

**THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER  
UPON WOMEN BUSINESS-OWNERS' ACCESS TO  
DEBT FINANCE IN BANGLADESH,  
A PATRIARCHAL DEVELOPING NATION**

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## ABSTRACT

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There is growing attention to analyse the influence of gender upon women's entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, the body of literature almost entirely concentrates on developed nations, specifically on the USA and Europe. The research context for the thesis is Bangladesh, a South Asian developing nation, where there was a government initiative to support small businesses of women through bank loans.

Recognising that entrepreneurship is a social phenomenon, it is important to explore how gender subordination is articulated in the experiences of women business-owners in developing countries. Placing women at the centre of the study, this feminist standpoint research undertook interviews with 21 Bangladeshi women business-owners. Considering finance as a major area of entrepreneurship, this thesis analyses the influence of gender upon women business-owners' access to debt finance in the context of a patriarchal developing nation. To address this aim, the study investigates the family as well as the broader societal context.

The thesis contributes to advance the understanding of gender subordination of women business-owners within the context of debt financing from developed nations to developing nations. The extant literature on debt finance of developed nations focuses almost solely on discrimination-related issues. It is individual woman business-owner centric, ignoring the family or the broader societal context. Nevertheless, the empirical evidence of this study suggests that male family members were inevitably involved in the process. Further, in developed nations, the exploration of patriarchal practices is primarily limited to the adverse effect of societal expectation of work (i.e., domestic responsibilities and childcare) on the businesses of women. This study extends the view by demonstrating that the dominating, oppressing and exploiting roles of male family members were evident at the individual level with a direct influence on the business activities. The husbands of many women were even found to share the bank loans entirely or partially. This has implications for the effectiveness of the government policy, aiming at the emancipation of the women. Moreover, the study significantly adds to the prevailing knowledge by identifying certain context specific family related issues (for instance, child marriage) or the structural, cultural issues of the broader society (such as, corruption) in relation to gender subordination of women business-owners.

While explaining gender subordination of women business-owners, the contribution of the thesis is not limited to its understanding in a developing nation. Given the highly patriarchal nature of the context, the study provides opportunity to extend the comprehension of some of the issues of gender subordination (for instance, the respectable position of women) that are existing in developed nations in a more subtle form. Thus, it provides a platform for future research in the field of entrepreneurship, gender and finance in developing nations as well as in developed nations.

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## **Publications Declaration**

The following publications relate to, and arise from the research carried out for this PhD:

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*'Gender plays a pervasive role in society. It cuts so deeply that we still do not understand all of its implications, nor perhaps can we. The remarkable achievements of scholars in women's studies can no longer be ignored by those who wish to redescribe business in more human terms'.*

- R. Edward Freeman

# Chapter-1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

The thesis critically analyses the influence of gender on women's access to debt finance for their small businesses in a developing nation with a highly patriarchal society. Bangladesh, a patriarchal developing nation, witnesses a remarkable increase of the amount of bank loans (50.68%), disbursed for small businesses of women and the number of women (140.28%) accessing the debt finance from 2012 to 2013 (Bangladesh Bank, 2014). Nevertheless, in this highly patriarchal developing nation (Sultana, 2011), where male family members control economic activities in the private sphere (Asian Development Bank, 2001), a potential question can be posed about the utilisation of the funds of the banks. Whilst women are castigated as the subordinated and dependent group in the society (Chowdhury, 2008), whether there is any influence of male family members in terms of domination or oppression regarding the process of accessing bank loans needs to be investigated. In such a patriarchal context, a further question can be raised about how women navigate the public sphere to carry out the process. As research on women's entrepreneurship is predominantly based on developed nations (Bhatt, 2006), these questions concerning gender subordination of women business-owners remain underexplored. Considering the potentiality of providing theoretically challenging insights through exploring these aspects of developing nations, this thesis raises the research question: *How does gender influence women business-owners' access to debt finance in the context of a patriarchal developing nation?*

The next section provides the detailed background of the specific topic of the doctoral research. In light of this, the research aim is succinctly outlined and, accordingly, there is an account of two specific research objectives, accompanied by associated research questions. The chapter then moves to summarise the key contributions of the research. It concludes with the overview of other chapters that presents the detailed structure of the thesis.

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

In general, it is widely recognised that entrepreneurship is crucial for the economic growth of a country (Audretsch et al., 2006). It is considered as not only an economic but also a social phenomenon (Steyaert and Katz, 2004), whilst its manifestation differs according to context (Zahra et. al., 2014). Researchers can systematically provide more insightful explanations by comprehending the intensity and dynamics of contexts in entrepreneurship (Zahra, 2007). Nevertheless, research on entrepreneurship is still almost exclusively focused on two developed economic regions – North America and Europe (Bruton et. al., 2008). The exploration of other contexts remains extremely limited (ibid).

The body of literature on entrepreneurship is also criticised on the grounds that it is gendered biased (Ahl, 2004, Ahl and Marlow, 2012, Marlow, 2014). ‘Entrepreneur’ and ‘Entrepreneurship’ are argued as male-gendered concepts, having masculine connotations (Ahl, 2004). This well-rehearsed issue is not only restricted to the usage of the language, that is, the extensive use of the male pronoun, but also the way entrepreneurs are presented (ibid). For example, whilst the family is considered as the responsibility of women (Bradley, 2012), the extant literature does not discuss family aspects, portraying the image that entrepreneurs do not have any family (Ahl, 2015). Nevertheless, some studies on women entrepreneurs recognise the importance of family issues (ibid). By ignoring family aspects, the existing literature provides a male-centric view and overlooks the opportunity to enrich the knowledge base with the incorporation of family aspects for women entrepreneurs. Another important issue is that the literature on entrepreneurship reproduces the notion of “women as being secondary to men” (Ahl, 2006:595). Although it is not the recent recognition to consider structural, cultural or historical aspects to reveal gender power relationships (Chell et al., 1991), researchers tend to attribute shortcomings to individual women business-owners (Ahl, 2006). Consequently, women entrepreneurs are misrepresented with different limitations in entrepreneurship scholarship.

Further, research on women entrepreneurs is considered problematic as it is not properly framed through feminist analyses (Marlow et. al, 2009). The extant literature is merely descriptive without proper systematic and critical analysis

(Neergaard et al., 2011) and hence, this field remains theoretically underdeveloped (Taylor and Marlow, 2010). Through employing feminist perspectives, research can move away from simply assessing women on the masculine premise and, accordingly, it can take the debate forward. It is worth noting that, at present, feminist studies are considering gender as an influence rather than merely a variable (ibid). Nonetheless, research to date is largely based on individual undertakings and, hence, by ignoring the collective dimension, it makes the gender power relations invisible in society (Ahl, 2006). To have a comprehensive understanding of the gender subordination of women entrepreneurs, rather than concentrating on individuals, the family and different contextual issues of society need to be addressed. This approach is aligned with the view of Neilsen (1990), which states that adopting a feminist perspective indicates exploring issues that were not explored earlier.

Research on the experiences of women business-owners is, however, mostly concentrated on developed rather than developing nations (Bhatt, 2006). In order to enact gendered practices of different contexts, the assumption of applying developed countries as the normative template is highly criticised (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2013). It can be argued that the influence of specific socio-economic aspects of developing nations can result in very different experiences for women business-owners compared to those of developed nations. For instance, from the context of a patriarchal society, men are not simply regarded as breadwinners on the basis of the economic perspective (Civettini and Glass, 2008). The power of men is embedded by the society, culture, politics and religion (ibid). In such a context, traditional conservative families legitimise women's subordination by reproducing gender hierarchy (Morris, 2008). Concentrating on the family perspective in developing nations can provide different insightful findings regarding women business-owners. Beyond the family sphere, the structural, cultural or other broader context specific issues of developing nations, that are different from developed nations, can also offer a nuanced explanation of gender power relationships in that society.

As alluded to above, while considering different context-specific aspects, there is a need to recognise that there can be also similarity of few of the issues of developing countries with those of developed countries. The concern for the

respectable position of women in society can be cited as an example. Even though this issue is generally associated with the 19th and 20th centuries (Radhakrishnan, 2009), it is argued that, at present in western societies, moral concerns have not entirely been disappeared (Fernando and Cohen, 2013). The highly patriarchal context of a developing nation can provide an opportunity to reveal this feature more vividly. Thus, certain aspects of gender subordination can be explained better that are implicit in their form in developed nations and are under-researched.

To address the gendered as well as contextual biases in entrepreneurship research, the thesis analyses the influence of gender on women's entrepreneurship in a developing nation in which finance is the focus. The reason for considering this particular area of business is that managing finance is a crucial but challenging task for most entrepreneurs and for women, it is particularly important due to gender specific barriers (Marlow and Patton, 2005). For example, many researchers (Orser and Foster, 1994, Cavalluzzo and Cavalluzzo, 1998, Coleman, 2000, Cavalluzzo et al., 2002, Fraser, 2005, Wu and Chua, 2012) contend that while approaching for loans, women are discriminated by banks. Nonetheless, in relation to the financing of businesses for women in developing countries, extensive research has been undertaken to explore the impact of micro-credit on these economies (Elahi and Danopoulos, 2004, Hartungi, 2007) and the patriarchal issues regarding financing (Woodworth, 2000, Amin et al., 2003, Mahjabeen, 2008, Naher, 2010). It is worth noting that micro-credit is provided for the initial stage of businesses and aims at not only financial but also social development for the poor, almost illiterate women (Naher, 2005). Conversely, when women in small businesses approach banks for loans at the growth stage, they are supposed to be already experienced with managing funds and to have proved their business potential in order to meet the requirements of acquiring loans. Therefore, in such contexts, the patriarchal experiences of this cohort of middle-class, comparatively educated women in small businesses seeking debt finance at the growth stage can be substantially different from that of women engaged in micro-credit.

In a patriarchal developing country, like Bangladesh, where there has been an effective micro-finance, the government has undertaken different initiatives to

support women engaged in small businesses (Bangladesh Bank, 2012). It is important to note that considering the economic prospect of the sector, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is declared as a priority sector in the Industrial Policy 2005 and, since the last decade, the government has adopted different policies regarding the growth of small businesses. Moreover, due to the significant contribution of women in micro-credit operations and also in the readymade garments industry, it is recognised that the participation of women in the SME sector is vital for a flourishing economy (Bangladesh Bank, 2012).

The concern for the empowerment of women is another important factor for undertaking such government initiatives (Bangladesh Bank, 2012). In this regard, it is worth noting that gender inequality remains a serious concern in the country. According to a Human Development Report (2015) of the United Nations, Bangladesh has ranked 142 out of 188 countries in a 'Gender Inequality Index'. The official statistics on diversified aspects of the country establish that gender discrimination is widespread regardless of spheres and levels (Chowdhury, 2008). In relation to women's small businesses, it is already recognised that because of the influence of patriarchal social and cultural norms, there are impediments that have gender specific dimensions (ibid). For accessing bank loans for small businesses in Bangladesh, whereas men confront a number of problems (Jaim, 2012), it can be argued that due to the deep-rooted patriarchal values, women business-owners can have additional gender-specific barriers.

Therefore, this study, from the context of this developing nation, explores the gender subordination of women business-owners and analyses how their experiences are produced or reproduced, or associated patriarchal relations are challenged through access to bank loans at the growth stage of businesses. Principally employing the concept of patriarchy, this feminist research attempts to investigate the dominating, oppressing and exploiting roles of men (Walby, 1990; 2006) within the context of the debt finance of women business-owners in Bangladesh. Ensuing from this discussion and debate, the next section presents a detailed account of the aim and objectives with relevant research questions.

### 1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Thesis

The aim of the thesis is derived considering the gap in the prevailing knowledge. The research aim is: *To analyse the influence of gender upon women business-owners' access to debt finance in the context of a patriarchal developing nation.* Driven by this aim, the overarching research question is: *How does gender influence women business-owners' access to debt finance in a patriarchal developing nation?*

To address the research aim and the overarching research question, there are two specific research objectives of the thesis. In order to explain the first objective, three research questions are raised. The research objectives and research questions are outlined below:

1. To investigate the role of the family in accessing bank loans at the growth stage of women-owned businesses.

*Research Questions:*

- (i) How do husbands play roles in accessing debt finance of women business-owners?
  - (ii) How are other male family members as well as the domestic responsibility and child rearing issue related to the process?
  - (iii) What are the family related aspects that are responsible for the diversified experiences of the women while accessing bank loans?
2. To explore how broader contextual issues of the developing nation are related to the experiences of women in accessing debt finance for their businesses at the growth stage.

The first research objective is related to the family, the private sphere of the women business-owners. Although in the literature on developed nations, the relationship of the family with the debt financing process is underexplored, the adverse impact of domestic responsibilities and childcare on businesses is underscored (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992, Marlow, 1997, Mattis, 2004, Ahl, 2004, Buding, 2006). Few studies on developing nations (De Groot, 2001, Amine and Staub, 2009) also discuss the impact of the marital and maternal roles of women on their businesses. In a similar vein, this research explores the impact of



domestic responsibilities and child rearing on the specific issue of accessing bank loans. Nonetheless, while conducting the research in this highly patriarchal context, this thesis takes the opportunity to move the debate forward. In order to extend the understanding on gender subordination, rather than solely concentrating on the household responsibilities, it investigates the direct roles of male family members when they become involved in the businesses of women.

This study, which is mostly inductive in nature, witnessed to enter into an enriched field of discussion with the respondents concerning the first guiding research objective. Regarding the family perspective, the participants were predominantly engaged in explaining the well-diversified roles of husbands while carrying out the process of bank loans. In relation to this process, they illustrated how many of them were dependent on husbands and how husbands of some women dominated or oppressed them or even took a share of the loans. This led to a focus on the first research question of the first objective: *How do husbands play roles in accessing debt finance of women business-owners?*

Moreover, from the empirical evidence, it is revealed that when acquiring bank loans, women business-owners experienced the involvement of many other male family members including adult sons and members of their in-law family or natal family. Few women shared their views about domestic responsibilities and childcare with particular relevance to the bank loan process. Hence, the second research question came to concentrate on other male family members and household responsibilities: *How are other male family members as well as the domestic responsibility and child rearing issue related to the process?*

As these two research questions suggest, the study explores and explains the roles of different male family members as well as the domestic responsibilities and childcare and, thus, it uncovers a detailed understanding of gender subordination on the family related issues. Through analysing the experiences of these women business-owners, the research unveils the highly subordinated positions of some women. Simultaneously, it demonstrates that some women business-owners did not have any negative influence of menfolk within the family by their direct involvement in the debt financing process, whereas others had experiences in between these two extremes. By financially contributing with businesses, a few

women were even found to challenge their subordinated position in the family to an extent for which they did not confront any patriarchal issue in relation to bank loans. The widely diversified experiences of the women business-owners pinpoints to further enquiry of the research puzzle. The study pursued the third research question: *What are the family related aspects that are responsible for the diversified experiences of the women while accessing bank loans?*

It is worth noting that, in general, these research questions, addressing the guiding research objective, can be considered as “non-questions”, whilst these kinds of questions profoundly challenge or question patriarchy (Vickers, 1989:38) as cited by Campbell (2004:206). The thesis argues that the dominant discourse on women’s entrepreneurship recognises patriarchy merely in terms of the impact of domestic responsibility and child rearing on businesses. Regarding women entrepreneurs, through narrowly concentrating on sexual division of work (Bradley, 2012), the presentation of patriarchal roles of males can be contended as passive; it renders compliance with the societal expectation of labour that can have an impact on businesses but not the engagement of patriarchal practices directly in business activities. Nevertheless, along with the issue of household responsibilities, this research enquires into the active and direct dominating, oppressing and exploiting roles of male family members concerning the operation of businesses of women. Building upon that understanding, the study further seeks to probe the diversified family related issues that were responsible for the wide range of experiences of women business-owners. This inquiry provides opportunity to bring to the fore few distinct context specific issues regarding the family in order to have a comprehensive understanding of gender subordination.

As opposed to being aligned with the “established tradition of thought” in women’s entrepreneurship, the “non-questions” of this research challenge the prevailing patriarchal norms of society (Vickers, 1989:38). The study endeavours to explore such issues of gender subordination in order to answer “previously unasked questions” (Vickers, 1989:38). In this regard, it is also important to note that few researchers (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2010) mention the limitation of drawing upon the normative presumptions of developed nations for analysing women’s entrepreneurship in developing nations. This research has not employed

the normative template of developed nations by replicating the research inquiry, restricted to the analysis regarding the impact of household responsibilities on small businesses of women. In so doing, it avails the opportunity to conduct a “creative and novel analysis” (Zahra et. al., 2014:2) based on this underexplored context.

While addressing the specific issue, that is, the family, the study extends its field of enquiry to a more general aspect. The second research objective emerges with an interest to understand the broader contextual issues that are not directly related to the private sphere. This objective leaves scope to identify and illuminate diversified contextual issues of Bangladesh that were related to gender subordination of women business-owners while accessing bank loans. Some aspects could be distinct in nature but others could also exist in developed nations. The highly patriarchal context provides opportunity to elucidate the issues that are not so impactful in developed nations. In addition, by addressing this objective, the relationship of the structural, cultural or other broader contextual issues with the family aspects are made visible. With clarification of the intimately entwined relationships of the private and public spheres, the study expounds the gender subordination by male family members in a more nuanced way.

Three empirical chapters of the thesis address the two research objectives to present the influence of gender upon the bank loan process of women business-owners in Bangladesh. First two empirical chapters (Chapter-5 and Chapter-6) clearly map the analysis based on the first research objective that entails gender subordination associated with the family sphere. Whilst Chapter-5 presents the first research question related to the issues of husbands, Chapter-6 responses to the second and third research questions about other aspects of the family. Finally, Chapter-7 sheds light on the complexity and diversity of broader contextual issues regarding gender subordination by considering the second research objective. Ensuing from the research, a discussion on the key contributions of the doctoral study is provided in the next section.

#### **1.4 Major Contributions of the Thesis**

The major and broad contribution of the thesis is to advance the debate on the influence of gender upon women's entrepreneurship from developed nations to developing nations. Whereas research on women entrepreneurs is particularly concentrated on certain developed countries, namely the US and Europe (Fielden and Davidson, 2005), to extend the view of the existing knowledge, a few studies explore how gender subordination is articulated in developing nations (Fielden and Davidson, 2005, Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2010). This thesis is a contribution to this contemporary conversation. Specifically, about the debt financing process, the research on developed nations focuses almost solely on the debate of the discrimination issue of banks. From the context of a developing nation, this study significantly contributes to the understanding by revealing the impact of the family and different societal contextual issues on the process of bank loans. Pertaining to this process, while establishing the inevitable roles of the family, this study unveils the patriarchal practices of male family members. This research also marks an important contribution by bringing to light family oriented or broader society-related context-specific aspects that have an influence on the bank loan process of the women business-owners. The thesis enhances our understanding by demonstrating that in accessing debt finance, the overall experiences of women business-owners of developing countries are substantially different from those of developed nations. In so doing, it also responds to the call to take into consideration the different socio-cultural issues instead of considering only individual women in the feminist study (Ahl, 2006).

The overarching contribution of the thesis regarding gender subordination is not only restricted to the central issue of debt financing but also to a wider aspect of women's entrepreneurship in general. A notable contribution of the research is to extend the understanding on patriarchal practices of the family in the context of business. The discussion on the patriarchal segregation of work (i.e., women's domestic responsibilities and childcare) is considered as the beginning point of the debate on gender subordination (Hartsock, 2004). This study argues that the contemporary research on gender subordination of women entrepreneurs of developed nations is at a rudimentary level because it is revolving around the issue of the impact of household responsibilities on businesses. This thesis significantly contributes by extending the understanding of patriarchy as it

establishes the dominating, oppressing or exploiting roles of male family members through getting involved in the businesses of women.

Particularly, whereas the studies on developed nations have paid almost no attention to the family issue related to debt finance, with rich empirical evidence this study makes a strong contribution to the existing knowledge by clarifying the role of male family members in carrying out this process. In relation to the bank loan process, it theorises the individual patriarchal roles of menfolk in the family, nested within the system of gender power relationships. In addition, the research remarkably contributes, by distinct insights of family related issues such as early marriage, regarding the impact of accessing bank loans. Moreover, whereas studies hardly explore the family related issues for which women can have a certain level of emancipation, this study contributes by identifying such family related aspects for women business-owners.

The novel contribution of the thesis is to bring to the fore some context specific issues of the broader society of the developing nation pertaining to the process of bank loans. The study unfolds the impact of certain aspects, for instance corruption, problems of public transport or superstition, in the case of women accessing bank loans. While adding the distinct insights of these issues into the prevailing knowledge, the research further illuminates some others that are implicit in developed nations. Thus, given the nature of the highly patriarchal context, it extends the understanding of gender subordination by explaining these common features, for example, the respectable position of women in society (Fernando and Cohen, 2013). Furthermore, in the context of debt finance, it contributes to the understanding of how the threat or experiences of patriarchal issues in the public place compel women to comply with patriarchal practices of family members.

The research makes a practical contribution to the methodological aspect in conducting a field work in a corrupted context. In attempting to generate data in an underexplored geographic area of study, considering the issue of corruption, the methodological approach has been fine-tuned. The experiences of having the interviews disclose that, surprisingly, some women received funds from banks with false identities of 'women business-owners' for their male family members.

Therefore, different pragmatic strategies have been employed in order to identify the appropriate respondents (the women, who own and operate businesses) for the study in such a context.

This doctoral research provides a critical contribution for policy makers of Bangladesh and similar patriarchal contexts throughout the world. The study draws attention to the share of bank loans by husbands of many women or, in some cases, by fraudulent people and extortionists. Thus, it inevitably raises the question about how far we can call the financial initiative of the government for the emancipation for women successful. The research suggests several recommendations to strengthen the policy of the government concerning this aspect.

The thesis generates a number of valuable contributions along theoretical, methodological and policy lines. It also provides a rich and robust contribution in the literature of entrepreneurship, gender and finance in the context of a developing nation. Further, the empirical contributions are generated through exploring the under-researched context of a South Asian developing nation for women in small businesses. Nonetheless, the next section provides an overview on the structure of the thesis to delineate how the research aim and objectives are addressed and the contributions are generated.

### **1.5 Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis is organised into nine chapters. Two literature review chapters follow this introduction chapter. These literature review chapters (Chapter-2 and Chapter-3) clarify the theoretical underpinning of the research. Chapter-4 explains the philosophical and methodological issues of the study. There are three empirical chapters to address the research objectives and a discussion chapter to illustrate the contribution of the doctoral research. Finally, Chapter-9 presents the conclusion of the thesis. (Figure-1 maps the narrative of the thesis according to each chapter.) This section provides a synopsis of these chapters.

## **Chapter-2:- Entrepreneurship, Gender and Finance**

Chapter-2 critically reviews the literature concerning three separate but interrelated aspects – entrepreneurship, gender and finance of developed nations. In order to analyse gender subordination of women business-owners, this chapter clarifies the implication of feminist standpoint theory in this study whilst this stance provides the opportunity to women in articulating social realities on the basis of their own experiences (Bowden and Mummery, 2009). Nevertheless, the chapter criticises that, in the extant literature on women business-owners on developed nations, the patriarchal practice of the family is mostly limited to the impact of domestic responsibilities and childcare on businesses. The studies remain silent about the patriarchal influence of male family members being engaged in the businesses of women. With particular attention to debt finance, the chapter further identifies and stresses that family issues and broader contextual aspects regarding accessing bank loans of women business-owners are underexplored. The studies in this area converge around the debate of gender discrimination by banks. The chapter concludes by probing different questions regarding gender subordination in the existing literature. Consequently, it brings to light the conspicuous gap of understanding based on the literature of developed nations and leads to consider different contexts in entrepreneurship scholarship.

## **Chapter-3:- Context in the Research of Financing Women Business-Owners**

Building upon the previous chapter, Chapter-3, firstly, sets the scene for analysing gender subordination in different regions by presenting the significance of context in entrepreneurship research in general and in the field of the debt finance for entrepreneurs in particular. Based on this understanding, the chapter advances the prevailing knowledge with the justification of considering different contexts for the research in women's entrepreneurship in terms of family perspective and broader contextual issues. The chapter then moves to introduce Bangladesh, the specific research context for conducting the research, in order to address the theoretical and empirical gaps in the extant literature. The discussion on Bangladesh reflects upon how the tensions among gender, entrepreneurship and finance are articulated in the particular context of a patriarchal developing nation.

Accordingly, it also offers indications about the way the existing debates can be forwarded with valuable insights.

#### **Chapter-4:- Research Methodology**

This chapter rationalises the philosophical and methodological background of the research. It explains pragmatic realism as the ontological position and also justifies the adoption of subjectivist epistemology for the concerned study. By highlighting the need to draw upon a gendered perspective, this chapter elucidates the feminist standpoint research. Rationalising the application of a qualitative study, there is a detailed account of the method of data generation. It describes three field trips for the study and the insights about the data generation with semi-structured interviews of 21 women business-owners of Bangladesh. This chapter sheds light on the challenges of generating data in a corrupted country and contributes to the understanding of how appropriate research respondents can be selected in such a context. Nonetheless, the chapter gives details of analysing the data employing thematic analysis. Finally, it presents the reflexivity of the researcher in order to inform how the research outcomes were uncovered (Mason, 1996).

#### **Chapter-5:- Roles of Husbands in Accessing Debt Finance of Women Business-owners**

With the rich empirical data regarding access to debt finance, this chapter illustrates a wide range of roles of husbands of women business-owners. Whereas the literature on women business-owners of developed nations is limited to the discussion of the impact of domestic responsibilities and childcare on businesses, this chapter provides novel insights of how husbands are actively and directly involved in businesses through the domination, oppression and exploitation of women. Further, due to the consumption of the entire or part of the bank loans by some husbands, women were not able to utilise funds for their own businesses. By presenting this scenario, this chapter establishes how the notion of empowerment of women through government aided finance for businesses is challenged. This chapter also extends the understanding of how banks can provide a platform for the patriarchal practices of husbands.



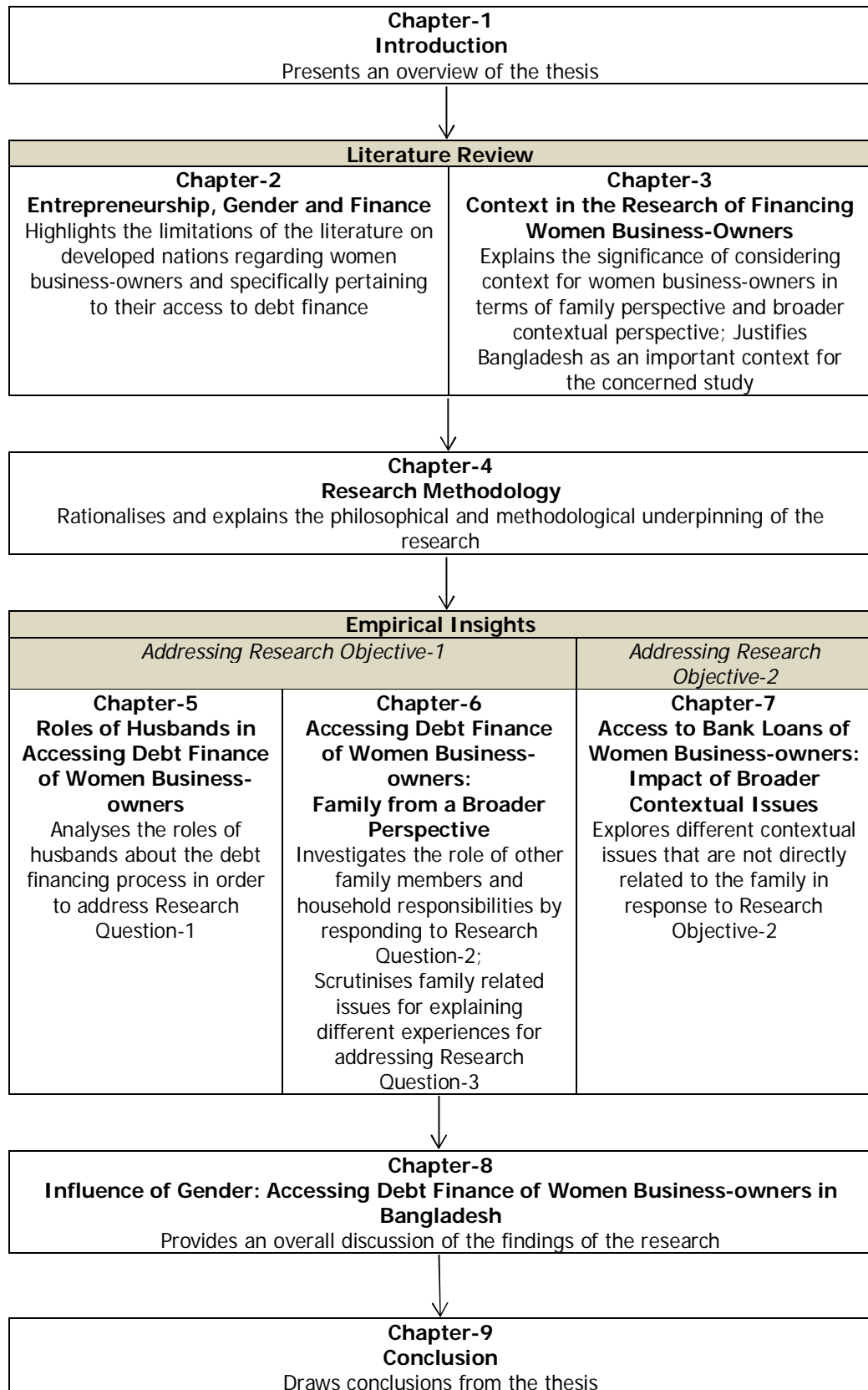
## **Chapter-6:- Accessing Debt Finance of Women Business-owners: Family from a Broader Perspective**

The second empirical chapter is broadly divided into two parts. The first segment seeks to investigate the roles of different male family members excluding husbands and addresses the issue of household responsibilities. Thus, it extends the understanding of the family to a broader stance. Collating the findings from the previous chapter and the first part of this chapter, diversified experiences of women business-owners are uncovered. Whereas the literature on debt finance of developed nations has paid almost no attention to the family, the findings of the study significantly contribute to the prevailing knowledge by demonstrating the inevitable roles of the family in the process of accessing bank loans in the developing nation. Moreover, the second part of the chapter endeavours to explore the family related issues that had an impact on the diversified family concerned experiences of the women. Consequently, it brings to the fore several context-specific family related issues (such as child marriage) with relevance to the bank loan process. It also highlights how women, instead of being only passive victims, can gain a certain level of emancipation in the family through the financial contributions of their businesses.

## **Chapter-7:- Access to Bank Loans of Women Business-owners: Impact of Broader Contextual Issues**

The last empirical chapter identifies and illustrates some broader contextual issues of Bangladesh in order to explain the gender subordination of women while applying for and continuing with bank loans. The chapter explains in detail how these issues place gender specific obstacles upon women. Drawing upon these facets, in some cases, the chapter offers explanations of how some women were dependent on male family members to navigate in the highly patriarchal context. It is worth noting that some aspects, like corruption, problems with public transport or superstition, were generally specific to the context. Some other issues, for instance, concern for the respectable position of women, are existent in the western society but this highly patriarchal context provides the platform for a more close examination of these aspects. In general, the chapter contributes by addressing the gap of understanding of gender subordination arising from the lack of recognition of structural, cultural or other broader contextual issues (Ahl, 2006).

**Figure-1: Thesis Narrative**



## **Chapter-8:- Influence of Gender: Accessing Debt Finance of Women Business-owners in Bangladesh**

This penultimate chapter provides a detailed discussion on the findings of the research and, accordingly, presents the contributions of the thesis. Based on the conceptual framework (developed in Chapter-2 and chapter-3) and the empirical evidence (presented in Chapter-5, Chapter-6 and Chapter-7), this chapter offers a discussion on the family perspective followed by discussion of broader contextual issues. Finally, considering the intertwined relationships of the private and public spheres, this chapter further elucidates the critical discussion of the research. The chapter not only enlightens how the thesis advances the debate on gender subordination from developed countries to developing countries but also provides clues on how the prevailing knowledge regarding developed nations can be enriched.

## **Chapter-9:- Conclusion**

The final chapter briefly summarises the overall research project and underscores the major contributions of the thesis. For policy-makers and practitioners, it reflects upon the implications of the findings emerging from this doctoral research. Concurrently, it acknowledges and outlines the limitations of the study. The chapter ends with suggestions for a number of future research avenues.

### **1.6 Chapter Summary**

The chapter serves as an introduction of the doctoral research titled - *The Influence of Gender upon Women Business-owners' Access to Debt Finance in Bangladesh, a Patriarchal Developing Nation*. It provides a background to the study, highlighting the potential research gaps. Based on this understanding of the research puzzle, the next section presents the aim of the study and, accordingly, an overarching research question. To address the aim and overarching research question, two specific research objectives with the associated research questions are explained. It also highlights the key contributions of the thesis. Finally, the chapter offers a synopsis of other chapters in order to illustrate the thesis structure.

## **Chapter-2**

### **Entrepreneurship, Gender and Finance**

*Feminism is an entire world view or gestalt, not just a laundry list of women's issues.*

*- Charlotte Bunch*

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Despite the growing interest of researchers in the field of women's entrepreneurship, it has been contended that gender subordination is not yet properly framed through feminist analyses (Marlow et al., 2009). In the literature regarding developed countries, it is evident that the attempts of sex comparison research in entrepreneurship are simply addressing symptoms of broader socio-cultural structures of patriarchy (Patterson, 2010). This chapter proposes that there is a potential opportunity to explain gender subordination in entrepreneurship principally with the theoretical concept of patriarchy. Whereas work and family are considered as separate issues in entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2004) and in the case of women entrepreneurs, in general, only the effect of domestic responsibility and child rearing on businesses is recognised, this chapter takes a step further by rationalising the need to explore other aspects of the family to advance the understanding on patriarchy. Moreover, it provides indications of considering different contexts in order to extend the view of the prevailing knowledge on gender subordination of women business-owners.

Recognising the issue of gender subordination in entrepreneurship as a wide area of debate, this study is focused on finance. The extant literature demonstrates that finance is a key gender barrier for women business-owners (Brush, 1997, Carter and Rosa, 1998, Marlow, 2002, Marlow and Patton, 2005). More specifically, the study concentrates on bank loans, the main source of finance for small businesses (Howorth and Moro, 2006). This chapter investigates how gender subordination is articulated in accessing debt finance of women entrepreneurs in developed nations. Drawing attention to the limitations in the existing studies in this field, this chapter concludes to consider the context of developing nations to advance the debate on gender subordination.

This chapter serves two broad purposes. It clarifies the relevant definitions and theories related to entrepreneurship and gender to set the ground for the concerned study. Following this, the chapter critically analyses the literature based on developed nations to underline the research gaps. It elucidates gender subordination that is reflected in the research of women entrepreneurs. With a general discussion on financing small businesses as a background, the chapter concludes with critical evaluation of the literature concerning access to bank loans by women business-owners in developed economies and then suggests the way to advance the prevailing knowledge.

## **2.2 Entrepreneurship**

In management and organisation studies, even though entrepreneurship has long been considered as one of the most promising areas, a search for a conceptual definition and a theory for entrepreneurship have been challenging (Ogbor, 2000). To commence the discussion on entrepreneurship, having an apposite definition of small business-owners is required. Given the complexity of the theoretical perspective, an understanding of the major theoretical approaches in this research area is also needed.

The concept of *small business* can be explained by taking into account the focus of the researchers regarding this issue. In the case of small businesses, researchers generally consider routine business experiences (Pittaway, 2012). They concentrate on established small firms that may not be associated with new venture creation, corporate venture or high-growth venture issues (ibid). In other words: "A Small business venture is any business that is independently owned and operated, not dominant in its field, and does not engage in any new marketing or innovative practices" (Carland et al., 1984:358). Considering the research aim and objectives, the definition of small business-owners of the thesis is aligned with the view of Carland (1984). For this doctoral research, such persons are deemed as small business-owners who are not dominating in their fields but own and operate their businesses. As a point of clarification, the term 'independently' in the definition is met with the consideration of sole-proprietorship whilst from the legal perspective, a person owns the business individually.

Nonetheless although there is an enormous growth of research in the field of entrepreneurship (Kuratko, 2006), entrepreneurship scholarship is regarded as the home of a “hodgepodge of research” (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000:217). Researchers employ a wide variety of theories (Grégoire et al., 2011). Consequently, to elucidate the theoretical position of the thesis, here insights are offered about the dominating paradigm in the research area of entrepreneurship. As a point of clarification, paradigm reflects fundamental metatheoretical assumptions which reinforce shared philosophy, theoretical approaches as well as the approach of researchers (Jennings et al., 2005).

In entrepreneurship research, there is a dominance of a functionalist paradigm (Grant and Perren, 2002), that is characterised by an objectivist standpoint and is based on regulations (Jennings et al., 2005). Functionalism focuses on facts that are objective in nature and “ignores the emotion and personal angst of entrepreneurs” (Jennings et al., 2005:147). Whereas the research objectives of the thesis are to analyse the experiences of women business-owners, the “emotion” and the “personal angst” cannot be ignored. Moreover, in functionalist paradigm, the function and the system are placed before people (ibid). The mainstream research in entrepreneurship assumes certain social structures as “natural” and “unchallengeable” facts and, hence, for researchers, there is no point to enquire regarding these issues (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999) as cited by Jennings, et al. (2005:147). Then again, as this research is to explore the experiences of women business-owners in relation to their family and broader contextual aspects, it eventually provokes potential questions about social structures. Therefore, undoubtedly this study is not aligned with the functional paradigm.

Functionalist theories are, however, mostly derived from economics (Jennings et al., 2005). To have a comprehensive understanding of the diversified fields of entrepreneurship, theories have been imported and employed from other disciplines, for instance, psychology and sociology (Zahra, 2007). It is important to note that although, initially, the research on entrepreneurship was largely influenced by economists, the approach of economics has been criticised on the grounds of providing extensive concentration from the macro level and of overlooking significant questions of “how” and “why” about individual

entrepreneurs (Mitchell et al., 2002:94). In a quest to investigate the characteristics of entrepreneurs, a substantial body of studies has emerged from psychology. Nevertheless, two dominant approaches of psychology, the trait approach and the cognition approach, have been found problematic (Down, 2006). While concentrating on analysis at a fundamentally individual level, the approaches do not engage the context of society (ibid).

To call attention to the context in the field of entrepreneurship research, Hjorth et al. (2008:82) argue that “entrepreneurship belongs to society and not simply to economy”. They note that studies on entrepreneurship have been limited due to their “historically mediated tendency to draw upon economics and psychology” (Hjorth et al., 2008:82). The researchers have not taken consideration of the insights of some different disciplines, like sociology (ibid). However, this thesis is to analyse the influence of gender on business activities that is related to neither economic perspective nor individual characteristics. Rather, better analysis of the issues can be conducted considering the context where women business-owners are operating and, hence, the theoretical ground is related to sociology. (The in-depth discussion on the significance of context in entrepreneurship research is provided in Chapter-3.)

In relation to theoretical preference, it is worth noting that some areas of entrepreneurship have received too much concentration in terms of empirical work at the cost of intensive knowledge building and theorising (Blackburn and Kovalainen, 2009). There are some enduring areas of research that have longevity for not only empirical but also theoretical development. Despite more than 30 years of research in these areas, several issues remain unaddressed. As a consequence, scholars and stakeholders have exciting questions regarding these spheres. *Gender* is such an area in entrepreneurship. Moreover, the area of gender and business ownership is considered as a distinctive one because it provides relatively clear relationships with other disciplines, such as sociology and, therefore, offers opportunity to raise new theoretical and empirical questions (ibid). Given the nature of this thesis, that is, concentrating on analysing gender subordination, the theoretical ground is anchored in gender.

