**Gender Differences in Social Media Networking Behavior and its Impact on Career Outcomes**

Submitted to Stream 5

**"Exploring Behavioural Equality: New Frontiers in Gender Research"**

17th Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion conference  
May 27-28-29, Seville, Spain

**Submitted By:**

Laila Zaman, Assistant Professor

Department of Business Administration

East West University

[lz@ewubd.edu](mailto:lz@ewubd.edu)

Samina M. Saifuddin, Associate Professor[[1]](#footnote-1)

Department of Business Administration

Morgan State University

[Samina.Saifuddin@morgan.edu](mailto:Samina.Saifuddin@morgan.edu)

**Gender[[2]](#footnote-2) Differences in Social Media Networking Behavior and its Impact on Career Outcomes**

Networking is a vital career self-management strategy as it gives individuals access to information, resources, and opportunities that facilitate personal and professional advancement (Davis, Wolff, Forrett, & Sullivan, 2020; Forrett, 2014; Forrett & Dougherty, 2001, 2004; Wolff & Moser, 2009). The primary purpose of networking is to develop and maintain relationships that can provide work and career assistance (Forrett, 2014). According to Inkson and Arthur (2001), three career competencies are crucial to remain competitive: knowing why, knowing how, and knowing whom. Although networking behavior is commonly associated with 'knowing whom' competencies, Forrett emphasizes that "networking behavior can be utilized to develop all three career competencies" (2014: p. 278).

Extant research has found networking positively related to career outcomes, including increased visibility and power (Forrett & Dougherty, 2001; Wolff & Moser, 2009), career satisfaction (Forrett & Dougherty, 2004), number of promotions (Forrett & Dougherty, 2004; Wolff & Moser, 2010), and job performance (Blickle et al., 2012). However, very few studies have investigated the potential career benefits of using social media for networking (Davis et al., 2020; Donelan, 2016). Donelan's (2016) study found that increased use of social media among academics (professors, lecturers, and researchers) is related to career progression. Davis et al.'s (2020) study also showed that professional use of social media is significantly associated with career benefits, including protection and political guidance, work-related assistance, career sponsorship, information and ideas, job search assistance, business assistance, and social support. However, none of these studies explored whether there are differential career outcomes between men and women using social media for networking. According to Forrett (2014), women and minorities have been found to have less influential and less developed social networks that may inhibit their access to information, resources, and career sponsorship and contribute to their underrepresentation in leadership roles. As networking behavior impacts career outcomes such as advancement (Siebert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001), differential use of social media for networking may further impact women's career outcomes. Furthermore, most research on careers and networking has been primarily situated in the Western context using samples from WEIRD (Western, educated, industrial, rich, and democratic)( (Henrich, 2020; Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010) countries and may not be generalizable to a non-Western, developing country.

With growing emphasis on South Asia, which includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Bhutan and collectively is equivalent to 25.2 percent of the world's population (Worldometer, 2023), it is vital to look into non-Western South Asian countries as some of these countries are experiencing more rapid economic growth and reducing the gender gaps than some Western countries (Arvey, Dhanaraj, Javidan, & Zhang, 2015; World Economic Forum, 2023). There is growing attention from career scholars emphasizing careers are influenced not only by individual (e.g., personality, ability, self-efficacy, and interest) and organizational (e.g., talent management, human resource development planning, coaching and mentoring) factors but also exogenous contextual factors that comprise of regional and local economies, labor markets, technological innovations, government policies, and societal and cultural norms (Gunz, Lazarova, & Mayrhofer, 2020; Mayrhofer, Meyer, & Steyrer, 2007). Thus, there is a growing call for more context-specific studies to understand the influence of contextual factors on career enactment and progression to manage them better (Baruch, 2015, 2022; Baruch, & Rousseau, 2019; Baruch & Sullivan, 2022).

In light of the above considerations, the present study aims to understand the role of networking and social media in employees' career development in Bangladesh. The study addresses the following research questions to achieve the research objective: (1) Which social media platforms are used for networking? (2) What are the perceived career benefits of social media networking? And (3) Does social media networking result in differential career outcomes for women and men?

