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**Availability of On-Site Child Care and its Impact on  
Productivity and Organizational Commitment: A Study  
on Female Knowledge Workers in Bangladesh**

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## **Availability of On-Site Child Care and its Impact on Productivity and Organizational Commitment: A Study on Female Knowledge Workers in Bangladesh**

### **Abstract**

With the increasing percentage of female knowledge workers entering the workforce in recent times in Bangladesh, it is becoming increasingly important to facilitate the highest possible output from this emerging segment. Availability of childcare support for working mothers is one of the most prominent issues concerning working women in Bangladesh. While developmental and non-government organizations have made major leaps in ensuring on-site child care facilities for thousands of women in the garments sector, other sectors are far behind. The purview of this research, therefore, will be contained within a sample of female knowledge workers who are mothers and the challenges they face regarding child care support which possibly hinder their productivity at work and prevent them from making similar contributions as their male counterparts in similar positions. The research concludes on significant findings on the impact of on-site childcare on female knowledge worker productivity and organizational commitment and offers recommendations to encourage the provision of on-site childcare for companies wishing to capitalize on the time contributed by female knowledge workers at the office.

**Keywords:** On-site Childcare, Knowledge Workers, Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction, Productivity

## 1. Introduction

It is commonplace in patriarchal societies to attribute female performance deficiencies to a lack of capability rather than to the lack of facilities required in order to enable women to optimize their productivity at work alongside successfully managing their traditional duties and mothers, daughters, wives and homemakers. According to Kamal and Sabrin (2014), our centuries-old patriarchal society has created formidable barriers for women to move forward in their respective profession. Women are considered as the inferior workforce in that sector. Biased attitude of management, non-cooperation from male co-worker, inadequate maternity leave, no child care centre, inflexible working hour are the main quandaries to operate their job smoothly in this field (Kamal and Sabrin, 2014)

In fact, one of the most concerning factors is the obvious lack of social support for working mothers in terms of child care facilities. Though several large corporations and academic institutions have made commendable strides in providing this support to their female employees, there are many more which still need follow suit. In the name of maximizing labor efficiency in general, care should be taken to ensure that the tradeoff which working mothers are undertaking by choosing to sustain their career and uphold their commitment to organizations is well worth it at the end of the day. This research will draw from a combination of qualitative and quantitative data to focus on the possible connection between availability of on-site childcare facilities for middle and upper class working mothers and the resulting productivity and satisfaction at work.

According to Duflo 2012, there is a bidirectional relationship between economic development and women's empowerment defined as improving the ability of women to access the constituents of development—in particular health, education, earning opportunities, rights, and political participation. In one direction, development alone can play a major role in driving down inequality between men and women; in the other direction, continuing discrimination against women can, as Sen has forcefully argued, hinder development. Empowerment can, in other words, accelerate development. (Duflo 2012).

## **2. Background of the research**

Despite increasing acknowledgement and declaration of the correlation between women's empowerment and economic growth, there are several factors which still hinder the scope for women to make their desired contribution to the workforce. This harsh reality is in fact equally applicable in the context of the developed and the developing world. According to Duflo 2012, women spend almost twice as much time on housework, almost five times as much time on child care, and about half as much time on market work as men do (Berniell and Sánchez-Páramo 2011). Evidently, child care, or the lack thereof, is a factor which often results in women either withdrawing from the workforce to stay at home, or contributing less to work in terms of hours and productivity compared to their male counterparts. However, to remain focused on the relation between child care and female productivity and job satisfaction, it is necessary to only consider the class of mothers who are employed as opposed to those who refrained from or were unable to return to work.

According to Duflo's analysis of prior research on the differences between male and female use of time across 23 countries, the numbers range from 30 percent more time spent on housework by women than men in Cambodia to six times more in Guinea, and from 70 percent more time for child care in Sweden to ten times more in Iraq. These differences have an impact on women's ability to participate in market work, be fully engaged in their career, etc. (Duflo 2012).

While traditionally in Bangladesh, the increasing female labor force participation numbers were due to the large percentage of women working in the RMG sector and in agriculture, a positive stride towards development may be observed in the shift in the industries where women have sought and attained employment in recent years as shown in the following table which highlights these comparisons between 2010 and 2013.

