

Experience of Female College Teachers: A Sociological Enquiry

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Abstract: This study is all about exploring the professional experience of female teachers working in public and private colleges in Bangladesh. To accomplish the investigation a qualitative approach was employed. The study was completed by in-depth interviews with seven female college teachers and grounded in reality. Eight respondents were selected purposively, five from private colleges and three of them from public colleges (public and government as well as private and non-government used synonymously). The objective of the study is: to explore female college teachers' experience in imparting teaching and disseminating knowledge in their colleges in general. The findings put forward that the respondents sensed that professional engagement opens a window of opportunity to them and poses some crucial challenges in their personal, family and social life. Through the opportunity, they get empowered regarding possessing resources, widening choice and enlarged level of decision-making. At the same time, they beset with some challenges like role conflict and role strain in their personal life, familial settings and professional engagement. They viewed that there is a reverse correlation between the extreme level of role strain and high-quality professional output that is effective teaching-learning.

Keywords: Professional Development; Role conflict; Role strain; Job satisfaction; Self-esteem and Empowerment.

Introduction

The gender dynamics in Bangladeshi society are transforming rapidly, especially in the professional sector where high educational quality is seemingly the driving force. When the dilemma is between professional development and family keeping, women are opted for teaching in several cases. It is observed that a significant number of women think that they can cope with the professional challenges in the education sector quite effectively than many other fields of working for highly educated female professionals in traditional societies like Bangladesh. Considering the above reality this investigation is intended to explore Bangladeshi female college teachers' experience in their professional context. Currently, Bangladesh has 137225 college teachers, of them 35551 are female which is 25.91 percent of total college teachers, according to education statistics 2021(BANBAIS, 2021). This number has been increasing in the last few decades. For instance, the total number of college teachers in Bangladesh was 86291 in

2009. Among them 17185 were female which is 19.91 percent of total number of teachers. It was further increased in 2014. The number was 105054, and the females among them are 24151 and that was 22.98 percent of the entire college teachers (BANBAIS, 2021). In the present day, one is female in every four college teachers which was one in every five, one decade earlier. This is a noteworthy enhancement from the point of gender dynamics.

In addition to the increasing number of female teachers in Bangladeshi college education, knowing their formal and informal life is also significant to understand the overall teaching-learning scenario as an entirety. Contemporary education theories suggest that despite education being a matter of formal classroom instruction, it is also based on the teacher's mental state, health method and motivation (Huffaker & Calvert, 2003). For this reason, teachers' social context, mental attachment towards teaching-learning and the process of a journey in professional life are essential for the effective learning of society (Dey, Rahman & Akther, 2012). Furthermore, many researchers suggested that how instructors come across their social life also influences the whole gamut of education (OFOEGBU et al, 1988). The study demonstrates that there are many areas left to be explored in college education in Bangladesh. One of the major fields is to know the working experience of female teachers which will unfold not only a number of pages of many aspects of education but also unwrap by and large Bangladeshi society as a whole. As such, this study is intended to investigate college teachers' experience in the profession as a female instructor.

It is experienced that a number of female teachers found teaching as a profession more convenient than another career as it is flexible in nature, allowed more freedom in the job place, put forward high opportunities for searching self-creativity, self-rewarding, bringing additional social acknowledgement and finally satisfactory in nature. Nevertheless, this kind of career is to some extent pleasing to female professionals, they are to encounter many challenges in their family life as well as from wider society for existing social values, working environment, infrastructures, external and internal threats, structural constraints- both material and nonmaterial and so on. On the other hand, to some extent, it creates some opportunities for them for example, generates scope for empowerment, widens entitlement, extends their level of confidence and brings financial solvency in their personal and family life. Keeping all the above realities in thoughts the qualitative study enquired how female college teachers experience the challenges and exploit the opportunities as a college instructor in their personal, professional and social life.

