

Women in Teaching: A Study on Selected Public Universities of Bangladesh

Bijon Kumar Roy*, Tanami Haider**

Abstract

Low participation of women is visible in most professions around the world. Although the student participation rate has increased, the university teaching profession is not out of it. All the public universities in Bangladesh have the same scenario where female participation is low. The purpose of the study is to explore the participation of women in teaching in different academic focus areas and to identify the reasons for their unbalanced participation in university teaching as well as in different academic focus areas of public universities in Bangladesh. This study used an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. For quantitative data, 10 universities were purposively selected from 53 public universities in Bangladesh, and data on academic subject areas-based participation of female teachers was manually collected from their websites. Qualitative data are collected by in-depth interviews with 10 female teachers who are purposefully selected from different academic subject areas. Firstly, the results show different academic subject area-based participation of female teachers. Secondly, qualitative data were analyzed thematically to understand the reasons behind the low participation of women. The findings reveal that female teachers in Business Study and STEM are lower compared to Arts & Literature and Social Science. One of the reasons for this low participation is social stereotypes. Other reasons include lack of personal interest,

* Student, Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), Education Discipline, Khulna University, Khulna 9208

** Student, Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), Education Discipline, Khulna University, Khulna 9208

lack of role models, family pressure to choose a subject area, cost-benefit analysis of parents, perceived less efficient by society, unable to balance family and working life, less involvement in lab work and extra activities, and the influence of hidden curriculum. The findings have important organizational and policy implications regarding gender equality and women's empowerment.

Keywords: Gender, Women in Teaching, Public University, Low Female Participation

Introduction

Teaching as a university teacher is the highest prestigious job in our society but gender-based discrimination is visible there.¹ Female university teacher faces a bunch of barriers in majorly three categories namely individual barriers, social barriers, and organizational barriers.² Similarly, male university teachers argued with the same stance that social norms and practices lead to discrimination and women's low participation.³ Even there was a huge difference in working satisfaction between male university teachers and female university teachers related to their work-life experience.⁴

Though the recent perspective related to gender has changed throughout the last decade, gender-biased phenomena are still visible in every level of education over the world.⁵ There was a vast norms gap among the people of Bangladesh as they are very liberal

¹ Fidan Bural Yayla and Mustafa Yıldırım, 'Being a Woman in Academia: Research in The Context of Career Experiences' (2022) 21 Acta Scientiarum Polonorum. Oeconomia 35
<<https://aspe.sggw.edu.pl/article/view/3156>> accessed 13 February 2024.

² Md Asadul Islam and others, 'Gender and Leadership in Public Higher Education in South Asia: Examining the Individual, Socio-Cultural and Organizational Barriers to Female Inclusion' (2023) 48 Studies in Higher Education 1197 <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03075079.2023.2187771>> accessed 13 February 2024.

³ Mohamed Mousa, 'It Is Not a Man's World: Perceptions by Male Faculty of the Status and Representation of Their Female Colleagues' (2021) 35 International Journal of Educational Management 1476
<<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJEM-03-2021-0104/full/html>> accessed 13 February 2024.

⁴ Ayesha Tabassum and Farhana Khan, *Quality of Work Life (QWL) among the Faculty Members of Private Universities in Bangladesh: A Gender Perspective*, vol 3 (Eastern University 2011)
<<http://localhost:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/171>> accessed 5 February 2024.

⁵ Claudia Buchmann, Thomas A DiPrete and Anne McDaniel, 'Gender Inequalities in Education' (2008) 34 Annual Review of Sociology 319
<<https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134719>> accessed 13 February 2024.

towards children's education but they show gender-biased attitudes in the case of upper-level education.⁶

The demonizing structure of women's education is responsible for low participation in the job sector as well as teaching in higher education where education has a master relationship with woman empowerment and employment.⁷ Higher education helps to empower women in decision-making, gaining economic freedom, and achieving political and social stability, which is also compulsory to be a female university teacher.⁸

Naher and others conducted a study on women in science and technology in Bangladesh, finding that women are disproportionately underrepresented in high positions within Bangladeshi academic and scientific institutions. Although progress has been noted in various areas in the advancement of women, the improvement of women's participation in science and technology still lags significantly.⁹

Casad and others state that participation among female university teachers in the field of STEM is comparatively lower than male university teachers because of various difficulties like gender stereotypes, lack of social networking support, and lack of a supportive working environment, etc.¹⁰ Even gender stereotypes related to males and females are also responsible for choosing non-STEM-based careers and skipping STEM-based careers among females.¹¹ Conversely, female university teachers are more motivated in non-STEM-based fields like social science, arts and humanities rather because of the social and family expectations that they experienced from their childhood.^{12;13}

⁶ Niels-Hugo Blunch and Maitreyi Bordia Das, 'Changing Norms about Gender Inequality in Education: Evidence from Bangladesh' (2015) 32 *Demographic Research* 183 <<http://www.demographic-research.org/volumes/vol32/6/>> accessed 13 February 2024.

