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ABSTRACT

The tendency of women empowerment denotes the idea of promoting women in social, economic and political spheres and equip them well with rights in socio-economic and political decision making so that can they come out of the traditional patriarchal supremacy and claim equality with males. Bangladesh achieved its independence in 1972 and with the enactment of constitution the quest for women empowerment was also started in the country. The beginning of feminist movement and women empowerment in Bangladesh can be traced in early 1970s and with this a nationwide campaign was started for the inclusion of women in all spheres of society and state. Although, before independence of Bangladesh the concerns and issues of women were raised by many activists such as Begum Rokeya, Sister Nivedita and Sarojini Naidu and their contribution was considerable also but a collective approach of women empowerment was seen after 1972 only when the major areas for research on women were marked which were social bonds, domestic issues, inequalities and discrimination. Following the above, many organizations were formed and joined the efforts in 1980 onwards and these collectively have been working for the promotion of rights of women and to empower women in social, political and economic spheres in Bangladesh. The reason behind the today's development and modernization of the countries is the role of men and women, but for many reasons women are not empowered like men especially in developing countries and women empowerment of women is always lower than men.

The present study was designed to undertake the following specific objectives:

- 1) To make a comprehensive study of the concepts of gender discrimination and women empowerment in the context of developing countries in general and Bangladesh in particular.
- 2) To study the social, economic and political dimension of gender discrimination in Bangladesh.
- 3) To study the post-independence governmental and non-governmental policies of women empowerment in Bangladesh.
- 4) To study the constitutional provisions for women empowerment in Bangladesh.
- 5) To study the achievements and failures in meeting the target of women empowerment in social, economic and political fields of life in Bangladesh.

The present study has been completed on the basis of both primary and secondary sources of data and information. The programmes and schemes launched by the government and international organizations have been studied with the help of various official publications of government of

Bangladesh. In order to know the women's perception about the issue of women discrimination and women empowerment in Bangladesh more deeply a stratified random sample survey in the country has been conducted. The survey was conducted in two divisions of Bangladesh; one is Dhaka Division and the other is Chittagong Division. A total numbers of 100 respondents have been interviewed from both the Divisions. The analysis techniques include mostly descriptive analysis tools like percentage, Five Point Likert Scale, and Quartiles Value method.

The main findings of the present study are briefly discussed as under:

In Bangladesh traditional patriarchy and male dominated society have been the major hindrance and have posed serious challenges to the movability and participation of women in many conventional and unofficial fields. Situation of women in Bangladesh is extremely vulnerable and because of prevalent patriarchal social norms the true value and proper rights of women are not actually given to them. The present research has shown that just after Liberation War in Bangladesh, in the Five Year Plans and other policies no significant shift has been visible in terms of addressing women's needs and interests particularly. Due to the deficiency of financial resources the development of women is far from satisfactory. The commercialization of politics hinders the political participation of women in Bangladesh. Reservation of seats for women in the parliament has only increased the number but it has failed to improve the quality of women in national parliament. The estimation of the degree of general participation is comparatively low. The present research has shown that the role of export industry should also not be appreciated and it is wrong to assume that export industry is helping Bangladeshi women being empowered because the reason of employing women is that they provide cheap, non-demanding and loyal workers. Gender wage gap is still present in Bangladesh which showcases the inferiority of women in employment sector. On the basis of field study in Bangladesh it can be conclude that women perceived that they are deprived of inheritance of property. It has been observed through the survey that women's right are remain ineffective because of culturally negative views towards women'. Women are excluded in planning and decision making process due to illiteracy and lack of awareness. More than 86 percent of women perceived that working women at workplace are always in fear of sexual violence and workplace sexual harassment affects women's mind and their work potential and creates an unfavorable working environment.