In sum, in terms of definition, this thesis considers those as small business-owners who individually own and operate businesses and who are not in the leading position in their operational areas (Carland, 1984). As far as the theoretical perspective is concerned, it is evident that the research on entrepreneurship is largely based on economics and also psychology (Hjorth et al., 2008). Nevertheless, there is a persistent need to recognise the social aspects in this field (ibid). Further, gender is considered as an important area of study in entrepreneurship to provide valuable empirical and theoretical insights (Blackburn and Kovalainen, 2009). In order to analyse the influence of gender on women business-owners, the theoretical perspective of the thesis is grounded in gender. In the next section, there is a critical discussion on entrepreneurship in relation to gender.

### **2.3 Entrepreneurship and Gender**

In narratives of entrepreneurship, the conventional sense of morality is obviously “masculine” (Smith and Anderson, 2004:137). This multifaceted claim can be exemplified with the reflection of the compliance of the broader societal norms of patriarchy in entrepreneurship studies whilst, according to patriarchal norms, women are expected to take a major role in domestic work and men are responsible for earning in the market place (Bradley, 2012). A clear division of work and family is taken for granted in the entrepreneurship literature (Ahl, 2004). It is implied that entrepreneurs do not have any family (Ahl, 2015) which clearly indicates a masculine framework. Nonetheless, from a few studies on women entrepreneurs, family life becomes apparent (Ahl, 2004) and it is also evident that the family plays a critical role regarding their businesses (Ahl, 2015). This section elucidates how women are marginalised in entrepreneurship due to the prevailing gendered attitudes in families and how the debate can be advanced (the next chapter addresses the issues beyond the family sphere). In so doing, at first, it requires to unpack the concept of gender and to place the underpinning logics about the relevance of patriarchy for this research.

#### **2.3.1 Gender**

Gender is regarded as one of the most common as well as recurrently employed categories of self-identification (Gherardi, 1996). It is often applied as the



synonym of sex (Calas and Smircich, 1991) but the concept of gender is not biologically governed (Due Billing and Alvesson, 2000); instead, it is socially constructed (Lorber and Farrell, 1991, Jackson and Scott, 2002, Bruni et al., 2004a). Soft, submissive, alluring, domesticity concern are few key feminine characteristics whereas tough, self-reliant, aggressive and controlling are some widely accepted masculine features of being a man in a society (Connell, 1987). Women are related to the symbolic universe of femininity that is confined to the private domain, where the expectations of society are tied to reproduction, silence and obedience (Gherardi, 1994). Conversely, men are related to masculinities and public domains, where social expectations are associated with production, command and voice (ibid).

Gender is argued as a binary hierarchy where masculinity assigns femininity an inferior status (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004). This binary hierarchy orders social relations of men and women by the subordination of femininity (Bruni et al., 2004a). It should be acknowledged that no essential masculinity or femininity is fixed to biological identities of human beings (Butler, 1990, Butler, 1994). Gender is regarded as performed (Kondo, 1990) whilst it is culturally comprehensible within social interactions and the sense regarding people is derived based on their attributed gender (Butler, 1990; 1994). Nevertheless, it is contended that both men and women are locked into the label of sex stereotypes (Gherardi, 1994). The biological differences between the bodies of men and women cannot be overlooked (Messerschmidt, 2009). Messerschmidt (2009) argues that maintaining compliance of gender behaviour with the perceived sex category is essential for other's perception regarding masculinities and femininities as credible and valid. In other words, the sex category is necessary to interpret the appropriate gender behaviour by others depending on the body (Butler, 1990, Butler, 1994, Mavin and Grandy, 2013). Social interactions are ordered and valorised by the socio-cultural pressure to ensure gender conformity (Holmes, 2007).

In order to analyse the influence of gender, this thesis seeks to explore the social construct of gender (Jackson and Scott, 2002, Bruni et al., 2004a) for women business-owners in the particular context of Bangladesh. The socially accepted femininity and masculinity issues (Connell, 1987, Gherardi, 1994) related to the debt financing process of Bangladeshi women business-owners can facilitate to

explain the hierarchical positions of the prevailing society. It also needs to investigate whether or how gender conformity (Holmes, 2007) places barriers in front of women while seeking debt finance for their businesses in that context.

To explain the reasons of gender inequality, however, an array of feminist theories have been developed (Lorber, 2010). Several major feminist theories are discussed here in order to set the background for the rationality of choosing a particular perspective for this research. Liberal feminism is regarded as the most moderate feminist branch that considers all people are equal when created (Lindsey, 2005). Therefore, based on gender, people should not be treated in a way where they are deprived from equality of opportunity (ibid). A major criticism is that the theory is based on a very simple proposition and it fails to explain the deep-rooted nature of gender inequality (Walby, 1990). Marxist feminism, however, considers the economic structure as well as other material issues of life as key sources of gender inequality (Lorber, 2010). The domination of men over women is argued as the by-product of domination of capital over labour (Walby, 1990). Marxist feminism is found problematic as it provides over emphasis on capitalism and it is "sex-blind" (Hartmann, 1981:11). It does not provide any indication about why gender subordination exists for women within and outside their families but it is not the case for men (ibid).

Radical feminism is distinguished from all these branches (Walby, 1990). It considers that men dominate women and men are beneficiaries of this subordination. This system of domination is not the result of any other social inequality, for instance, capitalism. This system is known as patriarchy (ibid). Patriarchy is most commonly applied as an indispensable way to explain gendered relations (Pollert, 1996, Walby, 2006). It is recognised as an important analytical category for comprehending the concept as a prevalent cultural condition (Butler, 1990). Nonetheless, a wide range of definitions of patriarchy has been a problem in early studies (Barrett, 1980). Rather than employing patriarchy as a seemingly descriptive term, Sylvia Walby (1986) utilised it as a theoretical concept. To address the research aim and objectives of the study, this theoretical concept of patriarchy has been employed for the thesis.

This doctoral study considers the definition offered by Sylvia Walby — “patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (Walby, 1990:20). This definition was also reinforced in her later study (Walby, 2002). As this thesis is to investigate the domination, oppression and exploitation of women by men, this definition of patriarchy is particularly important. Walby (1990; 2002; 2006) brings to the fore the concept of social structure and hence, rejects biological determinism. Patriarchy, thus, refers to an indiscernible cultural condition (Butler, 1990) in which men are considered as natural as well as legitimate figures of authority, having power and privilege (Simpson and Lewis, 2005). This doctoral research investigates how males exercise this powerful and privileged position over women and reinforce their natural roles.

Whereas at the most abstract level patriarchy indicates social relations, at the less abstract level, there are six structures – patriarchal production relations in the household, paid work, state, male violence, sexuality and cultural institutions (Walby, 1990; 2006). As the first objective of the research is regarding the domestic sphere in relation to women business-owners, two relevant structures, the production of household and the paid work, are discussed here. The family is typically regarded as the centre in the life of women (Walby, 1990). Within households, housewives are regarded as the producing class whereas husbands are considered as the expropriating class. Men are beneficiaries of this patriarchal exploitation through domestic modes of production (Walby, 1986). Through marriage husbands gain access to wives’ sexuality and labour (Mulholland, 1996). Whilst exploitation of labour is such a crucial issue, it is argued that the patriarchal relationship of the family is important to consider in the case of paid work. Women’s access to paid work is restricted as they are considered as unpaid labourers at home (Walby, 1986). In light of this logic, there can also be an impact when considering the domestic responsibilities of women, while working outside for their businesses. This issue is explored in the next section of this chapter.

Apart from considering the issue of the labour of women, it is also important to pay attention to the approach of men concerning the earnings of women. In the private sphere, the benefit of male family members from the earnings of women

is evident. From a western context, an example of an early study can be cited to demonstrate patriarchal practices concerning access to finance of wives. With reference to a write-up of a white working-class woman, Hartmann (1981:387) establishes how men have access to the money and property of women: "Their creed and their litany ... is as follows: All money and property, including welfare funds and old-age pensions, are "his." All wages, no matter who earns them, are "his"...." Hartmann continues to explain the disgraceful position of women at home and maintains that old women accepted male abuse as they felt that they "had to" and also considered that it was more important to nurture children and maintain family than the "life itself" (Hartmann, 1981:387). Accordingly, male family members gain access to the earnings of women as a legitimate authority and women accept the attitude as normal. In a similar vein, whether male family members have any interest in the earnings of small businesses of women or their access to finance for the businesses can be a rich line of enquiry. Again, this issue is further addressed in the next sections of this chapter.

The study further investigates the public sphere by including broader contextual issues — the issues in society outside of the household sphere. It takes into consideration how the public sphere has an influence on women in their access to finance. Nonetheless, whilst patriarchy encompasses intertwined aspects of gender inequalities, causal relationships exist among gender inequalities (Walby, 2006). In some cases, the issues of public sphere may provide nuanced explanations of the patriarchal practices of the male family members of the women business-owners. It is worth noting that private patriarchy is related to the more private sphere of home whereas public patriarchy is generally based on structures outside the household (Walby, 1990). Addressing these broader contextual issues in relation to gender is, however, related to the second research objective.

Nonetheless, it has been contended that due to an excessive concentration on domination by men or gender subordination in the literature of gender in developing nations, there is a production of a distorted picture of everyday life (Naher, 2005). In a quest to respond to this issue, feminist researchers are not solely concentrated on presenting and analysing issues of oppression or subordination (ibid). Rather than casting women as victims or positioning them

with passive roles, some researchers explore how women can shape their own lives (Kandiyoti, 1988, Naher, 2005). Yet, researchers rarely investigate the factors, specifically, family concerned issues that lead to women having comparatively better positions in families. This thesis seeks to identify different aspects of family that facilitate women to have a certain level of emancipation.

To sum up, with the concept of patriarchy, there can be a nuanced analysis of gender subordination (Walby, 2006). However, taking into account gender as a social construct (Bradley, 2012), it can facilitate to explain patriarchal relationships in a specific context. Considering gender as a social construct (Bradley, 2012) and employing patriarchy as a theoretical concept (Walby, 1990; 2006), this thesis sets to explore how men are engaged in dominating, oppressing and exploiting women business-owners. The impact of domestic responsibilities and child rearing on businesses of women is discussed in the next section. However, as the benefit of husbands from the earnings of the women is evident (Hartmann, 1981), this study further seeks to investigate the financial gains of husbands from the businesses of women. Along with private patriarchal issues, the study considers public patriarchal aspects to provide a proper understanding of gender subordination. The next section seeks to explain how gender subordination is reflected in the field of entrepreneurship.

### **2.3.2 Women Entrepreneurs**

In the early studies, the prominence of gender-bias in entrepreneurship discourse is understandable from the conclusion of Holmquist and Sundin (1989:1) drawn by Marlow (1997) – “entrepreneurial theories are created by men, for men and are applied to men”. It implies that women did not initiate or operate businesses and, if they did, there was no difference in the experiences and behaviours of women entrepreneurs (Marlow, 1997). Therefore, in the earlier studies, the analysis of experiences of women was insufficient, biased or inaccurate (Ferber and Nelson, 1993, Ahl and Marlow, 2012). Although since the early 1990s, the research on women business-owners has grown extensively, due to the lack of implementation of feminist theories, the understanding of this field is still argued to have limitations (Neergaard et al., 2011). In this section, firstly, there is a review of feminist analyses for a comprehensive understanding of gender

subordination. Then, the existing literature on developed nations is scrutinised to reveal how patriarchal issues are reflected on it and, thus, this section critically evaluates shortcomings in this field. Considering family as an important source of patriarchy (Millett, 1977, Bradley, 2012), the discussion of this chapter is restricted to women entrepreneurs concerning male family members. However, the public patriarchal issues in the entrepreneurial literature are the subject of the next chapter (Chapter-3).

### ***Feminist Analysis in Women's entrepreneurship***

It is strongly argued that in order to have good understanding regarding women's subordination in the field of entrepreneurship, it requires employing feminist analyses (Carter et al., 2012). Having considered mainstream entrepreneurship journals, Ahl (2004) proclaims that before the 1990s, there was no attempt to introduce feminist theorising into the research on women business-owners. Recently, research has been focusing on gender as an *influence* rather than ostensibly a *variable*. The particular concern of research is in the way social ascriptions of femininity have impacted on the experiences of women's business ownership (Gupta et al., 2008, Marlow et al., 2009, Henry et al., 2015). Still, the research on gender is extensively descriptive (Marlow et al., 2009). Researchers are less likely to implement explanatory feminist perspectives to conduct analyses systematically or critically (Neergaard et al., 2011). They are not inclined to embed feminist perspectives overtly (ibid). Moreover, feminist researchers to date tend to concentrate on individual women entrepreneurs, ignoring the socio-cultural issues and, thus, fail to unveil gender subordination properly (Ahl, 2006). For a better understanding of this issue, this section starts with an attempt to unfold the various approaches of feminist theories.

While implementing feminist analysis, it should be noted that there is no clear indication about the way to distinguish various perspectives of feminist theory and about which labels to use for these different forms (Bowden and Mummery, 2009). According to Martin (2003:66), "Although there are many varieties of feminist theory, they share two objectives. The first is descriptive: to reveal obvious and subtle gender inequalities. The second is change-oriented: to reduce or eradicate those inequalities". She further remarks that feminist theory is "better at critiquing the status quo than changing it" (Martin, 2003:67). However, notable

feminist Sandra Harding (1987) distinguishes between three approaches of feminist analyses – gender as a variable approach, feminist standpoint theory and post-structuralist feminism. A brief discussion is presented on these feminist approaches concerning women business-owners and considering these positions, the justification of adopting the specific feminist approach for this research is also offered.

Considering the 30 years of research in women's entrepreneurship, according to Neergaard, et al. (2011) and Henry, et al. (2015), gender as a variable approach is the most widely implemented feminist approach. This feminist approach reflects a liberal feminist stance. Nevertheless, the approach is criticised because the activities of women are assessed considering men as the norm (Ahl, 2006). However, post-structural analyses have emerged in this century that reflects the growing influence of post-structuralist feminist scholars (ibid). This stance is not concerned with gender as a characteristic of certain entities (such as men and women), but with the way of construction of masculinity as well as femininity and, further, the impact of this construction on the social order. Both femininity and masculinity may be performed by a person regardless of his or her sex (Ahl, 2004). This implies that, from the perspective of entrepreneurship, in certain circumstances, a male entrepreneur may behave in a way that is generally performed by a female entrepreneur and this can also be the case for a female entrepreneur (Neergaard et al., 2011).

Feminist standpoint theory, another broad approach of the feminist analysis (Harding, 1987), is about critical perspectives such as radical and socialist feminism (Bowden and Mummery, 2009). Research on feminist standpoint theory was random before the beginning of this century even though there were a number of peaks around the end of the 1980s and the mid-1990s (Neergaard et al., 2011). In this approach, the differences between lives of men and women have been emphasised (Hartsock, 2004). It is recognised that the experiences and interests of women are substantially different from that of men due to the socialisation process and the subordinated position of women (Ahl, 2004).

As this study is to analyse social aspects in terms of their family related issues or broader contextual issues that shape the experiences of women, feminist

standpoint theory is considered as the most appropriate. Further, feminist standpoint research offers an opportunity to unveil gender subordination by emphasising on providing scope for women to interpret social realities exclusively depending on their own experiences (Bowden and Mummery, 2009). Feminist standpoint theory presumes a unique view point of women whilst it is directly originated from experiences of subjugation (ibid). It is important to note that the activities of women are “determined outside them” but through their daily practices, they confirm the “demands” and “authority” of others (Smith, 2004:32). This situation can be vividly presented only by women as they are the “native speakers” of it; their language is based on their experiences (Smith, 2004:32). Women, as an oppressed group, can have a privileged position in terms of making any knowledge claims regarding their own experiences of patriarchal oppression (Bowden and Mummery, 2009). As the thesis emphasises the experiences of women from their own perspective, it is one important reason for which feminist standpoint theory is deemed appropriate for the concerned study.

With the review of different feminist stances, it can be concluded that for this concerned research, the feminist standpoint theory can provide a proper understanding on gender subordination of women business-owners. To pinpoint the research gap for conducting the study, the next and further sections critically present the studies on women’s entrepreneurship and finance related issues based on developed nations.

### ***Patriarchy in Women’s entrepreneurship***

Notions of entrepreneurship and entrepreneur are produced and reproduced based on masculine terms (Mirchandani, 1999, Ahl, 2002, Bruni et al., 2004a, Lewis, 2006). For instance, the discursive practice is likely to marginalise those who cannot be a part of entrepreneurship due to the domestic responsibility (Bruni et al., 2004a). Thus, historically women are excluded from the concept of entrepreneurship based on their gendered responsibilities (ibid). Nonetheless, when women are engaged in businesses, there is the impact of the issue of household responsibilities as revealed in some studies (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992, Marlow, 1997, Mattis, 2004, Ahl, 2006, Brush et al., 2009, McGowan et al., 2012)



In the past few decades, the number of women-owned businesses have increased remarkably (Blackburn and Kovalainen, 2009, Marlow et al., 2009). Despite the recognition of the noteworthy contribution to innovation, employment and wealth creation (Bruin et al., 2006), the primary responsibility of women is their consideration of the family (Ahl, 2006). Their position regarding child rearing and homemaking has remained fairly unchanged (Fitzgerald and Winter, 2001, Winn, 2004). It has been demonstrated that many women commence their own businesses in order to have some flexibility regarding domestic responsibilities or they had an adverse impact of patriarchal segregation of work on their businesses (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992, Marlow, 1997, Mattis, 2004, McGowan et al., 2012). The work of Ahl (2004), based on extensive studies on this issue, is particularly significant. It underscores gender subordination of women business-owners in families in terms of household responsibilities. It also criticises that women have to adjust to the rigid schedule of husbands. In addition, it is marked that a few researchers raise the question about women's double burden of family and work. The privileged position of men and the subordinated status of women are raised by just a few studies (ibid). Thus, the broader patriarchal norms of segregation of work have a profound impact on women's entrepreneurial behaviour and activities.

The discussion on the studies of developed nations related to family and women's entrepreneurship in this section leads to conclude that researchers have almost solely focused on childcare and domestic responsibility related aspects. In this regard, it is worth noting that considering the patriarchal segregation of labour is argued as the starting point of the debate on gender subordination (Hartsock, 2004). Hence, this study contends that the literature on patriarchal aspects of women business-owners is at an elementary level. Concentrating on marital and maternal duties implies taking into consideration only the societal expectation based on the patriarchal segregation of work. Nevertheless, there are possibilities for male family members to interfere in the businesses of women business-owners. For example, it can be inquired whether husbands dominate regarding any activity that regulates the operation of businesses. Further, it can be investigated whether male family members are engaged in consuming the earnings of women's businesses because sometimes sharing the income of wives is revealed in the case of paid work (Hartmann, 1981) as discussed in the

previous section. Exploring the roles of male family members directly in the businesses of women offers insights of patriarchy at the individual level rather than aspects which only comply with societal expectations (i.e., household responsibilities). Put simply, how male family members individually respond to business related issues in different ways to dominate, oppress or exploit women can be explored.

Regarding patriarchal practices, the dominating, oppressing and exploiting roles of male family members are more vividly presented in a few studies concerning family businesses (Mulholland, 1996, Colli et al., 2003, Hamilton, 2006). Historical studies regarding family businesses reveal that although women were crucial sources of finance and played potential roles in accessing networks, their contribution was not recorded (Colli et al., 2003). In a well-cited paper, Mulholland (1996) also establishes that during the initial stage of family businesses, the labour and capital of women become invisible over the course of time. The shareholdings of women are hidden. The labour of women is often unpaid because, through marriage, husbands have access to the labour of women. In exchange for subsistence, women are supposed to offer their labour. Further, during family business expansion phase, male family members hold managerial positions but women are excluded from the decision making process (ibid). Further, with reference to intergeneration case studies, Hamilton (2006) presents how the contribution of women is unrecognised or devalued. For example, the founder of a family business condemns his wife as not "business minded" (Hamilton, 2006:262) whereas the wife actually suggested initiating two businesses. In addition, for the expansion of a business, she generated funds through the earnings of her own job (ibid).

Examples of family businesses provide evidence of patriarchal practices of male family members at the individual level. It implies that the patriarchal segregation of work cannot be the only concern for the women in relation to businesses. In line with this logic, investigation is needed into the dominating, oppressing and exploiting roles of male family members through their direct impact on the businesses of women, whilst these women individually own and operate their businesses. In other words, it can be strongly argued that research on women needs to go beyond the surface issue of domestic responsibility and childcare.

Along with exploring the negative roles of male family members, enquiry is needed into whether they provide patronage to women in confronting gender specific problems of society. Research on copreneurships offers such instances. Copreneurship, however, is regarded as a particular sub-set of family business in which couples operate businesses as teams (Muske et al., 2009). Drawing examples from copreneurs, it is revealed that women are supported by their husbands whilst husbands are principally engaged in other occupations (Fletcher, 2010). This support is not limited to administrative work, management of clients or market research. Sometimes, women have their husbands as co-directors to gain credibility from banks in order to access loans (ibid). It implies that some women are dependent on husbands to navigate the gendered attitude of the broader society. In a similar vein, investigation is needed into whether women business-owners in sole-proprietorship seek such patronage from husbands for navigating gendered issues in society.

In sum, scholars (Neergaard et al., 2011) have already strongly argued that in order to advance the understanding of the influence of gender concerning women's entrepreneurship, research needs to be framed with feminist analysis. Nonetheless, from the discussion on women's entrepreneurship, it can be concluded that there is a dearth of research regarding patriarchal issues of women business-owners considering the direct roles of family members in businesses. It is also important to address issues of the public sphere, beyond the family sphere (the significance of the public sphere is discussed in Chapter-3). To address these issues in this study, feminist standpoint theory is employed in order to provide the opportunity to women to articulate their experiences of gender subordination in their own voice (Bowden and Mummery, 2009). However, analysis of the influence of gender on women business-owners needs to focus on a specific aspect. For this study, finance is considered as the area of concentration. The next section provides the detail on this issue.

#### **2.4 Entrepreneurship, Gender and Finance**

The issue of finance is important from the perspective of gender as well as entrepreneurship. In respect to gender subordination, patriarchy deals with the power related issues of men and women, whilst property is an imperative

indicator of this balance of power (Hirschon, 1984). Property refers to a wide range of resources but cash is the most common (ibid). Therefore, to investigate the direct patriarchal roles of male family members, the interplay between entrepreneurship, gender and finance can be examined. This issue is discussed in detail in Chapter-3. Furthermore, access to finance is an important issue for initiating and, consequently, operating businesses (Marlow and Patton, 2005). Therefore, this research is concentrated on the financing aspect of businesses. In order to have a good understanding of gender specific issues concerning women business-owners in the context of finance, prior to the discussion about their access to bank loans, it is important to have an overview on acquiring finance of small business-owners in general.

#### **2.4.1 Entrepreneurship and Finance**

Recognising the importance of finance, the literature on finance related issues in entrepreneurship has been grown extensively (de Bettignies and Brander, 2007). Financing small firms is a critical concern not only for researchers but also for practitioners and policy makers (Fraser, 2005). Financial capital is considered as one of the essential resources to launch and operate enterprises (Cassar, 2004). However, accessing adequate levels of finance is one of the principal obstacles for initiating and flourishing businesses (Kerr and Nanda, 2009). As a relevant area of literature, in this section, there is a brief outline of the importance of debt finance for small businesses at the growth stage of businesses and the problems associated with accessing bank loans.

It is well established that compared to large firms, small firms confront more restrictions regarding finance (Schiffer and Weder, 2001). Specifically, small firms are supposed to face more impediments for accessing formal finance (Levine et al., 2000). As a result, small businesses are found to be more restricted in their operations and growth (Galindo and Schiantarelli, 2003). In simple words, finance is a key constraint for the growth of small businesses.

For small businesses, however, the importance of bank lending has been widely recognised as a key source of finance (Cruickshank, 2000, Howorth and Moro, 2006). An early study (Cole et. al., 1996) demonstrates that for small firms, the source of the majority (60%) of credit was banks. Nevertheless, the alternative

types of financing can vary throughout the life of a business based on the financing life cycle (Cassar, 2004). It is well established that because of potential obstacles in accessing intermediated external finance, start-up finance largely depends on insider funding (Berger and Udell, 1998). Accessing loans from banks is less evident for the initial stage of businesses (Cassar, 2004). In other words, it can be concluded that although the bank is the main source of finance for small businesses, it is not so significant one at the initial stage of businesses. Therefore, for this study, considering the importance of finance at the growth stage of businesses and the noteworthy role of banks for financing businesses, the concentration is on bank loans at the growth instead of initial stage of businesses.

It is already evident that small firms confront considerable problems in accessing bank loans in terms of information asymmetry (Lean and Tucker, 2001), agency issues (Michaelas et al., 1999) and track records (Cruickshank, 2000). These firms also have limited abilities in the form of formal business plan preparation that eventually places them in disadvantaged positions for accessing debt finance (Smallbone et al., 2003). Regarding the issue of collateral for bank lending, the availability of an appropriate level of security is a major constraint for small businesses (ibid).

The brief discussion leads to conclude that finance is crucial for small businesses. Particularly bank loans are important at the growth stage of enterprises but, generally, having access to external finance is challenging for business-owners. Nevertheless, for accessing debt finance, women confront additional problems due to gender ascription (Carter and Rosa, 1998, Marlow, 2002). The next section demonstrates how gender subordination is reflected in the literature of financing women business-owners and highlights the gaps in the existing literature that need addressing.

#### **2.4.2 Debt Financing of Women Entrepreneurs**

Even though there is an inconsistency in findings, it is argued that while accessing finance, women business-owners confront a number of negative issues that originate from gender (Marlow, 2002). With particular concentration on the bank loan process this section commences by reviewing the relevant literature in order

to underline its limitations. In relation to bank loans, there is also a discussion on the initiatives of government regarding financing women business-owners.

A number of studies argue that gender discrimination prevails in the bank lending process. When women seek funds from banks, they generally confront the assumption that “women can’t handle money” (Bruni et al., 2004b:262). Studies (Cavalluzzo and Cavalluzzo, 1998, Cavalluzzo et al., 2002) reveal the gender effect in the debt finance for small businesses. Moreover, women business-owners are charged comparatively higher borrowing costs in the UK (Fraser, 2005) and in the USA (Wu and Chua, 2012), are required to place a higher level of collateral to meet terms (Coleman, 2000) and are evaluated in a “subjective” manner with the standard 5Cs model of the debt financing process (Orser and Foster, 1994:16).

On the contrary, Robb and Wolken (2002) reveal that for men and women businesses-owners there are no differences in the rate of approval or terms and the overall procedure of bank loans. However, considering the existing literature, an early study (McKechnie et al., 1998) maintains that the positive relationship between gender related issues and banking preferences is inconclusive. In this regard, Marlow and Patton (2005) conclude that as a wide range of factors have an impact on the bank lending process, it is not easy to isolate gender as a determining variable.

Rather than considering *gender* seemingly as a discriminating factor, some studies attempt to explore various reasons that are responsible for the differential treatment of banks towards women business-owners. According to feminist critiques of entrepreneurship research, it is not gender but the structure of business that is fundamentally responsible when accessing credit (Mirchandani, 1999). Based on an early research, Fischer et al. (1993) report while dealing with financial and other resource providers, women experience discriminatory treatment because of their lack of relevant education and practical experiences (Hisrich and Brush, 1983, Belcourt et al., 1991). Moreover, generally, women do not have an appropriate level of financial and human capital to utilise as collateral (Marlow and Patton, 2005) and track records to ensure formal credit worthiness (Shaw et al., 2001). Coleman (2000) also concludes that bank officers tend to lend more to the larger and more established firms. This preference eventually

places women at a disadvantaged position as, on average, the firm size owned by women are half compared to that of men (ibid). Starting a firm in crowded sectors is another discouraging issue for bank lending (Marlow and Patton, 2005). Therefore, experiences of women regarding debt finance can vary based on an array of factors, for instance, the educational background and practical experience of women, the level of collateral or the size of firms.

In reflecting on the prevailing research, this thesis identifies several key criticisms. At present, the literature revolves around the debate of whether banks are liable for any discrimination towards women business-owners or if the differential behaviour of banks is due to other factors. The prevailing research is, in general, confined to women business-owners and the bank. In this regard, it can be strongly argued that whereas family is considered with due importance as the source of patriarchal power (Millett, 1977, Bradley, 2012), the role of male family-members while accessing bank loans in order to explore gender subordination has been overlooked. It is still underexplored whether or how male family members dominate, oppress or exploit women in relation to the decision making process concerning access to bank loans, carrying out the loans process as well as utilising funds from banks.

Another issue is that while concentrating on banks, researchers have discussed the discriminatory behaviour or less satisfaction about interpersonal relationships with bank officers (Saparito et al., 2009). Nonetheless, researchers have not paid proper attention to whether the relationship with bank officers and women is perceived in any negative way by people in society. It is important to note that during an earlier period, in western societies, certain behaviour related to the respectable position of women in society was an important concern (Skeggs, 1997) and it is argued that this issue has still not entirely disappeared from society (Fernando and Cohen, 2013a). For example, the acceptable appearance of women at the working place is still an issue to be considered (Bradley, 2012). Nevertheless, studies on debt financing have not explored whether the respectable position of women is in question while dealing with male bank officers.

In addition, whilst restricting the focus on women and banks, it seems that researchers consider the process of acquiring loans as over-simplistic. To carry out the process of bank loans requires the involvement of other organisations. For example, as the issue of collateral has been addressed in the literature (Orser and Foster, 1994), it can be inferred that to place collateral there can be involvement from other organisations for legal purposes. Obstacles when taking loans can also arise from these organisations, or associated people in the process. Nonetheless, researchers have not explored patriarchal issues regarding these organisations or people.

In brief, the discussion and debate on debt financing of women business-owners resonates the general criticism of individual focus regarding the studies on women's entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2006). It presents that the research on this particular field in developed nations is individual centric, ignoring the family embeddedness and the broader societal context. Nonetheless, in relation to the literature on bank loans for women business-owners the questions, that have been raised here, have not been properly addressed in developed nations. These issues may not be so important in such countries but may be crucial for other contexts, such as, patriarchal developing nations. To extend the view on the understanding of gender subordination regarding the debt finance process, the family and broader contextual issues of women business-owners in developing nations needs to be considered.

Nevertheless, while assessing bank loan related issues regarding women business-owners, it should be considered that banks are cautious when lending to firms, even regardless of gender of business-owners (Marlow and Patton, 2005). In a quest to overcome this issue, the government can take the initiative regarding the supply of funds (ibid). In the case of government support, (again regardless of the gender of the targeted group of business-owners) researchers stress that the weaknesses of policies are concerned with bureaucracy and politicians (Bannock and Peacock, 1989, Bennett, 2012). Therefore, it can be contended that the criticisms in the literature pivot around the issue of the government or associated people for designing and implementing policies. Nonetheless, the support of the government can be effective only when business-



owners properly utilise the money for their enterprises. Hence, for women business-owners, due to the complication of patriarchal issues, it is also important to enquire whether women finally receive the benefit designed for them. Put differently, the extant literature on government support is focused on the supplier side rather than on the beneficiaries. For women business-owners, researchers also need to explore the complexities or challenges of the targeted beneficiaries when utilising loans, particularly, from a non-western patriarchal context.

Regarding the key area of the debate, gender, small business-ownership and finance, Marlow and Patton (2005:729) conclude that “constrained access to appropriate funding is part of a wider system of disadvantage where women cannot escape from their negative stereotypes which portray the feminine as inferior to the masculine”. This “wider system of disadvantage” can be varied depending on context. The context of a developing nation can provide an immense opportunity to examine the different and complex nature of gender subordination compared to that of developed nations. Moreover, some of the issues, such as the concern for the respectable position of women, that are implicit in developed nations, can be understood properly in the context of highly patriarchal developing nations.

Therefore, it is an important step to move away from the debate of discrimination that almost exclusively concentrates on individuals. Framing the study with feminist standpoint theory, it is time to investigate whether, or how, the family and broader society have an influence on the process. For example, whereas the existing studies appear to be restricted only to the household responsibilities of women regarding the role of the family on their businesses, exploring the debt financing process in a developing nation can bring to light the direct patriarchal practices of male family members. Thus, this step can enable the existing debate to move forward from developed nations to developing nations with distinct insights and, in some cases, with the opportunity for nuanced understanding of common issues of gender subordination in relation to the debt finance which exist regardless of contextual differences.

## 2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter extends the view of the prevailing literature on women's entrepreneurship by identifying the limitations of the understanding of patriarchal issues in this field. The extant literature in women's entrepreneurship acknowledges that even though women have made significant progress in business (Bruin, Brush and Welter, 2006), their primary responsibility is confined to household responsibilities (Ahl, 2006). This chapter highlights that literature regarding women entrepreneurs related to family in developed nations is concentrated exclusively on the domestic responsibility and childrearing issue and the consequence of its influence on businesses concerning selecting businesses or managing businesses in limited time (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992, Marlow, 1997, Mattis, 2004). However, there is a dearth of research on the direct influence of family members in terms of domination, oppression or exploitation of women regarding business activities whereas the roles of male family members loom large in family businesses (Mulholland, 1996, Colli et al., 2003, Hamilton, 2006). The literature on women's entrepreneurship in developed nations addressing patriarchal issues is argued to be at a rudimentary level. Therefore, it is strongly contended that concerning women entrepreneurs, rather than narrowly addressing patriarchal segregation of work in society, the view needs to be extended by exploring the patriarchal role of male family members at the individual level regarding carrying out the businesses of women.

This chapter further contributes by underscoring the gap of understanding regarding gender subordination in the entrepreneurship literature with particular concentration on the debt financing issue. It criticises that studies on developed nations appear to be converging upon a view about whether banks are engaged in a discriminating attitude towards women entrepreneurs or whether other issues are responsible for the differential treatment of bank officers. The private patriarchal issues have been overlooked in relation to debt financing. Further, as the focus of the studies is confined to only women and banks regarding acquiring bank loans, other sources of public patriarchal issues are underexplored. Research on governmental support also presents similar shortcomings. Nevertheless, by providing a voice to women (Bowden and Mummery, 2009), this feminist standpoint research can address these drawbacks by considering the family

related or broader contextual issues rather than employing an individual perspective.

It should be noted that the discussion of this chapter on women's entrepreneurship is restricted to gender subordination in only developed nations which context has received much attention in women's entrepreneurship scholarship (Ahl, 2006). Nevertheless, while discussing the shortcomings of the research concerning accessing bank loans of women entrepreneurs, few questions are raised in this chapter. It can be argued that these family related or contextual issues may have no or less relevance to these developed nations but these aspects can be deemed important in developing nations. The context of highly patriarchal developing nations can provide the opportunity to bring to light the direct patriarchal roles of male family members and other gendered aspects of society. In other words, given the nature of patriarchal contexts, the studies on developing nations can reveal the diversified aspects of gender subordination. Therefore, the next chapter sets out to justify the significance of context for studying women entrepreneurs in order to advance the debate on gender subordination in entrepreneurship from the context of developed nations to developing nations.

## Chapter-3

### Context in the Research of Financing Women Business-Owners

*I once read somewhere that 'context is everything'.  
- Gary Johns*

#### 3.1 Introduction

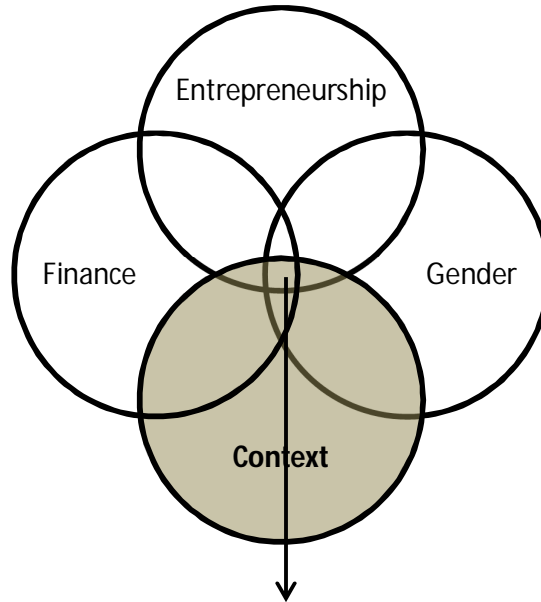
Research on entrepreneurship is criticised on the grounds that it is almost exclusively focused on two developed economic regions – North America and Europe (Bruton et al., 2008). Outside of these two developed economic spheres, the exploration of other contexts remains extremely limited (ibid). Specifically, regarding women business-owners, Ahl (2006) identifies that most of the articles (83%) are centered on Anglo-Saxon countries. Few articles (4%) compare issues of English-speaking countries with others. The remainder are from Norway, Sweden, Poland, Singapore, Israel and Pakistan (ibid). Therefore, research on women business-owners of developing nations has clearly been neglected.

Recognising entrepreneurship as a social phenomenon (Steyaert and Katz, 2004), it is argued that the manifestation of entrepreneurship varies based on context (Zahra et al., 2014). As most research is biased towards developed nations, understanding of some specific cultural issues regarding entrepreneurship and gender dominates as well as shapes the prevailing knowledge (Ahl, 2006). Therefore, in order to provide more nuanced views, at present, there is a persistent call to consider different contexts in entrepreneurship research (Zahra, 2007, Welter, 2011, Zahra and Wright, 2011, Zahra et al., 2014). In a quest to respond to the call, this thesis considers a developing nation of Bangladesh as the context.

This doctoral study is concentrated on the particular aspect of finance whilst in terms of the extant literature, it is also confirmed that by implementing the analytical frames – entrepreneurship, gender and finance – so far research has been focused on debt financing of women business-owners in developed nations. Against this background, to analyse the influence of gender on access to finance by women business-owners requires introducing another analytical frame –

context. Rather than only focusing on developed nations, research needs to be conducted concerning financing women business-owners in developing nations (Figure-2).

**Figure-2: Proposed Research**



Financing Women Business-owners in Developing Nations

This chapter aims to identify interplay among context and other analytical frames – entrepreneurship, gender and finance. It is broadly divided into two parts. The first part explains the need to recognise the significance of context and specifically, developing nations as the context when researching entrepreneurship within the particular aspect of finance. Thus, it sets the scene to bring to the fore the importance of context for the research in women’s entrepreneurship. Accordingly, this section identifies and stresses potential opportunities for studying debt financing of women business-owners in developing nations. Building upon the discussion, the second part of the chapter justifies Bangladesh, a South-Asian patriarchal developing nation, as an important context in order to analyse the influence of gender on the debt financing process of women business-owners for this concerned study.

### 3.2 Importance of Context in Entrepreneurship Research

The theories of entrepreneurship are generally concentrated on micro-level influences on entrepreneurship, considering the external environment or the context as given (Smallbone et al., 2010). Nevertheless, it is maintained that for entrepreneurs, individuals are presented with entrepreneurial opportunities when considering context; conversely, this can also set boundaries for their actions (Welter, 2011). Entrepreneurship scholars put forward arguments to recognise context in the studies of entrepreneurship (ibid). This section clarifies the significance of context in studies of entrepreneurship in general and justifies the potentiality of the developing nation as a context with reference to debt finance for businesses. This discussion sets the ground for understanding the significance of taking context into consideration in order to analyse the influence of gender on financing women entrepreneurs. For better understanding of these issues, this discussion commences by unpacking the concept of context.