⁷ Kamila Habib and others, 'Impact of Education and Employment on Women Empowerment'.

⁸ Arab Naz, Faiza Ashraf and Safia Iqbal, 'The Relationship between Higher Education and Women Empowerment in Pakistan' (2020) 3 *UMT Education Review* 65 <<https://journals.umt.edu.pk/index.php/uer/article/view/1105>> accessed 13 February 2024.

⁹ Hasibun Naher, Tasfia Tanim and Nadira Sultana, 'Women in Science and Technology: A Study in Bangladesh' (2019) 7 *Sociology and Anthropology* 306 <http://www.hrpub.org/journals/article_info.php?aid=8230> accessed 29 January 2024.

¹⁰ Bettina J Casad and others, 'Gender Inequality in Academia: Problems and Solutions for Women Faculty in STEM' (2021) 99 *Journal of Neuroscience Research* 13 <<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/jnr.24631>> accessed 13 February 2024.

¹¹ Katrina Piatek-Jimenez, Jennifer Cribbs and Nicole Gill, 'College Students' Perceptions of Gender Stereotypes: Making Connections to the Underrepresentation of Women in STEM Fields' (2018) 40 *International Journal of Science Education* 1432 <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09500693.2018.1482027>> accessed 13 February 2024.

¹² Sławomir Trusz, 'Why Do Females Choose to Study Humanities or Social Sciences, While Males Prefer Technology or Science? Some Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Predictors' (2020) 23 *Social Psychology of Education* 615 <<https://link.springer.com/10.1007/s11218-020-09551-5>> accessed 13 February 2024.

¹³ Sharon Sassler and others, 'The Missing Women in STEM? Assessing Gender Differentials in the Factors Associated with Transition to First Jobs' (2017) 63 *Social Science Research* 192 <<https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S0049089X16306020>> accessed 13 February 2024.

Similarly, Ahmed and others also reported that females are more motivated to choose non-STEM-based careers related to social science, arts and humanities, etc.¹⁴ This trend is not initiated suddenly at the university teaching, female participation was lower among university students due to gender stereotypes and gender roles in STEM fields than male students.¹⁵

Etejere and others conducted a study in Nigeria, they found that the reasons behind under participation of female teachers in academia are marriage, family responsibility, motherhood, social norms that shape gender roles, religious restrictions, sexual harassment, etc.¹⁶ Moreover, Participation and promotion in the university teaching profession are influenced by various external factors related to political and administrative power.¹⁷

Islam and others carried out a study on gender and leadership in public higher education in South Asia. This found that the number of public and private universities is increasing and participation in higher education as well as female university teachers increased than the prior records but the participation of female university teachers is still lower than male university teachers.¹⁸

According to the annual report of UGC Bangladesh, 37 public universities had 21.92% female teachers in 2015, followed by 27.75% of 50 public universities in 2021, i.e. an increase of only 5.82% in the last 7 years.¹⁹ In the academic year 2021-22, the representation of women among faculty members in Canada amounted to 42%.²⁰ In neighboring India, the ratio of female teachers was 42.9% in 2020-21.²¹ Over the past five decades, in Central and Eastern Europe, the proportion of female teachers in tertiary education has increased from 31.6% in 1974 to 43.6% in 2020.²² Despite global progress in

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Nova Ahmed and others, 'Impact of Socio-Economic Factors on Female Students' Enrollments in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics and Workplace Challenges in Bangladesh' (2023) 67 *American Behavioral Scientist* 1104 <<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00027642221078517>> accessed 13 February 2024.

¹⁶ Patricia AO Etejere and others, 'Bridging Gender Disparities in the Teaching Profession in Tertiary Institutions for Globalisation' (2023) 41 *Perspectives in Education* <<https://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/pie/article/view/7040>> accessed 13 February 2024.

