inherit property and many issues. Discrimination hampers the overall development of a country, and it perpetuates disproportion at every level of income. The effect of gender discrimination lies in differences that exist within the social structure and the relationship between male and female. The European Commission defines gender as the roles, expectations, and
responsibilities of men and women in the society and culture where their capability and incentive are affected and their incentive to take part in the process of development and lead to a different project impact for women and men.

In Bangladesh, with half of its female population, unequal treatment towards boys and girls is very common to the families. The society of Bangladesh is patriarchal, and women are considered inferior to men. Recently, Bangladesh is moving upward in all sectors especially about gender equality. Female participation is increasing gradually in all grounds of employment due to their envious achievement in the education sector. The development of a country can hardly be possible without the development of education. In this sense, education should be given top priority to reduce gender disparity. The development of a country depends on both the participation of males and females in all aspects of government. Gender equality is not simply a human right, but a necessary precondition for a prosperous, peaceful and sustainable society. Education is the bedrock of the overall development of a country. In line with reducing gender disparity, the government should give priority to quality education. More recently, the term ‘quality education’ has been given priority by national and international organizations. Besides to gender equality, the idea of quality should give priority. Developing countries are striving to overcome the dual challenges of education expansion and universal provision while simultaneously being mindful of ensuring quality and equity of education. Consequently, the government has given the highest priority to the education sector to build an educated, scientific-minded, independent, and dynamic nation.

Limitation of the study

This study has tried to cover the minimum number of respondents (12) from different government institutions, e.g. civil service, bank, and school, who are much busy in their respective functions. Therefore, it becomes difficult to obtain detailed information about the scenario of widespread discrimination against women. It is logical to state that the small size of the respondents in this study may not reflect the whole scenario of the Mega-City like Dhaka and the enormous number of public organizations inside. On the other hand, since this topic is a little bit sensitive, some respondents avoid interviewer to explore the real scenario in particular contexts. The respondents sometimes seem unclear about gender issues in their respective institutions and the respondents do not willingly or directly answer the questions. Thus, the major problem of the research is the
paucity of available data on some particular areas of the questions asked. Further researches may focus on a large sample, the missed issues and provides a bigger picture as a whole.

2. Review of Related Literature

In the global perspective, several published journals were available during the review of the literature, but while considering the Bangladesh perspective, little-published journals were available and so some of the columns published in the leading newspapers of Bangladesh were also reviewed and considered here. This section is going to conceptualize the terminologies used in this research by the researchers along with some of the existing vital researches and studies conducted in the area of discrimination against women at their workplaces.

Discrimination against women

Various approached by several writers have defined the term discrimination. It usually means the unfair and detrimental treatment of different groups of people, especially from a race, region, age, or sex. Article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW (1979), discrimination against women (popularly known as gender discrimination) is any division, segregation or constraint made based on sex which has the result or intent of damaging or abolishing the appreciation, satisfaction or exercise by women, regardless of marital status, on a basis of parity of men and women, of citizens' rights and essential liberties in the fields including socio-political, economic, cultural or civil fields (United Nations Statistics Division, 2019).

Based on these definitions, as this study mainly focused on discrimination against women at their workplace, the researchers define ‘discrimination against women’ as the unjust and prejudicial treatment of different categories of individuals at their workplaces, especially on the grounds of their sex. The study aims to determine whether women working at mid-level positions in public institutions face any discrimination, if any, then identify the degree of discrimination at their workplace. The existing literature in the global perspective and global South perspective as well regarding this issue summarized in the following subsections.

Bader, Stoermer, Bader, & Schuster (2018) tried to inquire into gender discrimination of female expatriates at the workplace across 25 host countries as well as the correlation between frustration and job satisfaction due to discrimination and found that female expatriates faced discrimination
more frequently than their male counterparts. Moreover, the study found significant findings of gender discrimination on frustration and job pleasure (Bader, Stoermer, Bader, & Schuster, 2018). Williams & Cuddy (2012) found that legal action regarding discrimination against working mothers is on the rise (Williams & Cuddy, 2012). Chester & Kleiner (2001) found that discriminatory practice against women during pregnancy is most prevalent in the hiring practices of an organization. The authors concluded that this issue requires immediate attention (Chester & Kleiner, 2001).

Another study by Ali (2013) focused on observations and experiences of women who work in the formal sector regarding challenges they are facing at their workplace and it was based on in-depth qualitative interview. It revealed that it would be inadequate if only the organizations are considered solely responsible for ensuring equal opportunities for both male and female. It also showed that equal opportunity is affected by both macro factors, which are societal factors (such as legal, socio-cultural), and micro factors, that are individual factors (such as intersectionality, agency) (Ali, 2013). Kaushik, Sharma, & Kaushik (2014) aimed to study issues like gender typecast and bias and sexual assault in the setting of India. They identified several job-related factors, and these were: human resource functions, infrastructure, organizational environment, legal pursuit, empowerment, training and development, and ethical concerns) and two individual factors (interactive and way of thinking) that were all seen as crucial for women workers in Indian institutions. Findings also show that respondents differ extensively on these issues based on their gender (Kaushik, Sharma, & Kaushik, 2014).