From the perspective of management research, Welter (2010) refers to context as a circumstance, environment or condition that is external to the specific phenomenon but has impact on it. Johns (2006) further proffers the view of the omnibus context that stands for a broad perspective. It is associated with the questions – who, what, when, where, and why (Whetten, 1989). Nonetheless, for defining context, specifically within entrepreneurship research, the dimension of *where* is of particular interest (Welter, 2010). *Where* indicates manifold locations in which entrepreneurship takes place (ibid). In this regard, it should be noted that this doctoral study considers the omnibus context, indicating a broader perspective (Whetten, 1989). Given the aim of the study, the specific question *where* is invariably embedded in the research. More specifically, the thesis considers the distal context, concentrating on a specific country or society (Mowday and Sutton, 1993) as well as the proximate context, related to the social environment of business-owners (Welter, 2010).

Zahra and Wright (2011) maintain that context is essential for theory building. Context challenges frontiers of theories and propositions, providing the scope to confirm their claims and explanatory power (ibid). With changes of contexts, even underlying predictions of theories can be reformed in an important and interesting

way (Zahra, 2007). Context can play dramatic changes in the rules for entrepreneurship (Baumol, 1990). These theoretical claims regarding consideration of context in entrepreneurship study are reinforced in some empirical studies. Research on transitional economies (Smallbone and Welter, 2001, Smallbone et al., 2010) or emerging economies (Ahlstrom and Bruton, 2006) provides substantially different insights compared to that of developed nations. Therefore, as the research on entrepreneurship is principally concentrated on developed nations (Bruton, Ahlstrom and Li, 2008), other context have strong potentiality to provide valuable contributions to the prevailing knowledge.

It is further acknowledged that contextualisation provides opportunity for “creative and novel analyses” (Zahra et al., 2014:2). By recognising and integrating diversified attributes of a context, the theoretical perspective can be advanced (ibid). The future research can be enriched with “the nature, dynamics, uniqueness and limitations” of a context (Zahra, 2007:443). The strength of research questions, the merit of theoretical arguments, the identification of causal mechanisms and the value-addition of empirical evidence are generally context-specific (de Ven, 2007). It can be argued that the context specific issues of underexplored areas, for instance, the aspects of developing nations, can add value to the empirical evidence. These issues can strengthen theoretical arguments and better answer the research questions with causal mechanisms. Thus, context specificities of this certain context can have significant impact on entrepreneurship scholarship. This statement can be justified with the specific focus on financing entrepreneurs in a developing nation.

The paper of Mair and Marti (2009) is particularly important to rationalise the context of developing nations for the research in financing entrepreneurship. This study is based on a micro-credit program of BRAC, a non-government organization in Bangladesh. The researchers establish that because of a multifaceted set of social relations, traditions, religious practices as well as legacy of institutions, corruption and governance structures, poor people of that country are unable to participate in the market economy, for instance microfinance. In other words, these people cannot be active in economic sphere due to institutional voids. Institutions are weak or absent and as a whole, are failed to

support markets. Addressing the institutional voids, BRAC utilised its well established networks and also considered the existing customary, religious and cultural practices of the context for implementing a viable micro-finance program (ibid). Thus, by taking into account different contextual issues, BRAC eventually demonstrates a way of financing that is substantially different from that of developed countries.

The overall discussion elucidates that entrepreneurship is inextricably intertwined with context. In the words of Weick (1995:389), "key lies in the context". Besides, it can be concluded that context specificities can contribute to enrich the research on financing entrepreneurship in developing nations. This section provides the platform to commence the discussion on financing women's entrepreneurship in developing nations.

### **3.3 Context in Women's Entrepreneurship Research**

Although in entrepreneurship research, the appeal for considering context is not a recent phenomenon (Welter, 2011), there remains a persistent need to recognise the importance of conducting research on women's entrepreneurship considering context. In light of this, bearing in mind the research concentration has, so far, been based on developed nations (Ahl, 2006), an understanding of the urge to study women entrepreneurs in other contexts, such as developing nations, is needed. Given the nature of the study, the specific perspective of finance in women's entrepreneurship in developing nations is highlighted towards the end of this section.

#### **3.3.1 Importance of Context in Women's Entrepreneurship Research**

The literature which considers the influence of gender on women's entrepreneurship is largely concentrated on the USA and Europe (Fielden and Davidson, 2005, Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2010). Other areas of the world, such as developing nations, are largely overlooked by researchers. Therefore, this section sets to illustrate the need to recognise different contexts concerning gender subordination in entrepreneurship research. In so doing, in relation to women entrepreneurs, this section, firstly, concentrates on the private sphere, specifically family related issues. Then, it discusses the public sphere, associated with broader



contextual issues. These broader contextual issues include socio-cultural or other context-specific issues that are not directly derived from family issues.

### ***Family Perspective in Developing Nations***

It is important to recognise that regarding the patriarchal segregation of work in developing nations, the power of men is not only confined to an economic justification that indicates a breadwinner role (Civettini and Glass, 2008). Rather, it is rooted socially, culturally, religiously and politically (ibid). Considering the high level of patriarchy, developing nations are important contexts to investigate how patriarchy is articulated in terms of women's businesses. With reference to empirical studies, the section highlights how the facets of families of different contexts can provide insightful findings. Drawing attention to the diversity and complexity of family aspects in developing nations to enrich this field of study will follow this discussion.

Even though studies on women business-owners in contexts, other than western developed nations are fairly limited, those that do exist have already established different findings compared to that of developed nations. For example, whereas the responsibility of women in western developed nations is generally limited to the roles of wife and mother at home, due to extended family members the multiple-role demands of South Asian women go beyond these roles (Fernando and Cohen, 2013b). Given the intensive household chores of South Asian women, the assistance of husbands is crucial but with reference to the Indian context, literature (Nath, 2000) establishes that the participation of males in domestic work is minimum. From the context of Africa, Amine and Staub (2009) argue that women's business-activities are constrained by their intensive domestic responsibilities and childcare issues because of having large families with a number of young children. These household responsibilities impose a physical, along with emotional, burden on women at a prime time for them to engage in entrepreneurial activities (ibid). Thus, studies on context-specific issues related to the patriarchal segregation of work in developing nations contribute with new insights.

Further, empirical evidence of few studies suggests that, apparently, male family members assist women entrepreneurs in many contexts. An early study (Roberts

and Tholen, 1999) establishes that in central European countries, it is seemingly convenient for women to become entrepreneurs on their own. Conversely, it is revealed that young women entrepreneurs in transitional economies (Welter and Smallbone, 2008) or in Saudi Arabia (Danish and Smith, 2012) are generally engaged in businesses with their husbands or fathers as either partners or guardians. Besides, taking the example of a young woman of rural post-Soviet Uzbekistan, Welter (2011) illustrates the way the private patriarchal attitude oftentimes determines women's start-up in low-growth and low-income business sectors.

While these studies signify the importance of contexts in the research of women's entrepreneurship, this thesis spots few limitations. As with entrepreneurship studies on developed nations considering family aspects (as discussed in Chapter-2), studies on other contexts mostly concentrate on the marital and maternal roles of women business-owners. Although there are hints on the influences of male family members on businesses of women in the context of developing or transitional economies, the research regarding the domination or oppression exercised by male family members through getting involved in businesses are largely underexplored. While reporting the assistance of male relatives, studies (Welter and Smallbone, 2008, Danish and Smith, 2012) have not paid attention to explore whether they gain any financial benefit from the businesses of women. Presenting merely assisting roles raises questions that the studies have not undertaken any in-depth enquiry regarding deep-rooted patriarchal norms.

It can be further argued that the diversified dimensions of families, considerably different from that of developed nations, are not properly taken into consideration in the case of women's entrepreneurship studies. For example, Nordqvist and Melin (2010) contend that the traditional nuclear family of western societies is reflected in the notion of the family in which the household and the parent-child relationship are considered as the foundation. Studies in entrepreneurship, particularly in other cultures, for instance the Asian culture, need to consider the extended family. This form of family comprises both affine, "related by marriage" (for example, an in-law) and kin, a group of people of "common ancestry" (for example, relatives of various distances) (Nordqvist and Melin, 2010:222). Therefore, in a highly patriarchal context, it can be explored whether or how

menfolk within extended families have an impact on businesses of women. In addition, the child marriage that is evident in South Asian countries (Jones, 2010) can also be considered to explore its impact on businesses of women. As in these contexts, the early marriage has a pivotal role in relation to the private patriarchy (Flake, 2005), this way of formation of families can raise a valid question concerning the autonomy of women while conducting their own businesses.

As alluded to above, in developing nations domestic violence emerges as a serious concern (Heise et al., 1994) as mentioned by Koenig et al. (2003). Studies (Ellsberg et al., 1999, Jewkes et al., 2002) on different developing countries provide evidence of widespread physical abuse at home. Nevertheless, the South Asian region appears to have the highest level of the domestic violence (Koenig et al., 2003). Since this kind of violence places obstacles on the economic and social development of women, it has become a crucial concern in the field of women related to development (ibid). In this context, although domestic violence is not present in an inescapable manner, it demonstrates that a very high level of private patriarchy is prevalent in a pervasive way. In line with this logic, it can be argued that considering the familial context of women in business in developing nations can offer novel insights of domination, oppression or exploitation by family members.

The studies on developing or transitional economies evidently justify the importance of considering the family of different contexts regarding women entrepreneurs and, simultaneously, this discussion emphasises that there remains ample scope to enrich this underdeveloped area of studies. Nevertheless, attention needs to be paid concerning the public domain of the patriarchal developing nation, as explained below.

### ***Broader Contextual Perspective in Developing Nations***

It has been recognised that some country specific issues provide opportunities and set boundaries for entrepreneurs (Estrin and Mickiewicz, 2011). It is argued that if contextual dissimilarities are not addressed, proper understandings cannot be achieved regarding the complexities of the entrepreneurial process of women (Bruin et al., 2006). Therefore, how broader contextual issues are related to the field of women's entrepreneurship needs to be explored and elaborated upon. For

that reason, after illustrating the importance of broader contextual issues regarding women business-owners, this section highlights the potentiality to offer a novel contribution by studying the context specific issues of developing nations.

Few studies mark that the broader contextual aspects of patriarchal developing nations can considerably enrich the prevailing knowledge of women's entrepreneurship. For example, Amine and Staub (2009) explicitly assert that compared to women entrepreneurs of developed western countries, women in Africa are confronted with more severe challenges generated from the deep-rooted cultural values, tradition, attitude or practices of the patriarchal society. In many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance in Nigeria, it is not socially acceptable for women to own and operate businesses as the earnings of women indicate an inability of husbands to control their wives. It can be also translated into the lack of capability of husbands to provide sufficient financial support for families. To avoid such social disgrace, many men do not permit their wives to start ventures (ibid).

Nevertheless, the existing body of literature on women's entrepreneurship concerning context, other than developed nations, is largely concentrated on certain context-specific issues. Considering the relevant studies, it is revealed that the influence of religious issues, particularly of Islam, is a recurring topic. For instance, with reference to Pakistan, Roomi (2009) draws attention to religious aspects of the society concerning the adverse impact of restricted mobility of women on their businesses. The context of Saudi Arabia not only provides examples of how institutionally enforced religious aspects have an influence on women entrepreneurs but also, in some cases, explains the dependence of those women on male relatives. In this area, women previously needed to have male agents for the registration of ventures (Fakkar, 2007). At present, although the requirement has been changed (ibid), they still confront constraints concerning their dependence on male family members in terms of availing public transport (Ahmad, 2011) or international travel (Danish and Smith, 2012). These bindings have immediate implications on their businesses (Ahmad, 2011). Nevertheless, it can be argued that in a developing nation, where the majority of people are Muslims but the Islamic rules are not generally governed officially, women can have substantially different experiences compared to that of Islamic countries. On

their businesses, Islamic beliefs and practices at the personal level may have an influence but the religious issues cannot be legally enforced.

From the empirical studies on developing nations, the morality or respectable position of women in society emerges as another important feature to be considered by women business-owners. In some societies, women are socially excluded from doing businesses on the basis of the question of morality (Mungai and Ogot, 2012). In such areas, women are traditionally brought up with the view that for them, making money is associated with immorality (ibid). In Zimbabwe, the earnings of women entrepreneurs is compared to the income of a prostitute (Chitsike, 2000). With reference to the context of Tanzania, it is disclosed that as women are restricted by their culture from having relationships with the opposite sex, their business network is kinship based (Rutashobya et al., 2009). It eventually places their business activities in a disadvantaged position (ibid). Evidence from Pakistan also supports that women seek moral assistance from male family members in terms of effective informal networking, management experiences and technical training (Roomi, 2009). Yet, in-depth investigation is needed concerning how the notion of the respectable position of women influences some specific aspects of businesses, such as, finance. Moreover, existing studies (Chitsike, 2000, Rutashobya et al., 2009, Roomi, 2009, Mugai and Ogot, 2012) do not theorise respectable femininity.

It is important to clarify that respectable femininity is considered as an ideological construct which comprises certain behavioural norms related to the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Radhakrishnan, 2009). In the Victorian period, British women maintained their respectable position by complying with the prevailing moral rules and socially expected gendered behaviour as well as appearance (Skeggs, 1997). The issue of appearance is still considered important in the context of the workplace (Bradley, 2007). Therefore, although this old concept has not entirely disappeared from that society, respectable femininity is largely absent in the current western literature (Fernando and Cohen, 2013a). Nonetheless, from the context of a career in South Asian countries, this issue appears to have due importance in different studies (Patel, 2006, Phadke, 2007, Radhakrishnan, 2009, Fernando and Cohen, 2013a). Still, we know little about the challenges concerning the respectable position of women, while undertaking business in these contexts.

Additionally, by examining such issues from the highly patriarchal context, the prevailing knowledge can be extended regarding the aspects that are also present in developed nations but in a subtle manner.

It can be argued that some other context-specific issues of developing nations are less studied. Corruption, a common feature in these nations (Olken and Pande, 2012), can be cited as an example. The meaning of corruption includes not only bribery but also fraudulent people, misuse of public funds, extortion etc. (Bayes and Hossain, 2013). The adverse effect of corruption on entrepreneurship is unveiled in some of these areas (Avnimelech, 2011). Nonetheless, whether or how it has any gender-specific implication related to women's entrepreneurship remains underexplored.

The discussion on broader contextual issues leads to the conclusion that considering different contexts is extremely important for women's entrepreneurship research. There is a wider range of opportunities to explore this field with diversified contextual aspects rather than considering only a few aspects, such as religious influence. By considering the sheer variety and diversity of contextual issues of the broader society, this thesis can unveil the gender power structure of society regarding women business-owners.

Drawing on the debates and discussions of this section regarding the perspectives of family and broader contextual issues, it can be contended that by taking into consideration such contexts, the research of women's entrepreneurship can be enriched with nuanced and theoretically challenging views. It can be further explained from the feminist standpoint theory. Europe and North America are the two major areas where the feminist standpoint theory is fundamentally positioned (Harding, 2004). Nonetheless, the theory can have dissimilar forms based on other cultures (Narayan, 2004). The reason is that different women are oppressed in different manners, resulting in the possibility to develop their "distinct insights" (Harding, 2004:9). Each oppressed group possesses its own critical view concerning "the larger social order" where the oppression takes place (ibid). In other words, "the social location of women" can be a valuable source of knowledge regarding "themselves" as well as "social relations" (Harding, 2004:4). Therefore, conducting a feminist study on women business-owners of an

underexplored area such as developing nations can offer a critical contribution within the context of entrepreneurship. Such research can provide insights into not only distinct issues of the developing nation but also about the in-depth understanding of similar aspects that are present in developed nations. Nonetheless, as this doctoral study is concentrated on the finance aspect, the next section sheds light on this issue.

### **3.3.2 Entrepreneurship, Gender and Finance in Different Contexts**

To have an understanding of the debt financing of women entrepreneurs in developing nations, at first, it needs to recognise the intertwined relationships of gender and finance in different contexts. Finance is an important aspect to assess private patriarchal relationships. This statement can be justified by considering the ways men attain finance from or through women. Patriarchal issues regarding gaining property through women, such as dowry, have been well researched (Bloch and Rao, 2002, Srinivasan and Bedi, 2007, Hossain and Sumon, 2013, Banerjee, 2014). In terms of dowry, men gain cash or other valuable properties from the natal family of women in many developing nations, for instance, India and Bangladesh (ibid). Considering the sources beyond the family, micro-credit is a prominent example for acquiring funds from women through formal institutions in developing nations (Goetz and Gupta, 1996, Mayoux, 1995, Naher, 2005).

Although extensive studies have been conducted on how men gain funds from and through women within the family (i.e., dowry) or from formal financial institutions (i.e., micro-credit institutions) at the initial stage of ventures, there is a dearth of research on whether or how men benefit from institutional loans by women who are engaged in small businesses at the growth stage. In respect to the specific context of developing nations, it is worth noting that extensive studies have been conducted on not only private but also public patriarchy about women in micro-credit in developing countries (Goetz and Gupta, 1996, Hashemi et al., 1996, Schuler et al., 1996, Amin et al., 1998, Chowdhury et al., 2005, Naher, 2005, Roodman and Morduch, 2009, Naher, 2010). Nevertheless, researchers have not paid much attention to small businesses of women of these regions.

It can be contended that financing issues of these women business-owners are considerably different from that of the women in micro-credit in similar contexts.

The women in micro-credit do not have any prior experiences of doing businesses or managing funds (Naher, 2010). Moreover, the constraints that the women face for gaining access to micro-credit are partly because of the resistance of the family or the society about their initiative for self-employment (Naher, 2005). Nonetheless, women, in small enterprises at the growth stage, have proved their capability regarding running businesses in the context of the gender expectations of society. Therefore, exploring access to finance at the growth stage may provide useful insights concerning the articulation of gender power in this country for these women who are somewhat atypical in their position as women business-owners and who are further challenging the stereotypical roles and attitudes. As a point of clarification, rather than solely concentrating on the issue of financial gains, whether and how patriarchy is articulated in other forms, such as, in terms of domination or oppression by male family members needs to be investigated. Apart from the issues related to businesses or the management of funds, it should be noted that whereas women in micro-credit are poor and almost illiterate (Naher, 2005), women engaged in small businesses are middle class and, generally, better educated. Due to the differences in class and educational background, research in small businesses of women can provide valuable insights. Notwithstanding the significant gap of research in this field, women engaged in small businesses in developing nations are underexplored.

The limited literature on financing women business-owners broadly addresses several issues of gender subordination without much in-depth analysis. Although some studies (Bardasi et al., 2011, Tlaiss, 2013) concentrate on the gender discrimination issue from the perspective of banks, other pertinent issues are not investigated. For instance, whether there is any involvement of male family members in the bank loan process that reflects private patriarchy is underexplored. Additionally, in developing countries, impediments from families for accessing bank loans are traced in terms of domestic responsibility and childcare regarding travelling to banks as well as the permission of husbands for taking loans (Ahmad, 2011). There is a dearth of analysis on complexities and diversities of patriarchal practices of family members in the entire bank loan process. For example, as the extended family is a common feature in Asian developing countries (Nordqvist and Melin, 2010), there can be possibility of male relatives of the extended family influencing the process. Furthermore, the impact



of broader contextual issues, such as the concern of the respectable position, on the debt financing process in developing countries is underexplored.

In sum, although finance is an important aspect in terms of analysing patriarchy, research on debt financing of women entrepreneurs at the growth stage of their businesses in developing nations is extremely limited. Whereas family or broader contextual issues are important to consider in order to investigate gender subordination about women's entrepreneurship in these regions (as discussed in the previous sections), concentration on bank loans can provide ample scope to enrich this field of research. In a quest to conduct a study in this area, it requires identifying an appropriate context of a highly patriarchal developing nation where a number of women are accessing bank loans at the growth stage of their businesses. The next section provides a synopsis of such a context, Bangladesh.

### **3.4 Bangladesh as a Context**

For considering a specific context, attention will have to be paid on the value addition of the overall research with regard to the context. In relation to this issue, Johns mentions:

... fostering context have to be used in a way that adds explanatory value to a manuscript. Perhaps the best question to ask oneself is this: Does the inclusion of this information or the use of this design feature explain the constraints on, or the opportunities for, the phenomenon I am studying? (Johns, 2001:39)

Given the research aim and objectives of the thesis, Bangladesh is an appropriate context for the study. In order to rationalise this context for the study, this section, firstly provides an overview of the socio-cultural aspects of the country to explain the broader contextual issues. Then, it concentrates on clarifying the patriarchal context in order to understand the influence of gender on women business-owners. Finally, after drawing attention to the limitations of the extant literature on debt financing of small businesses of women, this section emphasises the opportunities to conduct studies in this context.

### **3.4.1 Socio-Cultural Issues of Bangladesh**

Several context-specific issues of Bangladesh can have influences on the experiences of women business-owners concerning debt finance and these experiences can be considerably different from those of developed nations. Several contextual issues are elaborated and elucidated in this section.

Corruption in Bangladesh can offer a useful explanation when considering context-specific issues of this country. According to Transparency International (2015), Bangladesh is ranked as one of the most corrupted countries in the world and previously, it was the most corrupted one for five consecutive years (BBC, 2005). This indicates that as corruption is such a salient feature in Bangladesh, it can also have impact on the financing process of women business-owners. For example, the land department is revealed as the most corrupted public institutions (ibid) whilst the collateral related issues of the financing process require business-owners to face this department. The problems associated with corruption can have an impact on the bank loan process. In this regard, it should be noted that theories on entrepreneurship, predominantly developed in the western countries, are grounded on the principle of fairness as well as fair play among all parties (Puffer et al., 2010). The theories imbued from a western-based view cannot be exactly applied to this developing country. While accessing debt finance, women business-owners may navigate and negotiate corruption and thus, studies on this aspect can provide rich and robust findings.

In relation to corruption, the aspect of law and social disorder can also come into play. Particularly, during religious festivals, overall criminal activities are increased, requiring more police to maintain law and order in the country, as reported by the media (Raju, 2014). Special measures are taken and additional police officers are deployed at shopping malls to minimise extortion (ibid). Nonetheless, the identification of different problems concerning the police suggests that people have less confidence in the police force of the country (Mehtab and Rahman, 2014). In light of this background, it is valuable to assess whether there is any gender specific problem due to the impact of criminal activities on women business-owners while accessing or utilising bank loans.

The political unrest of Bangladesh is another significant issue to be considered. This country falls within the lowest 15% of politically stable countries of the world (Khan, 2012). Concerning this aspect, the contemporary scenario can be illustrated. In 2013, due to political violence, over 250 people lost their lives (Abdin, 2014) and the normal business activities were interrupted (Raju, 2014). Although studies (Saeed et al., 2014) in developing nations reveal negative consequences of political instability on businesses, the gender specific effect is yet to be explored. With regard to gender, the nuance of women business-owners' access to bank loans in politically vulnerable contexts needs to be investigated.

As alluded to above, it is important to note that in Bangladesh is an Islamic country where approximately 90% of the population are Muslim and the remainder are mostly Hindu (The World Factbook, 2013). Nonetheless, the culture of the country is argued to be influenced by the culture of the Hindu religion of the neighbouring country, India (Siddiqui, 2013). Bangladesh does not share many common characteristics with other Islamic countries. However, studies (Fakkar, 2007, Roomi, 2009, Ahmad, 2011) on developing nations regarding women business-owners heavily concentrate on Islamic religion, as discussed earlier. Due to the distinct culture of Bangladesh, the findings of other studies on Muslims dominated nations cannot be readily applied here which provides opportunity to contribute to the prevailing knowledge by studying women business-owners in this context.

It can be concluded that Bangladesh, a developing nation, is a rich context for this concerned research in terms of addressing broader contextual issues. Nonetheless, given the nature of the research, the patriarchal issues of the country require to be specifically scrutinised.

### **3.4.2 Patriarchal Society of Bangladesh**

In Bangladesh, patriarchy is deep-rooted in both the private and public sphere (Chowdhury, 2009). In the family, the status of women is considered to be "dependent" and husbands treat the wives as their "property" (Chowdhury, 2009:599). On the other hand, in the public space, sexual harassment is employed to maintain patriarchy (ibid). This section elucidates the issues of gender subordination in Bangladesh in light of the relevant patriarchal structures

– household, paid work, state and violence (Walby, 1990) and the concept of respectable femininity.

In the family, a high level of patriarchal practices are revealed in Bangladesh (Begum, 2005, Hossain and Sumon, 2013). In general, there is no recognition of the unpaid work of women (Chowdhury, 2009) which is essentially true in this highly patriarchal context. Generally, husbands hold control over the money of their wives either directly or indirectly. Traditionally, husbands accumulate capital through dowry (ibid). At present, it has become a serious concern as it results in severe physical and psychological torture of women and in some cases even murder (Hossain and Sumon, 2013). It is also evident that many husbands control the income of working women (Chowdhury, 2009). Women are not entitled to spend their money on their natal families or religious purposes on their own accord. They are obliged to spend the entire or a part of their earnings on their in-law's family (ibid). This scenario suggests that there is a persistent need to examine the extent to which women business-owners have freedom to utilise external funds for their businesses.

From the empirical evidence it is established that the influence of male family members goes beyond the household domain (Ahmed and Islam, 2008). In the case of professional work, sometimes there is also the impact of women needing to ask permission of husbands in undertaking different responsibilities (ibid). Whereas husbands have direct influence on the employed jobs of women, a potential question is posed about their domination or oppression by becoming involved in their self-employed wives' businesses. Furthermore, according to a significant number of women, sometimes, their opinion in the professional sphere is ignored (Ahmed and Islam, 2008). In light of this example, whether women business-owners can individually deal with other formal institutions, for instance, bank officers while seeking loans, can be investigated.

Although, as per the constitution, it is the responsibility of the state to ensure non-discrimination and gender equality of citizens, laws are hardly enforced or are even misused (Farouk, 2005, Sultana, 2011). Nonetheless, in the personal sphere, the responsibility to ensure non-discrimination of the state is not specified. Moreover, since the basis of personal laws is religious and social values, the age-

old patriarchal norms have been reinforced in these laws and, thus, women are deprived of equal rights (ibid). Even though Muslim women have legal rights to inherit the property of their fathers, in reality, generally they are deprived of any property due to social constraints (Zaman, 1999, Mair and Marti, 2009). It can be argued that the inheritance issue may have an unfavourable impact on meeting the demand of collateral when women business-owners apply for bank loans.

Private patriarchy is, however, interwoven with public patriarchy. The interrelationship of these two forms of patriarchy is reflected in the words of Schuler et al. (1996:1735): "In most cases it is the threat of public violence rather than the experience of it that keeps women in the home and ensures their compliance with patriarchal norms". Although the study is dated, the current situation implies that the threat of public violence still plays a significant role. Hence, it is important to provide an overview of this scenario. Table-1 demonstrates various forms of violence against women in Bangladesh. It is worth noting that, due to the traditional values, many incidents are restricted to the media coverage or not reported to the police and, hence, the figures presented in the table can be lower than the actual numbers (Hossain and Sumon, 2013). Furthermore, considering acid violence, Bangladesh has the highest number of incidences in the world (Farouk, 2005).

**Table-1: Violence against Women: Types and Trends**

Year	Types of Violence			
	Rape	Gang Rape	Acid Attack	Eve Teasing <sup>1</sup> / Stalking
2004	618	359	228	
2005	585	250	130	
2006	515	226	142	
2007	436	198	95	
2008	486	127	80	
2009	446	199	63	
2010	626	290	153	216*

Source: Adopted from Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) Documentation Unit, 2011 and Odhikar, 2011 referred by Hossain, and Sumon (2013)

\*Note: The data for eve-teasing is available only for 2010.

<sup>1</sup> Recently, eve-teasing is deemed to be a serious issue whereby boys individually or in a group try to irritate a girl or a group of girls in a public place by yelling, showing sexual gesture and instruments, obstructing them from moving and so on (Hossain and Sumon, 2013).

The discussion on public violence demonstrates not only the vulnerable position of women in the public sphere but also provides clues as to how women are confined to the household sphere. It also appears to suggest that to navigate public places women can be dependent on male family members. Therefore, this context can provide immense opportunity to explore how women business-owners go through the debt financing process specifically, whilst carrying on this process requires going beyond the boundary of their common business premises.

It is also important to pay attention to the notion of protecting the honour of women in Bangladesh. In some cases society condemns women for going to public places as it can be considered provocative and offensive (Feldman, 2001). Consequently, for the notion of honour and for the concern about threat of public patriarchy, particularly after sunset, women are expected to be escorted by a close male relative or an elderly woman or even a minor child when venturing from home (Zaman, 1999). It can be contended that the restricted mobility and, above all, the notion of the respectable position of women can also have an impact on the experiences of women's access to bank loans in this context.

This section vividly presents the highly patriarchal context of the developing nation of Bangladesh. Given the complexities inherent in this society, this context provides the potential opportunity to investigate how patriarchy is articulated in women business-owners acquiring debt finance in relation to the private as well as public realm. In order to concentrate on the particular aspect of financing businesses, a general understanding regarding the women engaged in small businesses in this country is required. For this reason, it is better to have a brief overview of the job market and self-employment scenario so that the discussion on women business-owners can be understood in a broader context.

### **3.4.3 Women of Bangladesh in the Job Market and Self-employment**

In patriarchal socio-cultural settings, considering the labour market, women were relatively absent from the public, commercial or trade sector or from all forms of industrial production before 1980 (Huq and Begum, 1983). Nonetheless, some women suffering from hard-core poverty worked at the homes of wealthy village neighbours (Dannecker, 1999) or entered into the labour market (Asian Development Bank, 2011). In this agrarian country, traditionally, women work for

agricultural activities at home (Hossain and Byes, 2009). Women are considered as unpaid family labourers (Jaim and Rahman, 1988). Even when women undertake the majority of the work, generally, men hold control over decision making and income from the economic activities (ibid).

Through employment in the garments sector and self-employment with micro-credit, however, women have marked significant changes in the patriarchal context of the country. With the emergence of export production in the early 1980s, rural women, as well as first-generation, urban, lower-middle-class women became a growing proportion of the labour force (Feldmen, 2001). It is difficult to explain “how women could, seemingly overnight, challenge patriarchal regulation and secure wage employment in the emerging export sector” (Feldmen, 2001:1100). Aside from this, with a particular emphasis on women, Professor Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank introduced the micro-credit concept; poor women receive 97 percent of the loans (Grameen Bank, 2013). The micro-credit programme has brought some positive changes to women, such as increasing mobility, participating in decision-making and being more aware about political and legal issues (Chen, 1983, Todd, 1996, Hashemi et al., 1996).

Nonetheless, many of the women in micro-credit are found not to have control over their financial issues (Schuler, et al., 1996; Naher, 2005). The male family members consumed the loans (ibid). Not only husbands but also other members of the extended family are involved in the process of accessing loans, particularly decision making concerning taking loans (Naher, 2005). As far as the engagement of women in micro-credit is concerned, sometimes there exists strong resistance from the rural society in terms of restricted mobility, impact of religious practices or superstition and so on (Naher, 2005, Naher, 2010). Thus, although the involvement of women in economic activities is evident in Bangladesh, a high level of patriarchal practices is traced in relation to their activities.

Research on women in Bangladesh is largely focused on poor women. An overwhelming number of studies are concentrated on micro-credit related to the overall empowerment of women (Goetz and Gupta, 1996, Hashemi et al., 1996, Amin et al., 1998), precisely their decision making power in family planning (Amin et al., 1995, Amin et al., 1996, Schuler et al., 1995) and resisting patriarchy

(Naher, 2010). Furthermore, extensive studies have been conducted on patriarchal issues, such as male violence (Zaman, 1999, Naved et al., 2011, Hossain and Sumon, 2013) specifically on domestic violence (Naved and Persson, 2005, Johnson and Das, 2009) focusing largely on rural areas. The proliferation of such studies related to gender or, specifically, patriarchy in Bangladesh is confined to women engaged in micro-credit and, in general, to poor, almost illiterate women living in villages.

These studies portray an image of women in micro-credit that contribute to construct the category, *Bangladeshi Women* or *Women in Bangladesh* (White, 1992). It represents women of the country as a group that shares common characteristics or interests that are concentrated on some aspects while suppressing others (ibid). Whilst this image is still prevailing, it can be strongly argued that women in Bangladesh are not at all a homogenous group. They belong to different economic classes – rich, middle and poor as well as to different cultural and ethnic minority groups (Farouk, 2005). Rural and urban settings are also factors to differentiate them (ibid). According to White (1992) the dominant discourse can be challenged by providing an opportunity to more women from diversified backgrounds to speak for themselves.

At present, there is a steadily growing middle class in the country, estimated at over 10 percent of the population (Mohiuddin, 2009). It is important to notice that like the poor class women, there have also been changes in the middle class women in terms of engagement in economic activities. A considerable number of middle class women are engaged in teaching, law firms, journalism, government and non-government organizations (NGOs) (Asian Development Bank, 2011). While considering professional issues, it should be noted that, recently, there has been progress in the education of females in the country. For the percentage of females in the 15-24 years age group, literacy rate doubled from 1991 (38%) to 2009 (76.8%) (UNSD, 2013). A study by the Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries (BWCCI) in 2008 suggests that as younger women receive education they are more likely to engage in self-employment. It is particularly true for those women between the ages of 15 and 30, with at least 10 years of formal schooling (this level of education is not sufficient to enter into mid-level jobs). Nevertheless, women entrepreneurs are heavily concentrated in



manufacturing (62%) mainly in boutiques, handicrafts and food processing, followed by service and trade (Daniels, 2003).

Despite an increasing number of women in small businesses (Chowdhury, 2011) as well as the recent changes in middle-class women and the education level, the focus of researchers remains almost resolutely on women in micro-credit. The differences of women in small businesses and women in micro-credit are not only restricted to the classes, educational backgrounds and settings of urban or rural areas for the operation of businesses. Considering institutional aspects, there also exist substantial differences between lending to micro businesses and financing small businesses. Micro-credit aims at social as well as financial development. For instance, Grameen Bank requires members to maintain 'sixteen decisions' that include performing particular activities and even following certain codes of conduct in daily life (ibid). As a result, the influence of gender on financing women in small businesses can be necessarily different from that of women in micro-credit.

In sum, while discussing the involvement of women in economic activities, it is important to note that these women are still subject to gender subordination in relation to their work. Nonetheless, even though there is a change in the middle-class, better educated women in professional work or self-employment, we know little about women in small businesses. The discussion in this section establishes that concentrating on poor, almost illiterate women results in the importance of middle-class, comparatively better educated women being largely overlooked. Therefore, recognising the heterogeneous nature of women, a quest begins to focus on this particular group of women in small businesses in the urban set-up of this country reflecting the fact that women in Bangladesh are not a homogeneous group. The specific focus of this thesis on the debt finance of small businesses of women is discussed in the next section.

#### **3.4.4 Financing Small Businesses of Women in Bangladesh**

To set the background to concentrate on bank loans of women business owners, it is essential to elucidate the debt finance related issues of small businesses in general. In Bangladesh, for the growth stage of businesses, banks, particularly private commercial banks are considered as the principal source of loans in the

country (Islam et al., 2005). Nonetheless, Jaim (2011) reveals various problems of the loan application process of male entrepreneurs in banks. These problems are associated with the collection and preparation of loan documents, inaccurate security valuation, lengthy time for loan sanctioning and so on. It implies that, in general, the debt financing process is problematic in this developing nation context.

However, recognising finance as an important tool for the empowerment of women business-owners, government has introduced supportive measures for the easy availability of financial assistance from banks (Bangladesh Bank, 2014). Twenty-two commercial banks are offering loans with the refinancing facility, aided by the government (Begum, 2015). Women are provided loans with relatively relaxed terms and conditions, specifically regarding interest rate and collateral (ibid) (the special scheme for these loans is explained in detail in Section 4.4.1: Accessing Sample of the methodology chapter). Nevertheless, in response to this step, the amount of loans has been increased (Bangladesh Bank, 2010). From 2004 to April, 2015, through this scheme, a large amount of loans (in total Tk<sup>2</sup>. 10.42 billion) has been disbursed to women business-owners. Although there is a growing number of women business-owners availing themselves of governmental financial support, given the nature of the patriarchal context, an investigation is needed of how gender subordination is articulated in their experiences of accessing debt finance. Moreover, in this country, whereas business is considered as a male domain (Zohir and Greene, 2012) and male entrepreneurs are facing many problems in accessing loans (Jaim, 2011), even with the existing support of the government, this situation can be more critical for women. Therefore, this doctoral study seeks to explore the influence of gender on access to bank loans of women business-owners in the context of a patriarchal developing nation.

It should be noted that a number of studies (MIDAS, 2009, Khatun and Kabir, 2014) about bank loans of women business-owners in Bangladesh have been conducted but, paradoxically, without mentioning the differences, the researchers have considered a wide range of businesses – micro, small and medium. The issues related to small businesses have been difficult to identify among all these

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<sup>2</sup> Tk. Stands for Taka, the currency of Bangladesh

different types of businesses. Furthermore, these studies have a lack of attention to any in-depth exploration of gender related analysis. As alluded to above, with particular concentration on women with small businesses in Bangladesh, few studies include financing (Zohir and Greene, 2012, Jaim and Chakma, 2013). The studies in some cases provide hints of patriarchy from a broader perspective but the literature is largely silent about the precise issue of gender subordination concerning women business-owners. How the family and the broader contextual issues play roles in the experiences of women concerning their access to bank loans remains underexplored. In simple words, there is scant attention paid to research on debt financing for women business-owners in this context.

In sum, the study on women business-owners in Bangladesh is at rudimentary level. Nevertheless, the discussion on previous sections establishes that there is ample scope to consider family related issues and broader contextual issues to advance the prevailing knowledge concerning the influence of gender upon access to the bank loan process of women business-owners. Given the highly patriarchal context, investigation into the family sphere can go beyond the exploration of the impact of domestic responsibility and childcare on bank loan related activities of women business-owners. Whether and how male family members directly dominate, oppress or exploit women by entering into their business domains can be interrogated. Considering the broader contextual aspects of this patriarchal developing nation, attention can be also paid to reveal how public patriarchal aspects are enacted in the debt financing process and, simultaneously, to delve into the interwoven relationships between private and public patriarchy in the experiences of women business-owners. The overall discussion leads to conclude that Bangladesh is a rich context for this doctoral study.

### **3.5 Chapter Summary**

It has been already recognised that the consideration of context is crucial for entrepreneurship research (Zahra, 2007, Welter, 2010, Zahra and Wright, 2011). With reference to the particular concentration on debt finance, it is evident that context-specificities of developing countries provide a critical contribution to entrepreneurship scholarship. This chapter, moreover, enriches the debate on recognising the importance of context in research of women's entrepreneurship.

With the existing literature, it highlights the potentiality of embracing context into women's entrepreneurship studies. For example, patriarchal practices in the businesses of women business-owners in developed nations are discussed almost solely in terms of household responsibilities as underscored in the previous chapter (Chapter-2) but a highly patriarchal context can provide opportunity to explore whether any dominating, oppressing or exploiting roles of male family members exist directly in business activities. Moreover, the chapter contends that the critical consideration of diversified family aspects of different contexts and the broader contextual issues of developing nations can advance the field of women entrepreneurship. Therefore, as the key debate of gender subordination has already been established (Bradley, 1999), argument should focus on how gender "shapes the experiences of entrepreneurship within particular contexts" (Marlow and Patton, 2005:731).

Taking into account the specific aspect of finance, it is revealed that men are able to gain funds through women within family in terms of dowry (Hossain and Sumon, 2013; Banerjee, 2014) or beyond families from micro-finance institutions as loans at the initial stage of businesses (Naher, 2005). This study can extend the view by exploring how male family members respond regarding bank loans of women at the growth stage of businesses when women are supposed to be experienced in managing businesses and funds. Moreover, whereas the literature on the bank loan process in developed nations is entirely concentrated on the issue of discrimination of banks, as discussed in Chapter-2, this chapter strongly argues to consider contextual aspects of developing countries as a valuable way to assess gender subordination of women business-owners. Rather than an individual undertaking (Ahl, 2006), by considering family dimensions and broader contextual issues, this feminist study can substantially advance the debate on gender subordination. Further, within the field of debt finance, the context specificities of a developing nation can enrich the extant women's entrepreneurship scholarship with distinct insights.