Industry	Women Employed 2010 ('000)	Women Employed 2013 ('000)
Total	16,202	16,846
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	10,506	9,008
Manufacturing	1907	3782
Construction	227	168
Wholesale and Retail Trade	1,027	776
Transportation and storage	245	114
Accommodation and food services	56	120
Financial and insurance activities	52	80
Public administration and defense	36	108
Education	326	712
Human health and social work activities	165	292
Other service activities	718	553
Activities of households as employers	845	974
Sources: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). 2012. <i>Labor Force Survey 2010</i> . Dhaka; and BBS. 2015. <i>Labor Force Survey 2013</i> , Dhaka.		

**Table 1: Employment of Women by Industry for key industries, 2010 and 2013**

Since most research on working women in Bangladesh have thus far focused on low-skilled female workforce especially in the RMG sector, this paper has specifically targeted working women employed in Education and Training, Media and Advertising, Banking and Financial Sector, Development and NGOs, Businesses and Multinational Corporations. As can be seen from Table 2, between 2010 and 2013 alone there was a noticeable growth in the number of women employed in Accommodation and Food services from 56,000 to 120,000; Financial and Insurance activities from 52,000 to 80,000; Public administration and defense from 36,000 to 108,000; Education from 326,000 to 712,000; and Human Health and Social Work activities from 165,000 to 292,000.

Therefore the selection of key industries in which the sample population for this research are employed, mainly Education and Training, Corporations and Banking and financial sectors accurately coincides with the growth in female employees in the aforesaid sectors. Furthermore, for the purpose of narrowing this broad research, the study will focus on findings derived from surveying only those women who have returned to work after children, and exclude those who withdrew from the workforce. In order to sustain this increase of females entering diverse industries, all factors hindering their ability to work must steadily be combatted.

Bangladesh Labor Law 2006 (amended in 2013) makes it mandatory for every organization with 40 or more female workers to have one or more rooms to keep children below six years when mothers are away for work. It also specifies details of all the amenities crèches must have along with trained and experienced female caregivers. However, the implementation of the law is rare. (Khan, 2015) Till date, only a handful of large corporations like GrameenPhone, BanglaLink, Robi, Brac Bank, Daffodil University, British American Tobacco have been commendable pioneers in this regard. On March 2017, The National Board of Revenue (NBR) also announced that it has taken an initiative to set up a day care centre for the children of their employees. (Uddin, 2017) However, apart from a number of large corporates and several other RMG companies, implementation of the law making on-site childcare mandatory is still negligible in Bangladesh, thereby hampering the ability of women to rise to decision-making level positions in far too many organizations.

*Note.* From Gender Gap and Present State of Working Women in Corporate Arena: An Overview of Bangladesh Perspective (Kamal and Sabrin, 2014, p. 6

Sl. No	Types of Problems	Number of respondents* (Total 80)	Percentage (%)
1.	Long working hour	78	98
2.	Absence of day care centre Facility.	75	94
3.	Facing discrimination in decision making	60	80

4.	Harassment during field work.	50	62
5.	Corporate fashion	50	62
6.	Non-cooperation from Male worker.	45	56
7.	Problem arises in getting promotion.	42	52
8.	Absence of transport facility.	40	50
9.	Glass ceiling	30	38
10.	Heeding no attention to complain	30	38
11.	Lack of policy	26	32
12.	Maternity leave problem	25	31
13.	Overt Discrimination	03	3.75

**Table 2: Problems faced by women in Corporate World**

In the absence of childcare facilities a woman has to depend and rely on inefficient and unreliable maidservants. As a result she is usually mentally occupied with her children and household work while she is at work, which disrupts her office work. (Jahan 2007) This is the case for many working women across various industries in Bangladesh. In fact, lack of a favorable work environment is one of the main reasons for the low presence of women in civil service. The research also cites absence of day care facilities as one of the main reasons for the limited entry of women in civil service. Furthermore, in a field survey conducted by Kamal and Sabrin(2014), the findings revealed that amongst a total of 80 female respondents working in the 20 twenty leading organizations in the corporate world in Bangladesh, 94% of the respondents declared an absence of daycare facility as the second biggest problem they faced.

Additionally, there is often a financial setback associated with women with children returning to work, and that is the cost incurred in finding the right child care solutions in the absence of on-site daycares at work. In fact, according to the sample population of urban working mothers surveyed in Dhaka, on average working mothers spend a total of (amount) on daycare services monthly. This amount is often psychologically considered by

working mothers as a monetary price of returning to work, thereby undermining the net earnings of a working mother.