In China, the number of married female workers has increased in recent years but women’s experiences at their workplace are highly under-researched. Broadbent, & Yuan (2018) focused on workers in the formal sector and compared the employment conditions between single and married women workers. Findings disclosed that the working environment of married women workers is worse, particularly from the perspective of salary and social security benefits. Though employment in the formal sector of married women migrant workers in China is increasing, they are suffering wage discrimination compared to their original counterparts, and the figure of wage differential is about 15.64% per hour. This study also concludes that married women workers are at a disadvantage when compared to their unmarried counterparts, especially in the case of well-paid jobs (An, Broadbent, & Yuan, 2018).
Before Bobbitt-Zeher’s study (2011), it was researched that gender stereotype and organizational factors may contribute to discrimination at the workplace. Bobbitt-Zeher (2011) analyzed 219 sex discrimination cases reported to the Ohio Civil Rights Commission and found the significance of cultural, structural, and interactional influences on discrimination against women (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). Again, conducting a study among a sample of 201 Americans and 177 Australians business students, Browne (1997) found the severe existence of gender disparity where women are more likely to confirm its existence, especially in the area of salary and participation in decision making (Browne, 1999). Triana (2011) investigated how gender roles where women as primary wage earners and males being secondary wage earners in their families could affect them professionally. The author used an experimental design with a cohort of 306 college students and explored how females who are the primary wage earners in their families and males who are the secondary wage earners are perceived and evaluated by peers in their respective job roles. This research implies that this may present a new form of sex discrimination against women in developing countries that have not yet been considered.

Meenan (1999) confirmed age discrimination in employment in the United Kingdom (UK). The demographic transition, resulting from previously aged people, urges the need for adequate protection against ageism at the workplace. The absence of legal protection from age discrimination may result in the possibility to receive claims of discrimination including gender, race or disability under existing British law on these areas. It is, however, insufficient to tackle the problem of ageism in the workplace (Meenan, 1989).

Channar, Abbassi, & Ujan, researchers from Pakistan, in 2011, explored the issue of gender discrimination and its effect on the performance of employees. The research included all of the three levels of employee namely lower, middle and higher category of health and education departments from two districts: Hyderabad and Jamshoro. The authors showed discrimination against women took place more frequently in private sectors and showed a reduction of job pleasure, inspiration, obligation, the enthusiasm of employees, and a rise in the stress of employees are the outcome of gender discrimination at the workplace (Channar, Abbassi, & Ujan, 2011).

Plickert & Sterling (2017) conducted their study on the persons involved in legal practice in the USA. It was observed that female lawyers need not face any challenges regarding the entrance to
the legal profession but still, gender-based issues are persistent at their workplace. The study revealed a significant variation of work schedules by gender, role as a parent and discriminatory practice at the workplace. Though both father and mother experienced some sort of discrimination at their workplace, still there exist significant differences in work schedules by father and mother due to the severity of discrimination they experienced at their workplace (Plickert & Sterling, 2017).

Apart from the global perspective, an ILO study by Kapsos (2008), using the 2007 Bangladesh Occupational Wage Dataset, identified the factors of earnings and gender wage disparities among the non-agricultural workers in the country and found that in Bangladesh women’s wage was 21% less per hour in comparison to men. 15.9% was wage differential, controlling for differences in age, education, industry, geographic location, and occupation, but the estimated wage gap was 23.1% considering the effects of industrial and occupational segregation. Gender gaps observed in every industry irrespective of the level of education and size class. The most substantial gaps were observed in the service sector and construction industries and among workers with primary education or lower. The gender wage gap in the financial intermediation, construction, and manufacturing industries are increased by gender-based occupational segregation. The most massive gender gap observed among illiterate workers followed by literate workers with less than a primary school education (Kapsos, 2008). This study indicates the presence of discrimination against women in wage determination at their workplace other than agriculture.

Another study conducted by Mahmud & Afrin (2017) reveals severe gender discrimination against women at Ready-Made-Garment (RMG) sector. Despite being large in numbers, female workers face severe gender discrimination, especially while determining wages, as well as various types of troubles at their workplace including physical and mental. Female managers paid 21% less than the male counterpart. The study found, in a leading exporter of RMG of Bangladesh with 4,000 employees, highest gender discrimination is observed at the supervisor level. 28.31% of workers reported discrimination in salary on a gender basis. In comparison to large industries the rate of discrimination is higher in small industries. There are certain grounds like wage fixation, overtime, bonus and wage computation and so on where female employees face discrimination. In RMG industries, excess male employees as well as sexual harassment by the male counterpart and also by the management is found. It shows strong evidence favoring discrimination and violence
against women at the workplace. About 3% of women have faced sexual harassment. It is primarily touching, molestation, or brushing against the body. Moreover, about 4% of men and 17% of women reported that someone in their workplace had reported sexual harassment. Most workers were not satisfied with the response of the employer and fellow employees to such incidents. They found the most common types of work-related harassment: heavy, additional workloads are to handle by 43% women which are 34% for their counterpart and extra hours without extra pay is handled by 27% women which is 7% more than men (Mahmud & Afrin, 2017). This study shows robust evidence that women face discrimination as well as violence at their workplace. Kamal & Sabrin (2014) also found gender discrimination in the corporate sector. They found some common challenges faced by women in corporate world includes sexual harassment (62%), delayed or deprived from promotion (52%), long working hour (98%) and lack of favorable policy (32%) (Kamal & Sabrin, 2014).