¹⁷ Golam Rabbani and Solaiman Chowdhury, 'Quality of Higher Education in Bangladesh: Governance Framework and Quality Issues' (2014) 7 *Beykent Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* <<http://dergipark.gov.tr/doi/10.18221/bujss.86058>> accessed 13 February 2024.

¹⁸ Islam and others (n 2).

¹⁹ 'University Grants Commission Bangladesh' <<https://ugc.gov.bd/>> accessed 2 March 2024.

²⁰ Uppal Sharanjit and Darcy Hango, 'Differences in Tenure Status and Feelings of Fairness in Hiring and Promotions among Male and Female Faculty in Canadian Universities' (1 September 2022) <<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2022001/article/00007-eng.htm>> accessed 10 February 2024.

²¹ 'Ministry of Education Releases All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2020-2021' <<https://pib.gov.in/pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1894517>> accessed 9 March 2024.

²² Ellie Bothwell and others, 'Gender Equality : How Global Universities Are Performing' [2022] UNESCO IELSAC <<https://redined.educacion.gob.es/xmlui/handle/11162/240963>> accessed 13 February 2024.

women's participation in teaching roles in higher education, Bangladesh's participation rate is low, the underlying reasons need to be explored.

Feminist symbolic interactionists believe that gender inequality is socially constructed.²³ It is the result of the socialization process, which may develop within certain societies. Gender roles and attitudes are crystallized during the socialization process, and individuals are expected to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to them by society.²⁴ In the context of gender perception in Bangladesh, the patriarchal society is a gender-biased society that includes biases from the elementary level of education.²⁵ The rate of graduates has increased but there is a huge gender gap due to gender stereotypes which brings a lot of barriers in education.²⁶ Examining the issues facing Bangladesh related to women's access to university teaching through an interactionist perspective is important because the conflict model's often-used theoretical framework has severe inadequacies in this setting. To explain gender discrimination, the interactionist perspective focuses at the core of socialization and social identity.²⁷

Previous studies in Bangladesh have been conducted on women in STEM, which found that female participation is low in teaching as well as other STEM-related fields. The reason behind the low participation is still unknown, and there has been no study on the participation of females in other academic areas like arts and literature, social science, and business studies. Understanding the barriers to women's equitable participation in teaching is critical to addressing systemic barriers and fostering a more inclusive academic environment. Promoting gender diversity and ensuring equal opportunities in university teaching requires uncovering and addressing the reasons behind the low participation of female teachers. Maintaining gender equality is important because it influences the future achievement of all genders and ensures quality achievement in education which is a universal right.²⁸

²³ Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott, *Theorizing Sexuality* (McGraw-Hill Education (UK) 2010).

²⁴ Md Asadul Islam and others, 'Gender and Leadership in Public Higher Education in South Asia: Examining the Individual, Socio-Cultural and Organizational Barriers to Female Inclusion' (2023) 48 *Studies in Higher Education* 1197 <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03075079.2023.2187771>> accessed 24 March 2024.

²⁵ Grace Chisamya and others, 'Gender and Education for All: Progress and Problems in Achieving Gender Equity' (2012) 32 *International Journal of Educational Development* 743 <<https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S0738059311001465>> accessed 13 February 2024.

²⁶ Rumana Ahmed and Nelia Hyndman-Rizk, 'The Higher Education Paradox: Towards Improving Women's Empowerment, Agency Development and Labour Force Participation in Bangladesh' (2020) 32 *Gender and Education* 447 <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09540253.2018.1471452>> accessed 13 February 2024.

²⁷ Jackson and Scott (n 23).

²⁸ Maria Esteves, 'Gender Equality in Education: A Challenge for Policy Makers.' (2020) 4 *PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences* 893 <<https://grdspublishing.org/index.php/people/article/view/572>> accessed 13 February 2024.

Our study is based on the above-mentioned research gap that focuses on public universities in Bangladesh, where women are comparatively less than men working as teachers. Consequently, it is expected that this study will fill such a gap by exploring evidence of gender inequality in the university teaching profession. This study aimed to answer the following research question:

1. What is the female participation rate in teaching among Bangladesh's public universities within different academic focus areas?
2. What is the reason behind the low female participation rate in entire university teaching as well as teaching in different academic focus areas?