Methodology

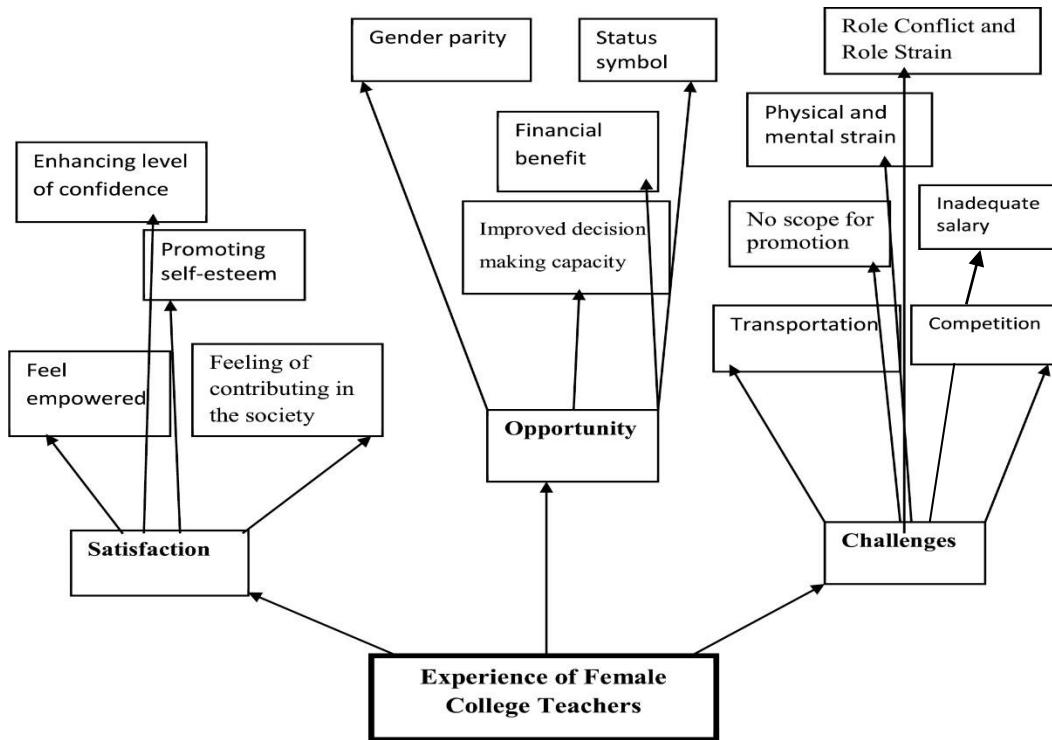
The investigation has been accomplished through the Qualitative Approach. The research is designed to examine the action and interactions of such individuals and the process of their practices and then grounded in reality. Some of the qualitative techniques are employed to explore the respondent's experience in

their job place. The principal technique of the study is In-depth interview by using a non-structured interview schedule. Respondents of the investigation were eight female college teachers and their age range was 32-52 years. Their work bases are in the northern part of five different districts of Bangladesh. The respondents are selected purposively, five of them from non-government colleges and three from government colleges. Data is collected by conducting eight face-to-face in-depth interviews during December, 2022 February, 2023. Data analysis is accomplished by using a thematic analysis procedure. For ethical ground the respondents are previously informed that their provided information, feeling and expression will be used for research purposes unanimously. To some cases, where felt required, given information was cross checked with information provided by other respondent/s. In addition, this kind of cross checking also helped to validate exploring reality.

Findings

Their narratives suggest that the profession engendered many opportunities and accomplishment bought for them, alongside posing a number of challenges to them in many ways. They informed the researcher that they feel empowered, in high esteem and capable of contributing to society and delivering knowledge to a new generation. Moreover, it improves their decision-making capacity, reducing gender disparity, changing social values affirmatively about working women and enhancing collaboration with the other gender.