Niimi (2009) reviewed the recent progress made to achieve gender equality in developing Asian countries. Though there were improvements in education and health to a small extent, the author found that the improved capabilities of women do not result in equal participation of them in activities such as economic and political. Moreover, she found significant gender gaps in all features, particularly in South Asian countries, with some exceptions. The most observed forms of different treatment at the workplace include wage gap and occupational segregation based on gender (Niimi, 2009).

In Bangladesh's perspective, studies aiming to identify the severity or degree of discriminatory practice against women at their workplace as well as the existence of the policy gap for redressing them are based on the RMG sector and non-agricultural industries. There is little or no research from the service sector conducted for the same purpose. Again, there is no research conducted yet that aimed to compare the discrimination against women in various sectors. This knowledge gap encourages the research to conduct this study which aims to identify the degree and severity of discrimination at the workplace from the three service sectors (e.g., civil service, education, and banking) and compare the findings from these three sectors. It will contribute to the existing research gap.
Women empowerment

Empowerment means granting powers, authority or right to perform various acts. Different writers analyzed empowerment from different perspectives. For example, Rowland (1997) mentioned three concepts to understand empowerment namely: ‘personal’ which is concerned about developing a sense of self-confidence and capability; ‘rational’ which means the development of the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of a relationship and decisions made within it. Moreover, ‘collective’ including involvement in political structures but might also cover mutual action-based co-operation rather than competition (Rowland, 1997).

On the other hand, Kabeer (1994) highlighted empowerment as the transformation of power between men and women so that women have greater control over themselves and men cannot control the lives of the women (Kabeer, 1994).

The UN statistics division defined the empowerment of women and girls as having power and control over their own lives. It requires creating awareness, generating self-possession, increase of opportunities and increased access to and control over resources. Empowerment of women and girls should ensure equal capabilities for women and men (including health and education), equal access to resources and opportunities for women and men (including land, employment, and credit). Women’s activity to use these rights, capabilities, resources, and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions in all spheres of life (including political participation, decision-making in communities and intra-household decision making) (United Nations Statistics Division, 2019).

Rahman (2013) described empowerment as a method of creating consciousness and building capability which is vital to bigger female participation, to greater decision-making power and control, and transformative action. Besides, empowerment is a process that is both individual and collective. Sometimes it involves a group of people starting to develop their awareness and the ability to take action and bring about change (Rahman, 2013).

Based on these definitions, the researchers define women empowerment as women having the authority or power with equal rights as men at their workplaces. So that they can perform their roles and responsibilities independently, need not face discrimination by the co-workers as well as
managerial bodies, can get involved in the policy-making process and can attain the top positions at their workplaces.

Cakir and Yerin identified some demographic factors including education level, self-reported discrimination, social support, and psychological distress in predicting women empowerment on Turkish migrant women workers. The study findings identified the level of psychological distress to be the most significant predictor of empowerment, while other significant predictors include a level of education and social support. The authors concluded that educational achievement and social support may function as protective factors and that psychological distress may function as a risk factor for female empowerment (Cakir & Yerin, 2011).

Another study by Martin, Warren-Smith, Scott, & Roper tried to provide the incidence of female directors in UK companies, drawn against types of firms. They found male dominance at senior levels. Though female directors represented one in four directors in UK firms, most companies are male-dominated. Smaller firms are led by female directors and only one in 226 of larger firms is led by the majority of female directors (Martin, Warren-Smith, Scott, & Roper, 2008).

**Gender**

The term gender simply defined as being either male or female. It has a broader meaning in social sciences. In social sciences, gender referred to the roles and responsibilities of human beings that are originated either from families and/or from societies and/or from cultures. Oxford dictionary defines gender as either of the two sexual categories (male and female), especially while considering social and cultural differences rather than biological ones. Sometimes, the term is also used more broadly to denote a range of identities that do not correspond to established ideas of male and female. In other words, gender is an individual’s self-perception about being male or female, as distinguished by biological sex. The UN statistics department refers to gender to differences in prospects and opportunities, constructed in society, depending on being female or male as well as to the social connections and relationships between women and men. Expectation, authorization, and valuation in a woman or a man are often determined by gender in a given context. Both men and women face differences and inequalities in assigning roles and responsibilities, undertaking activities and accessing and controlling resources in most of the societies as well as while making decisions. History of social connections and modification over
time and across societies shape these differences and inequalities between the sexes (United Nations Statistics Division, 2019).

Most of the people cannot distinguish between gender identity and biological characteristics. Studying gender is crucial as the overall development of a country rely upon the equal development of both male and female. This research defines gender as merely being either male or female which is a substitute for the definition of biological sex.

**Participation**

Participation means opportunities for taking part in any act or function or policy-making process. It usually means the action of taking part in something. In this study, female participation in employment defined as women’s engagement in the earning process, mainly employed in the service sector. Women's participation requires their equal rights as like as their male counterparts for ensuring their adequate representation in the service sector. The policies taken by the government emphasizing adequate women participation may contribute to ensuring gender equality.

A study by Gupta, Raychaudhuri, & Haldar (2015) aims to investigate inclusive gender participation in the IT (Information Technology) sector of employment in India. The study found that the proportion and mobility of female employees in an organization are not dependent upon the turnover or the total number of skilled employees in the organization. That seemed to depend somewhat on the location and environment of the workplace, cooperation from the co-workers, job security, etc. (Gupta, Raychaudhuri, & Haldar, 2015).