This research has a lot of significance for informing policy decisions and implementing interventions that enhance the representation of women in teaching in various academic focus areas in Bangladeshi public universities.

Methodology

The research is based on an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. In an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach, quantitative data are collected first, followed by qualitative data which further explain the quantitative results.²⁹ The rationale behind this design is rooted from the idea that quantitative data and its results offer a broad overview of the research issue.³⁰ To provide detailed explanations for this general picture, additional analysis is conducted through the collection of qualitative data.³¹

Both primary and secondary data are used in this study. First, the quantitative data are collected from secondary sources. In this case, the researcher purposively selected 10 universities out of 53 public universities in Bangladesh and visited each of the universities' websites considering academic focus areas, then manually collected data related to teacher ratio from each academic focus area. To ensure validity and reliability, the researcher cross-checked the data three times, and to ensure ethical considerations, the researcher sought consent from the university through email and telephone. Secondly, qualitative data are collected from primary sources, 10 female public university teachers from different academic focus areas were selected purposefully as participants. According to Creswell, the researcher chooses purposive sampling to provide insightful answers to research questions.³² A sample size of 10 participants is sufficient for conducting qualitative studies

²⁹ John W Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (4th ed, Pearson 2012).

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ *ibid.*

³² John W Creswell and J David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (5th edn, SAGE Publications 2014).

focusing on a homogeneous group of individuals.³³ In-depth interviews are conducted to collect qualitative data. This study followed thematic analysis, which consists of six steps: familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, formulating themes, evaluating themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. To prevent biases in the data analysis process of this study, intra-data reliability was strictly adhered to.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Women in Different Academic Focus Areas

University Name	Arts & Literature			STEM			Social Science			Business Study		
	Female (Total)	Female (%)	Total	Female (Total)	Female (%)	Total	Female (Total)	Female (%)	Total	Female (Total)	Female (%)	Total
DU	154	33.19	464	228	30.89	738	186	41.89	444	97	33.11	293
RU	52	25.24	206	100	18.28	547	41	22.78	180	15	14.02	107
CU	76	30.65	248	104	25.87	402	64	30.62	209	25	22.52	111
JU	59	40.69	145	117	31.53	371	51	40.16	127	24	33.33	72
IU	22	25.58	86	18	11.84	152	25	33.33	75	6	11.32	53
SUST	19	44.19	43	71	20.17	352	43	36.44	118	6	30	20
KU	25	33.33	75	72	21.05	342	36	40.45	89	8	22.86	35
JnU	51	38.06	134	113	39.93	283	78	46.99	166	32	35.96	89
BSMRSTU	13	48.15	27	61	33.70	181	20	39.22	51	9	25.71	35
CoU	14	45.16	31	31	28.70	108	29	37.18	78	17	30.36	56

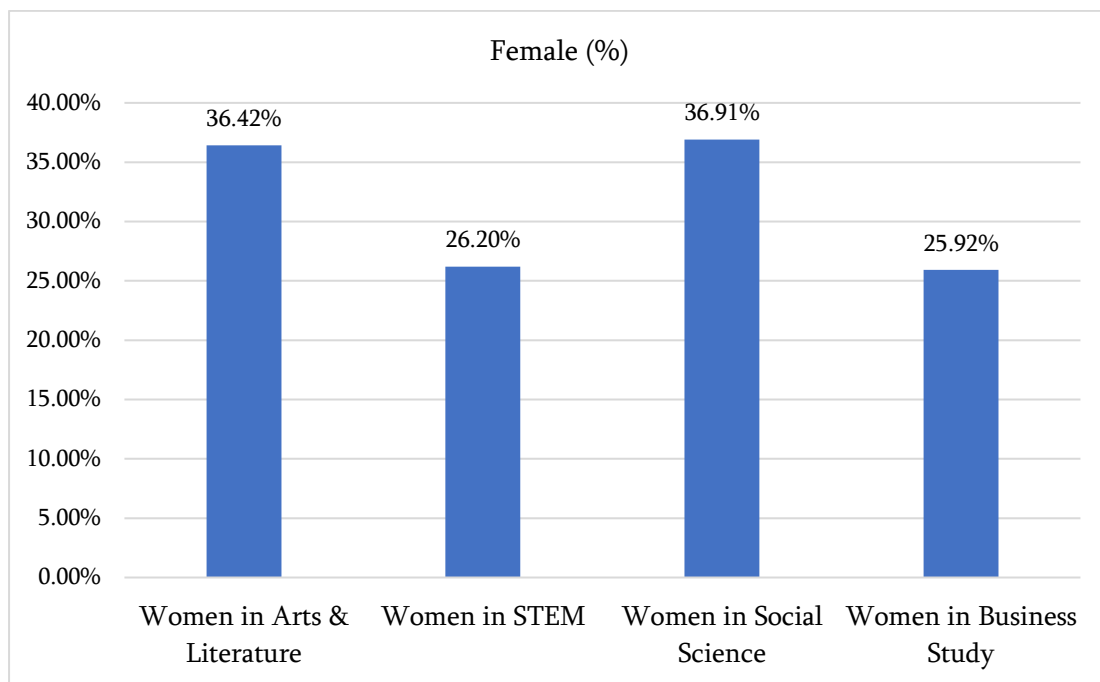
Source: Websites of above Universities, January 2024, DU: Dhaka University, RU: Rajshahi University, CU: University of Chittagong, JU: Jahangirnagar University, IU: Islamic University, Bangladesh, SUST: Shahjalal University of Science & Technology, KU: Khulna University, JnU: Jagannath University, BSMRSTU: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science & Technology University, CoU: Comilla University.