Reflective concept model of female college teachers’ experiences



Conversely, they are to encounter few challenges in several forms. Some of them face physical and mental strain in the work, sometimes they feel twisted with family and professional burdens. At the same time, some respondents reported that role conflict between family life and job responsibilities as well as role strain in different job assignments in the colleges make them a little demoralized on some occasions. A remarkable finding of the study is some of them do not find any scope for professional development. At the same time, some of them are completely apathetic about professional upgrading. When they were asked about academic accomplishments, various sorts of answers were recorded in response. One public sector college teacher was informed about her strong aspiration for completing a higher degree like MPhil and PhD and a solitary private college teacher once aimed at taking a higher degree however now gets disappointed by thinking that the degree will bring out nothing for her in the current professional setting.

Additionally, the oldest teachers felt that her depth of knowledge about her own discipline decreased compared to the time newly graduated from university as she did not find any scope for promoting her knowledge level and now she just keeps up the service looking forward to retirement .

When enquired about enhancing pedagogical skills in the delivery and student learning, all are followed the traditional lecture method except one. Only two of them heard about interactive learning and active learning methods. In addition, only two respondents are partially aware about online teaching learning and have little knowledge about teaching technology.

A portion of the respondents felt discomfort with some external factors during discharging their duties and responsibilities in their institutions. Delivering lectures, performing vigilance in the examination hall, evaluating in the formative assessment, conducting viva-voce, maintaining discipline in the college campus and organizing co-curricular activities they are to face some external and internal elements made obstacles that barred them to accomplish the duties as per their talent and efficiency in satisfactory level.

Their experience suggests that the participants of the research find themselves in a social dynamic with their profession which lifts their social status in a social context. Along with their up-gradation, they are contributing to change society at a considerable level. In addition to their self-development, they are to encounter significant challenges according to their assessment. Nonetheless, their satisfaction encourages them for further advancement, they cannot hide their disappointment in some areas.

Empowerment and self-esteem: All the respondents reported that they feel empowered with their job and find an improved form of self-esteem as their choice is widened and they are contributing to society in their own capacity. A government college teacher reported that she enjoys her plenty of decision-

making capacity by purchasing assets and making an investment in her personal life for the future which engenders a feeling of self-esteem in her mind. Exact opposite statement was given by other government college teachers. She reported that her husband makes a compulsion on to sign the salary cheque in advance and deals with her account. Even her profession and earnings do not bring any positive change in social empowerment. Moreover, physical sufferings she has to endure for the sake of her family life and the future of her children. Often she thought to leave either service or marital relations however restraint prevailed and finally thought out of social reality and children's future. Accordingly, a government college teacher reported that along with teaching she runs a school for underprivileged children who are basically street children or children of homeless slum dwellers. She is involved in such activity from the inner call of the soul and is searching for the meaning of life. She partakes in such activities along with some of her colleagues by donating resources and time for acquiring peace and tranquility in the mind.

Correspondingly, a private college teacher stated that she initiated entrepreneurship along with her college service. She runs a boutique house in the city where few female students get part-time work for earning which helps them to continue their education. The respondent sensed that her work in college gives her freedom to engage in many other activities which bring her honor and esteem. A public college teacher engaged in Bangladesh National Cadet Core (BNCC) and on a few occasions she traveled outside Bangladesh as a part of BNCC activities. Nonetheless, involvement in extracurricular activities is something painstaking, conversely, it generates a sense of self-respect and dynamism both in the body and mind as well as a feeling of love and respect.

Job satisfaction: All of the respondents thought that they are quite satisfied with the job situation, institutional settings, performing in the classroom and working with young learners. However, some of them are not completely pleased with their salary structure and promotion prospects. One of the respondents had opted for a BCS education but subsequently failed to reach but he is happy with her present private college job with little discontent. However, in this study, it is found that both kinds of teachers express their dissatisfaction with facilities other than salary structure compared to the same ranking of other government services. One of the government college teachers informed me that she is in teaching after leaving government cadre services and now she is a bit aggravated as she has had more facilities in her previous service than her present ones like government-provided transportation, personal staff and better office spaces.