This is unfortunately a global phenomenon as worldwide child care is still predominantly considered a mother's responsibility. It is important to note here that this psychological deduction in calculating net income prevails regardless of whether the cost of daycare in reality is borne by the mother or the father. In fact, this is one reason why women in developing countries are more likely to be involved in informal work (such as running a small business) that may not be the most productive use of their time. For example, they may run a shop from their house in order to be able to mind the children at the same time, instead of taking on productive employment. (Duflo 2012) In fact, owing largely to the ease of setting up businesses on social media, there has been a noticeable upsurge in women opting to be entrepreneurs and owners of e-commerce businesses in an effort to allocate sufficient time to caring for their children while working from home. It is therefore not surprising, that when working mothers employed in organizations evaluate job satisfaction or pay satisfaction, they consciously or sub-consciously tend to take into consideration the monthly expenses they incur on day care in the absence of on-site child care facilities at their place of employment.

However, there are far too many women who cannot afford to accept the unstable income and financial risks associated with being e-commerce entrepreneurs. Hence, there still remains a preference for the stable employment and income associated with working regular jobs in organizations.

### **3. Purpose of the Study**

Due to the absence of significant research in the aforementioned subject, there has been significantly little progress towards ensuring better child support or family friendly policies in majority of organizations in Bangladesh. The impact of this lacking on the ability of female workers to contribute better to the workforce has been overlooked to say the least. The research brings to light how the Bangladesh Labor Act, 2006 falls short in citing broader specifications regarding what constitutes adequate and acceptable child care facilities at the workplace. Consequently, the current child care arrangements, its resulting problems, the lack of organizational support and its resulting impact on the concentration, commitment, satisfaction and productivity of

female knowledge workers have been discussed. According to Hossain 2016, employment benefits and amenities motivate employees to work better and in many cases some minimal facilities can make big changes in productivity (Akhter et al., 2010). Further it is stated in (Hossain 2016), a congenial work environment in an office or workplace enhances significantly the efficiency of employees, increases productivity, and promotes motivation and commitment to work (Jahan, 2012). This applies equally to all employees regardless of gender.

However, certain determinants of a congenial work environment naturally differ when the perspectives of the two genders are compared. Work environment, when women are concerned, refers to many issues, conditions and settings which affect their professional lives in any workplace (Agomo,1995). Furthermore, according to Kato and Kodama 2017, when attempting to maintain a career alongside managing the household and children, women are naturally expected to commit more to organizations which have greater work-life balance practices (WLBP) on offer. Though what is considered a WLBP differs slightly among scholars, a typical set of WLBPs include three categories of practices: (i) flexible scheduling policies/programs such as flextime; telecommuting; and satellite office; (ii) temporary transitional part-time work (e.g., female employees return to work after maternity leave as a temporary transitional part-time worker for a fixed period of time); and (iii) company child care assistance (including onsite day care centers and a reimbursement program for those who use government-run daycare centers). (Kato and Kodama 2017)

#### **4. Literature Review**

Workplace productivity is an issue that encompasses various aspects of an organization's success across all industries. At a basic level, the concept of 'productivity' is relatively easy to define. It is the ratio of output to input for a specific production situation. Rising productivity implies either more output is produced with the same amount of inputs, or that less inputs are required to produce the same level of output. (Rogers, 1998) While this particular research focuses on the efficiency of employees in Australian firms, it is not difficult to understand the global importance of productivity changes for

general welfare, including environmental concerns. The concept of productivity is linked closely with the issue of efficiency.

The term “knowledge worker” was first coined by Peter Drucker in his book, *The Landmarks of Tomorrow* (1959). Drucker defined knowledge workers as high-level workers who apply theoretical and analytical knowledge, acquired through formal training, to develop products and services. (CFI) Knowledge work tasks are usually dominated by intellectual demands, technical know-how, creativity, interaction, mobilization, networking, and innovation. Generally defined, knowledge work is dominated by cognitive effort to use, generate, and extract value from knowledge. (El-Farr, 2009) According to the CFI, Management writers such as Fritz Machlup and Peter Drucker first came up with the term “knowledge workers” in the late 1950s and early 1960s. During that time, the number of information workers began to outnumber the number of workers engaged in manual jobs. Most people worked in traditional types of knowledge work professions such as those of teachers, ministers, and writers. The growth of industrialization introduced new types of workers who used information to make a living. These workers included investors, managers, and consultants. (CFI)

On-Site childcare has barely been elaborately defined according to the Bangladesh Labor Law. The 2006 Amendments to the Bangladesh Labor Law made a provision of a children’s room for every 40 (previously it was 50 female workers with children under 6 years of age. The room is required to be of such area so that it can provide 600 square metres, previously it was 20 sqft of space for each child and the minimum height of such room shall not be less than 360 centimeters. (A Handbook on Bangladesh Labor Act 2006) As one can understand easily from such basic requirements, this law was made with regards to the scores of female workers engaged in manual work in factories especially in readymade garments.