Bangladesh, a highly patriarchal context of a developing nation, can provide immense opportunity to conduct such a study in terms of family perspective and broader contextual perspective. Therefore, instead of almost solely concentrating on women of micro-credit of the country, researchers can pay attention to the

middle class, comparatively educated women engaged in small businesses, recognising the heterogeneous nature of women. Moreover, whereas the government is concerned with the emancipation of women through disbursing bank loans to women business-owners with special support, the investigation into this particular group of women can also provide insights of how gender subordination may subvert the aim of government initiatives in this patriarchal background. Put differently, given the nature of the context, regarding access to bank loans by women business-owners, the influence of gender in this developing country can be substantially different from that of developed nations. In line with this logic, in order to provide a robust and rich contribution to the prevailing knowledge, in the context of Bangladesh, this doctoral study addresses the research question: *How does gender influence women business-owners' access to debt finance in the context of a patriarchal developing nation?* The next chapter, on methodology, explains how this study has been designed and executed.

## **Chapter-4**

### **Research Methodology**

*People call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat.*

*- Rebecca West*

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Having laid out the relevant literature of the thesis, this chapter proceeds by explaining the philosophical underpinning of the research and how the data was generated and analysed to address the research objectives. Given the nature of the study, that is concentrated on gender in a specific context, I have adopted pragmatic realism as the ontological position as it acknowledges social construction and simultaneously, recognises reality that exists objectively (Watson, 2013). Further, in relation to the realist ontology, I have adopted subjectivist epistemology (Putnam, 1981) that considers the experiences of women business-owners as the centre of meaning construction. Subjective paradigm shapes this feminist standpoint research. Considering the experiences of the women at the centre of the research, I have applied the qualitative research method (Brooks, 2007). Three field visits in Bangladesh were conducted to generate data for the concerned research. In order to understand the subjective understandings of women's experiences, data were generated through semi-structured interviews (Hesse-Biber, 2007) and then analysed with thematic analysis.

The chapter begins with a rationalisation of the ontological and epistemological positioning of the research and proceeds by explaining the methodological choice and approach to address the research questions of this concerned study. I have presented the data generation method in detail. There is an account of accessing the sample, field trips and semi-structured interviews to generate data. There is also an explanation of the data analysis. The chapter concludes with the issue of reflexivity to ensure the quality of the research.

## 4.2 Ontological and Epistemological Positioning of the Research

Ontology refers the way a person “views the world” (Crotty, 2003:11). It is also concerned with the nature of things that exist in the world (Chalmers, 1999). Epistemology is related to the way “scientific knowledge” is justified with “evidence” (Chalmers, 1999:213). Building upon the understanding of the philosophical concern, this section explains the ontological and epistemological positions of the thesis.

This doctoral study investigates the influence of gender upon women business-owners’ access to bank loans at the growth stage of their businesses in Bangladesh in the context of a patriarchal developing nation and it addresses the research question: *How does gender influence women business-owners’ access to debt finance in the context of a patriarchal developing nation?* To address the research question, my ontological position of the study is based on Watson’s (2011 and also Watson, 2013) understanding of pragmatic realism:

Pragmatic realism accepts the importance of processes of social construction, researcher interpretation, narrative/discursive framing, and all the rest, without denying that there are realities which exist in the social world, independently of the way they are observed or interpreted. (Watson, 2011:208)

Therefore, while pragmatic realism acknowledges different processes, such as social construction, it emphasises establishing these processes in the real world that exists objectively (Watson, 2013). In order to justify this ontological position for the doctoral research, an explanation of the relationships of these processes and the concept of realities is required within the context of my study.

The recognition of the process of social construction in pragmatic realism is particularly important for the study. The reason is that rather than considering gender as a *variable*, the research analyses the *influence of gender* whilst gender is considered socially constructed through collective creation of meaning in societies and this concept of gender is moulded by conventions of social processes, culture and languages (Acker, 1990, Browne, 2007). Berger and Luckmann (1967) also argue that it is not possible to have a proper understanding of an individual without considering the context as it has an influence on shaping him or her. As social construction focuses on “meaning making” from individuals’

perspectives (Crotty, 2003:57), for this study it provides opportunity for the sense-making of gender subordination of women business-owners in terms of the family and broader contextual issues while accessing debt finance in a specific context. Social construction can be used to clarify how patriarchy is articulated and how patriarchal relationships are negotiated in a developing country.

To clarify the ontological position for the study, in addition to acknowledging the social construction, the recognition of the objectively existing real world needs to be discussed. Hjorth, Jones, and Gartner (2008:82) emphasise contextualised research for “being in touch with the real”. Being anchored to the theory of gender that is related to the insights of sociology, this study is concentrated on Bangladesh, a specific context of a patriarchal developing nation and, hence, it becomes close to the reality. To elucidate the issue of contextualisation, it can be noted that the study analyses context specific aspects of family related issues, for instance, the role of extended family members (Nordqvist and Melin, 2010) in the debt financing process. Different broader contextual issues are also identified that have influence on this process. Pragmatic realism enables me to enquire about realities of various social situations and practices (Watson, 2013). As women encounter challenges of gender subordination in their “lives” and “activities” while seeking debt finance in the society, these experiences can be termed as “the realities of the world” (Watson, 2013:24). Put simply, pragmatic realism provides an account of the influence of gender in accessing bank loans of women business-owners in that patriarchal society.

As alluded to above, whereas the studies are almost exclusively on developed nations (Ahl, 2006), this research can provide valuable theoretical insights by revealing how bank loans are accessed by women in a patriarchal developing nation. In this regard, it should be noted that pragmatic realism is concerned with constructing theories of social realities that inform social practices of human beings and thus, it explains “how things work” in societies (Watson, 2011:202). Hence, pragmatic realism provides opportunity to explore *how gender influences* regarding the particular issue of the study. It is worth mentioning that I do not pursue correct or essentially true “representation of reality” which is the guiding principle of pragmatic realism (Jaos, 1993:21). Pragmatism recognises that it is not feasible to ensure a completely formed or perfect theory as well as a



comprehensive understanding of any feature of the world because “reality is far too complicated for that” (Watson, 2012:162). By citing the words of Dewey, (Mounce, 1997) further clarifies that representing the world is not the purpose of knowledge. James considers theories in terms of “adaptation to reality” as quoted by Watson (2013:21). I also align my research with the view of Watson (2013:23) as according to pragmatists, reality is not concerned about either “deep-down generative mechanism” or with “surface level narratives” but about informing practices of human beings. My notion is to develop knowledge regarding gender subordination of women in small businesses in a developing nation in a better form compared with the previous knowledge based on developed nations in order to guide people to cope with the world (Watson, 2013).

Nevertheless, I have adopted subjectivist epistemology. It is recognised that this stance is related to subjectivist or realist ontology (Putnam, 1981). In line with this logic, subjective epistemology is related to my ontological position, that is, pragmatic realism. Subjectivity is, however, the “personal” and “intuitive” knowledge, originated from knowing a subject, that is situated in a particular “social context” (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2004:52). Subjectivism helps to understand the social world that is socially constructed and also possesses an objective reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Subjective evidence is the basis of this epistemological stance (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, for this research, subjectivism is related to the way women ascribe meaning to their experiences (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). In order to analyse the influence of gender, this research considers how subjective individuals, i.e. women business-owners, make sense of their personal experiences in the specific patriarchal developing nation. Moreover, Brooks (2007) raise the issue of a researcher’s lived experiences concerning conducting research. The experiences of a researcher can be incorporated to achieve new insights and knowledge (ibid). As a co-constructor of meaning, I can transparently relate my subjectivity through subjectivism (Thomas and Linstead, 2002).

The epistemological aim of the study is to understand the influence of gender through the experiences of women business-owners in accessing bank loans at the growth stage of businesses in a patriarchal developing nation. Through the paradigm of subjectivism, understanding the lived experiences of women will

further enable understanding of broader contextual issues underlying the different influences of gender in the specific cultural context. However, methodology is a strategy that interprets the principles of ontology and epistemology into guidelines in order to demonstrate the way research can be conducted (Sarantakos, 2005). It facilitates in selecting and applying specific methods in order to achieve results (Crotty, 2003). The next section seeks to explain the methodology of this research.

### **4.3 Methodology**

Within this thesis, subjectivism considers the experiences of individuals as the centre of meaning construction. To provide women the opportunity to articulate their “concrete experiences” (Collins, 1990:209), it is essential to place them at the core of the research (Brooks, 2007). It facilitates to reveal the ignored and unnoticed features of the social order (Buzzanell, 2003). Moreover, it is feminism that is concerned with providing power to women so that they can have a ground to contextualise their own lives as well as to clarify the associated constraints (Nicolson, 1996). In light with these arguments, drawing upon the need for a gender perspective, I have conducted a feminist standpoint research. This section attempts to explain the feminist methodology for the study.

Hartsock (2004) strongly argues that the realities of the lives of women are fundamentally different from those of men. Therefore, “the sexual division of labour” constitutes the foundation for a standpoint but building on that basis, “one could begin, though not complete” provision of the proper understanding on gender subordination (Hartsock, 2004:36). Whereas in the literature, there is a growing recognition of the role of domestic responsibility and child rearing on businesses of women in developed nations, it can be contended as the *starting point* of the debate. In order to advance the understanding on gender subordination, this thesis proposes the requirement to reveal the direct roles of male family members in businesses. Moreover, rather than the individual undertaking (Ahl, 2006), this research interrogates the impact of broader contextual issues on businesses of women to bring to light the gender power in society. Nonetheless, the feminist standpoint offers privileges to women to express their own experiences (Campbell, 2004) and provides opportunity to

understand patriarchal institutions (Hartsock, 2004). Thus, from the feminist standpoint, this research endeavours to uncover the gender subordination of women business-owners within a particular context to contribute to the prevailing knowledge.

Although various types of methods can be adopted for feminist studies, according to many researchers, qualitative methods are more closely related to this type of research (Deutsch, 2007). Feminist studies are concerned with presenting the voices of women for generating knowledge (Frisby et al., 2009). According to many feminist researchers, in order to understand the experiences and perspectives of others, they are committed to realise “as fully as possible women’s voices in data gathering and preparing an account that transmits those voices” (Olesen, 1994:167). Therefore, it is maintained that as qualitative methods are appropriate for revealing and understanding experiences of women as well as addressing the needs with subjective knowledge, these methods are more suitable for feminist studies (Depner, 1981). Given the nature of the study, I have also adopted a qualitative method which I consider to be appropriate for this feminist research.

The appropriateness of qualitative research for this study is explained in greater detail here. To analyse the influence of gender in the patriarchal developing nation, I need to understand “the ways in which people, through social interaction, actively constitute and reconstitute the culturally derived meanings, which they deploy to interpret their experiences and organize social action” (Johnson et al., 2006:135). Qualitative research methods are employed to interpret phenomena according to the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, Cassell and Symon, 2004). Consequently, as the research relates to, in particular, gender and context, meaning-making is important and, hence, a qualitative method is imperative for the study. Moreover, qualitative research provides me with the opportunity to explore the intensity as well as intricacy of phenomena related to financing businesses (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, Myers, 2009) grounded in the experiences of women (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002).

Further, qualitative researchers generally reckon the social world to be inseparably linked to individuals (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). They try to understand accounts of people in relation to their social, political and economic contexts (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, Golafshani, 2003). Put differently, it is based on holistic understandings (Silverman, 2009). This approach is particularly important for the study as it is based on women of a specific context of a developing nation where the contextual facets are assessed. By applying the qualitative method, this thesis can reveal how the broader contextual issues have an influence on the activities of women business-owners. This method also facilitates to address the embedded context-specific nature of family related issues in businesses of women.

My methodological approach, however, relates to the narrative inquiry that is based on the understanding of lives of people in a form of a story (Sarbin, 1986). Narrative is emphasised as a fundamental structured process to generate human experiences and actions of own lives as well as the lives of others (Polkinghorne, 1988). As the feminist methodology emphasises taking into consideration the voice and personal experiences in the research, through the narrative accounts of women, a better understanding regarding patriarchal experiences can be achieved (Falconer, 2009). For this study, I have sought to generate information in the form of a story concerning initiating businesses along with managing initial funds and then specifically regarding gaining access to debt finance at the growth stage of businesses. Narrative provides the women business-owners the space for thinking (Bruner, 1990). They recall incidents related to businesses and personal lives (O'Connor, 2002) and create, recreate and disseminate meaning from relevant events (Josselson and Lieblich, 1995). It should be noted that I have adopted semi-structured interviews in which narratives have been considered in a restrictive way. The issue of semi-structured interviews is discussed in further details later.

In brief, the foundation of a feminist standpoint research is to understand the view of women regarding their lives (Harding, 1991). In this feminist research, placing middle class, comparatively educated women business-owners at the heart of the study (Brooks, 2007), I am concentrating on their experiences (Collins, 1990) regarding debt finance at the growth stage of businesses in order

to analyse gender subordination in that specific patriarchal developing nation. Narrative inquiry is employed to explore the story of the women. In so doing, field work is needed in the specific context to conduct interviews. For this reason, it is essential to identify respondents for the interviews and gain access to the sample. The next section provides a detailed account of the method for data generation of this research.

#### **4.4 Method**

##### **4.4.1 Accessing Sample**

###### ***Criteria of Respondents***

To address the research question - *How does gender influence women business-owners' access to debt finance in the context of a patriarchal developing nation?* it requires identifying appropriate participants. Therefore, the selection of respondents was driven by the research question that is related to the links among gender, small businesses and debt finance in the context of a patriarchal developing nation. Further, as the first research objective is specifically associated with the family aspects of women business-owners, the selection of the women required also a consideration of their family. Purposive sampling was adopted for this study as it ensures that participants possess the specific characteristics (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Bangladesh, as the context of this research, is discussed in Chapter-3. However, in order to select the women business-owners of Bangladesh, I purposefully followed these criteria:

1. The women were founders and sole-proprietors of the concerned businesses in order to identify and analyse the influence of gender; it is particularly important because in the case of transferred ownership or partnership, it might be difficult to isolate the influence of others on financing businesses.
2. The business-owners were continuing with bank loans at the growth stage of the businesses that was essential for this study on the debt finance. To have consistency across the experiences of the women, it was considered necessary that they had applied for the loans within two years prior to the period of the interviews.
3. All women were married and living with their family.

In order to select the respondents for this research, I decided to approach a bank involved in providing small business loans to women at the growth stage of their businesses. Since the research is based on debt finance, in order to select the bank I considered, specifically, the performance of banks regarding disbursing small business loans to women. As a point of clarification, these loans of commercial banks are supported by a special government scheme of Bangladesh. Barc Bank Ltd.<sup>3</sup> was at the most prominent position for disbursing the highest amount of loans to women business-owners. This is why, I considered Barc Bank Ltd. in order to identify and recruit women business-owners for the research.

Barc Bank Ltd. operates different schemes for disbursing loans to small business-owners at the growth stage of their businesses.<sup>4</sup> In this bank, the 'Aditiya Rin' scheme, particularly designed for women business-owners, aligns with the procedure of the government policy as the funds of the loans are aided by the Bangladesh Government. Through this arrangement, Barc Bank Ltd. disburses loans to women business-owners at a comparatively lower rate (around 10%). Nevertheless, this scheme offers only small loans (up to Tk. 1,000,000) without any collateral. Comparatively large loans (generally, more than Tk. 2,500,000) are disbursed through other schemes that require collateral and charge a comparatively higher interest rate (around 15%). The lending procedures of these schemes are the same for both male and female clients.

In terms of accessing a sample for the study, considering the initiative of the government, I decided to concentrate mostly on women who received loans from the government supported scheme. To provide wider scope for the research, I also took into account other schemes from which women business-owners were accessing loans. Accordingly, I requested Barc Bank Ltd. to provide me with a list of women business-owners who were receiving loans at the growth stage of their businesses. I restricted the business setting to Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, as most of the women were operating businesses in that geographic location. Nevertheless, as I accepted the list of the women provided by the bank, it is worth noting the key issues concerning eligibility of women for accessing

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<sup>3</sup> The pseudo name of the bank is used for the purpose of confidentiality.

<sup>4</sup> The information of different loan schemes and other relevant issues of disbursing loans of Barc Bank Ltd. were presented from the interview of a bank officer; the interview was conducted during the pilot survey.

loans to provide a better understanding of the women and their businesses. For example, women needed to run businesses for at least three years before being able to apply for a loan. Further, the bank scrutinised the financial documents of the businesses, their transactions of businesses in the bank and so on in order to assess the financial performance of the businesses and to identify the growth stage of the businesses. As a point of clarification, while I was investigating the experiences of the women concerning the funds they had received from Barc Bank Ltd., I was also interested to know about their prior experience of debt finance from other banks. In some cases, this additional information facilitates to explain the broader picture of the debt finance of the context.

At the stage of generating data for the pilot survey (August, 2013), I compiled a list of women business-owners from Barc Bank Ltd. Accordingly, I received a list comprising the names, addresses and other details of approximately 50 women business-owners so that I could conduct extensive data generation. It should be noted that I prefer to use the term 'data generation' instead of the common term 'data collection' as considering my subjective epistemological position, during the interview process, knowledge is co-created and co-constructed with the interviewees (Bevan, 2009). Nonetheless, while approaching prospective respondents, I confronted context-specific challenges whereby I could not recruit participants based entirely on the list provided by the bank. The scenario led me to employ several strategies to select suitable respondents for the study.

### ***Selecting Appropriate Respondents***

During the extensive field trip, in general, I tried to meet the women face to face in order to make an appointment for the interviews. Although this required much time, cost and effort, I found this more effective than trying to undertake the initial communication over the telephone (the issue is discussed at a later part of the section). I contacted, in total, 38 women business-owners but two women, who were contacted by telephone for the appointments, later decided against being interviewed. It is important to note that among the remaining 36 women, some were revealed or suspected not to be business-owners at all. Although in the documentation they owned the businesses they did not operate the businesses. As per the definition of Carland (1984), a person needs not only to own the business independently but also to operate it to be considered as a small

business-owner. The issue related to the problem of identifying women business-owners is exemplified in much detail below.

While approaching the women business-owners to seek their consent for interviews, eight women or their husbands directly disclosed that the women did not operate the business. Practically, the businesses were owned and operated by the husbands (or the father for one woman). The women had their names only in the documents. These arrangements had been made so that the male family members could gain the benefit of the special governmental loan scheme. My experience of attempting to access respondents, without even necessarily undertaking any interview, revealed an insightful finding. This scenario brings to light how males take advantage of the government initiatives regarding debt financing, designed for women. Nevertheless, taking into account the definition of small business-owners (Carland, 1984), I could not consider these (eight) women as business-owners.

Finally, I considered interviews of 21 women business-owners who fulfilled all the specified characteristics for the research. Nevertheless, I interviewed 28 women who apparently complied with the criteria of the respondents. Later, I discarded seven interviews for various reasons. For example, while undertaking one interview the respondent admitted that, although the business was registered in her name, her husband operated it as if it were his. The loan was not taken from the special scheme for women and, hence, the family member did not avail himself of the opportunity of a lower interest rate on loans without collateral. Nonetheless, she disclosed an advantage related to tax benefits for her husband. In the country, females pay less income tax compared to male counterparts. Thus, the respondent's husband paid less tax by registering the business in the name of his wife. Another woman's business was close to the extent of a medium sized business which seemed inconsistent with the entire sample. Whilst four interviews were abandoned for such reasons, I discarded three additional interviews as I suspected that the women did not operate their businesses. From my knowledge as an insider, I perceived that those businesses were associated with corruption and perhaps to hide that issue, the women were not inclined to admit that they did not own the businesses.



Against this background, to select the appropriate sample, I employed different strategies. First, I emphasised the rapport-building aspect. I spent time with the women, or sometimes with their family members, before embarking on the interviews. I tried to visit the working places of the women to show my interest in their businesses. I considered this as an essential effort to develop confidence and trust between the participants and me (Waddington, 2004). Whereas some women or their male relatives were concerned about whether I was using a false identity to gain access to their business information, at the very initial stage of communication, I was conscious to properly position myself as a researcher. I needed to convince them that the information would be strictly utilised for academic purposes and I would not share it with others, particularly with the bank. This was one of the reasons why I preferred to communicate face to face for my initial communication. Thus, I wanted to provide the women or their family members a platform to clarify the original ownership of the businesses before undertaking the interviews.

The second issue is related to the focus of the nature of businesses. Some businesses are considered as traditional businesses for women (Mirchandani, 1999). From my experiences of the field visits, many of the businesses that were found problematic, i.e. not practically owned by women, were not traditional businesses for women. For instance, garage for servicing vehicles, traditional sweet shops etc. Consequently, while coming across these types of businesses, I was more aware about exploring the ownership issue. Third, generally, I went to the business premises without any prior appointment. Therefore, finding the women working at the premises suggested their involvement in the businesses. In some cases, I checked the issue with nearby businesspersons. Last but not the least, while undertaking the interviews, at the initial part, I spent much time identifying any inconsistency of the information or lack of confidence while presenting business related information. Before going into detail about the debt financing issue, I generally had a good indication about the ownership of the businesses from the way they narrated their experiences of launching businesses and managing the funds for the initial stage. Taking all these issues together, finally, I selected the 21 respondents who were appropriate for the study. Table-2 presents the information regarding the businesses and the demographic issues of the respondents (Annexure-1 provides details of the businesses and loans.)

**Table-2: Business Related and Demographic Information of Respondents**

SI No.	Name of Woman Business-Owner*	Type of Businesses	Demographic Characteristics		Special Remark***
			Age of Women	Educational Background**	
1	Zafrin	Boutique and Tailoring	50-55	Masters	Took large loan with collateral; lived with joint family
2	Maliha	Boutique and Tailoring	40-45	Masters	Lived with joint family
3	Zohora	Boutique and Tailoring	50-55	SSC	
4	Mariana	Boutique and Tailoring	35-40	MBA (On going)	Took large loan with collateral
5	Fahmina	Boutique and Tailoring	50-55	Masters	
6	Roushan	Boutique and Tailoring	35-40	SSC	
7	Nahid	Boutique and Tailoring	30-35	Undergraduate	
8	Lisa	Boutique and Tailoring	30-35	SSC	Lived with joint family
9	Fiza	Boutique and Tailoring	30-35	Masters	
10	Amrin	Boutique and Tailoring	60-65	SSC	Widow
11	Sheeta	Boutique and Tailoring (Embroidery Factory)	40-45	Grade 7	Hindu in religion
12	Shahina	Dress and Handicraft Products (Manufacturing and selling in the outlet)	50-55	HSC	
13	Masuma	Trading (Retailing curtains, bed-covers etc.)	25-30	SSC	Lived with joint family

14	Barna	Trading (Retailing curtains, bed- covers etc.)	50-55	Grade 10	Took large loan with collateral; Hindu in religion
15	Shahnaz	Trading (Retailing dress, toiletries, accessories etc.)	35-40	SSC	
16	Nurunnahar	Trading (Retailing accessories, henna etc.)	35-40	SSC	Lived with joint family
17	Lopa	Trading (Retailing shoes)	35-40	Grade 8	
18	Rizia	Beauty Parlour	25-30	SSC	Lived with joint family
19	Papia	Beauty Parlour	45-50	HSC	Lived with joint family
20	Nasima	Grocery Shop	25-30	Diploma	
21	Rini	Manufacturing Grounded Spice	45-50	Grade 8	

\*Note: For the purpose of confidentiality pseudonyms of the respondents is used.

\*\*Note: For educational background, in Bangladesh, SSC (Secondary School Certificate) indicates the degree achieved after Grade 10 and HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate) is the degree after which a student is eligible to seek admission to university.

\*\*\*Note: Special remarks have been mentioned in terms of religion, marital status, type of family and amount of loans; in general, all women are Muslims, married, living in unit families and took loans from the special scheme of the government.

#### 4.4.2 Field Trips

I had a total of three field trips to conduct the study. This section provides a brief description of the pilot survey, the extensive field trip and the follow-up survey for the doctoral research.

Before undertaking the empirical work, I conducted a pilot survey in Bangladesh to verify the research design. This survey was carried out for one month towards the end of the first year of my PhD (August, 2013). Prior to proceeding for the interviews of women business-owners, I considered it as a pre-requisite to have a good understanding regarding different issues such as the steps taken by women business-owners while accessing loans. With an open ended questionnaire, I

conducted an interview of a bank loan officer of Barc Bank Ltd. Based on that interview, I refined the interview guide for the women business-owners. Nonetheless, in order to know the detail of the loan scheme, prior to the interview, I checked the web-site of the bank and while taking the interview, I also went through the promotional materials of it<sup>5</sup>. In addition, I conducted face to face semi-structured interviews of four women business-owners who took loans from Barc Bank Ltd. I let the interview go off at tangents (Bryman, 2016) to explore the most interesting issues related to the study whilst my notion was to improve over time (Glesne, 1999).

Following the pilot survey, the interview guide was refined, making the necessary corrections and changes for the final interviews. Then the interview guide and the interview procedure were considered as apposite for the particular research. Later, the extensive field work in Bangladesh was carried out for approximately three and half months, starting from mid-February, 2014 to the end of May, 2014. At the analysis phase, there was another field trip for approximately one month in November, 2015. During the last trip, I had clarification of specific quotes and undertook follow-up interviews of several (eight) women. I checked my interpretation of a part of the data with a faculty member of a university of Bangladesh. In some cases, I verified my interpretation of the data with the respondents. The next section, however, exemplifies how data was generated from the interviews.

#### **4.4.3 Semi-Structured Interviews**

Given the nature of the research, to concentrate on the concrete experiences of women business-owners, semi-structured interviews were considered for generating data. This section sets to justify the selection of the way of the data generation. It also describes how data was generated in the field with interviews.

I consider interview as the most suitable method for this study compared to other qualitative methods. In-depth interview is an effective means to reveal the concealed experiences of marginalised groups (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Feminist researchers consider interviews particularly appealing (Reinharz, 1992) because

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<sup>5</sup> For the purpose of confidentiality of the bank, the web-site address and the reference of promotional materials cannot be made explicit.

through interviews, researchers can gain access to the “ideas”, “thoughts” and “memories” in their own words of the respondents rather than that of researchers (Reinharz, 1992:19). This technique of “learning from women” goes against the long standing tradition that ignores the ideas of women and in which men speak for women (ibid). However, other methods were deemed inappropriate for this study. For example, feminist case studies deal with experiences of selected women (Carroll, 1976). As in this research I intend to explore different underlying issues of the patriarchal experiences of the women, either in terms of the family or the broader context of a developing nation, I cannot focus on a few selected women. Concentrating on a few women would restrict the exploration of different aspects of the diversified experiences. Besides, in the case of ethnography, it requires considerable time for the participation of researchers in the lives of respondents (Reinharz, 1992). In this regard, time and financial constraint for the field work were taken into consideration for this doctoral research. By taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of different methods, the interview is deemed appropriate for the study.

Specifically, semi-structured interviews were employed to conduct data generation from the women business-owners for this research. In the case of feminist research, the importance of semi-structured interviews is evident from Graham (1984:112): “The use of semi-structured interviews has become the principle means by which feminists have sought to achieve the active involvement of their respondents in the construction of data about their lives.” These interviews enable respondents to express their own experiences in their subjective understandings (Hesse-Biber, 2007, Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Then again, as this type of interview is loosely structured and includes open ended questions, it offers flexibility for the interviewees to introduce concepts that they feel are important (Musson, 2004). This freedom of expression also provides the ground for researchers to raise probing questions and to discuss in detail (King, 2004) with clarification (Reinharz, 1992). In addition, there exists opportunity to request participants to present examples that are specific to their lives (Hesse-Biber, 2007).

It is also worth mentioning that I consider semi-structured interviews rather than open-ended interviews for the research as open-ended interviews produce non-

standardised information (Reinharz, 1992). Hence, adopting open-ended interviews is not an appropriate approach to address the specific research objectives of this study. Given the nature of the study, structured interviews are also not appropriate for this research as this type of interview restricts free interaction between a researcher and respondent (ibid). In line with the logics, for this research, semi-structured interview is deemed to be the most appropriate method so that the women business-owners can express their experiences in subjective understandings with proper clarification along with necessary examples.

In terms of conducting the interviews, at the beginning I sought to understand the extent and nature of the businesses as well as some personal and family related aspects in order to relate the information for an in-depth exploration at the later stage of the interviews. Then I concentrated on issues of financing the businesses. (The interview guide, along with the explanation of the intended information from each question, is provided in Annexure-2.) In order to have a proper communication, interviews were conducted in Bangla, which is the native language of both the respondents and me. I was also concerned about providing relaxed and comfortable feelings to the interviewees to disclose their own experiences (Liamputtong, 2007). To elicit an effective response from the participants, I sometimes made a personal investment in the research relationships by showing emotions and empathy (Oakley, 1993). Furthermore, my origin and gender played an important role while interacting with the respondents (Naher, 2005). Corbin and Buckle (2009) also point out that compared to non-native researchers, an insider can have better understanding of the participants.

As alluded to above, it is important to mention that, generally, the interviews were taken at the respondents' residence or at their working premises where the interviewees felt comfortable to talk alone and where the surroundings were essentially calm and quiet. While approaching the respondents, I clearly mentioned the nature and purpose of the research (the document of ethical approval from the university and the consent form are provided in Annexure-3). In this patriarchal context, in some cases, I had to ask permission from the male family members to undertake the interviews or even to have initial communication with the women. In several cases, I also had to convince the male family

members not to be present in the room during the interviews. Nonetheless, in general, the interview ranged from forty minutes to around two hours. All interviews were voice recorded. If there was any confusion or lack of clarification about the interviews, further communication with the respondents was conducted through repeat visits or over cell-phones. The next section, however, sets to clarify how I analysed the data.

#### **4.5 Data Analysis**

It is argued that for qualitative analysis, thematic analysis should be deemed as a foundational method (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is utilised in order to identify, analyse and report patterns (that are considered as themes) within data. This method of analysis presents data in rich detail (ibid). This section exemplifies why and how I employed thematic analysis to analyse the data of this research.

Given the nature of the research, relating to social constructions of gender in a specific context and considering that the reality exists objectively, thematic analysis is the appropriate method for data analysis. Thematic analysis is a constructionist method that recognises how individuals make sense of their own experiences (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It also focuses on theorising socio-cultural contexts as well as structural conditions (ibid). This method of analysis can be an effective means for this study to make sense of the experiences of the women business-owners while accessing bank loans. The underlying family-related and broader contextual issues of the diverse experiences of the women can be better explained with this analytic method. Moreover, while explaining the experiences of the women business-owners of the developing nation, thematic analysis can retain focus on limits of reality because it is further regarded as a realist method (ibid).

Thematic analysis is a recursive process rather than a linear process (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Through employing this analytical method, researchers cannot proceed directly from one phase to the next; they need to move back and forth. Nonetheless, the analysis process commences during the period of interviews (Charmaz, 2006). I found myself rephrasing my questions or focusing on some new issues that emerged during the interviews. To analyse the data of the

interviews, however, I followed the six phases of analysis, explained by Braun and Clarke (2006).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), while analysing data, at first, it is important to become familiar with one's own data. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:210) further recommend using "the data to think with" for exploring appealing patterns, surprises and discrepancies in order to be thoroughly familiar with the data. Nevertheless, for the purpose of transcribing and translating, I was heavily engaged with the data. I made a verbatim transcription of all the interviews. The transcription required close reading due to the acute attention for the process (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999). As a result, while time consuming, the work of transcription provided me with the opportunity to have a thorough understanding of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

As the interviews were conducted in Bangla, the transcribed copies were also in Bangla. The entire transcribed version of interviews was translated into English for the analysis. Initially there was a literal translation and then the interviews were represented in a way that made sense in spoken English (Pilnick and Zayts, 2016). As "people rarely speak in fully formed sentences", if there were grammatical omissions or if the interviewee referred to something that did not convey proper meaning, for the purpose of clarification, I inserted words in square brackets within the interviews (Bryman, 2001:554-555). Nevertheless, I had back translation of two interviews by a professional translator. The back translation is a commonly utilised way for checking the accuracy of a translation (Brislin, 1980). The back translated copies were compared with the original versions of Bangla transcripts. After checking two interviews, minor deviations between copies were revealed which indicates the accuracy of the rest of the translated data. Nonetheless, there were also limitations of back translation, such as non-existence of equivalent words or expression of the source language in other languages (Nes et al., 2010). Therefore, in some cases, I consulted with a faculty member of the English Department of a university in Bangladesh concerning the translation issue. To ensure the accuracy of translation, it is recommended to have such contribution from an expert specialising in linguistic skills (ibid).



After familiarising myself with the data, I started generating codes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Codes are to identify features of data and to organise data in meaningful groups (Boyatzis, 1998). For coding, I principally considered data-driven coding (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). To develop these codes, I took into account the recommendation of Ryan and Bernard (2003), for instance, repetitions that are related to recurring topics. Further, to investigate codes, I was concerned to emphasise similarities and differences across transcripts (ibid).

Phase three of the process of analysis is to search for themes whilst themes are different from codes; themes are generally broader (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The next two phases are associated with reviewing and refining themes. After first order coding, I had a long list of codes. Then I tried to collate the codes into themes considering the research aim. I reviewed the themes by adding some codes with additional data that I missed earlier and by discarding few themes. It is worth noting that I checked the interpretation of the data with my supervisors. At a later stage of the analysis, I also checked the interpretation of some quotes with the respondents and one of my colleagues in Bangladesh during the last field trip, as mentioned earlier. However, in terms of refining themes, concern was also paid to the coherence and internal consistency among themes (ibid).

Regarding the development of themes, it is important to note that software, for instance NVivo, is widely used for qualitative research. Nonetheless, it is recognised that even though the software offers a myriad tools to employ for analysis, researchers retain the power of selection (Bringer et al., 2004). The software can only assist in the tasks, it cannot analyse the data. Moreover, it is acknowledged that the software provides convenience to analyse data although the task can be also done manually (ibid). In line with these logics, instead of spending time to learn new software, I considered the manual analysis as appropriate for this study and, accordingly, I conducted the analysis to develop themes.

Finally, four overarching themes were identified. Three themes address the first research objective concerning the family issues related to the experiences of accessing debt finance of the women business-owners. 'Husband' was emerged as the most prominent theme. 'Other Family Members and Domestic Responsibilities'

was another theme to explain gender subordination. Based on these two themes, the widely diverse experiences of the women were revealed and, hence, to identify the underlying reasons for these differences, an attempt was made to explore the family related aspects with the third theme – ‘Family Related Issues Affecting Different Experiences’. In other words, these three themes are aimed at answering the three research questions of the first research objective. The fourth theme addresses the second research objective concerning the influence of the broader context-specific aspects on the experiences of the women regarding their accessing bank loans for the small businesses. ‘Broader Contextual Issues’ is the theme associated with this research objective.

The final phase of data analysis includes write-up with fully worked themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Whereas it is recognised that for writing up a qualitative research, there is no standard template (Pratt, 2009), I followed the hinges from a classic story: “Stories that resonate more deeply with readers are those in which real people are confronted with significant problems, and in their journey towards resolving the problems, those real people are profoundly changed.” (Franklin, 1994) cited by Golden-Biddle and Locke (2007:25). Although this thesis is not specifically related to the changes of the women business-owners, it converges upon the issues of gender subordination and navigating and negotiating with these aspects. I was keen to highlight these “significant problems” of the women business-owners in my write-up (ibid).

In brief, I followed the above six stages offered by Braun and Clarke (2006) to conduct the data analysis for the concerned research. Nevertheless, reflexivity is related to the questions regarding the way a researcher reveals findings (Mason, 1996). The next section illustrates my reflexivity regarding the concerned research.

#### **4.6 Reflexivity of the Research**

It has been argued that interpretations of a study are considered as valid only if the researcher can justify the way they reached the result (Mason, 1996). In other words, there is a growing recognition “how knowledge is acquired, organized, and interpreted is relevant to what the claims are” (Altheide and

Johnson, 1994:486). Reflexivity explores how the involvement of researchers with particular studies influences their research (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). Consequently, reflexivity is an imperative element to establish trustworthiness within a study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This section presents the issues related to my reflexivity about this doctoral research.

Personal reflexivity refers to the reflection of a researcher's values, experiences and beliefs on the research (Willig, 2001). It is contended that the researcher is the only medium, i.e. technique or method, through which research is conducted (Stanley and Wise, 1993). I consider that my insider knowledge and experiences of the context might have an influence on the analysis (Karra and Phillips, 2007). Nonetheless, when I tended to overlook some important issues of the context, consultation with my supervisors was helpful. My experiences, values and pre-understandings also influenced the access to and generation of data (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996, Charmaz, 2006) as mentioned concerning the selection of the appropriate sample in Section 4.4.1 (Accessing Sample).

Further, the clarification of my upbringing is required to explain the medium for the research. I am a middle class woman at my mid-thirties. Although I was born in England and spent my early childhood there, I was practically brought up in Bangladesh. Before starting my doctoral study, I was engaged in teaching in the department/institute of business administration in universities in Bangladesh for approximately four and half years. Nevertheless, all the respondents were middle class women and nearly half of them were in their thirties even though not all were highly educated. Thus, I have some similarities with my respondents. It is particularly true regarding confronting the same patriarchal society as a middle class woman and this issue enables me to understand their lived stories.

In terms of the family, I have to mention that I have never been married and I do not have any partner or children. Nonetheless, my natal family plays an immense importance in my socialisation process. My mother, who has the major influence in my life, was a writer and once a renowned singer of the country. Along with her studies, she enjoyed much freedom from her family enabling her to be engaged actively in co-curricular activities in her early life when the society was more conservative regarding women compared to that of recent times. After her

marriage, particularly due to illness, she remained mostly as a housewife. However, my father completed his PhD from England (University of London) in the early 1980s and, at present, he is a university professor. My younger brother is also pursuing his PhD in the USA. Being brought up in this educated and cultured family, I have never felt any gender-based differential treatment comparing with my brother in terms of accessing resources or attitude of family members. Nevertheless, I have experienced family members' concern about my protection from the outside patriarchal society. My family has supported me to develop consciousness to raise questions about gender subordination within the prevailing society.

It is noteworthy that at the initial stage of my study, I faced an emotional dilemma regarding conducting the research. While choosing the topic of the study, I did not realise that I would have to present different negative aspects of my country in such an extensive form, particularly, to people beyond my own community. Further, my background was in finance and, previously, I was not engaged in any in-depth social studies. Therefore, initially, I did not feel comfortable with the thought that I was gaining my academic achievement by portraying a negative image of my country. To deal with such feelings rationally and simultaneously, having passion for my own country, I began to think that I would have an opportunity to conduct other studies on positive aspects of my country later. In addition, through this research, I was bringing forward some positive issues from the negative background. Whereas the image of Bangladeshi women was derived from the subordinated women in micro-credit, this study can uncover a comparatively better picture of the middle-class women to the world. The women of the country may also be benefitted from this study as the study can facilitate the policy makers regarding developing strategies for their emancipation. Consequently, I believe that I have interpreted and presented the findings of the study in an unbiased manner.

Epistemological reflexivity, however, refers to the researcher's view about the world, which shapes the findings of the study (Willig, 2001). With respect to epistemological reflexivity, it can be mentioned that at the initial stage of the doctoral study, I was interested to adopt an objectivist approach to some extent. The reason is that in 2007, for my MBA dissertation, I conducted a study related

to the debt finance of small businesses of males in Bangladesh and it was principally based on quantitative methods. My knowledge acquired from this study, inevitably facilitated my PhD research but simultaneously, due to my prolonged orientation in an objectivist view, at the initial stage of the doctoral study, I was inclined to relate this research with the objective view and thought of proceeding for a mixed method. Nevertheless, with the progress of my degree, I have changed my perspective and have adopted the appropriate approach for the concerned study.