While non-government teachers sounded like the above observation. A non-government teacher sensed that external meddling in the teaching, evaluating and the disciplinary matter is a source of displeasure. Most of them come from local politics and insist on the political agenda in the institutional process. She was

disappointed with some recent past experiences of the appointment of some teachers in her college by using a deal mechanism and influence by passing the rules and meritocracy. She felt that this kind of practice of appointing teachers compromising with quality and merit will affect the government's targeted quality education and sustainable development goal in the long run.

Another non-government college teacher expresses her discontent with a power exercise in professional practice. One of her colleagues is a wife of a powerful man holding office. She cares a little about the rules and procedures of the service. That lady comes to the college at her will, conducting classes as she wishes, however, she draws salary regularly without ensuring any kind of accountability to anyone including the executive head of the institution- the principal. In contrast, the principal does not even take any effort to discipline the person according to prevailing regulations. Nonetheless, the executive head sometimes takes tougher action for small deviations of small fry- the powerless, rather he is always busy to please the lady and tries to prove that he is a man of that lady teacher. That reality engenders a nexus between the college administration and the people of malpractice. Through the process, the people of inappropriate conduct enjoy a state beyond accountability and the administration passes through no accountability and no transparency in administering the college and financial activity as the governing committee is composed of the powerful man. In addition, she observed that these kinds of practices are not the exclusive example in her institution solely. She opined that the concept of governing body for educational institutions is for making sure the quality of education, ensuring accountability and transparency, taking care of students' mental and physical well being and supporting the maximum level of better education atmosphere. However, the irony is that in this case the body and administration make a nexus for maximizing their petty interests which result in sacrificing quality education and a deteriorated learning environment.

The participants are not overall discontented with the salary structure and the nature of the job however the common issue among them is displeasure with their allied facilities compared to other government offices, external intervention and lack of accountability and transparency in policy formation and decision making.

Gender Parity: Apart from one, all respondents reported that they do not come across any gender discrimination in their work environment. A single respondent reported that she has to face some sort of gender issue though she acknowledged that those are not considerably a big deal to her at all. For instance, she was not considered for the remunerative committee and she thought that the college authority did not consider her as those the work is more strenuous and time consuming therefore as a female teacher she cannot cope with it. However, she herself thought that she deserved those and can perform such kinds of jobs. A government college teacher narrated that on many occasions she found her male

colleagues taking her official burden smilingly and making things comfortable for her with few exceptions. In some cases, she sensed those rivalries out of natural professional competition.

Challenges

Role strain and role conflict: Most of the participants, excluding one, feel pressure balancing diverse roles in the college and at the family especially, as mother, teacher and wife. They encounter both role conflicts holding different status as well as role strain from the same status. They are to balance relationships among department heads, students, college administration, husband, children and family members (Ali, Rana, & Islam, 2018). One of the respondents explains that she gladly does her professional assignment without harming her family and personal life.

A teacher of a Non-government College shared that she comes out of a well-heeled family background and her husband is a smartly earned public university teacher and a practicing religious person. Her husband's attitude towards her profession is as they need not face any financial intricacy that is why she need not work outside the home and she has to do many things with caring for children, keeping the house and giving special attention to their children's learning. Along with her husband, in-laws also insist her leaving the job and joining the bandwagon of the happy-family trip of keeping house and living with pleasure. That sort of way of thinking implies that the profession is only required for earning money rather than correlated to human creativity, satisfaction and contribution to society, the lady teacher observed. The teacher is highly troubled with her husband's attitude towards her service life and lives with high mental stress which endangered long-lasting relational strain in her conjugal life. Once she thought that she would leave the job however her father refrained from doing so and encouraged her to fight to survive. At one point tugged in by the stress of several contradictory issues, she felt that her ability to serve students gradually lowered, her concentration to teaching was scattering, confidence level diminishing and as if the meaning of living was flying out. She did not find any difference between serving as a professional or sitting idle at home. She identified that sort of situation negatively affected the quality of intellectual output and impacted mental, physical and social health.