Organizational commitment is the employees’ state of being committed to assist in the achievement of the organization’s goals, and involves the employees’ levels of identification, involvement, and loyalty (Caught & Shadur, 2000). Organizational commitment is often considered one of the very positive outcomes resulting from providing employees with job satisfaction. In a way it can be considered a tradeoff whereby once employees find job satisfaction working for an organization, they are bound to

consciously or subconsciously demonstrate a strong commitment to achieving the goals of the organization. In general, early theoretical literature that seeks the relationship between family-friendly policies and work motivation is based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Caillier, 2012, 2013; S. Y. Lee & Hong, 2011) Social exchange theory explains why employees benefit from their organization's family-friendly policies by stating that they feel motivated and are willing to reciprocate to their organization. (Bae and Yang, 2017) According to social exchange theory, employees voluntarily reciprocate after receiving benefits from their organization (Gould-Williams & Davies, 2005; Haas & Deseran, 1981). It is commonly observed that traditional HRM initiatives in motivating employees are incompatible with the expectations of knowledge workers (Tampoe, 1993).

## **5. Methodology**

In order to test the hypothesis of the impact of on-site childcare facilities and female worker productivity, an empirical study has been conducted using a structured questionnaire to find out the perspectives of 67 high skilled working mothers in Dhaka. Primary data has been sourced through one to one discussions and through a questionnaire distributed to working mothers on their agreeability on statements regarding on-site childcare and their ability to commit sufficient time to work, take up new challenges at work, focus better and keep their commitment to the organization.

The survey also collected responses on current child care arrangements availed by the sample population of working mothers in Dhaka. Several questions have been formulated to gauge the impact of on-site childcare on female job satisfaction and motivation as well. Since the research focuses on the perception of working mothers on the relation between available child care and productivity, the actual availability or lack thereof child care facilities at their workplace have been left out of consideration. In other words, the survey analysis gives equal weight to the perceptions of women who can avail on-site daycares at work alongside those who cannot. The collected responses have then been analyzed for quantifiable connections between the variables. Secondary data sources include journal articles, statistical

records of government and developmental organizations and national newspapers.

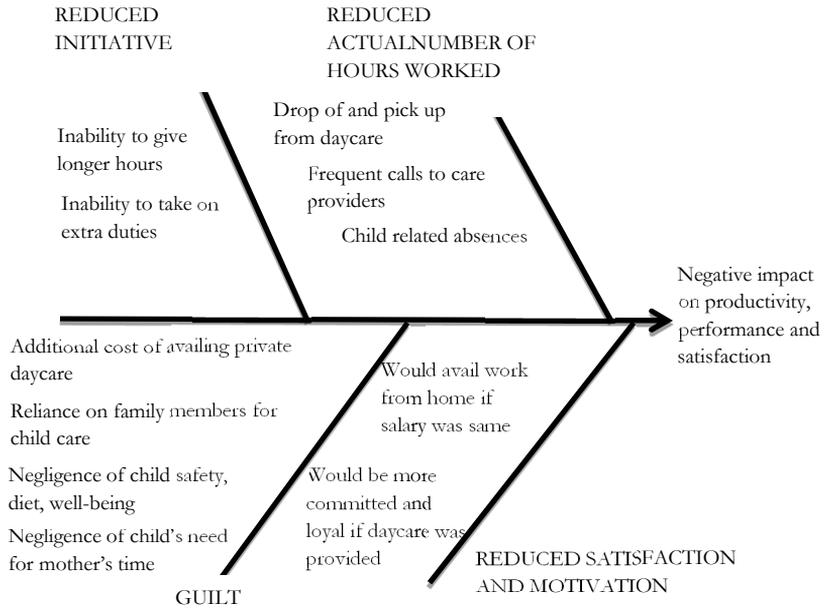
## **6. Research Questions**

This study focuses on exploring answers to the following major research questions:

- What is the average number of hours high-skilled professional working women spend at work?
- What is the greatest concern of working mothers in Dhaka?
- How do working women associate availability of on-site childcare facilities to higher morale and positive work culture?
- Would on-site child care facilities motivate working mothers to invest more time and focus at work?