Kabir (2013) discusses the position of women in civil service employment in South Asia (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) and identified that the majority of women were employed in lower-level positions and that it is rarer to find women in higher and mid-level positions and professional and administrative occupations. It was concluded that although there have been constitutional commitments and governmental initiatives to remove gender discrimination from the civil services, women still have to contend with a range of obstacles to attain career success (Kabir, 2013).
The International Labor Organization (ILO) tried to find out the global view of the women’s participation in the workplaces. It found some progress for women in the world of work and terms of gender equality in society for the past twenty years and more women are being educated and participating in the labor market than their counterparts. The report also found real awareness and the paramount importance of gender equality to reduce poverty and boost economic development as well as the high correlation between women's participation in the market and the achievement of SDGs. The report also demonstrated gender disparities in labor market opportunities as a notable concern. This has also been identified as present across the labor market and is rooted in the back-and-forth interactions of gender roles as well as socio-economic constraints and personal preferences, such as unequal care responsibilities and discrimination (ILO, 2018). Verick (2014) tried to analyze female labor force participation in developing countries and found that the relationship between participation and economic progress “is far from straightforward”. The author found the multifaceted factors responsible for women’s employment including education, fertility rates, social norms, and the nature of job creation and suggested particular emphasis to reduce drop out and ensure quality education of young girls which, in turn, will increase their chances of overcoming other barriers to finding decent employment (Verick, 2014).

Khatun F. (2014) highlights female participation in the job markets. The author shows that female participation in the labor force has increased drastically in the last few decades, which is 35.6% in 2016 compared to 4% in 1974. This growth in female participation is much faster than that of males, which is 81.9% in 2016 compared to 80.4% in 1974 (Khatun F., 2014).

In the banking sector, females are not as interested as their male counterparts to join the sector. Das (2016) says that the banking sector is one of the high stress (both psychological and physiological) creating sectors among female employees and this leads to low participation of females in this sector. The author found that more than 43% of the working women reported facing high stress in the 20-29 age bracket and those had bachelor’s degrees only; and also 62% having 1-5 years’ work experience reported that they faced high stress. 80% of women reported low salaries, job insecurity, transfer and lack of opportunity for growth and advancement as the main reasons behind their stress levels. The study also found discrimination against women results in more than half employees’ anger and frustration. The author suggested that seminars and workshops should be constructed to deal with stress and women should not feel pressured to stay
too long or unnecessarily at the workplace. Furthermore, it was suggested they should avoid multiple tasks concurrently to reduce the stress level. Moreover, the government should also strive towards amenable and encouraging policies in favor of working women to reduce discrimination. Das (2016) identified some critical factors that affect job satisfaction for female employees in private commercial banks in Bangladesh. They identified some significant factors that are responsible for lesser job satisfaction of female employees of private commercial banks including job security, decision-making participation, attitude from higher management, available leave facilities, salary increment, work-life balance, promotion opportunities, flexible working hours, etc. (Saif, Uddin, Haque, Rahman, & Mamun, 2016). These factors indicate the existence of discrimination against women in the banking sector of Bangladesh.

As this study aims to focus on women’s participation and their experience of discrimination at their workplace, the existing literature indicates the existence of gender discrimination in the workplace. Though female participation in several types of employment is on the rise over the years, women are still struggling to attain success.

**Gender equality in the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

Following the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) address the global challenges regarding those related to inequality, poverty, environment, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, peace, and justice. The goals are interconnected, and to leave no one behind, it is vital to achieving each goal and target by 2030. Among the 17 goals, goal five concerned with achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

Though the world has already advanced towards gender equality and women’s empowerment under the MDGs, females still face discrimination and violence globally. Gender equality is an essential human right as well as a necessary foundation for a peaceful, affluent and sustainable world. However, it is tragically the case that one in every five women between the ages of 15-49 reported that her partner is engaged in physical or sexual violence with her in the last 12 months and 49 countries currently lack laws in favor of women to protect them from domestic violence. Progress in this issue is happening despite harmful practices including child marriage and female
genital mutilation, which has been reduced by 30% in the last decade; but yet there is much more to do for eliminating such practices (Mellish, Settergren, & Sapuwa, 2015).

Goal 5 in SDGs sets some targets upon which the Government of Bangladesh is also committed to achieving the goals by 2030. However, only those goals relevant to this study mentioned here.

- End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
- Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life
- Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources, following national laws
- Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels (UN Women, 2018)

Although it is quite difficult to achieve all the goals by 2030, it is satisfactory that countries understand the factors behind the inferior status of the development and work towards adopting a new development prototype that can reach the SDGs in the foreseeable future. Hirway (2018) argues that most countries today are moving on a development path that is not directed towards achieving the SDGs, especially gender equality and the empowerment of women. The article also highlights the individuality of gender equality through these SDGs by discussing the different aspects of them (Hirway, 2018).

**Tackling discrimination against women in the workplace**

Discrimination against women occurs in almost all of the sectors in everyday life including health, nutrition, education, employment and so on. Discrimination in education attainment results in lack of skills gathered and low chances in the labor market. Empowering females is fundamental for sustainable economic growth and for promoting social development.

Harnois & Bastos examines to what extent perceptions of gender discrimination in employment and sexual harassment associated with individuals’ reports of mental and physical health and how
multiple forms of workplace ill-treatment (including discrimination regarding race, age, and sex) affect workers’ self-assessed health. They found that women’s perception of discrimination in the workplace negatively correlated with poor mental health and their perception of sexual assault results in poor physical health. For both men and women, perceptions of multiple forms of mistreatment associated with worse mental health (Harnois & Bastos, 2018). It indicates the impact of gender discrimination on self-reported health status which is crucial for the development of the economy as the output of the economy is highly dependent upon the healthier workforce. So, tackling gender discrimination may add up to the output of the economy, in turn to the growth of the economy.