Quite the opposite, a non-government college teacher coming out of the low middle-income group reported that she enjoys unconditional support from her banker husband and in-laws with three minor children, including a twin. She lives in an extended family with eight members. They share family responsibilities with financial difficulties that raise discontent on a few occasions however she feels relaxed about child rearing, security and education. That circumstance boosts her capacity to serve in the work setting and makes her vibrant in a teaching-learning situation. As she finds more integrated with family relations, sometimes she feels compelled to do a wide role in managing the family that also negatively impacts

her academic functions and steps taken for improving professional learning. Seldom, she realized she needed more action, improving academic skills and spending more time and efforts in academic activities but for the intensity of the family burden she constantly feels inclined to take on more family responsibilities. In addition, she infrequently thought that her absence from family affairs and attending to children will harm both the well-being of the family and the upbringing of infants. That sort of feeling and thinking negatively impacts little of her professional development and provides more care to the students. Nevertheless, she thought that compared to many of her colleagues she achieved a significant level of improvement due to her vibrant family relations and supportive role of family members.

Another government college teacher reported that she lives in a city but connected with extended family who lives in villages. She realized that performing duties in the family, maintaining children, and attending kindred from both sides are time consuming and laborious. She feels consistent stress in balancing her family role and professional work. As she has to manage her academic duty by any means because of time constraints and family business, she has no or less spare time to concentrate on professional development. She sensed that she achieved very little progress in academic development and professional improvement.

One of the respondents from government colleges viewed that she was projected by the principal as a smart and efficient person so that the principal wished most of the time to engage in administrative jobs and works related to other than classroom activities. Consequently, she does not get sufficient time to attend students that impacted students' learning along with her own academic development.

Accordingly, the rest of the participants reported that their family members expect more time and attention from them at the same time the college administration. They cannot make either side happy completely. The family, especially husband, thought that they were not appropriately doing the family role and the college authority considered that she thoughtfully escaped work responsibility. This is a real dilemma for their professional life.

The entire teachers observed that they felt worn out with making equilibrium in family roles and work in professional settings. They faced role conflict with family and working palace as well as role strain in professional settings with different roles at the same time. They suggested that some kind of support based on the society, family and institution could reduce or remove their despair and woe.

Physical and mental strain: All of the participants informed that sometimes they feel stress mentally as well as physically when they are to work long hours and do some strenuous jobs like evaluation, tabulation, managing exams and the like. A single participant reported that on a few occasions she thought about leaving the job under heavy workload but her feeling of social recognition and financial return

makes her strong enough to retain the job. A teacher reported that once she got faint in the classroom and was finally brought to the hospital and resultantly had to stay in the hospital for three days. She said that some workloads, family pressure and complex relationships with colleagues brought her to such a situation. She realized that a congenial work atmosphere, collegial relations among colleagues and resilience in personality are the key to the maximum level of success in professional life. Hence, she suggests that education authorities should take decisive steps about caring for teachers' mental and physical health as their wellbeing accelerates healthier growth of our most precious resources- student community.

Transportation: Transportation is also a big deal for all respondents except one as she avails private transport facilities. The private car owning person got it from her father as a gift and she felt that the comfort and service she got from the vehicle boosts her mental serenity and quality of teaching as transportation is a big issue especially for female professionals in Bangladesh. A participant stated that she has to commute daily around 30 kilometers up and down mostly by bus. This is not only time-consuming but also physically stressful and mentally painful in some cases as public transportation is inadequate in number, low service quality, unfriendly to women passengers and sometimes gender harassment is observed. As a dignified professional like a college teacher, coming across such an experience is sometimes traumatic in nature. As her husband is a primary school teacher, as she has to contribute to the family budget, she cannot afford personal transportation. Availing public transportation in daily work by a female professional is sometimes a horrific experience. Overcrowded boarding, low-quality vehicles, sluggish operation and most shockingly often getting abused by male passengers are both mentally and physically infuriating and in a long run, diminishing to quality intellectual output in the classroom. Another private college teacher reported that she has to commute around 20 km a day by an unsafe manually made van powered by an electric-charged motor. This kind of vehicle is highly accident-prone and in bad weather not suitable for female passengers.