Bangladesh has emerged as a top-performing country in South Asia by substantially reducing poverty, supported by sustained economic growth that hovered around 7.1% in 2022 (The World Bank, 2023). Bangladesh is the 8th largest global population, with more than 173 million, and women constitute around half of the Bangladeshi population at 50.4 percent (Worldometers, 2023). According to the GGGR (WEF, 2023), Bangladesh has progressed since 2006 and has closed 72.2 percent of its gender gap. Geopolitically, Bangladesh holds strategic significance with India bordering on three sides and Myanmar on the other, thus making it a regional gateway between South and South East Asia. Furthermore, the interest of two emerging super economies, China and India's interest, in Bangladesh made it more attractive to foreign investors (Rahman, 2022; Yasmin, 2019). Despite its significance, Bangladesh is an under-researched context for management (Saifuddin, Chhina, & Zaman, 2022; Saifuddin, Dyke, & Hossain, 2019) and diversity scholars (Klarsfeld, Knappert, Kornau, Ng, & Ngunjiri, 2022;) and thus makes an interesting context to study.

The data for this study will come from 25 face-to-face, semi-structured interviews that the first author will conduct. The interview was an appropriate technique to collect data as it allowed interviewees to reflect on their experiences and describe them in their own words. The interviewees for this study have a minimum of three years of work experience and worked in Bangladesh's banking and telecom sectors with a was included in the study. A snowball sampling method was used to recruit participants. The snowball technique is commonly used for recruiting difficult-to-reach populations. Without a robust research culture in Bangladesh (Saifuddin et al. 2019, 2022), it is difficult to recruit participants.

Preliminary analysis reveals that junior and mid-level employees found social media networking vital during the job search, giving them access to information that is otherwise difficult to decipher from job postings. Meanwhile, employees belonging to top-level cited social media networking allowed them to broaden their professional network with high-up officials from other companies, which gave them a sense of status and satisfaction. Regardless of management level, Facebook is the most popular social media platform for establishing professional networks, allowing members to maintain relationships and exchange information in Bangladesh, followed by WhatsApp and LinkedIn. Although social media is used to network and maintain professional relationships, junior-level employees emphasized the importance of face-to-face socializing to develop stronger professional ties. One of the strategies adopted for such is inviting individuals to their homes or taking them out to dinner. However, such was not evident from the responses of top-level employees.

Regarding gender differences, while all the male participants agreed that they use social media networking for career advancement or professional purposes, only 28.5% of women participants cited actively using social media networking for career purposes. 43.0% of women participants used social media for personal purposes, mainly to stay in touch with friends and family. In comparison, 28.5% had a negative view of social media networking as one's profile can be accessed by an unrelated man and tarnish their good women image or is against religious norms.

Networking behavior relates to relationship building and career benefits linked to socially prescribed gender roles. As Bangladesh is a patriarchal country with deeply embedded social norms, men are seen to hold positions of power and are breadwinners. In contrast, women are seen as subordinate to men and homemakers. Even when women work, social norms influence and judge their behaviors (Saifuddin et al., 2019). Relationship building is seen as communal; however, using social relationships strategically to support career achievement is more agentic and thus incongruent with women's behavior. Overall, we found that while male participants expressed career benefits and access to opportunities, our female interviewees did not derive the same benefits due to social, cultural, and religious norms, disadvantaging them from career advancement.

With the advancement of social media, networking behavior, and opportunities have expanded on the technology-driven platform; thus, to reap career benefits and ensure gender equality, female employees in Bangladesh must be trained to use social media frequently for professional purposes.

**References**

Arvey, R., Dhanaraj, C., Javidan, M., & Zhang, Z., X. (2015). Are there unique leadership models in Asia? Exploring uncharted territory. *Leadership Quarterly, 26*(1), 1-6.

Baruch, Y. (2015), Organizational and labor market as career ecosystem, in De Vos, A. and Van der Heijden, B. (Eds), *Handbook of research on sustainable careers* (164-180). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

Baruch, Y. (2022). *Managing Careers and Employability*. London: Sage Publishing.

Baruch, Y., & Rousseau, D. M. (2019). Integrating psychological contracts and ecosystems in career studies and management. *Academy of Management Annals*, *13*(1), 84-111.

Baruch, Y., & Sullivan, S. E. (2022). The why, what and how of career research: a review and recommendations for future study. *Career Development International*, *27*(1), 135-159.