Table 1 reveals the gender-based participation among Arts and literature, STEM, Social Science, and Business Study faculty in public universities of Bangladesh. At Islamic University, the arts and literature areas comprise 22 female teachers out of 86 (25.58%), while Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science & Technology University has a higher representation where 13 female teachers out of 27 (48.15%). In the area of STEM, Islamic University has 18 female teachers out of 152 (11.84%), while Jagannath University exhibits a higher proportion with 113 female teachers out of 283 (39.93%). Rajshahi University's social science faculty includes 41 female teachers out of 180 (22.77%), whereas Jagannath University surpasses this with 78 female teachers out of 166 (46.99%). In the realm of Business Studies, Islamic University features 6 female teachers out of 53 (11.32%), while Jagannath University showcases a higher ratio with 32 female teachers out of 89 (35.96%).

³³ M Sandelowski, 'Qualitative Analysis: What It Is and How to Begin' (1995) 18 Research in Nursing & Health 371.

Gender distribution among teachers in different academic fields of public universities of Bangladesh shows a noticeable disparity in participation. While some departments such as Arts and Literature of Islamic University have low female representation, other departments such as Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman University of Science and Technology have more female teachers. Interestingly, despite this disparity, Jagannath University has emerged as an icon in terms of gender diversity in several areas with a significantly higher proportion of female faculty in STEM, social sciences, and business studies than other institutions.

Figure 1: Representation of females in teaching in different Academic Focus Areas.



As shown in Figure 1, the percentage of female teachers in arts and literature (36.42%) and social sciences (36.91%) is comparatively higher than in STEM (26.20%) and business studies (25.92%). The figure implies that there is a gender disparity in the distribution of teachers across academic focus areas, whereas STEM and business studies have lower participation of female teachers compared to arts & literature and social sciences fields. Similarly, Eagly's study found that women make up 29% of the workforce in STEM fields, and they make up 49% of workers in social science disciplines.³⁴

³⁴ Alice H Eagly, 'Hidden in Plain Sight: The Inconsistent Gender Gaps in STEM and Leadership' (8 July 2021) <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1047840X.2021.1930764>> accessed 25 March 2024.

Table 2. Reasons behind Low Participation in Teaching

Formulating themes from data analysis		Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6	Participant 7	Participant 8	Participant 9	Participant 10
Reasons behind low participation of women as university teachers											
Marriage and Family Responsibility		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Social Construction of Gender*		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Lack of real-life networking		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
Lack of role model*		✓		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
Religious influence		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	
Cost-benefit analysis of parents*		✓		✓				✓	✓		
Social safety and security issues			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	
Family Pressure and Restrictions*		✓	✓		✓		✓			✓	✓
Huge distance from the university		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		
Less expertise in the research field				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fault of our education system*			✓				✓	✓		✓	
Male priority in teacher recruitment			✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	
Reasons behind higher female participation as university teachers in arts and literature and social sciences compared to business studies and STEM											
A few engineering universities		✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	✓
Lack of personal interest					✓	✓			✓		✓
Stereotypical reason	Family Pressure to choose a subject area	✓				✓		✓			
	Cost-benefit analysis of parents			✓			✓		✓		
	Perceived less efficient by society	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	
	Unable to balance family and working life	✓	✓			✓					
	Less involvement in lab work and extra activities		✓		✓			✓			
	Influence of Hidden Curriculum		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	

Source: elaborated by Authors, n.b.: Some reasons also responsible for low participation in Business and STEM fields are marked as “*” within the table-2.