#### **4.7 Chapter Summary**

Given the nature of the research that concentrates on, particularly, gender and context and aims at providing an account of *how gender influences* access to debt finance for women business-owners in a patriarchal developing nation, I consider pragmatic realism as the ontological position. It enables me to consider gender as a social construction (Watson, 2013) to analyse the gender subordination of women business-owners. Further, I can take into account social realities informing social practices related to the debt financing process of women in Bangladesh (ibid). In relation to this ontological position, my epistemological position is subjectivist because it enables understanding of the socially constructed experiences of women business-owners considering an objective reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). In subjectivism, the basis of meaning construction is the experiences of those women and, hence, essentially women are placed at the centre of the research (Brooks, 2007). Consequently, I have adopted the feminist standpoint research for this study to present the voices of women business-owners (Frisby, Maguire, and Reid 2009).

For revealing and understanding of women's experiences, however, a qualitative method is more appropriate for a feminist study (Depner, 1981) and, hence, this method has been considered appropriate for this research. To gain the effective involvement of women business-owners in generating data, I have employed semi-structured interviews, regarded as the fundamental means for data gathering for feminist researchers (Graham, 1984). Considering context specific issues such as corruption, the apposite method is operationalised for the study. Nonetheless, due to the nature of the study, for the purpose of data analysis, I

have considered thematic analysis which recognises social construction and is a realist method (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Thus, grounded on the philosophical understanding and the methodological approach, as discussed in this chapter, I address the research question: *How does gender influence women business-owners' access to debt finance in the context of a patriarchal developing nation?* Whereas the research on the influence of gender on women's entrepreneurship is almost entirely concentrated on the US or Europe centred framework (Fielden and Davidson, 2005), I endeavour to contribute to the prevailing knowledge regarding gender subordination by conducting research on the developing nation of Bangladesh. Based on my analysis, the next three chapters present the empirical findings of this doctoral study.

## **Chapter-5:**

### **Roles of Husbands in Accessing Debt Finance of Women Business-owners**

*Those who control life, and the bodies of women, control the money and hold the power.*

*- Jenny Nordberg*

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The family is an important source of patriarchy (Walby, 2006) but previous research which has sought to analyse the impact of families upon businesses of women in developed nations (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992, Marlow, 1997, Ahl, 2004, Brush et al., 2009, McGowan et al., 2012) has focused predominantly on household issues of domestic responsibility and childrearing. It has paid almost no attention to whether or how male family members are directly involved in the businesses of women. Nonetheless, regarding debt financing of women business-owners, there is a dearth of exploration concerning the influence of family members, and even domestic responsibilities, in developed nations. The literature on accessing bank loans in developed nations almost exclusively investigates the discrimination-related issues of banks. Although some studies (Roomi and Parrott, 2008, Bardasi et al., 2011) on developing nations attempt to consider influences of the family upon businesses of women from a broader perspective, family aspects in relation to debt financing are still under-explored.

In light of this context, this chapter, and the next (Chapter-6), address the first research objective of the thesis: *To investigate the role of the family in accessing bank loans at the growth stage of women-owned businesses.* Whilst the story of each participant is rich with family related issues, from the empirical evidence, it has been revealed that compared to other family members, husbands were more prominently involved in the debt financing process of women business-owners. Therefore, this chapter is entirely concentrated on the roles of husbands to address the first research question of the first research objective: *How do husbands play roles in accessing debt finance of women business-owners?* The next chapter focuses on other family members as well as domestic

responsibilities, followed by a coherent analysis of the overall private patriarchal issues regarding access to bank loans by the women.

Considering gender as a social construct (Bradley, 2012) and employing the theoretical concept of patriarchy, this chapter sets to reveal how husbands directly “dominate”, “oppress” and “exploit” women (Walby, 1990:20) in accessing bank loans. In order to identify and clarify the dominating and oppressing roles of husbands, the chapter considers the entire bank loan process and explores its different aspects. Thus, it illustrates in detail the direct dominating and oppressive attitude of husbands in the associated activities of the process. Moreover, the issue of exploitation is critically explored within the narrative of the experiences of the women. It is evident that many of these husbands, while not being entitled to the loans, were acting as though they were the legitimate authority and thereby benefiting from the loans, which implies a form of exploitation. Nonetheless, the chapter discloses how many women were dependent on husbands for going through this process. Simultaneously, it is evident that the majority of these husbands were engaged in consuming the loans. By uncovering and analysing the direct roles of husbands in businesses, it extends the view of private patriarchal practices beyond the issue of domestic responsibility and child rearing for women business-owners.

Accordingly, the chapter illustrates the continuum of experiences of women that ranges from the assisting to negative roles of the husbands and, finally, their roles concerning direct or indirect financial gains from their wives’ business loans. It should be noted that, for some women, the roles of the husbands were overlapping. However, the notion to critically present the involvement of husbands regarding the debt financing process starts with a discussion on the requirement of banks to elicit husbands’ involvement, reinforcing the interrelationships of private and public patriarchy (Walby, 2006).

## **5.2 Requirements of Banks to Involve Husbands**

Although the promotional materials and websites of Barc Bank Ltd. do not present that the husband was required as the first guarantor, many women business-



owners highlighted that this was the requirement stipulated by the bank. Fiza provided a general statement about the issue:

In fact, what we see – if the husband doesn't support, no loan is granted. Moreover, if the husband doesn't give the signature, the loan is not sanctioned. As a husband, he will have to be a guarantor. Those signatures are, in fact, not given by many [husbands]. Then what happens? Loans are not sanctioned. Then, it becomes a problem. (Fiza)

As stated by Fiza, the binding of women to have husbands as guarantors is so high that women cannot obtain loans without the involvement of their husbands. In the case of micro-credit, the written permission of husbands for accessing loans was also apparent (Naher, 2005). Nonetheless, whilst the special bank loan scheme of Barc Bank Ltd.'s is operated with government support, it is important to note that to have husbands as guarantors is not the requirement of the government. It is declared in the statement of Fahmina who regularly attended seminars related to the special lending scheme: *"Then [according to the government support scheme] your personal guarantor can be anyone – whoever. But they [commercial banks] said that it should be your spouse."* The complication of the guarantor issue is imposed by the particular bank. This highlights that even though there is no explicit gender specific barriers, as per the government regulations, due to the embedded patriarchal values in society, the bank officers set the guarantor-related condition based on their gendered framework.

Nurunnahar complained about banks for providing loans considering husbands. According to her opinion it is not sufficient to assess only the potentiality of women business-owners for sanctioning loans. Banks should have to be convinced of husbands' qualifications as guarantors. During the interview, she shared that she had much experience (nearly 20 years) of running different businesses. She also had property of her own that could be placed as collateral. She deemed her performance in the business of trading was sufficient to acquire a bank loan. Therefore, she could not accept it as justified grounds for the bank to sanction the loan by considering her husband, particularly when she was individually running her own business. The scenario indicates that her experiences and entrepreneurial capital were trumped by her gender as the bank officers were deeply influenced by patriarchal norms and expectations.

Nurunnahar further raised the question: "... *I can expand the business. Then, will the bank not help me? Would they help me only considering my husband?*" Her grievances were articulated in her words: "...*by only considering my husband, the bank would give me a loan! I can't accept that because I do the business by myself.*" This again implies how women's accomplishment in businesses is not assessed in terms of business performance but within a highly gendered framework or mental schema shared in this patriarchal society. Moreover, the real-life problems regarding the qualification of husbands as guarantors were disclosed from the case of Maliha, when she made an attempt to have her next loan from the same bank:

The husband was actually a guarantor of another one. That person did not repay the loan. Now as a guarantor the husband will have to repay the loan. So, my husband has become a defaulter, too. Again, to take my loan, the husband will have to be a guarantor. That is – all my documents were ready for the next loan. The work in the bank was nearly done. I would get the loan. That time, I approached the bank for a large loan. In fact, in case of the approval of that loan, I would close this loan that I am currently running. In the meantime, my husband became a defaulter for the loan of the other person. As I would not get the loan without having him as my guarantor, my loan was stuck. I will not be able to take the loan until the loan of the other person is repaid. I cannot get the loan. (Maliha)

From the situation described by Maliha, it is apparent that due to the defaulter status of her husband, she could not obtain the next loan even though the progress of the loan process clearly indicates her capability of acquiring the loan. The only constraint was the obligation to have her husband as her guarantor. Therefore, if women have potentiality to acquire loans, because of the lack of qualification of husbands as guarantors, they cannot gain access to bank loans. It reflects that women are not viewed as separate entities by bank officials. Rather there is an expectation of private patriarchy.

Due to the requirement of the bank, for almost all the women (16 out of 21), husbands were the guarantors of the bank loans. It should be noted that among the five women who did not have their husbands as guarantors, three had their sons as the guarantors. Amrin was a widow and, hence, there was no scope for the husband to be the guarantor. In the case of Rini, the husband was disabled and in the case of Zafrin, the husband was too aged to go for the contract. This

indicates that a male family member is essential when applying for a bank loan in this patriarchal society. Nonetheless, Shahina and Fahmina were two exceptional cases. The matter of Shahina is discussed in Section 5.4.3 (Lack of Support of Husbands). For Fahmina, her sister was the guarantor instead of her husband and the bank accepted the issue without any question. It is important to note that, compared to all the participants, she was highly educated and had good professional experiences. Fahmina did not directly mention that she had this discretion concerning the guarantor due to her professional qualification but for operating businesses she considered that experience of her professional life *“helped a lot”*. In her view, when dealing with the bank officers, her professional experience facilitated her: *“It’s easy to interact with the bank officers”*. Therefore, it can be inferred that if a woman is highly qualified and, consequently, can gain the confidence of the bank about managing the loan, she does not need the support of her husband as a guarantor.

Although some studies (Cavalluzzo and Cavalluzzo 1998, Cavalluzzo, Cavalluzzo, and Wolken, 2002) on developed nations reveal that there exists discrimination of banks about the lending process for women business-owners, the role of banks in relation to family members is under-researched. Moreover, whereas there is a dearth of studies concerning the family issues related to access of debt finance of women in developed nations, as discussed earlier, this study demonstrates that in Bangladesh, in general, family members are inevitable for the process due to the requirement of the bank. The condition of husbands as guarantors further implies that, generally, only women who have support from their husbands can gain access to debt finance. In other words, the bank made the women dependent on their husbands’ consent when accessing loans. It reinforces how private patriarchy and public patriarchy are interlocked (Walby, 1990). Nevertheless, many women were found dependent on husbands in relation to different activities during the bank loan process. The next section elucidates the assistance of husbands regarding this process.

### **5.3 Dependence on Husbands**

From the accounts of a large number of respondents (9), it is evident that many women business-owners had assistance from their husbands or were even

dependent on them for carrying out the bank loan process. Several women were explicit about acknowledging the role of their husbands regarding this issue. For instance, the comments of Maliha clearly reflect her strong dependency on her husband for the overall process: *"My husband helped me. I would not be able to go through the process of accessing loans. If he didn't help me, I wouldn't be able to do that. The loan was taken completely through him."* Recognising the very active involvement of her husband, Maliha admitted that she would not even gain access to the loan without him.

Although, broadly, the support of husbands when initiating and operating women's businesses is traced in the literature (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003), specifically, the context of debt financing has been overlooked. Within the respondents' narratives concerning bank loans, there are precise accounts about the dependence on husbands in terms of dealing with banks, preparing documents, managing guarantors and having assistance regarding travel. Each of these issues is discussed below.

### **5.3.1 Dependence on Husbands for Dealing with Banks**

During the process of accessing debt finance, to deal with the bank, that is to communicate, negotiate or meet some of the requirements of the bank, the dependence of women on their husbands is uncovered. Six participants expressed that they had assistance from their husbands for taking decisions and dealing with banks.

In some cases, the major tasks were accomplished by their husbands regarding dealing with the bank. The dependent attitude was echoed in the brief opinion of Masuma regarding the question of the discussion with the bank officers: *"He [husband] talked."* Masuma's husband dealt with the bank on behalf of his wife. Maliha's husband was also active in dealing with bank officers for his wife's garments products business. When Maliha was asked about the activities in the bank, after silence she replied: *"In fact, in the bank, my husband does the dealings. [...] To sign and to go to the bank – I had to do these."* Maliha only undertook the signing that was essential and she was present in person. Thus, there were cases where the women were not even properly aware of what to do in banks when taking loans.

It should be noted that women business-owners do not always have to go to the bank. Sometimes, without any appointment, bank officers came to the women to offer loans. In many cases, bank officers carry out a major part of the work by going to women business-owners. Therefore, sometimes there is less scope for husbands to become involved in the interaction with bank officers. However, when the women go to the bank, for some, husbands accompanied them; in the words of Nurunnahar: *"My husband went with me. I never went alone."*

The literature on the developed nations acknowledges the lack of satisfaction about the interpersonal issues of women concerning dealing with bank officers (Saparito et. al., 2009). In terms of this, discriminatory behaviour in personal interactions is addressed in some early studies of that context (Buttner and Rosen, 1988, Fay and Williams, 1993). Nonetheless, this research further demonstrates that when dealing with bank officers, women are dependent on husbands. This finding also establishes that husbands are actively involved in the business activities of women for their navigation in the public place.

### **5.3.2 Dependence on Husbands for Managing Documents**

From the interviews of five women, preparation of the documents, needed to support the loan application, emerges as a task that requires intensive dependence on husbands. Rizia made the point clear that for a woman to prepare documents for bank loans individually is very challenging:

I mean to get SME [Small and Medium Enterprises] loans, there are some problems in the case of a woman. You see, for instance, with intervals of some days, they [bank officers] ask for this and that – this is needed, that is needed. If I were alone, I would not take it [the loan]. [She laughed].  
(Rizia)

To gain access to loans from banks, Rizia pointed out the issue of submitting different documents at different points of time. For that reason, in her view, for a woman in this society, it is problematic to try to deal with document management alone (it is further explained in 'Section 7.2: Corruption' and in 'Section 7.5: Problems of Public Transport' in Chapter-7). During the interview, Rizia explicitly expressed her dependence on her husband regarding preparing documents.

Some of the documents required by banks were generally prepared beforehand as these were needed to operate the businesses or were important to the business-owners for other reasons, for example, a copy of the trade license, deeds of the shop, voter ID etc. In addition, sometimes the bank asked for several other property related documents, for instance, the deed, electricity bills, even if there was no issue concerning placing collateral. It is important to note that when providing collateral, documented evidence of the properties was needed from government offices. Zafrin sought help from her husband regarding this issue as she found it difficult to deal with male officers at the government office ('Section 7.2: Corruption' of Chapter-7 discusses this issue in detail). The women business-owners had to present some other documents to the bank, for example, balance-sheets, income statements, record of credit, addresses and phone numbers of wholesalers, creditors and so on. For some of these documents, such as accounting documents, Maliha was dependent on her husband due to her intensive household responsibilities, as discussed in the next chapter (Section 6.2.2: Domestic Responsibility and Child Rearing).

However, Sheeta conveyed her explicit dependence on her husband in terms of understanding the documents: *"I went with my husband. Doesn't my husband understand this? Certainly, he ... does he not understand things? [...] Didn't I say - my husband looks after things that I don't understand?"* In this regard, it should be noted that Sheeta had a factory producing embroidery products. The factory was mostly run by machines that were operated by labourers and her manager generally dealt with the operational aspects. Therefore, it required less of her involvement in the routine business activities. Nevertheless, she discussed with her husband when considering a loan to purchase a new embroidery machine. For the document-related issues of the bank loan, she depended on her husband for his understanding. Regarding this issue, Sheeta further mentioned that: *"It is my need. I need to run the business. I am taking the loan in my name. Now I am going there with my husband. What's the problem? Why should I do it alone? We went together. The loan is in my name."*

Although Sheeta repeatedly emphasised that it was her own loan, she could not find any point to deal with the issue alone. Her comment – *"Why should I do it alone?"* evidently assures that she had a strong sense of dependency on her

husband. It can be pointed out that as a sole-proprietor, she did not feel complete freedom to do tasks in relation to her business. Moreover, she accepted the involvement of her husband in the activities of taking the loan as a natural and obvious issue. Sheeta was so habituated with the patriarchal issues as a part of her everyday life that she could not realise any problem. Consequently, regarding going with the husband, she rather raised the question – *“What’s the problem?”*

To sum up, for preparing the documents or even from generating the documents from their own businesses, women were found dependent. However, regarding debt financing in developed nations, apparently researchers (Orser and Foster, 1994, Coleman, 2000, Fraser, 2005) consider the bank as the only source of gender subordination while overlooking different activities of the process; for instance, document management whereby these activities can provide scope for gender subordination, as discussed further in Chapter-7.

### **5.3.3 Dependence on Husbands for Other Issues**

Few women were keen to express their dependence on husbands for other issues, such as, managing guarantors, providing collateral or travelling. This section sheds light on these aspects.

Generally, in order to sanction a loan for a woman business-owner, in addition to a family relative, the bank required a guarantor who was a businessman or a person owning his or her own house. Three of the respondents informed that their husbands took the initiative to request male relatives or businessmen to be guarantors. For example, Masuma’s husband approached a neighbouring businessman to become the guarantor. A strong sense of dependence is reflected in the opinion of Rizia: *“I would not be able to manage the guarantors without the help of my husband.”* She clarified how her husband strategically managed guarantors for her business. The experience of Rizia also discloses the gender-specific difficulty of having a guarantor for a woman business-owner (Chapter-7 explains this issue in Section 7.4, concentrating on the societal responses towards women business-owners). This finding is particularly important because although researchers (Saparito et. al., 2009) have discussed dealing with bank officers for

taking loans in developed nations, the issue of dealing with other persons, such as guarantors, remains underexplored.

In addition, only three women placed property as collateral in order to obtain a large loan for their businesses. Two reported dependence on their husbands regarding the mortgage issue. The experience of Sheeta can be cited here as an example. She provided her house for the purpose of collateral for the bank loan. Nonetheless, that house was built with the money of Sheeta's husband. Regarding this issue, she asserted: *"everything is my husband's money. Do I work? Where would I get the money if my husband didn't give any?"* This comment reflects Sheeta's constraints in owning assets. However, Sheeta managed the requirement of the mortgage because of her husband. Further, regarding the query about the ownership of the house in her name instead of her husband's name, she explained: *"Does he not stay outside! He stays abroad."* Her husband lived in Italy for about 20 years and sent money to maintain the family. As the husband stayed abroad, Sheeta considered this fact as justification for having the house in her name. Inadequacy of collateral for taking bank loans by women business-owners is also revealed in the western context (Marlow and Patton, 2005). While acknowledging the constraint of possessing property, this study further reveals how a woman can manage collateral whilst the absence of the husband provides her with an opportunity to own the property.

Furthermore, while processing bank loans, two women mentioned their husbands regarding physical movement or travelling (in Section 7.6 of Chapter-7, this topic is discussed in detail from the context of using public transport). However, regarding the travelling issue of women, it should be noted that research (Feldman, 2001) has established the concern of restricted mobility in the context of rural Bangladesh. Even in the case of micro-credit, due to the reason of going out, sometimes husbands are resistant to the women taking loans from banks (Naher, 2005). Nevertheless, from the data gathered for this research, none of the women reported their husbands imposing any restrictions upon them with regard to mobility. There were only two cases where women themselves had reservations about going out and they were found to be dependent on their husbands for travelling.



In sum, this section highlights the pivotal roles of the husbands of many women regarding accessing debt finance, whereas in developed nations the family in relation to this issue is under-researched. In transitional economies, for young women, the role of husbands is also considered important in doing businesses and, hence, many start businesses with their husbands (Welter and Smallbone, 2008). Nevertheless, in the highly patriarchal society of Bangladesh, the assisting approach of husbands of small business-owners raises an imperative question about their intention. Therefore, this thesis further investigates whether, while helping their wives obtain loans, the husbands receive any benefit from them. This issue will be analysed in detail at the later part of the chapter. The dependence on husbands further poses the question about gender subordination in the public place, while navigating the loans process. It is worth noting that nearly half of the respondents were not dependent on husbands regarding the process, as further discussed in the next chapter. However, many women experienced a negative involvement from their husbands in carrying out the loans process. This issue unfolds in the next section.

#### **5.4 Negative Roles of Husbands**

Around half of the respondents (10) explained dominating attitudes, negative behaviour or lack of support from their husbands; nevertheless, not everyone perceived the roles negatively. It should be noted that all these women mentioned the negative roles of husbands from their own experiences except one who made general comments about the women business-owners of the country.

##### **5.4.1 Dominating Role of Husbands**

One third of the respondents (7) explained the dominating role of their husbands when accessing debt finance. This dominating attitude is traced as being discouraging or commanding regarding the loan decision, or placing constraints concerning eligibility to access loans. Each of these issues is explained in detail in this section.

In terms of decision making for taking loans, the dominating attitude of husbands is uncovered. In the case of Mariana, she required the explicit consent of her husband: *"... I shall take a loan from the bank. For each of these issues, the*

*consent from my husband was needed.*" After showing interest in a loan, her husband judged her capability and then allowed her to take the decision: *"He observed that – 'no, I can do everything.' [Then the husband said:] 'If you feel that it will be good to take it [the loan], if you can continue it, then there is no problem."* During the interview, Mariana mentioned her 20 year experience of diversified businesses and acknowledged the help of her husband. Despite her wealth of experiences, her husband had to assess her competency. These comments reveal that her husband still exercised authority over her business. However, in the case of micro-credit, the strong dependence on husbands when making decisions is revealed in Bangladesh (Naher, 2005). As the loans can be consumed by husbands, sometimes they put pressure on their wives to take loans (ibid). Nevertheless, during the interviews none of the women in this research reported being coerced by their husbands.

The dominating role of husbands was not limited to decision-making concerning bank loans during the application stage, when the husbands' signature was needed. Even after sanctioning the loans, when the funds would be finally disbursed to the applicants' account, sometimes husbands exercised their authority to decide whether the loan would be taken. An example can be cited from the experience of Roushan regarding her husband's response to the deduction of a significant amount of money as a service charge from her loan:

He [the husband] said – [I/we] would not take the loan. I mean they [the bank officers] did not inform that they would deduct such a large amount of money. When he went to take the loan, he noticed it. Then he said that he would not take the loan. He was angry. (Roushan)

When Roushan was asked concerning her personal opinion about deciding upon taking the sanctioned loan, she said: *"No. I ... he took the loan later on. We cannot say 'no' after having such troubles."* Her opinion reflects their consensus about the rationality of taking loans but about accepting the loan, the usage of the word 'he' rather than 'I' or even 'we' indicates her husband's authority regarding the decision making of this issue. The domination of husbands directly in business activities related to the bank loans is vividly expressed here.

In addition, Fahmina pointed out the dominating role of husbands concerning property where collateral is a requirement for accessing large loans. Regarding the question of collateral, she provided a general statement about how husbands control the property of their wives in the country and, thus, place women in a disadvantageous position:

A woman in great hardship, after taking care of the family, being rebuked by the husband, putting up with all the problems with the mother-in-law, may somehow gather capital or property. But the husband becomes the master, the sole decision maker of that property. She doesn't have any power or control over it. She can't fully control it. Otherwise, their family life will be hampered. (Fahmina)

In Bangladesh, the domination of men concerning the property of their wives is clearly reflected in Fahmina's comments. This finding is consistent with the study of Chowdhury (2009) based on the same context. Nonetheless, the control of husbands about property creates problem regarding collateral for business loans. The comments of Fahmina further explain that to maintain the family life, in general, women consciously accept the dominating attitude of husbands. This demonstrates that generally women cannot defer to their socially ascribed gender roles (Eagly, 2005) in the private realm regarding the property issue and it eventually has an adverse impact on accessing loans in the public sphere.

Whereas the literature on developed nations almost exclusively addresses the patriarchal segregation of work in compromising business activities of women, this study provides evidence of patriarchal aspects of husbands in terms of the direct domination on business related issues of women business-owners. Moreover, it has been revealed that the dominating attitude of husbands is found specifically in the decision-making process of loans as explained by five respondents. Whereas independent decision-making is a key feature for small business-owners (Longenecker et al., 2008), in this highly patriarchal society, due to the dominating roles of husbands, many women do not enjoy full freedom of making their own decisions for their businesses. Some women accept the domination of their husbands to maintain peace in their conjugal life. Thus, it further provides an explanation for accepting the domination for some women business-owners, reinforcing the issue that family life has a strong impact on their businesses.

Therefore, these micro-level, everyday practices of gendered roles, expectations and behaviours maintain patriarchy.

#### **5.4.2 Negative Behaviour of Husbands**

A few participants mentioned the negative behaviour of their husbands regarding access to bank loans. Nurnunnahar disclosed the ill-behaviour of her husband concerning his essential role as a guarantor:

... my husband sometimes says, 'would you be able to take the loan without me?' Sometimes, he ends up saying this to me. So, that's why, I say, 'why ... why wouldn't I be able to take the loan without you? What don't I have? I also have a house of my own. I also have my own experiences of running a business. Why will the bank not give me loans? Are you giving me the money for the bank loan? Rather, I am giving it! Why wouldn't the bank give me loans?' Sometimes we have arguments regarding this issue. (Nurunnahar)

The challenging conversation of Nurunnahar indicates that she had strong potentiality to have the loan and, therefore, she could not accept the question about her capability. It also expresses how her husband behaved negatively in daily life regarding the guarantor related issue. Thus, based on the public patriarchal approach of bank officers, that legitimise the husband as a signing authority for the loan, he had a platform to subjugate Nurunnahar. A similar problem was echoed by Lisa. In addition, she shared experiences about her husband's behaviour concerning her thoughts of using the land owned by her mother-in-law as collateral for a loan:

This [my mother-in-law's land] can be mortgaged, if she wants. If it is given, money ... some money will be made, around Tk. 2,000,000/2,500,000 will be made. In fact, I don't need this much money. If I wanted, I could have given Tk. 1,000,000 to do something on the land. I gave them this offer. After making the offer, my husband said, 'you have dared to eye my mother's land! You want to eat up my mother's land? You maintain yourself with loans. Why will my mother's land be given for your loans?' You know what I mean? I mean he doesn't want to understand that this is a security; we are not selling it or doing anything like that. He doesn't want to understand that. (Lisa)

When Lisa proposed to the family to employ the land of her mother-in-law as collateral for the loan in exchange for giving a part of the loan, the husband reacted negatively. He did not realise the concept of collateral properly. Rather,

he accused her of the intention to seize his mother's land. The language of the husband vividly presents the oppressing attitude towards Lisa. In this regard, it should be noted that Lisa's husband was a drug addicted person and therefore, in her words: *"his mind is different"*.

In rural Bangladesh, very oppressing roles of husbands are evident concerning women in microcredit (Nahar, 2005). For example, involvement in microcredit was perceived so negatively that women have even divorced as a consequence (ibid). Although a few issues of negative behaviour of husbands about the middle class women are unveiled in this thesis, these experiences are not as severe as that of poor women engaged in self-employment.

#### **5.4.3 Lack of Support of Husbands**

For two participants, the roles of husbands demonstrate their lack of support and their attitude had negative consequences in accessing bank loans. Due to the fact that banks require husbands as guarantors, as discussed earlier, Shahina confronted problems when her husband did not want to be the guarantor. She stated: *"My husband was never my guarantor indeed. He does not like it. Doing business! On top of that, taking loans! He does not like that I would take a loan. [...] but without him, I could not take a loan. It's a problem."*

Therefore, during the interview, Shahina expressed her grievances about not getting loans on time. Initially, she went to a non-bank financial institution for a loan but because her husband was non-cooperative to be a guarantor she did not get any loan. She had to wait for several years. Later, a bank considered the issue and asked Shahina to have a bank officer as her guarantor: *"bring a bank officer."* Shahina's daughter was a bank officer. So, she became the guarantor. Shahina informed: *"My daughter just joined [the bank]. So, if she becomes the guarantor, the loan will be provided. My daughter became [the guarantor]. The bank provided [the loan]."* Shahina received the loans after her daughter and also her son became the guarantors. Further, Nurunnahar took into account the problem that may arise if the husband is not interested about the prosperity of the woman. She put in plain words:

[A woman might say to her husband:] "Why would you not allow me [to prosper]? I want to expand the business. I want to be 'something' in my life." Then it can be found that many men don't allow them to be 'something'. Then if a woman wants to be 'something' with her own efforts, they should ... the bank should help her. (Nurunnahar)

To sum up the comments of Nurunnahar, it can be established that due to the prerequisite of the guarantor issue, women can confront problems in case of lack of interest of husbands about the prosperity of those women. This reflects that experienced and aspirational, growth-oriented women business-owners cannot access loans due to the prevailing gendered order which permeates and produces a gendered lending environment for many.

It can be concluded that whereas regarding debt financing, studies on developed nations have overlooked family related issues, evidence from this study establishes that there exist some dominating or other explicit negative issues of the husbands of many women in getting involved in the businesses. This reinforces the importance of contexts in entrepreneurship research as the experiences of western women cannot be assumed to be similar to those of developing nations. Nevertheless, in some cases, women may not recognise the attitude of their husbands as negative. In relation to this issue, the next section will explain how husbands gain from loans, or in general, from businesses.

### **5.5 Husbands' Financial Gains from Loans/Businesses**

Literature (Naher, 2005) demonstrates that husbands and other family members support women for accessing loans from microcredit institutions in Bangladesh and, later, they consume the loans. Fahmina pointed out that in the case of women in small businesses, this problem also exists: *"The problem is there but it is in a much disguised manner."* Fahmina indicated the exploitation of husbands through their financial gains from the bank loans of women business-owners. She further provided hints to explore this 'disguised manner' by contrasting the issues of small business and microcredit: *"If you observe normally, you will not understand it. But there is a tension within it; that exists in the case of a small business. Again, that issue of microcredit is open. You can understand the difference for sure."* Therefore, in this section, the exploration of the exploiting attitude of husbands is pursued as a worthy line of enquiry. The gains of the

husbands from the loans, or the businesses in general, are disclosed from the interviews of about one third of the respondents (8). In addition, two others provided their general view on this issue.

### 5.5.1 Husbands Share Loans

Sometimes husbands shared the loan of the women business-owners. Maliha expressed her interest in providing the entire loan to her husband, when she applied for the next loan:

But I will not take a loan for my business. If we ever take it, it will be for my husband. This is what I tried last time. I tried to take the loan with my property in the name of my business. Then I would give it to my husband. It was the plan. (Maliha)

Although Maliha could not finally access the loan, she tried to have a loan with her own property to provide the loan to her husband. It is important to note that there is an advantage when women business-owners take loans compared to that of male business-owners as mentioned by Masuma: *"I mean if women take loans the percentage [of the interest rate] is low. For example, we are taking at 12%, but for males it would be 20% or 22% or more than that. [...] This is the reason for taking it [the loan] by me."* The comments of Masuma reveal that rather than taking a bank loan in the name of a man, if the loan was taken in the name of a woman, the interest would be lower. Thus, husbands could be benefitted by obtaining loans at a lower interest rate for their businesses, if the loans were taken in the names of their wives.

According to four respondents, after taking the bank loans, they provided the entire amount or a part of the loan to their husbands. For example, Masuma informed that the loan was used for her business as well as for her husband's business. Rizia described her situation more precisely. She placed a false requirement for the loan on her beauty parlour:

They [bank officers] came to see [the parlour]. I told them – 'these are the chairs-tables for the parlour. I shall change these. I will purchase chairs, tables.' I took specially the loan as Eid<sup>6</sup> was coming. I need to buy goods for the cloth shop. You know what I mean. (Rizia)

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<sup>6</sup> Eid is a Muslim religious event and it is the largest festival in Bangladesh (Hasan, 2015)

Although Rizia took the loan for her beauty parlour business, she invested it in her cloth business. During the interview, she informed that the cloth business was comparatively new. She initiated it with her capital as she claimed: *"Completely with my own money."* Nonetheless, Rizia mentioned that the cloth business was operated by her husband as if it were his own business. Therefore, although the cloth business was in the name of Rizia, the ultimate beneficiary of the entire amount of the loan, taken for the parlour, was her husband. Fahmina provided a general statement about the way women are dominated in terms of loan related issues in the country:

Again, in our country, may be in the case of taking loans or whatever, husbands dominate – we accept defeat. So, the woman cannot have control on it [the loan]. [...] she can understand the liability of the loan. Her liability ... her liability will never end. She also understands that. (Fahmina)

From Fahmina's point of view, being fully aware about the consequences of not repaying the loans, women accept defeat in the country. Again, Shahina considered the financial reward as a motivating factor for husbands being guarantors. She summed up the issue: *"my husband never wants to be the guarantor. Whose husband does? Only the husband, who will be able to take away that money from the woman, becomes a guarantor."* The comments denote an unintended and negative consequence of the spousal guarantor requisite. Husbands can exploit or control wives' loans due to the public patriarchal requirement of banks.

Some studies (Goetz and Gupta, 1996, Mayoux, 1997) on microcredit also suggest that women are employed as unpaid debt collectors between financial sources and men. In this regard, it should be noted that research on developed nations about women business-owners (Orser and Foster, 1994, Coleman, 2000, Fraser, 2005) focus on sanctioning loans overlooking the aspect of utilising loans. Further, while evaluating the initiatives of the government to support small business-owners of developed nations, researchers particularly concentrate on the limitations of the policies related to bureaucracy and politicians (Bannock and Peacock, 1989, Bennett, 2012) but not specifically on the utilisation of support by the targeted beneficiary. This research extends the view by demonstrating that,



finally, some women do not receive proper financial support from the government. Nevertheless, in the next section, rather than only taking consideration of the issue of loans, how the husbands have control over the finance of the businesses of the women in general is uncovered because the control over finance eventually includes the issue of bank loans.

### **5.5.2 Husbands Control Finance of Businesses**

A few respondents admitted the control of their husbands in the financial aspects of their businesses. According to Maliha her husband was all in all about the financial issue: *“he completely looks after the finance of my business. Whatever I need, I ask for that from him. I don’t have any problem about the money. Nothing is considered separately as the money of the business.”* In the comments of Maliha, it is well articulated that she could not consider the money of the business separately and, therefore, she relied on her husband in her need of money. The approach of Maliha about finance indicates that, as a sole-proprietor, she did not have full access to her earnings on her own accord and she was dependent on her husband when accessing the earnings of her own business. In this context, in some cases, husbands were also found to hold control over the earnings of working women (Chowdhury, 2009).

In the case of Sheeta, she was aware about her finance but she felt that she was accountable to her husband concerning financial issues. Her deep sense of accountability was reflected in the opinion:

If I spend [money], am I not giving the statement of expenditure? That is – I need so many lacs<sup>7</sup> of taka. For this [purpose], so many lacs [of taka] will be needed – I am giving the statement. I am communicating [with the husband] by phone – telephone. This is between us. (Sheeta)

As the husband was living abroad, Sheeta communicated with him over the telephone to inform the details about her financial issue of the business. The subservience of women in relationships is so deeply rooted that she persisted even in the absence of her husband.

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<sup>7</sup> 1 lac = 100,000

Whilst the first example shows that the husband could use the loan with his own accord, the last example demonstrates that the husband had the authority to dictate how the loan would be used. Whereas, concerning the role of family, the literature (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992, Marlow, 1997, Ahl, 2006) on developed nations is generally restricted to the discussion of the domestic responsibility and child rearing of women business-owners, this section highlights that husbands can be actively involved in the businesses of the women and exercise their power in terms of financial issues. Nevertheless, in some cases, husbands were found to receive monetary benefits from the businesses without fully controlling the finance of the businesses.

It has been revealed that some women were not completely aware of how the earnings of the businesses were used for the family purposes. For instance, Roushan said that whenever they (the couple) needed money for the family, they took the amount of money from either her husband's shop or her own shop. She stated: *"These are our own shops. There seems to be regular sales. Every day there is some expenditure. Whenever I need anything for the family, we take it from the shops. This is how it is done."* The comments demonstrate that she did not differentiate the shops in terms of ownership. She further mentioned that concerning the expenditure of the family, the couple did not have any precise approach about who would bear which type of expenditure for the family. However, she noted that her husband dealt with expenditure related issues: *"It is he [the husband] who looks after the issues of expenditure most of the time."* Therefore, Roushan's husband practically had control over expenditure from her business and she did not feel it necessary to be conscious about the issue.

These examples illustrate that, as the husbands of some women could benefit from the businesses in general, there was a possibility that the issue of bank loans could be welcomed by the husbands for their own interest. It should be highlighted that, in general, the husbands who helped their wives to carry out the process of accessing loans had financial gains from the funds. Moreover, no coercion is revealed regarding using the loans of wives. Husbands of many women gain access to the loans as if they were the legitimate authority thus indicating the exploitation of women business-owners. An early study (Hartmann,

1981) on developed nations also reveals that husbands consume the earnings from the paid work of wives.

### **5.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter establishes the direct patriarchal practices of husbands in the case of accessing debt finance of women business-owners in a developing nation. The studies on women business-owners of developed nations almost entirely concentrate on the adverse impact of patriarchal segregation of work on businesses and reveal patriarchal practices of husbands only in terms of the societal expectation. This chapter extends the view about the husbands' patriarchal practices from the passive roles of meeting the societal expectation to the direct and active roles at the individual level. The domination of the husbands of many women concerning the loan process is particularly important because it indicates that, as sole-proprietors, these women are not entirely independent and do not enjoy proper freedom of work. Besides, husbands' oppressing attitudes, another significant dimension of patriarchy, was channelled through the negative behaviour towards their wives. Nevertheless, the assistance of the husbands provides detailed accounts of how they were engaged in the businesses of the women. Affording greater attention to this helping attitude, it is revealed that most of these husbands had financial gains from the loans or businesses of their wives as if they were the legitimate authority which reveals a noteworthy insight regarding a method of exploitation. Thus, with the rich empirical evidence, through the issue of debt financing, this chapter extends the understanding of gender subordination by demonstrating how the patriarchal practices of husbands of many women can be evident in the direct involvement in their businesses.

With particular concentration on the debt financing issue, it should be noted that the research on women's entrepreneurship of developed nations is extremely limited to the discrimination issues of banks towards women business-owners. This chapter adds novel insights concerning the family dimension by presenting the way husbands of many women influence the overall process of accessing bank loans in this country. Furthermore, in this highly patriarchal context, the role of husbands was made inevitable because the bank demanded husbands as guarantors. Due to the conditions placed by banks, women were more vulnerable

to private patriarchy. This finding reinforces the interwoven relationships of private and public patriarchy (Walby, 2006) in the context of debt finance. In explaining the patriarchal roles of husbands, however, the chapter unfolds precisely different activities or aspects related to the bank loan process in the developing nation. It contributes to the understanding by providing the contrasting view of the oversimplified process as presented in the literature on developed nations. Moreover, the analysis of the research has brought to light the issue that the government policies to support women business-owners through providing bank loans were not implemented as intended but, instead, were interpreted and implemented through a gendered lens – that of patriarchy.

**Table-3: Roles of Husbands in Accessing Debt Finance**

<b>Roles of Husbands</b>	<b>Brief Explanation</b>
<b>Husbands' Designated Role</b>	
Guarantor Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bank Assessed Women's Eligibility with Husbands' Ability as Guarantors</li> <li>- Bank Demanded Husbands' Involvement</li> </ul>
<b>Husbands' Individual Roles</b>	
Assisting Role	- Husbands Provided Patronage for Particularly Navigating in Public Places
Dominating Role	- Husbands Dominated Specifically for Decision Making
Oppressing Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Husbands Behaved Negatively</li> <li>- Husbands did not Support Properly</li> </ul>
Exploiting Role*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Husbands Consumed Loans or Controlled Businesses as a Legitimate Authority</li> <li>- Mostly Husbands, Providing Patronage, Interfered in Financial Issues</li> </ul>

\*Note: Indication of Exploitation is reflected in the Interviews of Women Business-owners.