Blickle, G., John, J., Ferris, G. R., Momm, T., Liu, Y., Haag, R., Meyer, G., Weber, K., & Oerder, K. (2012). Fit of Political Skill to the Work Context: A Two-Study Investigation. *Applied Psychology, 61*(2), 295–322. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2011.00469.xt>

Davis, J., Wolff, H., Forret, M. L., & Sullivan, S. E. (2020). Networking via LinkedIn: An examination of usage and career benefits. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 118*, 1-15,  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2020.103396>

Donelan, H. (2016). Social media for professional development and networking opportunities in academia. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 40*(5), 706–729.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2015.1014321>

Forret, M. L., & Dougherty, T. W. (2001). Correlates of Networking Behavior for Managerial and Professional Employees. *Group & Organization Management, 26*(3), 283–311. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601101263004>

Forret, M. L., & Dougherty, T. W. (2004). Networking behaviors and career outcomes: differences for men and women? *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 25*(3), 419–437. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.253>

Forret, M. L. (2014). Networking as a job-search behavior and career management strategy. In Klehe, U.-C., & Hooft, E. A. J. van (Eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Job Loss and Job Search* (pp.275-292). New York: Oxford University Press.

Gunz, H., Lazarova, M. and Mayrhofer, W. (Eds) (2020). The Routledge companion to career studies. Abingdon: Routledge.

Henrich, J. P. (2021). *The WEIRDest people in the world : how the West became psychologically peculiar and particularly prosperous*. London, UK: Picador.

Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). The weirdest people in the world? *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *33*(2–3), 61–83. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X0999152X

Inkson, K., & Arthur, M. B. (2001). How to be a successful career capitalist. *Organizational Dynamics, 30*(1), 48–61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/S0090-2616(01)00040-7>

Klarsfeld, A., Knappert, L., Kornau, A., Ng, E. S., & Ngunjiri, F. W. (2022). Introduction to the research handbook on new frontiers of equality and diversity at work (1-15). In A. Klarsfeld, L. Knappert, A. Kornau, E. Ng, & F. Ngunjiri (Eds.), *Research Handbook on New Frontiers of Equality and Diversity at Work* (pp. 36-53)*.* Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Langford, P.H. (2000). Importance of relationship management for the career success of Australian managers. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 52(*3), 163-168.

Mayrhofer, W., Meyer, M., Steyrer, J., & Langer, K. (2007). Can expatriation research learn from other disciplines?: The case of international career habitus. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, *37*(3), 89-107.

Rahman, M. M. (2022, August, 25). Growing with Two Giants – A Mixed Blessing for Bangladesh. *ISAS South Asia Scan*. Available at: <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/papers/growing-with-two-giants-a-mixed-blessing-for-bangladesh/#:~:text=Bangladesh%20has%20emerged%20as%20a,over%20the%20past%20few%20decades>

Saifuddin, S. M., Chhina, H., & Zaman, L. (2022). Perspectives on diversity and equality in Bangladesh. In A. Klarsfeld, L. Knappert, A. Kornau, E. Ng, & F. Ngunjiri (Eds.), *Research Handbook on New Frontiers of Equality and Diversity at Work* (pp. 36-  
53)*.* Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Saifuddin, S., Dyke, L., & Hossain, M. S. (2019). Walls all around: Barriers women face in high-tech careers in Bangladesh. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International  
Journal*, *38*(7), 705-726.

Saifuddin, S. M.,Dyke, L., & Hossain, M. S. (2022). Doing and undoing gender: women professionals persistence in technology occupations. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, 41*(4), 673-690.

Seibert, S. E., Kraimer, M. L., & Liden, R. C. (2001). A social capital theory of career success. *Academy of Management Journal*, *44*(2), 219-237.

Wolff, H. & Moser, K. (2009). Effects of networking on career success: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 94*, 196-206.

Wolff, H.-G., & Moser, K. (2010). Do specific types of networking predict specific mobility outcomes? A two-year prospective study. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 77*(2), 238–245.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2010.03.001>

World Bank (2023). Bangladesh. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bangladesh>

World Economic Forum (WEF) (2023). The global gender gap report 2023. *World Economic Forum*, Geneva, Switzerland. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/globalgender-gap-report-2023/>

Worldometer (2023), "Bangladesh Population", available at\ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/bangladesh-population/>. accessed 02 December 2, 2023)

Yasmin, L. (2019). India and China in South Asia: Bangladesh's opportunities and challenges. *Millennial Asia*, *10*(3), 322-336.

1. Samina M. Saifuddin is the corresponding author. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For this study, gender refers to biological sex only. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)