Accordingly, the entire government college teacher claimed that transportation is a crucial issue for them as all the government service holders in their same rank avail government provided personal transportation while they did not have such facilities. They argued that personal transportation helps to save time and ensure quality delivery in the classroom.

Discussion

The research findings suggest that there are several crucial and desired transformations achieved in the respondents' personal, social and family life. However, they are to go through a long, complicated and stressful journey. They claimed that they have decisive advancement in some areas of social and personal levels. With few exceptions, they expressed their gratification in empowerment and self-esteem. Due to being professionals, they can contribute to a larger extent in

family and society. Additionally, their decision-making capabilities widen, they have greater access and control to resources and power, and they can contribute increasingly not only to the well-being of society but also they have the ability to expand more philanthropic activities for inner peace which were not possible without this profession. With very little exception the participants felt that their service in colleges empowered them in family life as well as in society. That sort of view is supported by a recent study of Dey et al. (Dey, Rahman, & Akther, 2012).

On the contrary, the finding implicated that regarding empowerment there are some bottlenecks still existing. In a single case, the study found a teacher becomes a money making machine without having any kind of individual freedom, control of resources and decision making. This person actually felt vulnerable as her parents no longer support her in crisis as well as she fears for her children's future in the case of a break up from the relationship. There she trades her rights off for the children's future. In addition, the circumstance implied that her sense of vulnerability is also a cause behind her submissive role against wrong doing of her husband.

One of the vital issues of the study was job satisfaction in the work. Except for a few issues they mostly pleased with their job status and job nature. In some cases, government and non-government is an issue as reflected in similarity with the existing study (Mahbub, 2014). Sarkar (2021) found that job satisfaction in colleges is a complex issue and is differently exposed in government and non-government colleges. This study's findings about job satisfaction is an exceptional result in Bangladeshi traditional gender relation, also encountered some empirical study results like Rahman's enquiry (Rahman, 2015). While no significant difference was found among the female teachers in Government Colleges and Non-government Colleges in Sarkar's (2021) study. Alom et al (2005) did widespread study on female teachers in a public university in Bangladesh and their findings are slightly diverse from this one. They found female teachers in public university are more satisfied with their promotion, miscellaneous benefits and support in teaching compared with their counterparts.

While the under-study female teachers were pleased with their salary structure and collaboration with male colleagues, they were dissatisfied about promotion opportunities and allied facilities compared to other government offices. Nevertheless, Sarkar (2021) found no significant correlation between public and private college teachers regarding job satisfaction, this investigation suggests that all private college female teachers express their contentment clearly differently from public college teachers. Respondents from public colleges visibly agonized with discriminatory allied facilities compared to other government offices. Their feeling is that at policy level, overall teachers including female teachers are ignored therefore education is not appropriately get attention. They thought that teachers are the core to quality sustainable education. As teachers of higher

education are ignored thus whole education is also not properly maintained. In the same way, participants from private colleges worried about external influence in their academic, administrative and institutional atmosphere. Their experience implied that this kind of external interference asymmetrically influenced the teaching-learning quality as well as the teachers' capability to serve the learners and teachers' devotion towards profession.

The study also explored another vital area of their occupation that is professional development. Divisive reality is also featured in this area. Public college teachers comparatively have a better opportunity for professional development than private college teachers despite the fact that those are inadequate according to the respondents. Moreover, private college teachers felt that they have almost no scope to develop for many obstacles like administrative barriers, inadequate training facilities, institutional obstacles and family burdens. Al-Faruki and Rahman (2022) found that insufficient professional development in college teachers is the outcome of both lack of motivation and lack of institutional development in Bangladesh colleges though the study was conducted only on public colleges. While female private college teachers experienced that it is a process-driven reality. In the beginning, they have a strong impulse to acquire profound updated knowledge for better output, however consistent no opportunity made them reluctant to attain new knowledge. As a result, college education endured with prevailed inertia and apathy creating and acquiring new knowledge in college education which impacted negatively the entire national education.