In brief, the findings of this chapter regarding the roles of husbands in a highly patriarchal developing nation significantly contribute to the understanding of gender subordination in relation to entrepreneurship. In order to analyse private patriarchy in an inclusive way, the next chapter (Chapter-6) seeks to explore the

roles of other male family members and domestic responsibility regarding the debt financing process. Moreover, some women had less involvement from husbands or other family members in the process. These issues are also discussed in detail in the next chapter. In addition, the dependence on husbands to carry out the bank loan process indicates the public patriarchal issues that are explored in Chapter-7.

## Chapter-6

### Accessing Debt Finance of Women Business-owners: Family from a Broader Perspective

*Women are the only oppressed group in our society that lives in intimate association with their oppressors.*

*- Evelyn Cunningham*

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter sets the broader perspective of the family in order to analyse the influence of gender on accessing bank loans of women for their own businesses. Whereas the previous chapter entirely concentrated on the roles of husbands, this chapter extends the scope of the study by including other male family members to assess their involvement or influence while acquiring bank loans. It also focuses on domestic responsibilities and child rearing aspects in relation to this process. Further, recognising the widely diversified experiences of the women, this chapter seeks to explore the various features of the family that are responsible for the differences of their experiences. Thus, the previous chapter and this chapter collectively address the first research objective of the thesis: *To investigate the role of the family in accessing bank loans at the growth stage of women-owned businesses.*

In an attempt to address this research objective, this chapter concentrates on the second and third research questions. The second research question is: *How are other male family members as well as the domestic responsibility and child rearing issue related to the process?* The literature (Welter and Smallbone, 2008, Danish and Smith, 2011) on family members (other than husbands) associated with women business-owners is extremely limited. In the context of Asia, the extended family is a common feature (Nordqvist and Melin, 2010). In order to have an understanding of the family in relation to businesses with a particular focus on the debt financing process in a South Asian country, this study seeks to unpack the roles of other male family members, along with husbands. Nevertheless, even though research on developed nations considers the domestic responsibility and child rearing aspect regarding businesses of women (Marlow, 1997, Mattis, 2004,

Ahl, 2004, Ahl, 2006, McGowan et al., 2012), the impact of this issue on the bank loan process remains underexplored. Therefore, this chapter investigates the role of other family members and the issue of domestic responsibility and childcare of women business-owners while accessing bank loans in this developing country context.

This chapter also addresses the third question of the first research objective: *What are the family related aspects that are responsible for the diversified experiences of the women while accessing bank loans?* The first research question regarding the roles of husbands (discussed in the previous chapter) and the second research question concerning other family members and household responsibilities provide the overall scenario of diversified experiences of the women business-owners within the family sphere. It leads to pinpoint the research puzzle and investigate whether family related aspects exist that are liable for the diversified experiences. This chapter explores the features of the family that could be the causes of such diversity and, thus, few distinct context specific issues are brought to light.

This chapter is broadly divided into two parts to respond to the second and the third research questions respectively. The first part explains the role of other menfolk in the family as well as domestic responsibilities and child rearing issues when women business-owners access bank loans. The second part explores different aspects of families regarding the diversified experiences of the women.

## **6.2 Other Male Family Members and Domestic Responsibility**

In this section, in relation to the access to debt finance, firstly, the support of different family members (except husbands) is explained that reinforces the essential roles of males in the process. It also draws attention to the patriarchal roles of the members of the in-law's and natal family in terms of domination or oppression (Walby, 1990). Then the discussion continues with an investigation of the impact that the sexual division of labour (Gherardi, 1994, Bradley, 2012) has on the access to bank loans. In brief, this section addresses the research question: *How are other male family members as well as the domestic responsibility and child rearing issue related to the process?*

### 6.2.1 Other Male Family Members

A large number of respondents (16) mentioned the involvement of different family members (other than husbands) in the debt financing process. This involvement can be in terms of patronage or negative behaviour. This section seeks to unveil the roles of these family members.

Generally, the women who did not have husbands as guarantors or whose husbands were abroad, were found to rely on sons for discussing about the loans or managing documents for accessing loans. For example, Rini's husband was never interested in her business and during the loan process, he was physically disabled. About deciding upon a bank loan, she expressed reliance on her son: *"I discussed with my son. I didn't discuss with my husband because he is out of reach. I said to my son. He said, 'take it [the loan].'* My son became the guarantor." Thus, adult sons can play a critical role in the absence or lack of interest of husbands. It also indicates the essential role of male family members in the process of bank loans in this patriarchal context.

Moreover, from the accounts of a large number of women (13), it is revealed that different relatives became guarantors for loans. In most of these cases, the husbands were first guarantors and other relatives became second guarantors. The bank generally required a businessman or a government service-holder or a house-owner as the additional guarantor. Many women preferred relatives to be those guarantors. The relatives could include their father, father-in-law, brother, son, son-in-law, nephew and so on. Thus, it is evident that the debt financing process of women includes the involvement of different male family members in this context. In other words, in this patriarchal country, many women need the involvement of not only husbands but also other male family members for the process.

Along with patronage, negative roles adopted by the in-laws or natal families were also traced from the comments of a few respondents. Two participants, however, mentioned the negative roles of their in-laws in the case of their access to debt finance. For these women, from a religious perspective, the father-in-law preferred not to take a loan. Maliha's father-in-law did not acquire loans for his



own purposes. The negative approach of the father-in-law regarding loans was depicted in the comments of Maliha:

My father-in-law, mother-in-law never took loans. They built houses, did many things but they did not take any loan. They don't like it. If they will take loans, they will have to pay the interest. From the Islamic rules the interest is not good. It is Haram<sup>8</sup>. It is not good to do that. That's it! They don't like taking loans at all. In fact, as many times as we [my husband and I] took loans for my business, even when we took the loan for the third time, we did not inform them. We actually did it by hiding it from them. (Maliha)

Despite the negative attitude of the father-in-law regarding having loans, Maliha acquired loans but she had to hide the issue from those family members. Although the father-in-law did not directly restrict her from taking bank loans, Maliha avoided the unwanted situation by concealing this issue from him. This scenario implies that religion had an influence on the ability to access loans with the condition of paying interest and due to this concern, the father-in-law had an indirect influence on this process. This resonates with the finding pertaining to the religious restrictions in accessing microcredit being very prominent in Bangladesh (Naher, 2010).

Few respondents mentioned the natal family in terms of inheritance related issue. The inheritance of property was related to the constraint of utilising the asset as collateral. In this regard, Zafrin explained the rule of inheritance for the Muslim women of the country:

According to the rule, the women should get the property. If the father is alive, she cannot get it. She gets it in the absence of the father. A woman, a Muslim woman will have to get half of the property of her brother. But in reality, they don't get the property in our country. (Zafrin)

The comments of Zafrin re-iterate what is known in the literature about inheritance in this context. Although Muslim women are entitled to have property from their natal family, in reality it does not happen (Zaman, 1999, Mair and Marti, 2009). Fahmina further clarified the issue regarding accessing a bank loan:

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<sup>8</sup> Haram means forbidden or proscribed by Islamic law (Halal Certifications Services, 2016).

After getting married, the day a woman leaves her father's house, that's the end of the relationship with her father's property. Brothers will never let her get it. After the death of the father, brothers will say, 'she can't get it.' [...] So, a woman has nothing to provide as collateral. She has no capital. Being a man, he automatically inherits some properties. It is a fixed asset that he can place as collateral in the bank. Here is the greatest weakness of women. (Fahmina)

Males in the society can inherit properties easily whereas, generally, women cannot have properties from their fathers due to the complication caused by their brothers. As a consequence, compared to male counterparts, women have limited assets to utilise as collateral. It is considered as a significant weak point for women in accessing loans. The literature on developed nations (Marlow and Patton, 2005) also identifies the limitation of the collateral issue for women business-owners. This study extends the view by providing the example of the patriarchal practice of natal family members as a reason for the lack of collateral of women in the developing nation.

Amrin mentioned about the probable problems of other family members, namely her sons-in-law. It should be mentioned that Amrin formally started the business when she realised that she would have to maintain the family due to the death of her husband. Her son helped her to continue the business and to take the bank loan. However, during the process of accessing the loan, she intentionally involved her married daughters and sons-in-law less. Additionally, she did not consider seeking financial support from her sons-in-law when she was having difficulty repaying the loan during a period of political unrest ('Section 7.3: Notion of Respectable Position of Women' of the next chapter addresses the issue of political turmoil in relation to repayment of the loan.) She poignantly expressed her situation:

Now where will you [I] go? To the sons-in-law? If you [I] go to the sons-in-law, they will say tomorrow – What's that, Mother? ... [They will say to the daughters:] 'Your mother came to me to ask for money!' They may not insult my daughters. Again they may do it. I am not like that type of woman. (Amrin)

Amrin considered that the involvement of her sons-in-law might become an issue to insult her daughters. This example demonstrates that due to the probable

patriarchal practices concerning her daughters, she did not want to involve her sons-in-law in this process. Put differently, probable patriarchal issues of relatives can also have an impact upon the management of bank loan repayment for women business-owners.

It can be concluded that in some cases, the male family members (here other than husbands) can have an influence on this bank loan process. Particularly for the purpose of guarantors, a large number of family members were involved. Nonetheless, the literature (Welter and Smallbone, 2008, Danish and Smith, 2011) seldom discusses the involvement of other family members, such as fathers, as partners in businesses in transitional or developing economies. From the context of a patriarchal developing nation, this section extends the view regarding diversified roles of different family members in businesses, with specific concentration on acquiring bank loans. In order to assess the overall influence of family on the debt financing process, along with family members, the impact of the issue of domestic responsibility and child rearing needs to be investigated. The next section sheds light on this topic.

### **6.2.2 Domestic Responsibility and Child Rearing**

Some respondents explicitly explained the domestic responsibility and child rearing issue regarding their access to debt finance. They considered the issue from the response of the families as well as from the perspective of banks.

The following comments of two women business-owners can be considered here regarding the problems of going out for acquiring loans due to the childrearing responsibility:

Then being a woman, leaving the children ... I could not do it [accessing bank loans], if my husband would not cooperate with me. (Rizia)

In fact, I cannot spend time for going out for the process of loans. Leave it. My husband can do something. [...] Sometimes, it is found that I will get ready. I will prepare. I will go out. A man can do it fast. It is done quickly. I say to the kid, 'I am coming. Sit down. I will go out. I will come back.' Considering all the sides, it is not possible. Many things I have left to my husband. (Maliha)

The comments further rationalise the grounds of the involvement of husbands in the process of debt finance. As the women could not go out due to their child rearing responsibility, they were dependent on their husbands to undertake the tasks. This finding coincides with other studies based on developing nations (Ahmad, 2011). The issue of domestic responsibility and child rearing not only restricts the mobility of women concerning going out for the tasks related to bank loans. It also left them dependent on their husbands for other purposes, for instance, keeping accounting records. Accounts documents are essential while applying for a bank loan, as discussed in the previous chapter. Maliha mentioned about the assistance of her husband in relation to her daily business activity: *"I, in fact, I cannot maintain many things. For example, I can't keep the accounts properly. I have to spend time for the family. The children go to school. I can't do many things. I have left it to my husband – 'Look after that'."*

According to few women, banks also consider the issue of domestic chores and child rearing negatively while deciding upon sanctioning loans for women. The negative attitude of bank officers was echoed in the comments of Fiza:

They [bank officers] think that probably they [women business-owners] cannot keep continuing; they [the women] have nothing of any importance to say.... Now a days, in fact, the mentality has not yet become clear that in Bangladesh, a woman can maintain a family with her own responsibility; simultaneously she can pay instalments to a bank ... She is capable of handling anything. This matter has not yet been ... I mean it has not been realised by men in Bangladesh. A lot of tension prevails ... whether they would be able to repay loans or not – things like this. (Fiza)

Fiza contended that the patriarchal approach of the broader society has an influence on banks. It is not yet established in the society that women can manage their businesses alongside household chores. Banks lack confidence in women concerning their ability to maintain loans. Consequently, based on the domestic responsibility issue, women can be discriminated against concerning their access to bank loans.

Drawing upon the findings of the study, it is evident that responsibilities within the household sphere were considered as obstacles for women acquiring bank loans. Although prior studies on developed nations consider patriarchal

segregation of work as an obstacle for women business-owners (Ahl, 2004, Brush et al., 2009, McGowan et al., 2012), the particular field of debt financing is not addressed. Moreover, the perception of women regarding the approach of banks concerning domestic responsibilities and child rearing for disbursing loans remains underexplored in the extant literature. This study sheds light on this issue of perception. Nonetheless, only a few respondents reported the problems concerning household responsibilities. As a point of caution, it can be contended that this issue of domestic responsibility and child rearing may be so deeply entrenched in the day-to-day activities of women business-owners that many of them did not think to mention it separately concerning debt financing process.

**Table-4: Broader Familial Context in Accessing Bank Loans**

<b>Broader Issues of Family</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Other Family Members</b>	
Assisting Role	Mostly regarding Guarantor Issue
Negative Role	Extended Family Members' Negative Behaviour
<b>Domestic Responsibility and Childcare</b>	
Negative Impact	Obstacles for carrying out the Process
Perceived Negative Impact	Banks' Discrimination based on this Issue

To sum up, even though different family members were involved or even supportive about acquiring bank loans of women, in some cases patriarchal practices of male family members were revealed. The roles of other family members are hardly addressed in the extant literature. Moreover, whereas the studies broadly consider the issue of domestic responsibility and child rearing for women business-owners, this research particularly presents this aspect as a hindrance for acquiring loans. Nonetheless, the previous chapter about the roles of husbands and this section about the roles of other family members and domestic responsibility clearly present the diversified patriarchal experiences of the women. The next section attempts to unpack different features associated with families that can cause the diversified experiences of women business-owners.

### **6.3 Different Aspects of Families about Diversified Experiences of Women**

When considering women business-owners' access to debt finance, the first empirical chapter and the previous section disclose a wide range of roles of male family member in Bangladesh. It reveals assisting roles, negative roles and even having financial gains from loans. For the better explanation concerning all respondents' diversified patriarchal experiences within the family sphere, there is a need to explore different family related aspects that could be liable for their experiences. Therefore, this section investigates how various aspects of family have an influence on women's different experiences in their access to bank loans. Providing attention to the voices of the women (Frisby et. al., 2009), in this section, the feminist study seeks to address the research question: *What are the family related aspects that are responsible for the diversified experiences of the women while accessing bank loans?*

It is important to have a recap on the various experiences of the women to set the scene for explaining the detail of the family related aspects. Approximately one third of the respondents' (6) husbands consumed loans or had control over the finances of the businesses. These women were also found to be dependent on their husbands. Some other respondents (8) reported the negative attitude of their husbands during the process of accessing loans even though the financial gains of husbands were not traced. Considering all these respondents (14), few were confronted with a negative attitude from other family members.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the remaining one third of the respondents (7) did not report any negative attitude from their husbands or other family members concerning the debt financing process and they were not dependent on their husbands for this process. They also did not mention any domestic responsibility or child care issues that were directly related to the bank loan process. As a point of caution, as these findings are based on the particular experience of debt financing, it does not necessarily indicate that these women had no patriarchal experiences regarding their businesses. For instance, among these seven women two (Nahid and Nasima) preferred to run businesses rather than take jobs in order to have more time for their household responsibilities. These are examples of how domestic responsibility and childcare influence their



on the debt financing process. Thereafter, this section unveils how the financial interest of the family had an influence on initiating the businesses that led to the overall positive approach for the businesses. Finally, it investigates some other issues, for example, it explains how some women were able to overcome the problems created by husbands via the patronage of other family members.

### **6.3.1 Age of Marriage**

From the empirical evidence of the study, the age of marriage emerged as an important aspect to consider regarding the differential patriarchal experiences of the women business-owners. It requires analysing how the experiences of the women can be varied based on the age of marriage and how this method of forming the family (that is, early marriage) can have an impact on these women regarding their access to bank loans.

The empirical evidence reveals that the women who were married in adulthood and those who were married in childhood had sharply contrasting experiences in relation to debt financing for their businesses. In general, the women, who did not experience any negative attitude from family members, were married in their mid-twenties or at least after 18 years of age. The only exception was Barna who took a major financial responsibility for the survival of the family (the case of Barna is explained in the next section.) On the contrary, the women (11 out of 14) of the sample, who had negative experiences from their male family members, were married at an early age, that is, before the age of 18. In general, they were married within the ages of 15-17. Nevertheless, a few were very immature at the stage of getting married. Among all the respondents, Rini was married at the earliest age (8-9 years). She started her conjugal life at her father-in-law's house, when she was 14-15 years old. Additionally, as a minor, Lisa was even forced to get married against her will. It is condemned as a highly patriarchal issue whilst guardians arrange marriage without necessarily having the consent of the girl involved (Jones, 2010).

As many women started their family life in such a highly patriarchal way and the empirical evidence establishes a strong relationship between the patriarchal practices regarding the debt financing process and the age of marriage, it is important to explore how their early marriage influenced their businesses and,



consequently, their access to bank loan. Papia mentioned that as she was married in *childhood*, she was not aware of her role in the family of her in-laws. She had the naïve approach that she was being treated in the same way as the daughters of the family and of following what was instructed. This attitude clearly reflects the strong dependence on the family members or the husband and the unquestionable acceptance of their opinions as a minor. Therefore, due to their early marriage, women can easily accept the private patriarchy as a natural issue and they are shaped according to the system of the family of in-law. Papia explained how she accepted the patriarchal norms because she was married in her childhood:

As I got married in my childhood, I did not understand the fact that I had to take the family's responsibility. I assumed that perhaps my task was to follow the way the in-laws directed me. [...] Then I noticed the way my father-in-law guided me. I thought, 'having left behind one [own] father, I would have another father [the father-in-law]. I shall be guided in the same way he guides his own daughters.' Yes, it was neither my claim nor my right. I thought, 'this is the system.' In fact, I was growing up according to their system. However, now my mother-in-law orders me to do this or to do that. I follow her orders. I work, manage the babies, my studies – everything. (Papia)

Considering the neighbouring country, India, it is also argued that child marriage make females accept the structure of the authority of their in-law families more easily (Jones, 2010). However, the attitude of accepting the patriarchal norms can be found to be continued even when the female becomes an adult as ascertained from the opinion of Papia:

From the very beginning of my family life, I have tried to follow the instructions given by my husband or my father-in-law and my mother-in-law. So, now, even though I have grown up, I can't suddenly do things without informing them. No matter what is the issue whether it is about my business, or say, bank loans. Family life does not work in this way! If I try to do things for my business without the consent of my family members, there will definitely be chaos in my personal life. But yes! My view is not very different from their views. However, you may say that it is because I was brought up according to the norms of the in-law's family. [She laughed] (Papia)

The quotes exemplify that as Papia started her marital life in a submissive way, she was not able to influence any change in the attitude in her adulthood. If she deviated from the way she was following, there might be friction in the family

relationship. To avoid such a situation, she accepted the subordination even for her own business and also for accessing bank loans. It is worth noting that during the interview, on several occasions, Papia mentioned how her decisions and activities about her businesses or even bank loans were moulded by family members. Moreover, she acknowledged that as her socialisation was influenced by her in-law's family, it might be the reason for not having too different views from that of other family members. The impact of the family, evident from Papia's comments, resembles what Bradley (2007:27) argues about "the long-lasting and the deepest effect" of the family on women. The case of Papia implies that early marriage can have a strong patriarchal influence in permanently shaping the view of a female, resulting in life-long subordination and, thus, it is not surprising that it can have an influence on the debt financing process for their businesses.

Some women also mentioned that being married at an early age was an obstacle to continue their studies. In order to explain this issue, it is important to draw attention to the significance of educational and professional qualifications regarding the process of bank loans. The respondents who did not report any negative influence from their husbands or other family members directly in businesses, were generally engaged in good jobs before starting their businesses or they were well educated (completed undergraduate or masters' degrees). Among these women Zohora and Barna were two exceptional cases as they were not educated to university level. They started businesses to generate income for their family (explained in the next section). It is important to note that most of the women (11 out of 14), having negative experiences of family members in one way or another, did not study in universities. It is revealed that most of the women, whose husbands consumed the loans or had financial control over the businesses, could not even complete their higher secondary school level. The patriarchal experiences regarding male family members within the context of debt finance imply that the women with less educational or professional qualifications were more likely to be subordinated by family members. In addition, the women whose husbands gained benefits from the businesses or the loans, were highly dependent on their husbands for dealing with bank officers, preparing documents and so on. The lack of educational background in relation to bank loans is established as the most significant problem in the comments of Fahmina:

Number one problem is that most of the women business-owners are not so educated. They are not highly educated – not highly exposed – their confidence level is not so high. You know what I mean. They are quite mediocre. So, they don't understand – how to face a bank? Banks consider from the commercial point of view – what is her ability to deal with the bank? Women can't represent themselves in this way. (Fahmina)

According to Fahmina, bank officers judge the ability of the women while dealing with banks. In the context of developed nations, the importance of education in terms of accessing debt finance has long been recognised (Hisrich and Brush, 1984, Belcourt et al., 1991).

However, the data demonstrate that the age of marriage was an issue for not continuing to study and, as a consequence, these women were in disadvantaged positions regarding acquiring loans. For instance, although Rizia was interested to be engaged in employment, she could not pursue her education after marriage. The restriction from the family of in-laws was reflected in the comment: *"Mother-in-law said, [with laughter] 'after marriage, studying is not possible.' They said things like that."* Rizia's laughter demonstrates that she was not convinced by her mother-in-law's view. However, she had to accept the attitude of the family members of her husband with regard to her studies. The research (Flake, 2005) related to early marriage also establishes that females, getting married at an early age, are not receptive to or are less likely to undertake formal education and training for employment.

Although there was an acceptance from Papia's in-law family concerning her continuing education, she could not carry on her studies because of childcare issues. It is already recognised that for females who get married at an early age, motherhood becomes the only focus of their life (Flake, 2005). Papia elucidates her critical position regarding study after giving birth to a child: *"My father-in-law said, 'Yeah, Alright; continue to study with my daughters. Do everything.' Then after having a baby, it was found – moving forward was a bit problematic."* Hence, the child bearing and rearing issue placed constraints on Papia to become educated. However, it is important to note that from many of the interviews, the rural background of the natal families is revealed where early marriage is comparatively common.

In brief, due to early marriage, females are more prone to accept patriarchal norms while adjusting to the new family in childhood. Later, they may not escape from the subordinated position even for accessing bank loans for their own businesses. The data further suggest that sometimes, given the complexities in the early marriage, it is considered as a hindrance of being properly educated and, hence, it can eventually lead to an adverse impact on the debt financing process. In other words, the subordinated position of women from a young age has an impact upon their human capital acquisition and acts as a barrier to access finance at a later stage. Thus, this section provides novel insights about the age of marriage associated with accessing bank loans. Although some studies (Flake, 2005, Jones, 2010) discuss patriarchal issues originating from early marriage, the specific sector of business is underexplored. Moreover, the impact of the issues related to the formation of family has not received attention with regard to the debt financing process of the women business-owners.

### **6.3.2 Necessity of Earnings for the Family**

In order to explore the basis for not experiencing a negative attitude from family members regarding access to bank loans by the women business-owners, an attempt is taken to consider the reasons for or scenario of starting the businesses. For some of the women, the motive for launching their businesses can appropriately explain the family related issues with regard to the debt financing process. Accordingly, the severe financial crisis of the families is revealed as an important factor to be considered.

From the narrative accounts of the respondents, it is disclosed that for two women, family members accepted or encouraged businesses due to the need for a financial contribution for the family. In this regard, the circumstances of Zohora can be considered. Her husband's business failed and he could not start a new one. During that time (the late 1980s), to maintain the family, Zohora started her boutique business on a small scale. Her husband helped her in the business. Sometimes, he also looked after the children, when Zohora needed to go out for the purpose of the business. According to Zohora: *"when I went to shopping malls, he looked after the kids. Or when one thing had to be bought, or there was some work or someone had to be assigned for work, I went out, he looked after the kids."* These comments clearly demonstrate that she played the role of the

bread-earner and the husband was engaged in child rearing even though he was not entirely responsible for domestic responsibilities and child rearing. To some extent, the subversion of the traditional gender roles (Bradley, 2012) was necessary in this case.

Zohora related the reason for starting the business and the way of managing it with her debt financing experiences. When she was asked specifically about the response of the family members regarding debt financing, she replied:

They did not make any comment because the way I have expanded the business, the way I am running the business, no one had any reason to complain. [...] No problem. Rather they respect me. When I say something they follow it. They think that – ‘as she works hard to maintain her family, no need to say something unnecessarily’. (Zohora)

From the response of Zohora it is evident that she clearly experienced positive attitudes from family members due to her business performance. She maintained the business in a way that elicited no complaints from her husband or in-laws. She gained recognition of her hard work from the family and as a result, the family members did not interfere in her business. Put more explicitly, in accessing bank loans for her business, they did not make any comments. She further clarified the role of her husband regarding the bank loan: *“He is not saying anything or he does not have the right to say. The reason is that I have taken the responsibility to maintain the entire family. It is I who am running it.”* As Zohora was individually maintaining the whole family with her business, she considered that her husband did not have *‘the right to say’*. Due to her financial contribution to the family there was an extent to which Zohora could challenge patriarchal practices and was not subjugated in her family regarding having the bank loan. This finding is particularly important as the existing literature on developing nations demonstrates that through self-employment women can navigate and negotiate their subordinated position in the family but cannot challenge it (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2010).

The necessity of income for the family was more acute for Barna. She was living in a village with her family. She explained that, in her opinion, as they were Hindu by religion, for religious conflicts, the Muslims of that area took over their house, killed her brother-in-law and the life of her husband was in threat. She articulated

her vulnerable situation: *"In simple words, as I am a Hindu, I am helpless. In this country, I am very helpless."* Therefore, in the 1980s, they moved to Dhaka. When her husband started a job, she started a business trading clothes. She had strong support from her husband and other family members for establishing the business for their survival: *"Here, to survive in Dhaka city, if I need to work hard, I will have to do that. There is no way other than considering it positively."*

As the problem of the family of Barna was related to survival, her business was considered positively. Afterwards, she also had support from her family for the bank loan. Like Zohora, Barna did not directly relate the earnings issue as an explanation for not having any negative attitude from family members for the debt financing process. Nevertheless, the necessity of their financial contribution demonstrates a strong grounding for the overall positive approach of the family members. Against this background, it can be contended that for bank loans, she did not face any problems from the family. The case of Barna, however, cannot be solely explained by economic rationality. The problem of being in a minority group was embedded in this overall issue. In this regard, it should be noted that, according to black feminists, the family is a source of solidarity for these women in western countries (Bradley, 2007). For them the family is supportive instead of oppressive in order to confront white racism (ibid). The example of Barna, as a member of a minority group in the context of an Islamic country, elucidates similar issues to those of black women.

Financial crisis does not necessarily always place women in advantageous positions. This is apparent from the case of Rini. Although her husband was an educated person, he was not interested in being employed. He wasted much money by going abroad and, after a certain time, although not being engaged in generating income, he still liked to live a luxurious life. In order to maintain the family, Rini started her business; however, she did not receive support from her husband for the business. In order to acquire a bank loan, her son was the guarantor, as discussed in Section 6.2.1 (Other Male Family Members).

It should be noted that like Zohora, Barna and Rini, no other women in the entire sample mentioned such an acute need to generate income for their families. Therefore, the necessity of earnings for the family can be considered as an

important issue that provides some women a certain level of emancipation through their financial contribution. Although the financial contribution of women business-owners in the family generally goes unrecognised (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2010), this section enlightens the fact that, in acute financial distress, sometimes if not always, the financial support of women can be recognised. Further, the single case of Zohora establishes that women can also challenge the patriarchal segregation of work (Bradley, 2012) to a great extent.

### **6.3.3 Other Issues related to Families**

This section further detects the factors associated with families for the differential experiences of women business-owners while going through the bank loan process. These minor aspects are explained here.

In a few cases, the husbands of the women were not supportive regarding access to loans but other family members had a positive approach towards the women concerning this issue. For instance, in terms of the concern for conforming to societal expectations of gender roles (Bradley, 2012), Shahina's husband had a strong patriarchal approach: *"According to him, there's only one job – to sit idle at home. Just cook. You can call that a 'master of cooking'. Do all these things. And raise the kids properly. It is a woman's job. You don't have to do anything else."* Shahina's husband liked to see her engaged only in housework. She did not have support from her husband about accessing institutional loans ('Section 5.4.3:Lack of Support of Husbands' of the previous chapter illustrates her situation). Finally, she was able to obtain a loan when her daughter started to work at the bank. The daughter became the guarantor along with Shahina's son.

Rini had an almost similar situation. Her son, an officer of another bank, became the first guarantor of her loan on the grounds that Rini's husband was disabled during the time of the application for the loan. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that her husband gave no support to her business at all which implies that Rini might not obtain his support as a guarantor either. When accessing loans, the requirement of patronage of sons again demonstrates the dependence on male family members. Nevertheless, it is established that with the positive view of the children, women can avoid the patriarchal practices of husbands.

In addition, the negative role of the males of the extended families was traced for a few women business-owners. Seven of the women lived in a joint family, with members of their in-law's family where the menfolk of the extended family could be involved in their everyday lives and, as a consequence, they had scope to influence the debt financing process. For the majority of the women living in unit families, male family members of the extended family did not have such scope to negatively influence access to the bank loan process. The extended family, a context specific issue of a developing country of Asia (Nordqvist and Melin, 2010), appears to have an impact on the diversified experience.

In sum, there were a few minor family related issues that were responsible for the diversified experiences of the women business-owners. These issues could be related to their extended families or their adult children.

**Table-6: Impact of Family Related Issues on Women Business-owners' Experiences of Accessing Debt Finance**

<b>Family Related Aspects</b>	<b>Impact on the Process</b>
Age of Marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Early Marriage Correlated with High Level of Patriarchy, having Negative influence on Debt Finance Process</li> <li>- Early Marriage Hindered Education, Placing Women in Disadvantaged Position for Bank Loans</li> </ul>
Necessity of Earnings for the Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advantage to Gain a Certain Level of Emancipation in Family, Leading to Have no Direct Patriarchal Influence on Accessing Bank Loans</li> <li>- Challenging Patriarchal Segregation of Labour to an Extent</li> </ul>
Other Issues related to Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overcome Husbands' Patriarchal Approach with the Help of Adult Sons</li> <li>- Negative Roles of Extended Families Depending on Living in Joint/Unit Families</li> </ul>



#### **6.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter complements the previous chapter to explain the role of family regarding access to debt finance of women business-owners in a developing nation. Recognising different contextual issues in relation to the family in Bangladesh, this chapter addresses these aspects to analyse gender subordination of women business-owners. In an Asian country, along with the unit family, the extended family is apparent (Nordqvist and Melin, 2010) and, hence, taking into consideration this context-specific issue, this chapter incorporates the roles of male family members of the extended family. It brings to light the patronage of menfolk of the family that reinforces the dependence on males on this patriarchal society. In some cases, the patriarchal practices of male family members (other than husbands) regarding women's access to bank loans are also revealed. Nonetheless, in developed nations, although the impact of sexual division of work is recognised in relation to women business-owners (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992, Marlow, 1997, Ahl, 2006), there is a dearth of research of this concern particularly in the case of bank loans. In the context of intensive domestic responsibility and child rearing (Fernando, 2011), the obstacles imposed by the household responsibilities on the lending process is explicitly traced in this chapter.

Therefore, the previous chapter covering the role of husbands and this chapter together provide valuable insights about the role of family for women business-owners in accessing bank loans. The chapters establish how husbands and other male family members dominate, oppress and exploit women by getting involved in their businesses. The studies on developed nations appear to suggest that patriarchal practices are restricted only in terms of the marital and maternal roles of many women regarding the impact of these issues on their businesses. Nevertheless, this research demonstrates that the patriarchal roles of many men were also strongly evident at the individual level, that is, the male family members of many women actively intruded or controlled the businesses of the women. This finding contributes to the understanding of how patriarchal practices go beyond the family sphere when considering the businesses of women. It should be noted that there were some women who did not report any negative attitude from their male family members when taking bank loans. This is particularly important as it demonstrates that in this highly patriarchal context, some women could carry on their business activities without the direct negative interference of male family

members, whereas the majority of women in this study were found to confront private patriarchal issues in relation to their businesses.

In order to provide an explanation of the diversified experiences of the women business-owners, this chapter further reveals some distinct aspects of the family based on which the experiences can be varied. The family related context-specific issues of this developing nation provide valuable insights whereas these features are not common in developed nations. For example, the issue of early marriage explains how the subordinated position of women transcends the home into business activities. Whereas the educational and professional qualification was revealed as an issue that facilitated some women to gain access to bank loans individually or to operate businesses without the negative attitude of their male family members, this chapter explains how early marriage creates barriers to develop the human capital of many women. Moreover, generally the feminist work is concentrated on how women are subordinated or, at best, how women protest against their positions in developing countries (Naher, 2005) but little is known about the circumstances that lead to a certain level of emancipation. This chapter brings to the fore that in this patriarchal context, the financial crisis of the family can provide the women not only with a certain level of emancipation but also an ability to challenge patriarchy to an extent.

In general, the research on debt financing of women business-owners in developed nations is individual centric, ignoring family embeddedness. On the contrary, Chapter-5 and Chapter-6 collectively establish that the role of family is inevitable in the process of bank loans in the context of a patriarchal developing nation. The next chapter seeks to explore the broader contextual issues, the issues beyond the family sphere. These aspects not only have an impact on experiences of gender subordination of women outside the household realm but also, in some cases, explain how these external factors are related to private patriarchal issues.

## Chapter-7

### Access to Bank Loans of Women Business-owners: Impact of Broader Contextual Issues

*Being a woman is a terribly difficult task, since it consists principally in dealing with men.*

*- Joseph Conrad*

#### 7.1 Introduction

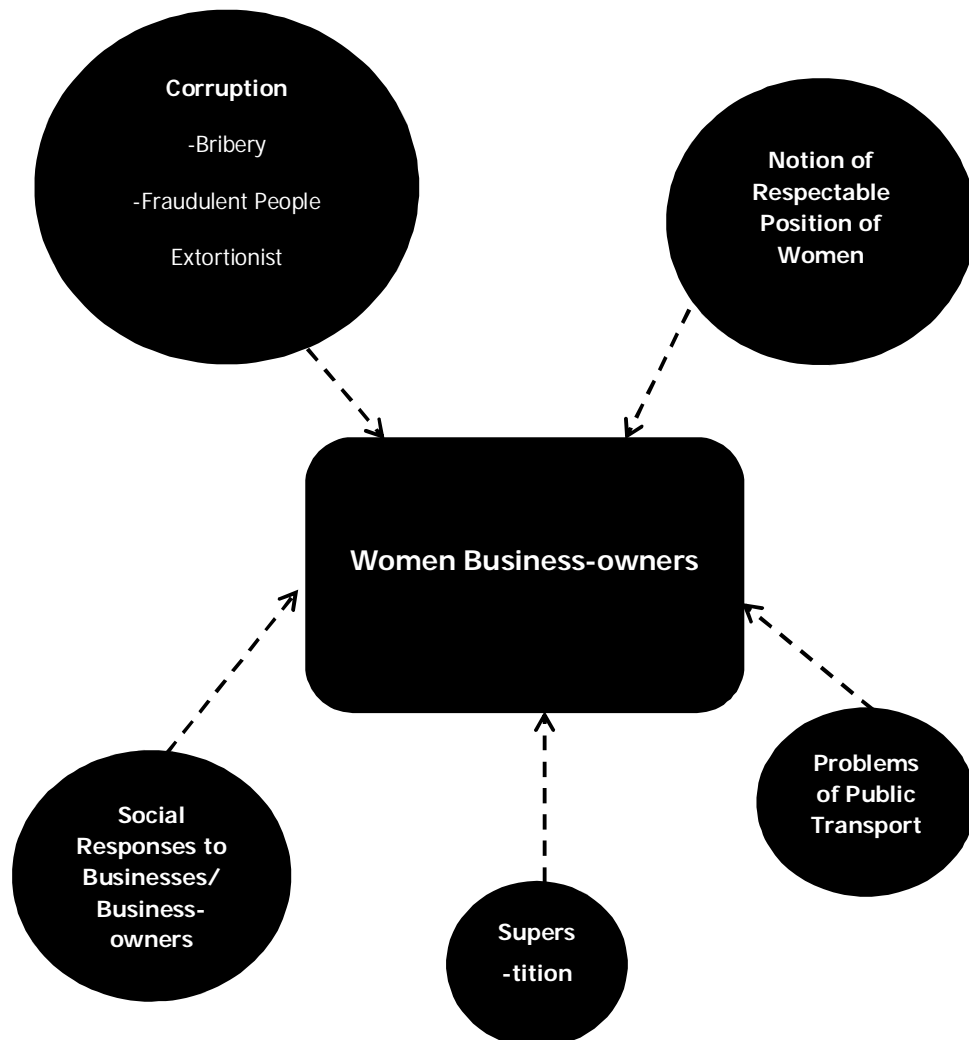
It is contended that entrepreneurship is influenced by contextual issues (Davidsson, 2003). For women entrepreneurs, rather than individual undertaking, calls have been made to consider contextual aspects in feminist studies to unveil the power structure relationships that affect women in society (Ahl, 2006). Nevertheless, due to the research concentration on developed nations, certain aspects of these areas are dominant in the existing literature (ibid). The context of developing nations has not been adequately investigated, even though the context specificities of these areas can offer ample scope to enrich the entrepreneurship scholarship. Further, a highly patriarchal context can provide an opportunity to bring to light some general issues of gender subordination that are not so visible in developed nations. Paradoxically, in developing countries, researchers are heavily involved in studying women who receive micro-credit (Hashemi et. al., 1996, Ghosh and Wright, 2005, Naher, 2005, Roodman and Morduck, 2009, Naher, 2010) but research on women in small businesses is underexplored. In the chapter, against this background, based on the context of Bangladesh, this feminist study aims at responding to the second research objective of the thesis: *To explore how broader contextual issues of the developing nation are related to the experience of women in accessing debt finance for their businesses at the growth stage.*

This chapter identifies multiple contextual issues that are at play and that affect the experiences of women business-owners when accessing bank loans in Bangladesh. These facets include corruption, the notion of the respectable position of women, social responses to businesses or business-owners, problems of public transport and superstition. The limited studies on women business-

owners in developing countries have primarily addressed broader cultural values but have not analysed or even recognised many contextual issues of this area. In line with this logic, this chapter advances the prevailing knowledge by extending the view concerning the diversified context-specific issues of developing nations in this field of study and, simultaneously, facilitates in extending the understanding with more visibility of several broader contextual issues that are common but implicit in developed nations. The contextual aspects not only explain gender subordination in general, but also, in many cases clarify why women are dependent on male family members and are, consequently, victims of private patriarchal issues. Thus, it reinforces the inextricably intertwined relationships of private and public patriarchy within the context of debt financing (Walby, 2006).

**Figure-3**

**Broader Contextual Issues related to Women Business-owners**



## **7.2 Corruption**

Corruption is witnessed as an important broader contextual issue in the interviews of some respondents when considering access to bank loans. The narrative accounts of women are not limited to bribery as a hindrance for the process. They expressed how fraudulent people or extortionists, other aspects of corruption (Bayes and Hossain, 2013), play active roles in exploiting women in the society.