Reasons behind Low Participation of Women as University Teachers

‘Marriage and family responsibility’ is the most common barrier where females have to do dual job responsibilities. Thus, family responsibilities and marital status of women have a significant impact on their career advancement, as they must balance managing their family with pursuing their professional growth.³⁵ There are also ‘family pressures and restrictions’ are work as a barrier on the path to being a university teacher. *Religion* also works as a barrier where orthodox religious perception does not allow women in this profession. Additionally, if the *distance of university* is too far from their home, it will create restrictions to study in public universities. These problems are firstly faced by a female student, which then leads to the female student's tendency to overcome obstacles and become a teacher. Participant 6 shared her experience by saying,

³⁵ Teresia Koki Kavoo Linge, ‘Social-Family Issues as Barriers to Career Advancement: The Perception of Women Employees in Kenya’ (2015) 05.

"I had a very talented student who achieved the first position with an outstanding CGPA in both the first and second semesters, and she got married the following year. After marriage, she did not continue her studies which is very pathetic that marrying someone stopped her academic life."

Six participants of ten participants talked about the '*religious influence*' that creates barriers in the higher education and higher-level teaching profession. For instance, Participant 9 shared her view,

"I have three or four students in my classroom who are religious but very talented. They used to wear hijabs covering their full face and eyes. We all know that standard teaching strategy requires proper eye contact and interaction with students which is not possible in that case."

Participant 4 shared another experience from a religious perspective,

"I have a relative who studied at a public university with excellent results. Once, I asked her about her career goals, and she replied that she had been committed from the time of her marriage, stating that she would never pursue any job due to religious restrictions within her family. Restrictive marriages can hinder one's career path; in this case, her family's beliefs in religion restrict her from pursuing any job, including the opportunity to become a university teacher."

The lack of *real-life networking* is also responsible for the low female participation in university teaching, as women often lag in developing expertise in public interaction and communication. Similar findings have been identified in Rothstein and Davey's, in which they reported that networking differences by gender, potentially contribute to lower female participation in university teaching.³⁶ For instance, participant 5 stated:

"When any program needs to be organized in my department, most of the time male students take the hassle to conduct the program, to talk with decorator and sound system, etc. Thus, males gather real-life networking experience more than females and any experience is equally important to learn anything."

Because of their less expertise in real-life networking, they have less expertise in the research field. Similarly, Jordan and other's study found that networking leadership enhances research impact in nature-based learning networks through fostering relevance, rigor, activation, and collaboration.³⁷ *Social safety and security issues* are a related factor

³⁶ Mitchell G Rothstein and Liane M Davey, 'Gender Differences in Network Relationships in Academia' (1995) 10 *Women in Management Review* 20 <<https://doi.org/10.1108/09649429510095999>> accessed 25 March 2024.

³⁷ Catherine Jordan, Cheryl Charles and Avery Cleary, 'Enhancing the Impact of Research: Experimenting with Network Leadership Strategies to Grow a Vibrant Nature-Based Learning Research Network' (2017) 4 *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies* <<https://pubs.lib.umn.edu/index.php/ijps/article/view/175>> accessed 25 March 2024.

that works behind low participation in university teaching. Sexual harassment and traditional cultural norms hinder female education enrollment, limiting women's participation in social action and access to education.³⁸ Concerning their safety issue, they make their research field narrower compared to their male. Female researchers are at higher risk of harassment and violence during fieldwork due to gender dynamics, requiring the social science community to prioritize researcher safety.³⁹ For instance, Participant 6 stated:

"I have a female student who is very talented and motivated in the research field but when she was asked to visit the field in any rural region, she rejected the proposal concerning her safety and security. In this way, females lose their opportunities and lag behind. Definitely, this issue hampers their productivity but our society needs to come forward to give a safe and secure society."