Additionally, the respondents of this study identified that they don't find any gender disparity in their workplace which is a unique feature of the study. Moreover, they came across more than that of their expectation which was encountered by the finding of Huq and Rahman (Haq and Rahman, 2008) and supported by the study of Alom et al (2005). This finding indicates that the gender parity situation in Bangladeshi society is substantially improving, especially in college education.

In addition, participants of the study also identified a major area of their professional life is work-family conflict and role strain in college which is similar to Pronay's study findings (Pronay, 2011). Role conflict and role strain are the essential issues in modern life. The issue was brought to the field of sociological research by prominent sociologists Robert K Merton in the earliest years of the second half of the twentieth century through his renowned article 'The Role-Set: Problem in Sociological Theory (1957). He observed that a person has to play a set of roles that engenders strain in the social structure and if society does not maintain equilibrium it will impact both the individual and society (Wallace and Wolf, 1995). Role strain is a situation where a person plays many roles from single status and role conflict is a situation where a person performs many roles from several social statuses (Erdwins et al, 2001). Following the theory Erdwins et al

(2001) found that role strain and role conflict create intense pressure on the professional and impact professional efficacy if not get into equilibrium in the personal, family and social atmosphere. However, spousal, supervisor (controlling officer) and institutional empathetic support can manage it properly without inflicting any harm to the person and society (Gupta, 2016). The findings of the inquiry suggest that role strain and role conflict in the college turn down the potentials of female teachers as well deteriorate the teaching-learning quality. Moreover, they sensed that high strain severely impacted the physical and mental health of a professional.

Moreover, the respondents explained that these kinds of challenges have two dimensions: (1) some are related to long-term policy decisions; (2) some are related to social value and outlook. Long term issues are related to policy and government decisions and social issues depend on the positive change of social outlook towards the professional life of women folk. Especially, controlling officers' and family members' empathetic views and lucid behavior can address a large part of their challenges related to role strain and role conflict. From the policy and government part, some comprehensive policy adaptation may solve the hard part of their challenges. For instance, setting up the required number of quality childcare facilities for professional women, employing some mental health counselors in the respective directorate or division and increasing support facilities for professional women.

Conclusion

The study outcome demonstrates that the professional role of college female teachers brings a significant quality change in their social, personal and family life in all respects. They are able to contribute to the society with talent and sincerity and vice versa they acquire respect, admiration, satisfaction and financial solvency through their profession. Such an outstanding result is achieved in exchange for sacrificing their comfort, passionate love, intimate family time, care giving services to the loved one and facing many hassles in daily life. One of the noteworthy findings is that no respondent raises the issue of gender disparity in their working environment which indicates that a momentous positive change is occurring in society in favor of female professional engagement. They find such a professional engagement opens a window of opportunity to them and poses some crucial challenges in their personal, family and social life. Through the opportunity, they get empowered regarding possessing assets, widening choice and enlarged level of decision-making. At the same time, they are beset with role conflict and role strain in their family life and work environment which poses a threat of losing equilibrium in personal life, family settings and professional engagement. They viewed that there is a reverse correlation between the extreme level of role strain and high-quality professional output that is effective teaching-learning.

Additionally, it is implicated in their experience that a normal level of family bonding is favorable for efficient professional output whilst both strained family relations and high intensity of family bonding inauspicious for better professional output. Moreover, they felt that empathetic and caring treatment from administrators and supportive-rational attitudes of family members towards professional practice enhance the quality of teaching-learning.

One of the crucial observations of the respondents is that they achieved an insignificant level of professional development throughout their professional life due to the thin scope and non-encouraging professional environment. This kind of reality made them apathetic towards acquiring new knowledge and proficiency. The study also suggests that an increasingly high level of participation of women in instructional practice creates unlimited potential for individuals as well as for society. However, state and policy-makers have a huge scope to give attention to the further improvement of quality education through making the change in women teachers' professional development.

Future research scope: The researcher cannot identify whether there is any impact of their institutions on their job performance or job satisfaction for time constraints. Investigator expects future researchers will investigate the issue.

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