### **7.2.1 Bribery**

From the comments of the women business-owners, it is evident that in this corrupted context, due to the issue of bribery, some women faced problems while preparing bank loan related documents at government offices. The issue is considered as gender specific because male family members did not face such an issue at all or, if they did face it, it was less problematic for them to manage. Several examples are cited here to illustrate this concern.

Zafrin unveiled the issue of bribery regarding providing collateral for her business loan. She needed documented evidence of the property from the land registration office in order to provide collateral. For this purpose, she sent her staff to the land registry office without success and, finally, had to resort to sending her husband to that office in order to obtain the documents. She avoided going herself as initially, she went for two days to there and felt that she was harassed. The officers informed her that the documents were incorrect and they asked for money whereas Zafrin considered that money to be a bribe. Her opinion about bribery is justified when considering her husband's experience on attending the office. The officers did not raise any question about the documents and they did not demand any money from him. This implies that there was no problem with the documents. By pointing out problems with the documents, the officers were making an excuse to ask for a bribe from Zafrin. It should be noted that the land registration office is considered to be the most corrupt in the country (BBC, 2005). Nonetheless, Zafrin shared her experiences of going to the office:

They asked for money – a bribe. For this reason, later on, I didn't go to the government office. I had to provide documents of the property to the bank. I went to the land registration office for the documents. Then they said, 'Your document is not right. You have to provide money.' Harassment! I went two days to the office. (Zafrin)

On the contrary, while discussing the experience of her husband, Zafrin pointed out: *"The task that males can do, females cannot do it. The officers asked the husband: 'Show those documents.' Then my husband said to me, 'nothing – no bribe was required.' They harassed [me]."* The gender specific problem regarding bribery is clearly articulated in Zafrin's opinions from these contrasting experiences. Whereas at the same office, for the same work, she was asked for the bribe, her husband was not confronted with any such issue. Therefore, she concluded that, in society, a woman cannot do many things that a man can do. The scenario implies that Zafrin attempted to go against her social role expectation (Eagly et al., 2000) and hence, she confronted problems in the corrupted context. It is so commonplace for women to be harassed in wider society where there is the expectation that they can be an easy target for exploitation with the formal authority of corrupted government officials. The patriarchal social norms restrict women from undertaking certain activities and, consequently, place them in disadvantaged positions for their business operations.

Zafrin further elucidated the way government officers consider 'harassment': *"They [government officers] harass. They think it is easy to harass women."* As grounds of harassment, she mentioned: *"They underestimate them [the women]."* Zafrin condemned the officers for underestimating women because of their gender. She echoed the general perception about women not being equally intellectual to men (Bradley, 2012). However, the example of Zafrin demonstrates that due to the gendered-attitude of the officers in this corrupt environment, sometimes women are dependent on their male family members to navigate the public sphere in order to carry out the process of acquiring bank loans.

Because of the issue of bribery, the dependence of women on their husbands was also revealed in the case of preparing and receiving renewal of trade licenses. It should be mentioned that the principle purpose of trade licenses is to gain legitimacy in order to formally operate businesses. Nonetheless, while applying for loans, copies of trade licenses or updated copies of the renewal of licenses are required to be submitted to banks. From the interviews, it is revealed that several women relied on their husbands to produce these documents in order to manage the bribery issue. Maliha clearly declared: *"in government offices there is an issue*

*of bribery. It's not possible for a woman to manage it. That's why, it is better, if he [the husband] goes there."*

The comments indicate that officers ask for a bribe to prepare the documents but managing this task is a gender-specific issue. It reminds us that certain actions express roles and norms of a specific gender (Martin, 2006). In the context of Bangladesh, dealing with bribery is generally managed by men. For women, an attempt to deal with bribery can be considered as a challenge to the expectation of the socially recognised sex category (Deutsch, 2007, Jeanes, 2007). To comply with the social expectation, women are supposed to maintain a feminine manner (Eagly, et al., 2000). Therefore, according to Maliha, for women, it is *"not possible"* to manage this issue which, therefore, results in their dependence on males to carry out the process.

Rizia echoed the dependence on husbands for managing such documents. Further, she mentioned that the officers charge larger amounts of money as a bribe from women compared to male counterparts: *"They [the officers] ask for more money from women, got it? If the person is a woman, they think that it will be possible to charge more. They think so."* Thus, based on gender, women were asked for a higher amount. The approach of the officers towards women hints at taking advantage of softness (Marshall, 1993, Gherardi, 1994) or submissiveness (Connell, 1987), the widely recognised characteristics of femininity. Nevertheless, trade licenses are not prepared or renewed primarily for the purpose of bank loans, as mentioned earlier, but the gender-specific problems of managing these documents have an indirect impact on the debt financing process of the women.

Even though by taking into account the issue of bribery, literature on developing nations seeks to explore the lack of confidence of women to deal with government officers in the corrupted environment (Amine and Staub, 2009), researchers have not particularly examined how corruption is related to the debt financing process of women. This issue is unveiled in this section in detail. The experiences of women business-owners establish that, in general, managing bribery is a task that is cast to men. If women attempted to handle this structural problem, due to their gender, they confronted more difficulty. They were charged higher amounts of money and even, if the bribery was not obviously linked to a

certain task, only women were corruptly asked for payment for such a work. Clearly, the bribery in the broader society placed women business-owners at a disadvantaged position to access to bank loans and, in some cases, left them dependent upon male family members. In brief, this section brings to light that whilst dealing with bribery is widely considered as men's affair, in this corrupted context, 'bribery' is employed as a means to exploit women and the attempt of women to avoid and subvert exploitation reinforces the influence of public patriarchy on private patriarchy (Walby, 2006).

### **7.2.2 Fraudulent People**

Women were found exploited due to not only bribery but also fraudulent behaviour. Three respondents highlighted the issue of fraud in this corrupted country. The empirical evidence suggests that although fraudulent people appeared to both males and females, women more easily fell into the trap. Thus, the gender specific dimension is revealed from the experiences of the women.

Shahnaz explained this concern in detail. She mentioned that, sometimes, bank officers come to the shops to promote loans and support the business-owners to sanction loans. Nevertheless, in reality, some of them are not bank officers at all. They provide commitment to sanction loans quickly in exchange for a charge for their service. Ultimately, however, the business-owners experience trouble in their attempt to have bank loans. Shahnaz illustrated how such people cheat the women:

For taking loans, many people fall in traps. For example, there are often some fraudulent people who say that this amount of money will be needed. They will be able to sanction loans. [...] Then those people don't manage sanctioning loans. They take the money and flee. (Shahnaz)

The comments clarify that although some people are committed to manage loans, in reality, when they receive money from the business-owners, they escape from the area. Although these fraudsters go to both males and females, according to Shahnaz, females are more easily convinced by them: *"They say that they have come from the bank. In our country, the women are generally quite simple, aren't they? They don't think much. Then they agree with the offer of the people."* This approach of the women in Bangladesh is consistent with the consideration of the docile and obedient characteristics of women (Wollstonecraft, 1975) as discussed



by Bradley (2012). Shahnaz termed those women as *"a bit different – they trust on what is said to them"* without verification. The comments imply that some women are easily convinced by fraudulent people and this is why they are exploited. In the comments, while referring to the societal representation of women, Shahnaz distanced herself from this cohort of women. When she was approached in this way about sanctioning a loan, she refused. Finally, she personally approached another bank (Barc Bank Ltd.) for a loan and managed to receive the funds. Although Shahnaz was not a victim of fraudulent people, her general comments on this aspect present the scenario of the corrupted context whereby many women face problems when undertaking the debt financing process.

Zohora shared her personal experience of a fraudulent person when she was taking her first loan. At that time, she was not aware of the facilities of bank loans and she did not feel confident to go to the bank directly. It is worth noting that many women took active support from their husbands to deal with banks. Nevertheless, Zohora, playing the major breadwinner role for the family, did not involve her husband in the outside work for the business. This could be the probable reason why she depended on a male outside of her family who was later revealed to be a fraudulent person. The person, who committed her to sanction a loan, was her neighbour. He informed Zohora that his network included the officer of a particular bank. However, the neighbour did not uncover his true identity to her: *"He didn't have a business. For the purpose of business or any other work, he came to the shop. He didn't disclose everything to me."* The docile attitude of women (Wollstonecraft, 1975) is strongly presented here. It also indicates that in this patriarchal society, to physically approach banks for loans, some women feel the need of the support of males in such a way that they even rely on people who are almost *strangers* to them.

That neighbour sanctioned the bank loan for Zohora with the condition of taking part of the money. He received further money from Zohora as partial instalments to repay the loan but he took away all the money and left the area. Before the bank approached her for the repayment of the loan, she was not aware that the person did not pass on the instalments to the bank. Zohora had to repay the entire amount of money which was a great loss for her and, consequently, she

even had to close her showroom at that time. Zohora explained how she fell into the trap and suffered for that fraudulent person about the bank loan:

[The person said:] 'You can have a loan in the name of your shop. I will use a part of that loan and you will use the other part of it.' That person helped me to take the loan. He had a part of the money. He was supposed to pay the instalments, with my money and his money. I did not seek for any information about the loan from the bank. When he left that area, he did not communicate with me. He did not come to know whether the loan was repaid or not. When the bank communicated with me, I realised that he did not provide the instalments at all. Again, I repaid the loan. [...] It was a loss. I also had to close that showroom. (Zohara)

The scenario of Zohora vividly presents that there are cases where women are exploited by unfamiliar males in the society while accessing bank loans. Even though in this corrupted nation fraudulent people try to exploit business-owners financially, for women business-owners this situation is more challenging.

It is worth noting that the majority of the corruption-related research in economics converges around the concern of bribery (Tonoyan, 2003). There are also some studies on corruption regarding entrepreneurship in developing nations concentrating only on this aspect (Avnimelech, 2011, Dreher and Gassebner, 2013). This section extends the view of corruption in entrepreneurship by contributing from the perspective of fraudulent people. Moreover, it demonstrates how due to the gender specific characteristics (Wollstonecraft, 1975), fraudulent people try to exploit women business-owners.

### **7.2.3 Extortionists**

From the interview of one respondent, the issue of extortion emerges as a problem regarding utilisation of bank loans in Bangladesh. This example also emphasises on the gender specific issue whilst in that corrupted context, it can be a problem for business-owners in general. While explaining the problem, Lisa unpacked the concept of extortionists in the specific context with reference to their activities:

Again, in the last year during Eid, when I took the loan, somehow this has been informed [to the extortionists] ... I mean, don't they come during the time of Eid to shops for demanding 'Chanda'? Such extortionists – they came and said, "Okay. 'Apa'<sup>9</sup>,' you have received a good amount of loan from the bank. You have to give some 'Chanda' for Eid." I don't know them. They didn't come once; they came several times. Later on, they threatened me; they wouldn't allow me to run the shop. This is how the extortionists say anyway. (Lisa)

From Lisa's comments, it is apparent that when she received her loan, the extortionists became aware of it. Then they demanded a part of the loan by using the excuse of the Eid celebrations (they used the Bengali word 'Chanda' for that). However, Lisa's comments suggest that it was not a celebratory donation for the religious festival because their approach was intimidating. They threatened her with restrictions in running the shop. Lisa mentioned that it was the way generally they force people to comply with them: "*as the extortionists say anyway*". In addition, this type of offence often occurs during Eid in the country which was evident from her comment: "*During the time of Eid many people of such type [extortionists] come for 'Chanda'.*" Lisa's opinion is also supported by the reports in the media (Raju, 2014).

As Lisa was terrified by the threat, she provided part of her loan to the extortionists. Although it was a criminal act to demand money in this manner, she did not seek help from the police officers as she did not expect them to resolve the issue. Rather, she perceived that she might have to face more hassle:

Then being afraid, I gave some money [to the extortionists]. I didn't go to the trouble of reporting to the police. I know that by doing this, perhaps nothing will happen. Unnecessarily my trouble will be increased. [...] Females indeed! That's why they [extortionists] know that we will give [them the money] without inviting any problem. (Lisa)

The disadvantaged position as a female was clearly echoed in the quotes of Lisa – "*Females indeed!*" According to her point of view, the extortionists considered that when facing criminal activities, females were more helpless in that context. Moreover, in that country, as there was less reliance on the police (Mehtab and Rahman, 2014), the extortionists would be more easily able to obtain money from women business-owners. Again, it seems that because of the soft or submissive

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<sup>9</sup> In Bangladesh, generally older females or less known females are called 'Apa'

nature of women (Connell, 1987), they were considered vulnerable and, subsequently, the extortionists expected to gain funds from Lisa.

Like the examples of fraudulent people, the case of extortionists also extends the view of corruption in relation to businesses and, particularly, regarding the gender-specific dimension. Further, this case demonstrates that the people in society, who are neither related to the formal bank lending process nor to women business-owners, can take a share of loans. Some women are deprived from utilising the full amount of their loans for not only the family members but also the criminals of the society.

In sum, the patriarchal practices of the corrupted people were evident through the exploitation of women business-owners. The scenario led some women to become dependent on male family members to deal with the issues. It can be concluded that corruption plays an important role in placing obstacles for women business-owners in their access to bank loans.

### **7.3 Notion of Respectable Position of Women**

Several respondents drew attention to the notion of the respectable position of women that has a negative impact on accessing debt finance in this developing country. Concerning this aspect Fahmina employed the term *character* (this English word was mentioned during the interview) whereas the usage of the word 'character' has a context specific connotation. Prior to the discussion on the bank lending process, to set the background, the concept of character is elucidated.

Fahmina illustrated this concept by pointing out many restrictions imposed by society or religion. She indicated the concern of morality about dealing with the opposite sex with the notion of character. This notion of character also coincides with a study regarding the career aspect of women based on the context of Sri Lanka, another South Asian country (Fernando, 2011). Good character is considered as the most valuable asset of women (ibid). Fahmina unfolded the concept of character from the context of Bangladesh:

In our country, character means the way we will have to live according to the Muslim laws. The society further imposes restrictions. For example, 'you can't do this; you can't do that.' We consider that the woman, who follows all these restrictions has a 'character'. Even though there are many prejudices, many traditional obstructions, we consider it as the 'character'. We consider that a female will maintain her life properly. In addition, she will not be involved in ... we don't allow free mixing, that exists in the western society. After getting married, she will mix with her husband. (Fahmina)

These comments indicate that to maintain a good character, women have to follow many restrictions. It illustrates the expectation of this highly patriarchal society regarding "appropriate female behaviour" (Eagly, 2005:470) of women. To hold a respectable position in society, the restriction on interaction with male acquaintances also exists in the neighbouring country, India (Phadke, 2007). Fahmina further explained that the issue of character is particularly employed for women. In any incidence, a woman's morality can be questioned but a male is not judged in the same way which reinforces the privileged position of men in society (Simpson and Lewis, 2005). Accordingly, character is a weak point for women. Women have to be concerned about their respectable position in society otherwise there will be rumours about their character that will raise questions regarding their socially accepted moral behaviour with males. Moreover, Fahmina argued that males take advantage of this issue of character. If a promising woman cannot be defeated on rational grounds, she can be overthrown on the basis of her character. In the crude words of Fahmina:

In our country, the worst thing is like that – to defeat a woman, develop a rumour. There is something called 'character' that a woman needs but a man doesn't need. If anything happens people will say, 'The woman has a bad character'. And in the case of a woman, regarding her calibre, ambition, hard work, if there is not any problem, she cannot be defeated, you can attack her by only one thing, 'Her character'. (Fahmina)

Against this background, in the case of acquiring bank loans, the issue of character can be a hindrance for women:

When a woman has a good progress in her work, for example, she is doing well in her business. She has a viable project to get a loan. She is taking a loan from a bank ... Then, there will be two types of interpretation. One group of people will say, 'She deserves it. She has achieved it.' But some people will never consider her quality, her academic background, her hard working. They will say, 'Oh! You know, she has some sort of relationships with the bank officer.' They perceive the issue as the outcome of her networking. One or two may even indicate that the woman maintains an immoral relationship with the bank officer. (Fahmina)

The comments of Fahmina bring to the fore how the entrepreneurial experiences and capital of women are undermined by gender and how the relationship with bank officers can be negatively related to the issue of character. Although, sometimes, the achievement of women can be acknowledged by some people, she spotted that the professional and academic background of a woman can be underestimated or may be even unrecognised by some. Without considering the qualification of women, some people are inclined to term the relationship with bank officers negatively. There may be an assumption that these women have divested their respectability or have exploited their sexuality to gain success. The discussion implies that, for the notion of character, women can face obstacles when dealing with bank officers for access to loans. A study (Radhakrishnan, 2008) on India also demonstrates that for the moral concerns women sometimes compromise their career.

Through her own experience, Lisa made the point of the respectable position of women more transparent. She explained why she was compelled to go the bank for a loan instead of seeking financial assistance from her male relatives:

... where should I get the money? I must go to the bank. I can't take money from my relatives in that way. I mean, suppose, if I ask my male cousin to lend me money – yeah — then my husband will again use nasty words. He will say, 'What is your relationship with him? Why will he give you the money?' I mean, he will insinuate about an inappropriate relationship. So, I will not be able to take a large amount of loan from the relatives in that way. I must go to the bank. (Lisa)

Such statements reveal the fact that taking loans from male relatives can place a woman in a disgraceful position as her husband could indicate an *"inappropriate relationship"*. Thus, concern about the respectable position of women in society sets financial constraints on accessing informal loans. As a result, it can be

considered as a reason for some women approaching banks for loans. It also indicates the influence of husbands on the decision of accessing debt finance.

Nurunnahar conveyed how she managed her problems when taking informal loans. Due to the political instability of the country, there was an adverse impact on businesses and for that reason some women were under pressure to repay bank loans. The problems of repaying loans originating from the political turmoil were expressed by many respondents. Nevertheless, during that period, as sales were low, Nurunnahar could not provide loan instalments properly and, subsequently, she received several phone calls from the bank asking for repayment of the money. She articulated her concern regarding this issue: *"I was in stress – how will I repay the loan? Yes. It has never happened to me. I am trying hard to manage the money."* The struggle to manage the money and provide loan instalments is noticed from her comments. She had to take loans from nearby business-owners in the shopping complex for the timely repayment of bank loans. In response to a question concerning her husband's insinuation of any negative relationship with the business-owner having taken loans from him, Nurunnahar responded: *"No. That type of question did not arise in my husband's mind."* However, she was concerned about not having any complication with her husband regarding this issue:

... again, the person from whoever I borrow [money], I ask [my husband], 'I am requesting money from someone in particular; [in that case,] shall I take money from that person? What do you think?' Before asking all these [questions], I would never take [any loan]. (Nurunnahar)

Thus, it is apparent that Nurunnahar sought permission from her husband regarding taking informal loans. One good reason for asking her husband was to maintain her respectable position and to avoid any awkward situation in future. This reinforces the role of her husband through his involvement in the decision making process regarding bank loans in relation to the protection of Nurunnahar's respectability. This matter is further clarified in her opinion:

... in future there will be no scope to say anything negative. [He can't say,] 'Why did he give loans to you?' Then I would be able to say, 'I took it after asking you'. There would be no scope to say anything negative. I don't leave that scope. (Nurunnahar)

The quotes denote the way some women preserve their respectable positions. Studies on South Asian countries (Fernando and Cohen, 2013) also present the impact of the concern of respectable positions on the family. Nonetheless, the example of Nurunnaher further reveals how the women comply with patriarchal attitudes of husbands to maintain relationships within families.

From the discussion in this section, it is evident that the notion of the respectable position of women has an impact upon dealing with bank officers regarding the loan process and also upon decision-making when taking or repaying loans. It is apparent how male family members employed respectability as a control mechanism to keep women subordinated. To avoid friction in their relationships with their husbands, some women comply with private patriarchal issues. Whereas the issue of respectable femininity is underexplored in entrepreneurship, this section provides valuable insights on this area of study. In addition, it is important to note that although moral concern was deemed important in western countries in the past, it is argued not to have entirely disappeared during the present time (Fernando and Cohen, 2013). Nonetheless, recent studies on developed nations do not address the moral issues of women explicitly in areas such as women's careers (ibid) or entrepreneurship. This section extends the understanding of this aspect of gender subordination considering the highly patriarchal context. Put differently, the concern of respectable femininity, that is common in both developed and developing countries, is made clear in the experiences of the women of Bangladesh where the issue is much more extreme and blatant.

#### **7.4 Social Responses to Businesses/Business-owners**

Several respondents made resolute claims about gender specific social responses to their businesses or to them as business-owners. These responses had direct or indirect consequences on the debt financing issue.

The example of Nasima concerning her struggle against banks' approach towards the nature of her business can be explained here. Nasima, a computer engineer, started a grocery shop. The reason to select that particular form of business was the prospect of the turnover based on her small amount of capital. Nevertheless,



in Bangladesh, it is not natural to find a woman operating a grocery shop. It was expressed in her strong voice: *"We have never seen [it]! You have never seen [it]!"* She went to several banks for loans but all loan officers pointed out, *"you are a woman"* because according to them, the type of the business was not consistent with her gender. Nasima illustrated the issue:

When many people from the bank came to visit my shop, everyone had the same question – why am I in this sector? [They said,] 'You should be at a boutique! You should be at a parlour! But why are you in here in the first place?' When I was in the process of taking the loan, many people came [to the shop]; they came casually. You can't imagine! I mean, I talked to many people about my shop concerning the issue – 'why are you here?' (Nasima)

The opinion of Nasima conveyed that as the type of business does not comply with the societal expectation, she confronted many questions. This social expectation regarding the sector of businesses for women reflects the broader patriarchal norms of the country. It is generally considered that women can convert domestic activities to business activities that results in their engagement in certain low-skilled and little or no profit businesses (Mirchandani, 1999). The societal approach regarding the nature of businesses in developed nations coincides with that of Bangladesh. Nonetheless, this study extends the view by considering the perspective of the bank concerning whether to sanction the loan.

Nasima initially failed to receive loans from different banks. Finally, she received her loan from Barc Bank Ltd.. She considered the gendered attitude of bank officers regarding the type of the business was responsible for the barrier because her documents were strong enough to access a loan. Her conclusion concerning the bank officers was vindicated by her comments:

... if it were a boutique, I wouldn't face much problem. It might be easy for the boutique. I found more ... The reason is that if you have only papers, if everything is Okay, you will get the loan. In my case, as it doesn't match with the nature of my gender, so much hassle, so much discussion – all these. (Nasima)

Nasima conveyed the message that financial statements or other relevant documents cannot guarantee loan approval. The societal expectation concerning the nature of the business needs to comply with the gender of women business-owners. In other words, the behaviour of women requires consistency with the

socially expected sex categories (Marvin and Grandy, 2010). Nasima's case illustrates how some banks were concerned about conforming gender with the nature of the business. In this patriarchal society, the deeply embedded gendered stereotypes and roles impact on women's entrepreneurial ability to navigate and access finance in the public domain. This is, again, reflected in the previous chapter where the bank discriminated against women based on domestic responsibility and childcare when approving loans.

Nonetheless, regarding the process of applying for bank loans, whereas the extant literature appears not to pay any attention to the bank loan related different people, such as guarantors, examples from this context reveal that these people can also be associated with the problem of gender subordination. Rizia disclosed how her husband employed strategies to manage guarantors for the business. He requested his male cousin to be a guarantor. The husband thought that there was a possibility of the cousin denying him, if he became aware that it was for Rizia's business. Therefore, in order to convince the person Rizia's husband pointed out his trustworthiness and said that it was his business:

[The cousin asked:] 'Why are you taking the signatures?' He asked different questions [Rizia laughed]. My husband said – 'I brought these [the documents]. Don't you trust me? It is for my loan.' He convinced him to agree. [...] He [the husband] said that it was his loan. I mean his cousin didn't even want to agree to sign out of fear. He was afraid. (Rizia)

Rizia's comments indicate that the relative might have a lack of confidence in her business. To convince him, the issue of her ownership of the business was not disclosed. The approach of the husband re-iterates what is known about offering more value to males in entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2004). It also reinforces that for managing guarantors, women can be dependent on husbands to avoid the gender specific problems of the broader society.

The problem of Zohora is, however, not directly related to the process of accessing bank loans. She emphasised the issue of suffering financial loss in her boutiques because many of the wholesalers withheld payment. It eventually had an impact on the repayment of bank loans. In her view, the problem with wholesalers was attributed to the gender issue:

They [the wholesalers] didn't provide importance to me because I am a woman. They didn't pay the money properly. In many places, in at least seven to eight places, I had losses. I lost money from the people. [...] If there was a man in my position, he would quarrel, argue or fight with them [with the wholesalers]. He would manage to get the money. But I can't behave in that way. (Zohora)

Pointing out the role or behaviour of men, Zohora tried to explain that men were able to manage the due payment from the wholesalers. However, as women cannot perform the same role or behave in the same manner, she had to accept the loss in her business. Zohora's comments suggest the tough or aggressive masculine attitudes (Connell, 1987) that were not acceptable to be demonstrated by her. As she considered that this form of masculine attitude was essential to deal with the situation, because of her gender, she was in an awkward position in terms of having cash flow in her business. For such obstacles, Zohora had problems with loan repayment: *"Certainly it has an impact [on repaying the loan]. That's why, I could not repay one instalment. I faced problems in running the business but I want to repay the loan."* In general, the approach of wholesalers regarding Zohora provides an example of the negative responses of people in the society towards women business-owners and, as a consequence, the impediments for continuing the bank loan.

It can be concluded that broader social responses, having gender specific dimensions towards businesses can directly or indirectly play a role in accessing bank loans. On the basis of this issue women can be subjected to public patriarchy. However, literature on developed nations concentrates on the debate of discrimination of banks regarding women entrepreneurs or on the exploration of reasons for the differential behaviour of banks in terms of women's personal qualifications or the structure of their businesses. Concerning the debt financing process, the gender specific attitude of banks regarding the nature of businesses is underexplored. Concerning the bank loan issue for women, studies to date have been almost exclusively confined to the bank loan officers whereas this research addresses the adverse effect of the gender based attitude of other people, such as guarantors or wholesalers in the patriarchal society. Moreover, while considering societal responses, it is important to note that such social approaches are not features unique to Bangladesh. The gender specific approaches also exist in the broader society of developed nations (Marlow and Patton, 2005, Bradley,

2012). Nevertheless, in this developing nation, the specific patriarchal societal approaches intensely exist; hence, these had explicit negative responses on the ability of women business-owners to access bank loans.

### **7.5 Problems of Public Transport**

Three women raised the problem of travelling by public transport that was relevant to their experiences of accessing bank loans. Zohora informed that she tried to go outside less frequently because of her negative experiences about travelling: *"For example, I got on the bus. It is crowded. It is hard to push and shove your way into a crowded bus. Men don't want to allow us on the bus."* She continued to clarify the aspect of sexual harassment:

Pushing and dashing ... As a woman, to move a man is a tough thing. There is a system of seats, allocated for women. But it seems that males sit on the seats of females; women can't sit. They have to stand up. Some males actually have a bad attitude. In fact, if they find females, they try to touch the bodies of the females or do ... they create problems. (Zohora)

In her opinion, Zohora not only illustrated the way males violate the rights of females regarding their reserved seats but also disclosed the issue of harassment in streets. Thus, men on streets, who have no relationship with women business-owners or banks, can also be obstacles for females in gaining access to bank loans. Avoiding this public patriarchal issue was one important reason for which two women were found dependent on their husbands for travelling.

During the interview, Rizia mentioned several times that she sent her husband to different places on her behalf. When she was asked the reason for doing so, she explained her reservation of going out with the example of her notion of starting the beauty parlour business:

I am naturally ... This is the reason why I have started this business. I mean going outside, talking to men – I don't like. For this reason, I have started this parlour business. That's why ... I feel uneasy about going out, talking to a man. [...] I mean, sitting with men while travelling by bus – I dislike this. (Rizia)

Rizia's reservations concerning mobility are well articulated in her comments. In the nearby patriarchal country, Pakistan, the hesitation of travelling is also revealed (Roomi and Parrot, 2008). Even though the impact of less mobility is addressed regarding women business-owners there, researchers have not explored the issue specifically in the context of debt finance. It should be noted that compared to the women in micro-finance, living in rural areas (Naher, 2005), women in small businesses have fewer problems regarding public transport.

The experiences of the women associated with travelling in the public place hint at sexual assault; hence, the problem can be classified as violence (Walby, 1990). Therefore, in a highly patriarchal context, when accessing bank loans, a few women were found to be victims of violence. Due to fear of violence, a few women were confined to the private sphere and dependent on their husbands to carry out work in the public place.

### **7.6 Superstition**

Two women mentioned different types of superstition which had an impact on their gaining access to loans. However, the role of superstition regarding the particular issue of debt financing can be considered as indirect. Zafrin mentioned that she suffered severe psychological pressure from her in-law's family due to their superstitious beliefs and, consequently, she experienced a negative effect when acquiring the bank loan. Her personal story is cited as an example here.

In 2005, Zafrin's husband had been seriously ill. She travelled abroad for a certain period for the purpose of her husband's treatment. She required a large amount of money that she managed from her business. During that time, her children were at home. Her in-laws were taking care of them. However, one brother-in-law said to the children that their father was ill because her mother was engaged in a business. The approach of the relative regarding the Zafrin's engagement in business echoes the expectation of the socially recognised sex category (Deutsch, 2007, Jeanes, 2007). However, Zafrin considered that it was not appropriate behaviour with her children, particularly during the crisis moment. The children were very upset by such comments. The family members said the same thing to Zafrin after her return. According to Zafrin, the members of her in-law's family

believed in superstition. They considered that a woman doing business was a negative issue. Consequently, as a *curse*, her husband was seriously sick. Zafrin poignantly illustrated the situation:

However, I took my husband to Thailand. My children were at home at that time. Then my husband's brother said – 'Your mother does a business; for that reason your father has become sick. It's a curse.' The daughters cried a lot. It's the mental pressure. [...] When I returned, they also said things like that to me. I could not accept it at that time. I had a mental break-down. I could not work for about one year. They believe in superstition. They said that for females, doing a business is not the right thing – it was the reason for my husband's illness. But they did not ask – how did I manage that money to save his life? It was the money from my business!

The oppressive behaviour of the in-laws was articulated due to their superstition. Zafrin could not bear the attitude of the family members. Moreover, regarding the huge amount of money required for the treatment, they undermined the financial contribution generated from her business. The menfolk of her in-law's family were concentrating on superstition to accuse her of being responsible for her husband's sickness. She had a mental breakdown and could not continue her work for a certain time. This interruption had a negative impact on her overall business and, as a result, on her financial records. As the financial documents were important to access loans, the discontinuation of her business had an impact on her bank loan approval. She reflected upon the problem:

At that time, I could not work. After getting back to work, it also took time to become fully fledged. This gap is not a good record for the business. The bank transaction was less – got it? There were some issues. If it – if I could continue without such interruption, my documents would look better. It would be much easier for me to get the loan because banks rely on documents.

In brief, the superstition had an impact on the discontinuation of the business activities of Zafrin and it eventually led to an adverse impact on her accessing the bank loan. Even though the role of superstition was not directly related to the debt financing issue, considering the consequences, it can be deemed to have an indirect impact on the process. Nevertheless, the direct and strong impact of superstition on businesses was revealed for the women in micro-credit in Bangladesh (Naher, 2005).

This case of superstition presents a particular context-specific aspect in Bangladesh. The discussion indicates that the societal expectation regarding the apposite female behaviour of women (Eagly, 2005) is reinforced and attempts made to maintain it by using superstition. Thus, the section sheds light on how superstition can be employed to subordinate women in that country and how its enduring impact can set problems when women access bank loans.

### **7.7 Chapter Summary**

In a highly patriarchal society there are many broader contextual issues that can be translated as potential obstacles for women when accessing debt finance for their businesses. This chapter contributes to the understanding of how women were subject to gender subordination due to the broader contextual issues. It provides evidence of how women were dominated, oppressed or exploited in the public place when accessing bank loans. In some cases, some people, who had important adverse roles on the bank lending process, were not family-members of the women or not related to their businesses or even the bank. Therefore, the issue of gender subordination is not confined to banks or family members alone, as generally discussed in the extant literature of developing nations. The broader society also has an influence on the process. Further, it uncovers how the societal expectation regarding gender or the well-known masculine/feminine characteristics are articulated in different activities or behaviour of the people in that particular underexplored context. By considering the social construction of gender from this specific context, it explains gender subordination in relation to the debt financing process by unveiling the gender power relationships embedded in the broader society.

Whereas the effect of social or cultural issues of the context on the businesses of women is rarely discussed (Chell and Baines, 1998, Ahl, 2006), this chapter brings to light different contextual issues to better explain the gender power relationships. While concentrating on the broader contextual features, it provides valuable or novel insights concerning some context specific issues of the developing nation, for instance, corruption, the problem of public transport or superstition. In so doing, this feminist study reinforces that different women of

the world are oppressed in many different ways (Harding, 2004). This chapter also explains some other common concerns, such as respectable femininity or some aspects of societal responses that are implicit in developed western economies. The highly patriarchal context provides opportunity to understand diversified dimensions of these issues. In explaining these different contextual issues, the chapter extends the prevailing knowledge about gender subordination.

The chapter further reinforces the issue that private and public patriarchy are entwined (Walby, 2006) within the context of debt financing. It reveals how superstition and the notion of respectable femininity, the broader contextual issues, are employed as control mechanisms by male family members to subordinate women in this patriarchal country. Moreover, many women are dependent on male family members in order to protect themselves from public patriarchal issues, such as problems of corruption or public transport. Although the husbands of some women play a crucial role to help them, from the findings of the previous chapter (Chapter-5), it is evident that they dominate, oppress or financially exploit women. Thus, in an attempt to escape from one form of patriarchy, many women are victims of another.



## **Chapter-8**

### **Influence of Gender:**

### **Accessing Debt Finance of Women Business-owners in Bangladesh**

*Peace in patriarchy is war against women.*

*- Maria Mies*

#### **8.1 Introduction**

Since the early 1990s, there has been growing attention to the influence of gender upon women's entrepreneurship (Marlow, et. al., 2009). Nonetheless, the body of literature is mostly based on developed nations, specifically on the USA and Europe, with the assumption that the findings of the studies can be applicable throughout the world (Fielden and Davidson, 2005). It is argued that to provide a more nuanced as well as theoretically challenging approach, exploring the intersection of entrepreneurship and gender in diversified contexts (Al-Dajani, et. al., 2015) is required. Recognising finance as a key issue in entrepreneurship (Fraser, 2005) and an important aspect to explain gendered power relationships (Hirschon, 1984), this doctoral study aims at analysing the influence of gender upon women business-owners' access to debt finance in Bangladesh, a patriarchal developing nation.

To address the research aim, Chapter-5 and Chapter-6 principally investigate the private patriarchal issues of women business-owners. By providing empirical insights, these chapters demonstrate the dominating, oppressing and exploiting roles of male family members, specifically husbands, in the bank loan process of the women business-owners. Whereas the patriarchal practices of male family members appear to be restricted to domestic responsibility and childcare issue regarding businesses of women in developed nations (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992, Marlow, 1997, Ahl, 2004, Mattis, 2004, Budig, 2006, McGowan et al., 2012), this study remarkably contributes to the gender theory by establishing that the patriarchal practices were extended directly to business activities. By revealing that the husbands of many women were the ultimate beneficiary of the loans, this finding enriches the understanding on gender subordination in terms of exploitation regarding financial gains. The dominating roles of male family members are particularly important as they challenge the *independence* notion of

small business-owners (Longenecker, et al., 2008). While revealing the gender subordination of women business-owners, it should be highlighted that there were some women who did not experience any direct negative involvement of male family members in businesses in this highly patriarchal context. A few of them achieved a certain level of emancipation in the family due to the acute need of earnings for the family. In addition, to elucidate the diversified experiences of the women, the underpinning family related issues are revealed that advance understanding on the developing nation specific context concerning gender subordination.

Chapter-7 subsequently explores the public patriarchal issues, identifying various context specific aspects of this particular developing nation, in order to elucidate how these issues play a role in the experiences of the women business-owners. As the research on women business-owners are developed nations focused (Bruton et al., 2008), the broader contextual issues of this developing nation, such as corruption, significantly contribute to the prevailing knowledge. Due to the highly patriarchal nature of the context, in some cases, the study illustrates more clearly some gender specific issues, for instance, respectable femininity, that are present in developed nations in a subtle manner. Moreover, considering the family and the broader context in the empirical chapters, the thesis reveals that due to the entire or partial consumption of loans by husbands within the family or by the fraudulent people and the extortionists of the broader society, many women could not necessarily utilise the funds for their businesses. This finding highlights that the government support, provided for the emancipation of the women, was not properly effective due to the patriarchal practices.

While the previous chapters provide valuable empirical insights in detail, this chapter links the findings on family and broader contextual perspectives regarding the influence of gender on access to bank loans of women business-owners. Thus, it builds upon and extends the literature on entrepreneurship, gender, finance and context. Even though the contemporary studies on entrepreneurship and gender challenge the masculine assumption regarding women entrepreneurs (Mirchandani, 2005), this approach has paid little attention to the geographic areas beyond the USA or Europe (Fielden and Davidson, 2005). Accordingly, this thesis contributes to the gender theory in the context of access to debt finance of

women business-owners in a patriarchal developing nation. Explaining the critical role of the family, it contributes to the understanding of how private patriarchy is articulated in an indispensable way in accessing bank loans in this context. It draws attention to the broader contextual issues of Bangladesh and adds to the existing knowledge to properly comprehend the gender subordination of women business-owners. Drawing upon the private and public spheres, it further reveals the issues of gender subordination associated with the process of bank loans.

## **8.2 Family Perspective**

This thesis highlights a significant gap in the knowledge base concerning the lack of exploration of the direct patriarchal roles of male family members in the businesses of women. In so doing, it illustrates how male family members, especially husbands dominated, oppressed and exploited the women business-owners concerning the debt financing process. The study also discusses the specific scenario of the families for which several women did not have any direct negative influence from male family members. The research also adds to the prevailing knowledge by identifying developing nation specific family related aspects to expound gender subordination in a comprehensive manner.

### **8.2.1 The Husband as 'Ultimate Beneficiary'**

Whereas the existing studies on developed nations are based on the application and disbursement stage of bank loans, this study extends the understanding to the continuation stage of women business-owners' loans. In exploring this stage, it reveals that in many cases, the loans were not used for the businesses. Rather the funds were consumed by the husbands. This provides unique insights about patriarchal practice in terms of financial benefits from the businesses of women. Simultaneously, this finding adds to the prevailing knowledge regarding how husbands found a new way to gain access to funds through their wives.

Research on developed nations concerning the utilisation aspect of bank loans of women business-owners is underexplored. However, while analysing the influence of gender on the debt financing issue, this study provides valuable insights into how the husbands of many women gained financially from the loans. Nearly one third of the respondents reported that their husbands benefited financially from a loan taken to grow the business. These husbands had either the entire loan or a

part of it. Several women actually took the loans in order for their husbands to use the finances. Some women were not completely aware of how the loans were used by their husbands.

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that while husbands acquired bank loans from women business-owners, there was no evidence of coercion. While the husbands shared the loans, the women did not give any objection which suggests that some women considered it as normal to provide their own loans to their husbands. This scenario resembles what we know about the activities of housewives. While working at home, housewives feel that they are working for the well-being of their husbands as well as children (Bennholdt-Thomsen, 1984). Husbands are regarded as the legitimate authority to be the beneficiary of the work of wives at home (ibid). In a similar vein, the husbands of some women received the bank loans, whereas the loans were specially designed for the women business-owners and were offered only to women. Therefore, the acceptance of the women about their husbands' access to the debt finance as a legitimate authority provides an indication of a form of exploitation by their husbands. In a highly patriarchal society, the husbands were assumed beneficiaries who duly possessed the external funds of their wives' businesses.