In a study, Gumbel considered industrialized countries in the 1970s and tried to measure the impact of gender inequality on the labor market, along with health and education. He finds out that less gender inequality results in a higher per capita income (Gumbel, 2004). Another study by Klasen & Lamanna found that economic growth significantly reduced by gender discrimination in employment opportunities. They also found that employment inequality has a more negative impact on economic growth than education inequality (Klasen & Lamanna, 2008). Partovi, Amini, & Goodarzi (2009) studied the effect of gender inequality in employment and education on economic growth in Iran and found economic growth positively correlated with a decrease in gender gaps in education and employment. They concluded that an increase in female participation in economic activities would lead to an improvement in economic growth (Partovi, Amini, & Goodarzi, 2009). Considering the Middle East and North Africa, Libby analyzed the role of women in economic development in these regions during the years 1990-2010 and empowering women by providing higher levels of education and granting women the right to vote positively correlated with the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of the country (Libby, 2011).

Khayria & Feki tried to analyze the effect of gender inequality on economic growth and confirm the negative correlation between gender inequality and economic growth in terms of human capital and suggest promoting economic growth (Khayria & Feki, 2015).

Based on the existing literature regarding the negative impact of gender disparity at the workplace on economic growth, it can be said that without providing the women with equal prospects and opportunities in employment, it is quite impossible to maintain economic development.
Consequently, for sustainable economic growth, gender disparity must be tackled with proper policies.

3. Methodology

The researchers used a qualitative method to represent the experience and opinion of the respondents about discrimination at their workplace as well as a quantitative method to analyze the actual female participation in employment. Data were collected in 2019.

Qualitative methods

Qualitative data were collected in this research as it may capture the whole practice of gender discrimination in the workplace. In-depth interviews conducted in this regard which helped the researchers to find out the actual scenario of obstacles women are regularly facing at their workplace. As the respondents went through an in-depth interview, the data collected was mainly qualitative. This researchers interviewed the respondents through a semi-structured questionnaire which enabled the researchers to create an environment with the respondent so that the required insight information for the study purpose can be gathered. All the questions’ answer was open-ended and the respondents had choices to answer in the way they feel comfortable. After the collection of data, their responses were analyzed by the researchers, common key findings were brought out and represented separately for three different types of institutions.

Quantitative methods

Quantitative data were collected for analyzing the existing scenario of women’s participation in the three above mentioned institutions. In this regard, this study premised on secondary sources of data, in addition to primary data. Secondary data were collected from various journal articles; books; government research papers and published reports of different concerned ministries and authorities in this field; different annual reports of Bangladesh Public Service Commission and the Government of Bangladesh. Websites, the database of the concerned authorities were also used to collect quantitative data. Quantitative data mainly helped the researchers to find out the existing scenario of female participation in the service sector.
Conceptual framework of this study

A conceptual framework helped to identify the factors behind discrimination against women in mid-level positions in workplaces.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for discrimination against women in workplaces

Women’s participation in employment depends upon several factors including job security, adequate remuneration for work, provision for salary increment, opportunities for promotion, favorable working hours, and available leave facilities in favor of women, transportation facility and job security. Based on these factors, if women participate in employment, they may face different types of discrimination in the workplace. These factors include their participation in decision making, recognition of their good work, co-operation from a male co-worker, good working environment, women empowerment and attitude of top management. This study thus aimed to find out the types and severity of discrimination against women and suggest some policy implications to reduce this problem.
Sampling
This study did sample purposively. For purposive sampling, the criterion for respondents was to work at a mid-level position in public institutions of Dhaka city and there were no exclusion criteria in the selection process. So, convenience sampling was used to contact the respondents as well as snowball sampling. This study included twelve female officials from three public institutions, e.g. civil service (CS), education sector (ES), and banking sector (BS). High School Teachers from public schools, officers with the rank of Assistant Commissioner or equivalent from civil service and Senior Officers from public banks were interviewed as respondents. Officers from these ranks as mid-level positions were identified after reviewing their pay scale. A total of four respondents from each of the institutions were selected for the interview. Randomness maintained while selecting the respondents during this study.

Ethical consideration and Coding
The study involved respondents from three different public institutions. The respondents voluntarily participated in this study and decided whether to participate in the study or not, and the participants could stop any time during the interview if they felt uncomfortable. If they had refused to take part in or withdrawn from the interview, they had not to face any risk of loss associated with their services. The researchers ensured the privacy and confidentiality of the collected information and coding are used. In the report, only aggregated information is presented, no name of the respondents is mentioned. The researchers used coding as BS1, BS2, BS3, BS4, CS1, CS2, CS3, CS4, ES1, ES2, ES3 and ES4 for representing twelve respondents. The alphabetical part of the coding represents the type of organization of the respondents and the numeric part shows the sequence of the respondent from each organization.