Reasons behind Low Participation of Women in STEM and Business Studies

Social Construction of gender is very crucial where society constructs their gender role as fixed and thinks that the STEM and business studies field is not for females. Consistent with existing literature, the low participation of girls in STEM is attributed to gender roles created by society.⁴⁰ The low participation of female university teachers in STEM and business studies fields results in a shortage of role models for female students to emulate. However, female role models boost girls' interest in math and STEM, increasing their chances of pursuing STEM careers.⁴¹ There was a huge responsibility of our education system to make our society free from bias and gender stereotypes. Furthermore, parents often exhibit an unintentional bias against investing in their daughters' education based on a cost-benefit analysis that assumes limited financial return after marriage.

Participant 1 regrets this way:

"Our society makes retractions for girls to choose their subject area and parents calculate the rate of return for investing for their girls. Most of the time, parents think that STEM is more expensive to study. So, females skip to fulfill their choice"

Another thought is shared by participant 7:

³⁸ Anbreen Yasin Khan and others, 'Sexual Harassment: A Barrier to Girls Education' (2022) 5 Indonesian Journal of Educational Research and Review 429

<<https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/IJERR/article/view/54353>> accessed 25 March 2024.

³⁹ Gwen Sharp and Emily Kremer, 'The Safety Dance: Confronting Harassment, Intimidation, and Violence in the Field' (2006) 36 Sociological Methodology 317

<<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-9531.2006.00183.x>> accessed 25 March 2024.

⁴⁰ Casad and others (n 10).

⁴¹ Susana González-Pérez, Ruth Mateos de Cabo and Milagros Sáinz, 'Girls in STEM: Is It a Female Role-Model Thing?' (2020) 11 Frontiers in Psychology

<<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.02204/full>> accessed 25 March 2024.

“There is often a misconception that business studies are more suitable for men. After studying business studies, people only have to work in the corporate fields, which society does not like for a woman. which may discourage young women from exploring this field of education”

Reasons behind Higher Female Participation as University Teachers in Arts and Literature and Social Sciences compared to Business Studies and STEM

There are various stereotypical reasons are responsible and most of the reasons are consistent with the existing literature.⁴² Stereotypes and prejudice remain significant barriers to women's career advancement.⁴³ Families are sometimes pressured to encourage girls to select Arts, Literature, and Social Science fields due to a cost-benefit analysis, which assumes that women will not contribute financially after marriage. This trend is consistent with findings from previous studies.⁴⁴ Furthermore, people think that it is *hard to balance family and career* in Business and STEM fields as these fields are more critical and technical than Arts & Literature and Social Science fields. For instance, Participant 3 stated:

“I was a student of science background but at secondary level, my family refused me to take higher math just because I was a girl and did not dedicatedly influence me to be admitted in engineering. So, I had only one option to study in public university because I was a girl and I did not have the financial backup.”

There was another stereotypical concept is responsible that females are thought *weak physically and mentally* than males. For this reason, females cannot cope with *extra lab and field work* which is compulsory for the STEM field. In Bangladesh, many women lack confidence in pursuing challenging jobs due to low interest and limited technical skills.⁴⁵ Participant 9 stated:

“Our society thinks females are too weak to study STEM field and our society directs female thinking so. Personally, I do not think that women are weak physically or mentally. Females are as capable as men, only our societal stereotypes stop us from growing.”

⁴² Casad and others (n 10).

⁴³ Judith G Oakley, 'Gender-Based Barriers to Senior Management Positions: Understanding the Scarcity of Female CEOs' (2000) 27 Journal of Business Ethics 321 <<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1006226129868>> accessed 25 March 2024.

⁴⁴ Jianzhen Zhang and Xiaoyu Liang, 'The Impact of Family Background on Subject Selection in Senior Secondary School Students in the Context of the Reform of College Entrance Examination: An Empirical Study Based on Survey Data from Zhejiang Province' (2023) 15 Best Evidence in Chinese Education 1783 <<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1395175>> accessed 25 March 2024.

⁴⁵ Samah Hatem Almaki and others, 'Challenges Faced Muslim Women Leaders in Higher Education' [2016] Journal of Educational and Social Research <<https://www.richtmann.org/journal/index.php/jesr/article/view/9488>> accessed 25 March 2024.