## **7. Conceptual Model**

The underlying intention of this study is to examine the connection between availability of on-site child care facilities and workplace productivity of working mothers. Productivity results from maximizing output from a given input. The inputs in this case are time, attention and number of new tasks or projects undertaken. Hence, the above conceptual model using the fishbone framework or the Ishikawa diagram demonstrates the variety of factors which influence the productivity working mothers in Dhaka in terms of their time commitment to work, mental engagement at work, perception of positive work culture and resulting productivity. The Fishbone diagram is an analysis tool that provides a systematic way of looking at effects and the causes that create or contribute to those effects. Because of the function of the Fishbone diagram, it may be referred to as a cause-and-effect diagram (Watson, 2004).

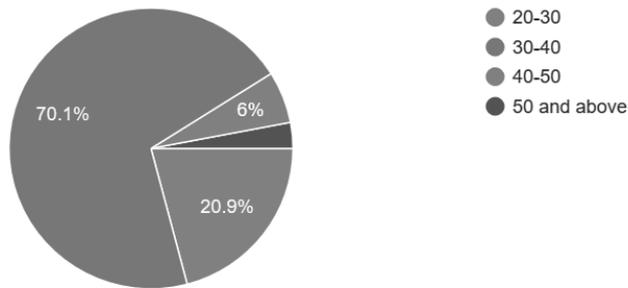


**Figure 1: Fishbone Diagram**

## 7. Results and Discussions

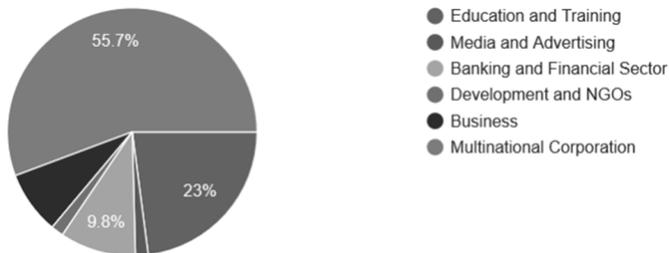
### 7.1 Respondent's Characteristics

Respondent characteristics have primarily differed in terms of age, the industries of employment, number of hours worked and current childcare arrangements. A large percentage of female employees surveyed are within the age range of 30 to 40 years, which is much higher than that of entry-level or clerical employees.



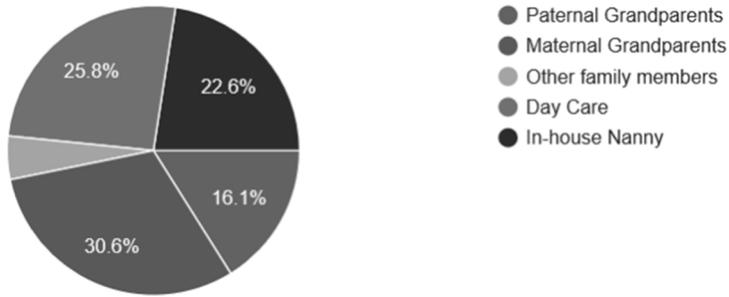
**Figure 2: Age Distribution of Respondents**

The sample population for this research has considered the perspectives of knowledge workers as opposed to those performing manual labor. Majority of female employees surveyed are currently employed in either Multinational Corporations or Education and Training. Most jobs in these sectors require mental effort which relies on the ability of employees to be free of distractions or stress over child care, in order to be able to perform at their highest potential as knowledge workers.



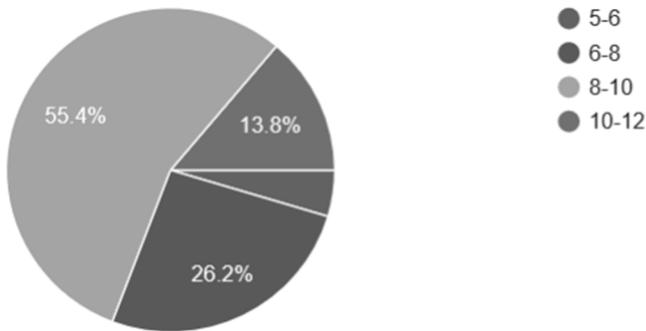
**Figure 3: Industry of Employment of Survey Respondents**

Bangladeshi culture still has most families still living in close knit arrangements with maternal and paternal grandparents taking on the load of babysitting young children with both parents working. As shown in Figure 4, grandparents account for 46.7% of working parents’ child care providers. Another finding is that apart from 25% of employees who have availed either private or on-site daycare facilities, majority of the female employees rely on family members and household help to keep their children at home while they work.