Data analysis
Notes were taken while the interviews were conducted. Further the researchers transcribed the interview notes for analyzing. Transcribing interviews may be helpful to the researchers as they can scrutinize thoroughly what the respondents’ answers were as well as for its time-saving nature. The researchers identified and analyzed the potential factors contributing to the practicing discrimination against women at their workplace through analysis of both primary data from the interviews and secondary data collected from existing literature.
4. Findings of the Study

Discrimination against women at workplace

A primary area of interest for Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) was women empowerment and bringing the women into the mainstream economic activities. However, inequality between male and female in Bangladesh still exists. To change the dynamics the participation of women is necessary to steer the economy of the country towards growth and development. From the research findings, it seems that in this modern era women are treated as women but not human beings even in public institutions. However, male staffs are preferred to important responsibilities for example; receiving different training, dealing with a big desk, taking the class for high-grade students, playing a role in school committees, operating mobile court, handling big projects and so on. Women are thought physically weak than men. One respondent (ES1) commented:

“Women’s promotions are stopped going after a particular stage. Their works are not valued as well. Female teachers prefer to sleep in their classes than to teach. Male teachers are preferred and highly paid than females in terms of private tuition (ES1).”

Another respondent (BS1) commented:

"At the time of taking second maternity leave, some of my colleagues began to slander that I give birth to the baby before nine months. It means that I frequently get pregnant and take maternity leave (BS1)."

The above statements seem to suggest that our society assesses women as inferior to men. It thinks women to be involved in birth-giving and managing household services. These devaluations of women decrease their productivity and create an unwillingness for their works. Dissatisfaction in the workplace is linked to the resentment in the family. It increases absenteeism in the office and creates mistrust among colleagues. These findings correspond to the existing literature (Khair, Haque, & Mukta, 2017; Kamal & Sabrin, 2014; Saif, Uddin, Haque, Rahman, & Mamun, 2016).

Policy gap in the institutional framework

Gender discrimination is prevalent in every sphere of life in Bangladesh. In different sectors like education, health, employment and so on there is still a lack of clear policy initiatives. State legislation and institution frequently overlooks the rights of women despite having constitutional affirmations of gender equality. Participation in public life is often discouraged for women where reproductive roles gain importance. Regarding policy gaps one respondent (CS1) said that she...
doesn't have a clear understanding of it. Another respondent (CS2) does not found any policy gaps as such but emphasizes having enough female officers in policy level that can support bringing policy reforms in favor of women. Furthermore, she (CS2) explains policy reforms to have equal preference and justice and have a women-friendly working environment. The rest of the respondents (CS3 and CS4) said that all policies are women-friendly, but in practice, some of them are not effective. Three respondents (BS1, BS2, and BS3) mentioned that institutions should have a day-care and breastfeeding center for female staff which must be included in legal frameworks. To decrease the discrimination at workplace, much awareness and gender sensitization programs may be more effective. However, gender-responsive, and enough women in management positions can support creating a women-friendly working environment. Things like increasing gender sensitivity even between women should be considered. Moreover, setting up day-care center and personal space for women's own should be a policy agenda in every workplace. Men and women must equitably share the gender division of labor. Quality education at all levels should be ensured to produce quality human resources. Regular orientation on institutional policies and procedures between staff is needed to explore the way of addressing discrimination against women at the workplace. The researchers can find the similarity of these findings with the findings of Kamal & Sabrin (2014).

**Impact of unlike treatment**

There are social forces that create gender differentials in a patriarchal society like Bangladesh. Girls are subject to discrimination from their births. Old values and traditional perceptions still prevail where men are thought to perform well, and they can contribute to higher productivity than women. Women find themselves with few opportunities for advancement. For ensuring sustainable development, equal treatment irrespective of gender should be promoted alongside women empowerment. The respondents (ES1, ES2, ES3, and ES4) said that women are managing both their office and family well. It causes overburden to their lives. They added that their stereotyping social system degrades women. Women do beautiful works, but our social network assesses them with a traditional mindset. Pregnancy may be a cause to treat them differently. In terms of any silly mistake done by women are neglected but the same error frequently done by male colleagues and they are not commented as such. Due to women's discrimination country is depriving to get equal benefits from women and men. We are advancing gradually; hope quality education will help to
recover these social ills. Hence, male and female members must share the household responsibilities.

In response to the differences in treatment between male and female officers, one of the respondents (BS) said:

"Some of the male colleagues attack us to get equal rights. They twist us not to take equal and challenging responsibility. If I go for an official assignment in the afternoon, I have to hear the comments on why I didn't do it in the first half of the day (BS1)."

One respondent (BS1) said that a big project is thought suitable for male colleagues than females. The assignment can be value-adding for the male during their promotion. Women's career is not considered by management as their focus.

The Constitution of The People's Republic of Bangladesh safeguarded the fundamental human rights for women. Article 27 of the constitution states that: "all citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law" (The Constitution Of The People's Republic Of Bangladesh). Article 28(2) states: “Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the state and public life (The Constitution Of The People's Republic Of Bangladesh).” It is evident from the existing literature and conducting interviews that our traditional social system is passing through hundred years causes different treatments for males and females. Lack of quality education and traditional mindset are another reason behind. Social taboos and practices for a long time degrade women in our society. These findings are similar to those of Saif, Uddin, Haque, Rahman, & Mamun (2016). It is due to the patriarchal social system that treated women differently for a long and so women are lagged behind. If the working environment is not favorable to women, they lack mental satisfaction which results from a negative impact in family and office work as well. Spiritual dissatisfaction also increases working errors and dropouts and reduces productivity. They will also be disappointed and lose energy to go forward.