The term "hidden curriculum" describes the implicit or unwritten norms, values, and attitudes that influence educational environments.⁴⁶ There was a huge influence on our education system related to the *hidden curriculum* that influenced females to study in arts & literature and social science fields. Our education system has the responsibility to change this scenario. Similarly, Losioki and Mdee's study found that the hidden curriculum within teaching and learning materials contributes to gender disparity, increasing the visibility of women but still portraying them in stereotypical content and illustration.⁴⁷ Participant-10 added that,

"I think choosing a field of study should be a personal choice, free from societal influence. To achieve this, we must work together to eliminate discrimination from our education sector and ensure that everyone has the freedom to choose their academic path".

Overall, our findings confirm that women's low participation in teaching in Bangladesh is significantly influenced by society's construction of gender which examined the theoretical framework of feminist interactionism. The study adds to the literature on the reasons for the lower participation of women as university teachers in business studies and STEM compared to the arts and literature and social sciences, as well as the reasons for the lower participation of women in overall university teaching.

In recent years, the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has enacted policies aimed at mitigating discrimination against women. The National Science and Technology Policy of 2011 placed particular importance on fostering the involvement of women in the fields of science and technology as well as encouraging their advancement in higher education.⁴⁸ Additionally, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has developed the National Women's Development Policy of 2011, which recognizes significant disparities in women's participation in professional life.⁴⁹ Special emphasis has been placed on the involvement of women in every sector. To establish a knowledge-driven society with effective management and a proficient workforce comprising both males and females, it is imperative to extend gender equality.

⁴⁶ Merfat Ayesha Alsubaie, 'Hidden Curriculum as One of Current Issue of Curriculum' (2015) 6 Journal of Education and Practice.

⁴⁷ Bertha Erasto Losioki and Hemed Karani Mdee, 'The Contribution of the Hidden Curriculum to Gender Inequality in Teaching and Learning Materials: Experiences from Tanzania' (2023) 9 Asian Journal of Education and Training 54 <<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1389497>> accessed 25 March 2024.

⁴⁸ 'National Science & Technology Policy - 2011'

<https://most.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/most.portal.gov.bd/policies/2303afd3_6664_4a38_957e_6e35f1d7f0bf/National%20Science%20&%20Technology%20Policy%20-%202011%20%20English.pdf> accessed 13 February 2024.

⁴⁹ 'National Women Development Policy 2011'

<https://mowca.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mowca.portal.gov.bd/policies/64238d39_0ecd_4a56_b00c_b834cc54f88d/National-Women-Policy-2011English.pdf> accessed 10 February 2024.

Both males and females are very essential in the path of development where no one lags to contribute independently.⁵⁰ This study explored the reason for the low participation of woman in teaching at the university level as well as their low participation in business study and STEM fields which will have a huge impact on social consciousness. This study may influence the area that involves gender equity and equality. Moreover, this study may be helpful in the path of decision-making related to gender development and making any law, or policy related to gender. Finally, this study will create a conscious perception among the stakeholders related to gender disparity, social barriers and social norms in the path of higher education and university teaching.

Conclusion

The findings of this study contribute to the existing knowledge of the reasons behind women's lower participation as university teachers in business studies and STEM compared to arts and literature and social sciences. In the Bangladesh context, this study helps to narrow the knowledge gap about the barriers for a woman to become a teacher at the university level. The conclusion can be drawn that there are some barriers in Bangladesh, if the concerned policymakers remove those barriers, the number of women in university teaching will increase and their participation will make more academic success in any academic institution.

To address the gender disparity among university faculty in business studies and STEM, it is important to promote female role models, implement initiatives to eliminate social stereotypes, provide scholarships and support for women, and create gender-inclusive educational environments that actively encourage women's participation. Furthermore, policies should be developed to promote work-life balance and prevent systemic biases that hinder the advancement of women in STEM and business studies.

However, this study acknowledges some limitations. Initially, because of its limited scope and specific context of Bangladesh, the results might not be generalizable to other countries or regions with different sociocultural backgrounds. Secondly, the study may not take into consideration external factors that could impact women's participation in the teaching profession, such as changes in educational policies, political conditions, or financial conditions. Lastly, this research may have limitations due to missing data, particularly if university data sources have not updated their records.

⁵⁰ Alif Aditya Candra, Aulia Sholichah Iman Nurchotimah and Mochammad Tholluth Syaifulloh, 'Citizen Participation in Realizing Gender Equality in Education and Development' (2022) 1 QISTINA: Jurnal Multidisiplin Indonesia 155.

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