**Figure 4: Current Childcare Arrangements of Survey Respondents**

A startling 55.4% of women surveyed have declared that they spend an average of 8 to 10 hours working in a day. Added to that is the problem of spending hours stuck in the increasingly congested roads of Dhaka city twice a day to commute back and forth between home and work. This places an added burden on working mothers who end up spending more than 12 to 14 hours away from their children due to this.



**Figure 5: Average Number of Hours Worked of Respondents**

## 7.2 Concerns of working mothers which hamper their focus at work

The survey results of 67 respondents reveals that while working in industries which require tremendous mental focus and concentration, working mothers have several concerns hindering their ability to focus such as

- 45% of respondents have cited possible negligence of the safety of their children in their absence, as their primary concern as working mothers.
- Almost 42% of respondents have declared their primary concern being the possible negligence of their child's need for their time.
- 55.7% of working mothers are expected and required to take the day off from work in the event of their child's illness, while 34.4% put in the minimum number of required hours and return home to nurse the child. (A possible indication of how the option of have their children under medical care in an on-site day care might have helped to avoid this kind of absenteeism.
- If there was an on-site child care facility for our respondents, 52.5% of women have stated they would be able to work better without stressing about their children, 22% have declared they would feel less guilty as a working mother, and 10.2% of women have said they would be able to put in longer hours at work.

### 7.3 Childcare as a determinant of career choice

In recent times, there has been a great increase in the number of female entrepreneurs in Dhaka, fueled by the ease of setting up home businesses owing to social media. In fact, if our survey respondents were ever given the opportunity to work from home, 67.2% of them have stated that their primary reason for doing so would be to spend more time with their children.

### 7.4 Working women perspectives on availability of on-site daycare and loyalty, productivity and commitment.

Organizational commitment is vital because it portrays the overall effectiveness and success of the organization. (Allen & Meyer, 1996). The extent to which employees feel a sense of loyalty towards their organization depends on several psychological tradeoffs outside of the standard compensation methods. Allen (2001) argued that employees who perceive a high level of organizational family support are more likely to feel obliged to "repay" the organization in terms of affective commitment. The increase in employees' perceived levels of work-family support provided by their

organization leads to the increase in affective commitment (Aminah & Zoharah, 2010). Being able to manage work and family requires for working mothers to have the right kind of work-family support from organizations and on-site child care facilities is one of the most popular and tangible methods of extending such support to female employees. These findings directly support the findings of our current research as shown.

Employee Attitudes	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
On-site day cares at the office can boost workplace performance and motivation of working mothers	95.5%	-	5.5%
Working mothers would naturally be more focused at work if there were on-site child care facilities	90.9%	.1%	3%
Your morale improves/ would improve if you could avail on-site child care at the office	88.3%	.7%	10%
On-Site childcare facilities motivate/would motivate you to work for longer hours in the organization.	65.5%	7.3%	7.2%
On-site daycare motivates/would motivate you to engage in more tasks of the organization besides your job.	70.1%	.8%	21.1%
Having an on-site daycare increases/would increase your loyalty toward the organization.	88.2%	.1%	6.8%

**Table 3: Employee Perspectives on On-Site Childcare and its impact on performance**

## 8. Conclusion

Research conducted thus far on organizational facilities and its impact on employee commitment has produced rather disappointing and often contradictory results. While some researchers have found a negligible connection between the benefits provided by an organization on the productivity or commitment of knowledge workers, the findings of this research have revealed a very strong connection between family friendly policies of organizations, or lack thereof, and workplace motivation, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Understandably, in a predominantly patriarchal nation, where the burden of childcare still falls on the woman, Bangladeshi female knowledge workers perceive organizational

support in the form of child care facilities to have a rather strong impact on their concentration, performance, productivity and organizational commitment.

Being primarily held accountable for child care it is no surprise that female employees appear to have a higher number of absences owing to such child-care requirements. While even when they do not have to take time-off or leave early, during an average work day, a greater portion of them fall prey to mental distractions in the form of worry and guilt over their children's physical, academic or psychological needs. Further research is certainly required in order to do a thorough analysis of the psychological setbacks women suffer at work while trying to manage both ends. Organizations in Bangladesh also need to be held legally accountable to facilitate the right family friendly work policies and practices which would enable female knowledge workers to contribute the same way to their work as their male counterparts.

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