**Protecting women from discrimination**

To minimize the obstacles to women's development much has been attained over the past few decades. Gender-stereotyped roles and traditional attitudes of women is a barrier for society as a whole to recognize the gender parity in both the public and private sectors. Male counterparts must be careful of the household responsibilities so that females can contribute more to their office
work. Some of them observed women apart themselves from challenging activities, but it should not be. They should be an equal team player in the office. Women must be more competent and educated. Approaches and strategies need to be renewed and revised by the government in achieving the aims to eliminate discrimination against women.

One respondent (BS2) shared exceptional findings. She said:

"We female are mostly discriminated by a female rather than male. If women create barriers for women, the men surely will do in line with that. Sound competition among female colleagues is good but kicking a female behind by other females is unfair at the institutional level (BS2)."

In responding to combat discrimination in their workplace women bankers mentioned their protest against it if it happens. One of the respondents (BS) said that their bank issued a circular named Sonali Chata (golden umbrella) to protect harassment against female staff. The circular also provided an email address and if anyone becomes a victim of the bullying, she can email describing the incidence. The information of the victims remains confidential, and they will get justice accordingly.

The respondents suggested women be pro-active and competent in their works. If they are aware of it, they could protect discrimination themselves. One of the respondents said that senior female colleagues inevitably face much discrimination than us throughout their careers. They can realize the constraints of women. So, they can play a vital role to reduce prejudices against women in civil service.

For protecting discrimination against women, the respondents suggested raising women's voices by themselves. Women must protest any undesirable behavior from the opposite sex. The present government has taken initiatives for multilateral programs to materialize Vision 2021 for ensuring female rights, female empowerment and normalizing their presence them in the overall development.

They suggested that male counterparts should change their mindset. They must associate with females in the home and working environment. Male should not be superior to women and should not consider women as weak and incapable of performing any job.
The respondents mentioned in other words that, the sometimes female staff is being harassed day by day, and other colleagues remain silent. They do not come to protect her. It does mean that another team of the office was also supporting bad practices. One respondent (BS4) said:

“Women have to go forward, and their management should support them accordingly. Management should protest the male staff passed ugly comments towards women (BS4).”

**Ensuring a women-friendly working environment**

The respondents (CS) mentioned having a separate room for rest and recreation for women. One of them said that her boss is sensitive enough to women's physical and biological issues, but she has heard from other parts that they are not as vulnerable as such.

The respondents identified the extension of maternity leave from four months to six months as good practice. They also mentioned about National Women Development Policy (NWDP), human resource policy and govt. Circulars which can be the example of good practices to ensure women-friendly working environment.

In response to good practices, one of the respondents (BS) said that our office has a better women-friendly environment than earlier. Bangladesh Bank issued a circular that prohibits remaining female staff after 6.00 pm in the office. A bank also issued a circular named Sonali Chata mentioned earlier. Some of the managers are women-friendly; they release women from office before 6.00 pm.

Some of the respondents (BS) said:

"We don't have any day-care center, even any breastfeeding room in our office. If a mother abstains from breastfeeding for 8/9 hours, it causes harmful as well as painful situation for her.” Another respondent (BS1) added, “Female staff does not have any separate washroom (BS1).”

Discrimination against women at the workplace, the policy gap in the institutional framework, the impact of unlike treatment, protecting women against discrimination, and ensuring a women-friendly environment emerged as the most dominant factors for the discrimination against women at mid-level positions who works in public institutions like school, civil service, and banks.
5. Recommendations and Conclusion

This paper provides some critical implications to reduce discrimination against women at their workplace.

Legal and policy measures to eliminate discrimination against women

To eliminate each sort of discrimination faced regularly by women, the Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh and other international organizations have provided legal and policy measures that are provided below. Previously females were lagging far behind from their male counterparts in different governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Over the period, the significance of the quality and potentiality of females had underscored by different scholars, researchers, academia and poets in their seminal works. Females have to surmount the myriad obstacles to getting their caliber, skill, and knowledge utilized. Therefore, in the context of Bangladesh, the government attempts to maximize female’s involvement in different government jobs through the quota reservation policy. In addition to this policy, international organizations like the UNO and other non-governmental organizations have been trying to prevent discrimination against women. Therefore, they formulate policies and legal frameworks to eradicate female discrimination from UN member countries. The UNO also encourages the government of member countries to provide various awards for their achievement in this field to arouse awareness.

Policy for government jobs, politics and administration opportunity for females

The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh provides the following provisions for securing female equality and eradicating discrimination against the female. The constitution also provides provisions for increasing female representation in different cadres of Bangladesh civil service through equal opportunity principles. It is called preferential treatment for backward sections of society. The government has also emphasized the participation of women in state administration, political empowerment and at the policy level of the government. There are 45 reserved parliamentary seats for women. These include appointing the positions of Secretary in the Administration, Deputy Commissioner, and officers in the Police, Army, Navy and Air Force. Even at the upazila level, a post of Vice-Chairman is created, who is to be elected by the votes of the citizens. National Council for Women and Child Development (NCWCD), consisting of 50 members and headed by the Hon’ble Prime Minister has been formed for assessing the socio-
economic development of women at the national level, policy-making and implementation of development programs

**Constitutional provisions for equal job opportunities**
The Bangladesh Constitution has guaranteed equal prospects for neglected societal sections incorporating a provision in the constitution. This provision assures equal treatment irrespective of gender in every aspect of life. Article 29 of the Bangladesh Constitution mentions about equality of opportunity for every citizen in employment or office in which they work; non-existence of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, sex or birthplace; making special provision in favor of any backward portion of citizens focused on securing their sufficient depiction in the service; preserving for members of one sex or any class of employment or office on the ground that it is considered by its nature to be unsuited to members of the opposite sex (Government of Bangladesh, 1972).

Besides, with these provisions, the constitution especially emphasizes the provision of equality before the law. The provisions mentioned above do not mean that the state gives priorities to some sections of society, rather it means that the Constitution maintains compensatory justice through preferential treatment.

**Policy implication at the international level**
The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) provides Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 for eliminating all kinds of discrimination against females from their house to different positions of services. It is to note that the steps that have been taken by different national and international organizations have been praiseworthy. Gender equality ensures the utilization of the potentiality of the neglected female section of a country. The overall development of a country cannot be possible ignoring the large section of the female who constitutes almost half of the total population of a country. As a result of various attempts, the first quarter of the 21st century provides a positive picture of female participation in different governmental and non-governmental positions. The involvement of females is increasing day by day.

In the main document of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) states parties agreed-
a) “To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle (CEDAW, 1979)”; 

b) “To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women (CEDAW, 1979)”; 

c) “To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination (CEDAW, 1979)”;

d) “To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation (CEDAW, 1979)”;

e) “To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise (CEDAW, 1979)”;

f) “To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women (CEDAW, 1979)”;

g) “To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women (CEDAW, 1979)”.

The convention attempts to promote equality of rights irrespective of sex. The UNO and specialized agencies adopt the resolutions, declarations, and recommendations promoting equal rights for men and women. Discrimination against women disrupts the principles of equal rights and respect for human dignity. It also emerges a barrier to female participation in economic activities, on equal terms with men as well as in the political, social, and cultural life. This discrimination results in hindrances to the economic growth of the country along with the growth of prosperity within society and the family and the full enhancement of women’s capabilities. While considering the cases of poverty, women have the least access to food, nutrition, health, education, training and opportunities for employment and other basic needs required for their development or no access in the case of the poorest countries. It demands establishing a new international economic order which must be based on equity and justice may contribute significantly towards ensuring equalities between the sexes (CEDAW, 1979)
Recommendations to reduce discrimination against women in Bangladesh

Based on the findings mentioned above, this section provides some policy implications to reduce the practicing discrimination against women at their workplaces.

Awareness building and gender sensitization programs

Much awareness and gender sensitization programs may be adequate to decrease discrimination against women in the workplace. Some seminars or workshops may be arranged regularly in this regard to make the women appropriately informed of their rights and to let the men know the existing practice of discrimination against women. Again, women need to be encouraged to defend the discrimination they are facing day by day.

Gender-responsive and adequate number of women in management positions

Promoting and ensuring adequate number of women in management positions can support creating a women-friendly working environment that needs to be gender-responsive as well.

Increasing gender sensitivity among women

In existing settings, many women lack gender sensitivity in their workplace. It accelerates the existence of discrimination against women in the workplace. Increasing gender sensitivity should be taken into account to eradicate the gender discrimination.

Setting up day-care center and personal space for women

Currently, almost all of the government and non-government institutions lack day-care centers for the babies of a working mother which triggers the problems faced by them. Again, working women lack personal space in their workplace. Setting up at least one day-care center and personal space for women in all the government institutions may contribute to eradicating the obstacles faced by working women and these should be considered as a policy agenda in every workplace.

Equitable share of division of labor by the employees irrespective of gender

Men and women must equitably share division of labor more equitably. Women, in some cases, need to bear more workloads and handle more strenuous jobs than men. To eliminate discrimination at the workplace, an equitable share of the division of labor is a must and this must be considered policy formation.
Quality education to produce quality human resources

Quality of education is one of the fundamental requirements for producing quality human resources. Women are traditionally lagging far behind from men in attaining educational institutions, except for the last decade. Quality human resources, quality education should be emphasized at all levels with particular attention to women.

Regular orientation on institutional policies and procedures on women or staff

Many of the working employees are not either aware of real gender discrimination or not concerned about discrimination. The regular orientation of institutional policies and procedures among the staff is needed to explore the way of addressing discrimination against women in the workplace.

Conclusion

This research aimed to explore the respondents’ exposure to the discrimination against women at workplaces in public institutions, identify policy gaps in the institutional framework of institutions concerning rights of the women and identify the critical recommendations for protecting women from any discrimination. Women are regularly being exposed to discrimination either by their colleagues as well as the management. To ensure sustainable development, the women-friendly workplace and female participation in employment, especially in the service sector, should rapidly increase to minimize the gap that already exists. Some policy recommendations are provided earlier in this section regarding this. These recommendations may be considered in policy agenda which may contribute to the reduction of discrimination against women at their workplace. It may be possible that along with the employees from mid-level positions face discrimination, employees from high and low-level positions may be facing severe discrimination. However, due to smaller sample size, resulting from constraints of time and resource, this study could not capture all the levels and all the sectors, and so the findings may not reflect the actual scenario of discrimination practiced in all the institutions (including both public and private) throughout the country. Even the exact scenario may be worse than the findings of this study. Further studies can focus on considering all the levels and including more sectors.
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**Conflict of Interest**
The authors have no financial arrangements that might give rise to conflicts of interest in the research reported in this paper.

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