The thesis also contributes to the general understanding of how husbands gain financial benefit from their wives. Studies on developing nations (Hossain and Sumon, 2013, Banerjee, 2014) demonstrate the issue of dowry to gain access to funds through wives. Research on micro-credit (Mayoux, 1997, Naher, 2005) further informs that some male family members consume loans that are offered at the initial business stage and, thus, they extend their source of funds beyond the family. Whereas the prevailing research (Mayoux, 1997, Naher, 2005, Hossain and Sumon, 2013, Banerjee, 2014) discusses husbands accessing funds in different ways, this study adds to the existing knowledge by demonstrating that these practices were also evident for bank loans in the growth stage of small businesses of women.

The study provides valuable insights by disclosing that, in some cases, the ultimate beneficiary of the loans were the husbands instead of the women business-owners and the method of accessing their wives' funds suggests a form

of exploitation, a fundamental feature of patriarchy (Walby, 1990, Walby, 2002). Thus, within the context of small businesses, this study extends the view of patriarchal practices in terms of financial gains as research on such exploitation is underexplored. Moreover, in general, it enhances the prevailing knowledge by identifying the extension of husbands' accessing funds through wives as the extant literature concentrates mostly on the issue of dowry and micro-credit.

### **8.2.2 'Domination' of Male Family Members vs. 'Independence' of Entrepreneurship**

Recognising the domination of women by men as an important feature of patriarchy (Walby, 1990), this study interrogates the dominating roles of male family members of women business-owners in exploring the patriarchal practices regarding debt finance. Nonetheless, independent decision making is regarded as an important aspect for small business-owners (Longenecker, et al., 2008). Therefore, while investigating the dominating roles of male family members, this study provides a critical contribution by raising the question about the independent characteristic of women business-owners.

Whereas the literature on bank loans of developed nations has overlooked the private patriarchal issues to date, this study contributes to the debate around the issue by establishing a wide range of dominating roles of male family members in Bangladesh. As discussed earlier, the husbands had control over the loans or financial aspects of their wives' businesses. Moreover, considering other aspects, one third of the respondents reported about the dominating attitude of husbands in accessing bank loans. This is evident in terms of commanding on decision making or placing obstacles regarding eligibility to apply for loans. Legally, women own businesses but in a highly patriarchal society where women are subordinated and typically controlled by their husbands, ultimately the women's business is often regarded as the issue of husbands. For some women, the role of extended family members, for instance, fathers-in-law, was also apparent regarding interfering in taking bank loans. The scenario also leads to conclude that although the women own and operate their businesses (Carland, 1984), as sole-proprietors, some were not free to operate businesses autonomously in Bangladesh.

The dominating attitude of male relatives eventually restricted the women business-owners' independent decision-making ability, a key criteria of small business-owners (Longenecker, et al., 2008). As studies on the influence of gender in entrepreneurship are scant in the context of patriarchal developing nations, how the independent issue of entrepreneurship can be translated in relation to the aspect of domination of patriarchy is underexplored. This research on this highly patriarchal context enriches the understanding of this issue by demonstrating that the independent feature of entrepreneurship was directly contradicted by the domination aspect of the male family members of the women business-owners. The experiences of some women of this study establish that the independence associated with business activities was impeded by menfolk within the family and was rarely negotiated. The women generally accepted the domination of family members. The subordinated position of the women transcended the family sphere to their businesses and, consequently in their cases, the independence feature of business-owners was subverted. Nonetheless, some women were found to challenge or resent patriarchy.

Drawing upon different experiences of many women business-owners, this thesis establishes the dominating roles of male family members directly in business activities whereas the existing literature remains silent regarding this issue. Further, by studying in this underexplored region, this feminist study provides novel insights into how the independent aspect of entrepreneurship is contested by the notion of patriarchy.

### **8.2.3 'Direct Involvement' of Male Family Members in Businesses**

Research on entrepreneurship presents that entrepreneurs do not have any family but women entrepreneurs do (Ahl, 2015). Nonetheless, in the extant literature, for women, the involvement of family is recognised almost resolutely in terms of the impact of domestic responsibility and child rearing on businesses (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992, Marlow, 1997, Mattis, 2004, Ahl, 2004, Brush et al., 2009, McGowan et al., 2012). This thesis takes the debate a step further by ascertaining the patriarchal roles of male family members directly in businesses.

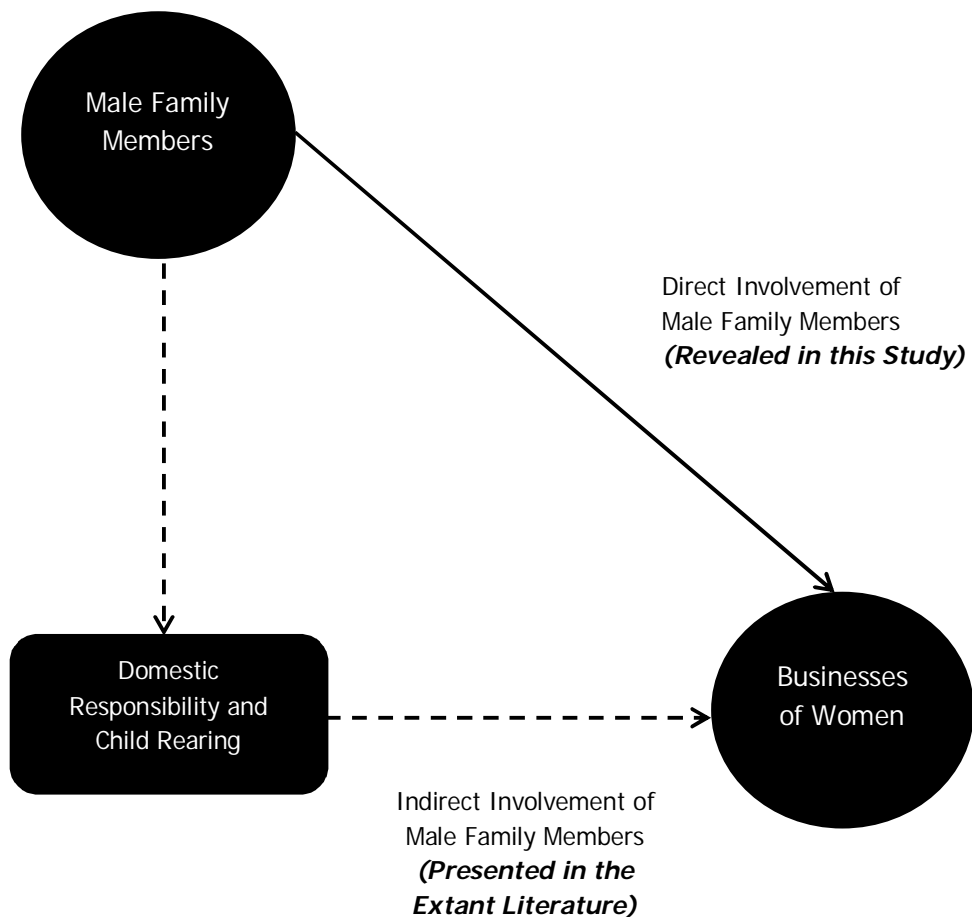
While addressing issues of the family in the businesses of women in developed nations (Ahl, 2006), the research concentrates almost solely and narrowly on the

patriarchal segregation of work. The roles of family members are presented in a passive way as the extant literature demonstrates that both men and women are simply complying with the sexual division of labour (Bradley, 2012) and this response to the societal expectation has an adverse impact on businesses of women (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992, Marlow, 1997, Mattis, 2004, McGowan et al., 2012). Thus, the patriarchal approach of male family members towards businesses of women is channelled through the issue of domestic responsibility and child rearing. Whether male family members employ patriarchal practices by directly becoming involved in the businesses of women is under-researched. It leads to conclude that the extant literature demonstrates only the indirect role of family members in businesses (presented in Figure-4). It does not necessarily imply that, in developed nations, there is no direct influence of male relatives on the businesses of women. The limited literature addressing gender subordination in family businesses (Mulholand, 1996, Hamilton, 2006) in developed nations demonstrates that sometimes women are dominated, oppressed or exploited by their male family members in businesses. Considering these studies, it can be argued that the direct patriarchal practices of male relatives can also exist in the case of sole-proprietorship of women in developed nations. Nonetheless, considering developing nations, research on family related aspects of women business-owners is extremely limited. Dominating, oppressing and exploiting roles of male family members at the individual level by their involvement in businesses are yet to be explored.

This doctoral study unveils that along with the impact of household responsibilities, there was a wide range of diversified and direct roles of different male family members in the businesses of women. More precisely, two thirds of the respondents expressed the direct influence of the family menfolk in their businesses. The discussion in previous sections of this chapter illustrates how women were dominated and provides indications how they were exploited in the debt financing process. The husbands were found to hold financial control of businesses, to influence the decision making process and such other activities. The husbands of some women also consumed the loans, acting as a legitimate authority that indicates exploitation. The negative behaviour of the husbands related to the debt financing process suggests their oppressing roles. In some cases, other male family members had negative interference on businesses. In

brief, the patriarchal practices of male family members in businesses were not limited to only the issue of domestic responsibility and child rearing. For a number of women, the dominating, oppressing or exploiting roles of male relatives were manifested in the debt financing process. In other words, the role of male family members was not confined to only responding to the societal expectation of sexual division of work but to the individual level by directly influencing business activities. Hence, this research is unique in its nature by exploring and establishing these direct patriarchal roles of family members in the businesses of the women in a highly patriarchal context (mapped in Figure-4).

**Figure-4**  
**Involvement of Male Family Members in Businesses of Women**





In sum, research on gender subordination related to the family in developed nations is almost exclusively confined to the issue of household responsibilities. As the discussion on the marital and maternal roles is considered as the beginning of the debate on gender subordination (Hartsock, 2004:36), the literature on women's entrepreneurship in developed nations addressing the patriarchal issues can be argued to be at a rudimentary level. With mounting evidence of empirical data, this study noticeably contributes to the prevailing knowledge of patriarchal practices of the family by establishing the direct roles of husbands and other male family members in businesses in a developing nation. Nonetheless, regarding developed nations, considering the literature on family businesses (Mulholand, 1996, Hamilton, 2006), it can be argued that direct patriarchal practices may also exist for women in sole-proprietorship.

#### **8.2.4 Financial Stress and a Certain Level of Emancipation in the Family**

Whereas some researchers seek to explore how women actively try to make changes to patriarchal relationships in developing nations (Kandiyoti, 1988, Naher, 2005), we know little about the issues that are not regulated by women but for which women can be in comparatively better positions in the family. This feminist study extends the view by identifying that the adverse financial condition of the family paved the way for some women to earn for the family through small businesses and consequently, these women had a certain level of emancipation. They did not confront negative influence from male relatives in their businesses and, subsequently, in their access to bank loans.

Whilst some respondents reported not experiencing any negative attitude from male family members when accessing debt finance, greater attention is paid to reveal whether there was any reason to gain the overall positive approach of the family towards their businesses. In doing so, for few women, this study brings to the fore the issue of financial crisis in the family and, thus, it contributes to the understanding of how, in the family, some women were able to overcome the subordinated position to a certain extent. The case of Zohora demonstrates the way she challenged patriarchy to a great extent with her role as a bread-earner for the family. When her husband failed to perform his duty concerning their livelihood, the family was struggling against the poor financial condition. From the economic point of view, there was no other option but to play the role of sole

breadwinner by Zohora. Even Zohora's husband shared major childcare responsibilities because of her income generating activities. Whereas according to the patriarchal segregation of work, men are the primary bread earner and women are confined to the household responsibilities (Gherardi, 1994, Bradley, 2012), the case of Zohora demonstrates that under this critical financial condition, the family considered it acceptable, to an extent, to have the reverse of the sexual division of labour. Furthermore, it reveals that under acute financial stress, the women's financial contributions to their families could be overtly recognised. This is echoed in Zohora's voice because she explicitly pointed out that as she was financially maintaining the family, her husband did not interfere or did not even have the 'right' to interfere in her accessing loans.

As alluded to above, to initiate and operate the business, Rini did not receive support from her husband, who was indifferent regarding the financial situation of the family. Nonetheless, she had good response from her adult son with regard to business activities or accessing the loan. Barna was, however, engaged in the business for the survival of the family and her experiences also support the issue that women can have a certain level of freedom to operate businesses when the family is under financial stress. It was not evident that her husband took the household responsibilities. Nonetheless, it was transparent that her primary responsibility was tied not only to domestic responsibility and childcare but also to entrepreneurship due to the need for the earnings for the family. Barna's case demonstrates that, when families are in severe financial need, the earning role of women is not always regarded as secondary in the familial context which challenges the patriarchal segregation of work (Gherardi, 1994, Bradley, 2012).

Nevertheless, Barna's family life was permeated with struggles as they belong to a religious minority group and, hence, the minority issue was partially responsible for the support of the family for her business. Being oppressed and threatened by the dominant Muslim community, the family left the village for Dhaka and there, to survive, Barna had the support of family members to initiate and continue the business. This resonates with what is known regarding the family of black women in western countries (Walby, 1990, Bradley, 2007). They find the family to be supportive rather than oppressive. For them, the family is regarded as "islands of safety" within the context of the white racist society around them (Bradley,

2007:72). For the experiences of minority groups, whilst the western context discloses the issue of racism, this developing nation provides insights from the aspect of religion.

It is important to mention that in the entire sample there were only three women who were facing severe financial problems of the family. Although the number of women is relatively small, it provides valuable insights regarding the scenario where women can change their subordinated positions to a certain level. The existing literature (Walby, 1990, Bradley, 2007) provides evidence of the support of family for women while confronting problems based on minority issues in society. Along with reinforcing this aspect in the context of entrepreneurship, the thesis further uncovers that due to the economic necessity of the family some women can have the role of major earning person of the family and, thus, can gain a certain level of emancipation in their family. Whereas it is strongly argued that the primary responsibility of women is at home and the business is their secondary responsibility (Ahl, 2006), the experiences of a few interviewees potentially pose a challenge to this patriarchal perspective of the family in the context of a high level of patriarchy. With the recognition of their financial contribution, the status of the women was enhanced in the family. Even there was a case where sexual division of labour was reversed to a great extent. In sum, it is evident in a highly patriarchal developing nation that, in some cases, the issue of patriarchal relationships was undermined to an extent in the family when there was a question of severe financial crisis.

#### **8.2.5 Beyond 'Prescriptive Approach'**

The research into women's entrepreneurship is criticised for considering "individual undertaking" that results in attributing limitations to women (Ahl, 2006:606). It ignores the social arrangements and consequently, the subordination of women is not properly unveiled (ibid). Instead, women are advised to overcome shortcomings (Ahl, 2015). Therefore, scholars (Marlow, 1997, Rosa and Hamilton, 1994, Ahl, 2006) argue that considering contextual issues is required to present the gendered power relationships. This thesis heeds the call and while revealing the disadvantaged position of women from a certain aspect, it seeks to explore the underpinning issue behind it. Thus, it provides a

rich and robust understanding of gender power relationships regarding the process of bank loans for women business-owners in a developing country.

The prevailing studies (Fischer et al., 1993, Boden and Nucci, 2000) identify that lack of education is an important issue for which women are not equally performing in businesses compared to male counterparts and, therefore, women are advised to have a proper education. Particularly, considering bank loans, several decades ago, studies (Hisrich and Brush, 1984, Belcourt et al., 1991) also identified the differential attitude of bank officers based on the educational qualification of women business-owners. Consistent with these studies, education also emerges as an important issue in relation to access to debt finance of women in Bangladesh. As a point of clarification, the significance of education is assessed mostly on the basis of how the women were subject to private patriarchy. In general, the one third of respondents who did not experience any negative attitude from male family members was better educated. The importance of education and professional qualification when dealing with bank officers was also reflected from the experiences and comments of one respondent, Fahmina (presented in 'Section 5.2: Requirements of Banks to Involve Husbands' and 'Section 6.3.1: Age of Marriage').

However, in previous studies, whether there is any gendered issue behind the lack of education of women is underexplored. This doctoral study is not limited to the surface level of exploration of the issue of gaining human capital that was liable for the disadvantaged position for the women to access bank loans. It is also not intended to simply prescribe women to become better educated. By providing women the opportunity to contextualise their lives along with clarifying the relevant obstacles (Nicolson, 1996), this feminist standpoint research uncovers that early marriage played a vital role where many women could not continue their studies. The obstacle about further studies might be imposed by members of in-law families. Besides, the women might not be able to continue studies due to giving birth to children. Thus, the study unveils that the wider social system was rooted in certain aspects, (i.e. educational qualification), that were placing barriers for women in gaining debt finance.

It can be concluded that the study assures the problems associated with women accessing loans were entrenched in the wider social arrangement where gender subordination was inevitable and the ascription was apparently transferred to individual women (Marlow and Patton, 2005). Moreover, as this context is underexplored regarding women's entrepreneurship, this research advances the existing knowledge with the novel insight of the context-specific issue of early marriage; whereas education is revealed as a limitation of the women business-owners for accessing loans, this study explains the patriarchal practices behind this issue from the evidence of early marriage.

#### **8.2.6 Family Related Contextual Issues**

Hjorth et al. (2008) strongly contend not to consider the superficial approach by simply considering the context. Calls have been made to emphasise the context dependent nature of entrepreneurship research (ibid). This thesis is aligned with the view of Hjorth et al. (2008) and, accordingly, responds to the call. To provide an appropriate explanation about the private patriarchal experiences of women business-owners, this doctoral study brings to light few context-specific family related issues. The previous section illustrates a context specific feature (i.e., early marriage) in exploring the underlying issues of the disadvantaged position of the women business-owners. This section explains in greater detail the different family related issues to elucidate the patriarchal relationships. Nevertheless, as the studies on women business-owners related to family aspects in developing nations are extremely limited, this research provides a valuable contribution by discovering and demonstrating a few context specific family aspects with regard to gender subordination.

Studies (Hisrich and Brush, 1984, Belcourt et al., 1991) on developed nations reveal demographic issues, such as education and practical experiences, in relation to the different experiences of accessing debt finance of women business-owners. This research on the developing nation extends the view by adding another important demographic characteristic, the age of marriage. This context specific issue of marriage as a minor was a major concern in the experiences of women business-owners. The comments of Papia establish how she accepted the authority of her in-laws in an unquestionable manner as she was married in her childhood. This resonates with the well-recognised fact that when females are

married before 18 years of their age, they cannot make their own decisions (Hunter, 2015). They are more prone to easily accept the authority of the in-law family (Jones, 2010). Papia further made the point clear that in her adulthood, she could not change her submissiveness as it started at an early age. Eventually, it had an impact on her business, including accessing debt finance. In general, women married at an early age were found to experience comparatively more patriarchal issues regarding taking loans.

Although studies (Flake, 2005, Jones, 2010) on early marriage address different patriarchal issues, there is a dearth of exploration on the relevance of it within the businesses of women. This study extends the view by revealing strong relationships between the age of marriage and experiences of debt finance. It reveals that the submissive attitude of the women, originated from marriage at an early age, had an impact on the women's businesses. In other words, the deep rooted patriarchal culture permeated in such a manner that the way the family was formed had an enduring effect on the lives of the women and, as a consequence, on their accessing bank loans for businesses.

In addition, the western culture is nuclear family-focused but the Asian culture includes extended families; hence, in the context of Asia, entrepreneurship scholarship needs to consider extended families (Nordqvist and Melin, 2010). This doctoral study draws attention to this contextual nature of the family aspect regarding women business-owners. It discloses that a good number of family members were involved in the bank loan process, particularly when considering the guarantor issue. Further, there was evidence of private patriarchal issues from extended family members. Regarding debt financing, whereas the literature on developed nations is silent concerning the family aspect, this study enriches the understanding of gender subordination by demonstrating the role of extended family members along with considering the roles of husbands or sons.

In sum, consistent with the view of Zahra and Wright (2011:72), this research does not consider context as a "control variable" like the majority of studies on entrepreneurship. Rather, it considers the context as a "part of the story" (Zahra and Wright, 2011:72). By explaining the context-specific issues of Bangladesh, it facilitates an understanding of gender subordination of a developing nation with

distinct insights and extends the existing knowledge on this aspect from developed nations to developing nations. Moreover, whereas the limited studies on women business-owners in developing nations mostly concentrate on domestic responsibilities and the child rearing issue, this feminist study adds to the existing knowledge by pointing out the context-specific family related aspects, such as early marriage and extended family.

### **8.3 Broader Contextual Issues**

Based on the extant literature, Ahl (2006) maintains that, generally, sole responsibility about the future of the business is ascribed to individual business-owners. It has been contested that the structural, historical and cultural factors that have an influence on the businesses of women are hardly addressed (Nutek, 1996, Chell and Baines, 1998, Ahl, 2006). Without recognising the collective dimensions, women are held responsible for having limitations and the gender power structure in society is made invisible (Ahl, 2006). This feminist study endeavours to identify the ignored and unnoticed aspects of the social order (Buzzanell, 2003). Eventually, it reveals diversified structural or cultural issues concerning debt finance of women business-owners in Bangladesh. This study adds to the prevailing knowledge by establishing the roles of other different contextual issues (beyond family issues) in relation to gender subordination.

#### **8.3.1 Corruption**

Even though the literature explores the impact of corruption on entrepreneurship, little is known about the influence of gender concerning corruption related to women business-owners. Regarding bribery, the literature on developing nations only addresses the problems of women for dealing with government officers in the corrupted environment (Amine and Staub, 2009). Nonetheless, this research specifically explicates the case of debt financing of women business-owners. Further, as far as corruption is concerned in entrepreneurship, researchers discuss solely on bribery (Dreher and Gassebner, 2007, Avnimelech et. al., 2011). This study extends the view in relation to fraudulent people and extortionists who share the loans of the women business-owners. The empirical evidence mirrors diversified dimensions of corruption of the society and analyses the aspects regarding gender subordination.

This study contributes to the existing knowledge by clarifying gender subordination in relation to corruption when women accessed bank loans in Bangladesh. While uncovering the issues of bribery, this study presents the practice as the domain of men and some women sought help from male family members to deal with the issue, reinforcing the concern that some actions are confined to the roles and norms of only one particular gender (Martin, 2006). Although somewhat dated, the account of West and Zimmerman (1987) more specifically illustrates this matter. According to these researchers, some widely known and accepted actions are stereotypically related to a certain gender (ibid). In the context of bribery, the study contributes to the understanding by demonstrating the experiences of women while attempting to enter into the domain of men. The bribery issue provides valuable insights into the case when women go beyond the expectation related to the socially considered sex category (Eagly, et al., 2000). The women were charged with a high amount of bribery or, where a bribe was not normally demanded, women were asked for one. This reveals how the women were subordinated concerning bribery due to feminine characteristics, such as softness (Marshall, 1993, Gherardi, 1994) or submissiveness (Connell, 1987). The approach of extortionists towards women also coincides with addressing the well-recognised characteristics of femininity (ibid). Fraudulent people were, however, found to take advantage of the docile and obedient features of women (Wollstonecraft, 1975). Thus, the study advances the prevailing knowledge by illustrating how corruption was employed as a vehicle to control women in that patriarchal society.

### **8.3.2 Respectable Femininity**

This study provides a critical contribution to the notion of the respectable position of women in society. It contributes to the limited understanding of the importance of the issue of respectable femininity concerning women business-owners. There are also few studies on this issue from the perspective of career in South Asian countries (Patel, 2006, Phadke, 2007, Radhakrishnan, 2009, Fernanado and Cohen, 2013). This doctoral research brings to the fore the issue of respectable femininity in the field of women business-owners.



This thesis unveils how the relationship of women business-owners and bank officers can be negatively interpreted. Some women may be castigated for using their sexuality to achieve the outcome and, hence, that can be an obstacle for them to proceed for bank loans. The study also reveals that the scope for seeking financial support from male relatives or neighbouring business-owners was limited due to the probable question concerning the immoral relationships of the women with those men. As a consequence, they confronted problems for repaying instalments to banks or they had to carry on the complicated process of debt financing instead of considering any informal sources. The notion of respectable position was employed as a control mechanism by the husbands of some women to keep them in their place. The findings enrich the understanding on gender subordination by illustrating that due to the concern of respectable femininity, women are not only constrained while accessing bank loans but are also susceptible to accept the subordination of husbands to keep peace in their family life.

While unveiling the issue of respectable femininity in developing nations, it is important to recognise that this concern is not entirely non-existent in western societies (Fernanado and Cohen, 2013). However, the respectable positions of women are not discussed in an explicit manner in these western countries like the South Asian countries (Fernanado and Cohen, 2013). For instance, the literature on developed nations presents the restriction of the appearance of women at the working place (Bradley, 2012) but it is not overtly discussing the issue of the respectable position of women. This study brings to light the issue more vividly and provides evidence of how it can be played in the context of a highly patriarchal nation.

### **8.3.3 Other Contextual Issues**

Although studies (Mungai, 2012, Chitsike, 2000) on developing nations broadly address the response of the society towards women business-owners, this research extends the view particularly in the field of debt finance. The decision to grant a loan was influenced by the question of whether the nature of the business corresponded with the societal expectation of the type of business women should run (Mirchandani, 1999). There was problem for having people accepted to become guarantors for the business of women which indicates that people give

less value to women concerning running businesses (Ahl, 2004). The gendered attitude of the broader society towards the women business-owners also had a negative influence on the operation of their businesses and, as a consequence, it had impact on timely repayment of loans. The case of Zohora who did not receive timely payment from the wholesalers was such an example. The concern for gender conformity (Marvin and Grandy, 2010) in relation to business operation or access to bank loans is broadly articulated through the societal responses. Thus, the thesis contributes to the knowledge about how the women confronted gender-specific problems when taking loans due to the responses to their businesses from the highly patriarchal society. In addition, whereas the literature on developed nations is confined to women business-owners and the bank, by taking consideration of the response of the broader society, this research broadens the scope of understanding of the bank loan process.

The study further considers other issues, such as the problems associated with public transport restricted the mobility of some women; this is also evident in other patriarchal societies (Roomi and Parrot, 2008). However, it complements and adds to the view by exhibiting that the problem of travelling had an impact on accessing debt finance. It further draws attention to the issue of violence in this process. Moreover, the research contributes to the understanding of the issue of superstition by demonstrating how women were oppressed with it and faced obstacles in gaining access to bank loans. The example of superstition also enriches understanding of the way the women were forced to comply with socially perceived appropriate feminine behaviour (Eagly, 2005).

It is worth noting that the limited literature (Fakkar, 2007, Roomi and Harrison, 2008, Roomi, 2009, Alturki and Braswell, 2010, Ahmad, 2011, Danish and Smith, 2012) addressing broader contextual issues regarding women business-owners in developing nations is concentrated mostly on the practice of religion, specifically Islam. Even though in Bangladesh the majority people are Muslims, the culture of the nation is argued to be influenced by Hindu religion from the neighbouring country, India (Siddiqui, 2013). In the interviews, the Islamic practices are not revealed as prominent aspects in this context whilst other broader contextual issues received much attention which indicates that the findings regarding women business-owners of other Islamic countries cannot be readily applicable in

Bangladesh. This study contributes with distinct insights compared to other Muslims dominated countries.

In brief, Harding (2004) argues that each oppressed group of women has its own view regarding the broader social context where the oppression took place. Based on the “concrete experiences” (Collins, 1990:209) of women business-owners, this feminist study, conducted in an underexplored area, brings to light distinct issues concerning the broader context. Whereas the normative assumptions concerning women business-owners are mostly based on developed nations (Fielden and Davidson, 2005), this study provides a novel contribution of how women business-owners were subordinated embedded with the broader contextual issues of a developing nation. In the extant literature of women business-owners in developed nations, issues such as corruption or problems of public transport are underexplored to date whilst these aspects might have little or almost no relevance in these contexts. On the contrary, this study establishes how these context specific aspects of a developing nation played important roles in relation to gender subordination of women business-owners. However, due to the highly patriarchal nature of this context, the study provides a platform to vividly illuminate few common issues, such as respectable femininity, that are not prominently present in developed nations. Moreover, in relation to debt finance, the study contributes to the understanding of the social expectation of gender in that context. It further extends the view of how well-known masculine/feminine characteristics are employed to subordinate women in accessing bank loans in that particular context. By exploring the broader contextual issues, the research also reinforces that the social location where women were subjugated is a valuable source of knowledge in terms of social relations (Harding, 2004).

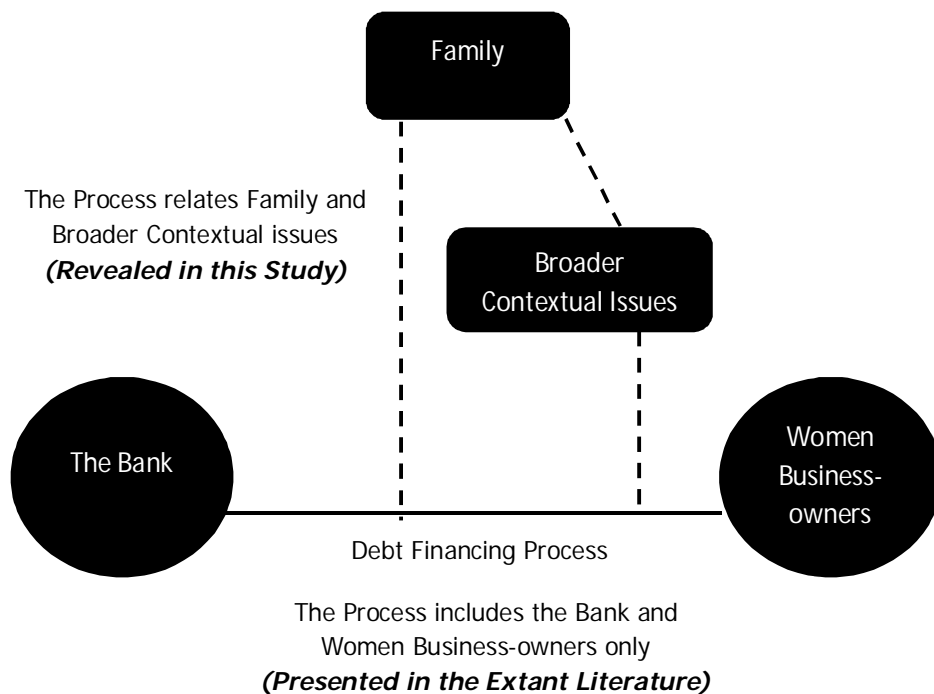
#### **8.4 Private and Public Spheres**

The previous two sections provide a detailed discussion of the private and public spheres. Nevertheless, these two spheres were inextricably intertwined to the experiences of women business-owners. This section clarifies different salient points by taking into consideration the confluence of the family and broader contextual issues.

### 8.4.1 Inevitable Role of Family Support

The literature on developed nations appears to suggest that there is no involvement of the family of women business-owners in the debt financing process. In contrast, this study establishes how the bank involved the family in this process. This research further extends the literature by establishing the essential role of family in the entire process.

**Figure-5**  
**The Role of Family in Debt Financing Process**



The studies on the debt financing process in developed nations concentrate almost solely on the bank and the individual woman business-owner (presented in Figure-5). The thesis criticises the literature for presenting an oversimplified process of bank loans regarding assessing gender subordination. While focusing on individual business-owners, studies tend to ignore the influence of the family or any contextual aspects of developed nations. Regarding carrying out the process, there might be crucial roles played by other people, such as government officers regarding the collateral issue or guarantors of loans, also in developed

nations, but these issues are underexplored. In contrast to this view, this doctoral study unveils the family and broader contextual issues that were related to this process in the context of a developing nation (as discussed in the previous sections). The family played a major role in the entire process of taking loans. Again, the family had a relationship to the broader contextual aspects to facilitate women to access loans. Overall, in revealing the entire process of debt finance, the role of the family emerges as an inevitable one (presented in Figure-5).

The issue of the crucial roles of the family can be further explained. It is disclosed that Barc Bank Ltd. demanded male family members, particularly husbands, as the guarantors for the loans of women business-owners. As a result, to access the financial support offered by the government, in general, women needed to have the positive approach of their husbands (this issue is discussed in further detail in the next section). Moreover, a number of women were found dependent on husbands to carry out the process of bank loans in terms of dealing with bank officers or guarantors, managing documents and such other issues. Many women also sought support from other male family members for the purpose of guarantors. Thus, the empirical evidence strongly supports that for accessing bank loans, women were not only obliged to include husbands because of the guarantor condition imposed by the bank but also were dependent on male family members in different ways to carry out the process.

The roles of male family members were extended to the issue of dealing with different broader contextual facets. In society, there were many structural barriers, such as corruption, problems of public transport, that placed women in disadvantaged position to access to debt finance. In such instances, some women required support from their husbands to navigate in the public space. It reiterates what we know from the theory concerning the intertwined relationships of private and public patriarchy (Walby, 2006). Thus, this study is not limited to uncovering the negative impact of broader contextual features on the bank loan process; it further discloses how the family was related to these aspects in facilitating women to overcome the barriers in this highly patriarchal context.

Therefore, to have support of the government or, in general, to confront society when proceeding with the bank loan process, women were dependent on male

family members. It leads to the conclusion that family support was inevitable in the process of accessing bank loans. In other words, generally, women could not access debt finance without the support of their families. This provides an indication that the process of accessing bank loans was gender-biased.

In sum, in contrast to the simple demonstration of the debt financing process, this study establishes a more nuanced presentation of the process. In doing so, it highlights the inevitable role of the family of women business-owners regarding their access to bank loans. Further, whereas women confronted gender specific obstacles from society to access loans and were not eligible to take loans for their own businesses without the support of male family members, the process of debt finance can be considered as gendered-biased. The gender-bias of the process is further vindicated in the next section.

#### **8.4.2 The Bank and Gender-Biasness of the Debt Financing Process**

Research on women's entrepreneurship is criticised for its individualist concentration (Mirchandani 1999). This approach is also reflected in the area of studies on debt financing of women business-owners in developed nations as focusing almost entirely on individual women in relation to bank loans. The existing studies generally revolve around the debate of whether banks discriminate women or, at best, whether other factors are liable for the differential attitude of bank officers. Nevertheless, this thesis provides a valuable contribution about understanding the bank loan process by demonstrating the role of banks concerning private patriarchy. In addition, it adds to the prevailing knowledge by revealing other aspects of gender discrimination of the bank.

While some studies reveal discrimination related issues, other studies attempt to provide explanation of the reason of differential behaviour of bank officers, such as the lack of education and practical experiences of women (Hisrich and Brush, 1984, Belcourt et al., 1991) or the low level of their financial and human capital to utilise as collateral (Marlow and Patton, 2005). Recognising the debate on this issue of discrimination, it is important to note that literature remains silent about the way women perceive the reasons for the discrimination. This feminist standpoint research extends the existing knowledge by providing the opportunity to the women business-owners of Bangladesh to articulate their own views

(Campbell, 2004) about discrimination issues. Affording attention to their voice, this study reveals that, according to several women, bank officers were not confident enough about their performance in businesses due to their domestic responsibilities and child rearing obligations. Thus, the perception of the women provides visibility of the patriarchal segregation of work as the basis of discrimination.

The prevailing research further appears to suggest that, in the context of developed nations, banks concentrate on individual applicants of loans and do not consider their families in the entire lending process. However, this study on Bangladesh extends the view about the requirement of banks to involve male family members in this process. As per the regulations of the government, the condition of male family members as guarantors was not evident which implies that, officially, there was no explicit gender discrimination. Nonetheless, Barc Bank Ltd. demanded husbands as the guarantors for the loans of the women. Patriarchy, or the traditional gendered roles and relationships, was so deeply embedded in the psyche that officials in the bank automatically interpreted and operationalised the government regulations within the gendered frame of patriarchal customs and norms, that is, requiring husbands' signature. From the interviews of many women, it is transparent that their entrepreneurial capital and achievement of running and growing businesses were outplayed within a highly gendered framework of bank officers. Their business performance was interpreted in relation to their gender and the gender subordination is clearly presented in the way the bank imposed the pre-requisite of guarantor to take loans for the women business-owners.

As alluded to above, the bank further reinforces private patriarchy because for the guarantor issue, the women were obliged to have the positive view of their husbands for accessing loans. Despite the potentiality to grow, the aspirational women business-owners could be obstructed due to the prevailing patriarchal norms embedded in the lending process. Further, because of the essential role of the guarantor, some husbands had a platform to behave negatively towards their wives. This reflects that the macro level gendered roles, norms and stereotypes influence the micro-level reproduction of gender practices. In other words, this

reinforces the interwoven relationships of private and public patriarchy (Walby, 1990, Walby, 2006).

The research on discrimination by banks towards women in developed nations addresses the aspects of discrimination, for instance, borrowing cost (Fraser, 2005), collateral (Coleman, 2000) or discriminatory behaviour in personal interactions (Buttner and Rosen, 1992, Fay and Williams, 1993). It is still underexplored whether banks are biased towards the nature of businesses of women. This study adds to the existing literature about this aspect of discrimination. Nasima struggled to obtain a loan for her grocery shop as it did not match with the societal expectation of businesses for women (Mirchandani, 1999) even though Nasima finally received the loan from Barc Bank Ltd. Her previous experiences regarding attempts to gain debt finance support that gender is performative (Kelan, 2008) which has to comply with certain expectations of society. Put simply, the nature of the businesses of women needed to be feminine to meet the expectations of the society. Some banks were keen on maintaining the societal expectation and based on that women were discriminated against when accessing loans in the highly patriarchal country.

In sum, in this particular context, in the case of debt finance of women business-owners, the role of the bank was deemed critical concerning the issue of gender subordination. It was not restricted simply to the issue of discrimination based on the sexual division of labour. The patriarchal norms were manifested in the way the bank offered loans to the women business-owners. The designated guarantor position, enforced by the bank, was further exploited by husbands to dominate or oppress women. Whereas the studies on developed nations entirely concentrate on the discrimination issue, this study brings to light novel insights into the patriarchal aspects of the bank regarding the family in the debt financing process in a developing nation. In addition, the study confirms how the bank emphasised the gendered nature of businesses. The overall approach of the bank indicates that the debt financing process is gender biased.

#### **8.4.3 Women in Small Businesses and Women in Micro-credit**

The image of *Bangladeshi Women* or *Women in Bangladesh* is portrayed with the experiences of the women, doing businesses with micro-credit (White, 1992). This



image represents a highly submissive cohort of women whereas this study, based on middle class, comparatively educated women in small businesses poses a potential challenge on this rhetoric. Consequently, the research provides important empirical contributions in the under-researched context of Bangladesh.

This study discloses that a good number of women business-owners (one third of the respondents) did not confront any negative behaviour from male family members. Although the dominating or oppressing roles of menfolk within the family were revealed for the rest of the respondents, these were not as severe as that of women using micro-credit. For example, although some women experienced negative behaviour from their husbands for accessing bank loans, in the case of micro-credit some husbands even divorced their wives for taking loans based on the rural cultural influences (Naher, 2005). As with the husbands of the women in micro-credit (Goetz and Gupta, 1996, Mayoux, 1997, Naher, 2005), the husbands of some women business-owners also consumed loans as reported during the interviews. Nonetheless, some women were found to be forced, physically assaulted or threatened with divorce (Naher, 2005) to take loans from micro-credit institutions so that the husbands could have the funds. However, no such coercion was revealed in the case of small businesses implying that the women in small businesses were not as oppressed when compared to the women in micro-credit. Moreover, women in the micro level businesses were widely restricted concerning the issue of mobility or many women were oppressed through the issue of superstition (Naher, 2005) whereas this study reveals that these issues had little impact on the women in small businesses.

It can be concluded that the women in small businesses were not as subordinated as the poor, almost illiterate women in micro-credit. Around 25 years ago, White (1992) strongly argued to provide a platform to express the voice of different women in the country rather than drawing the impression of women based solely on micro-credit recipients. Whereas it was not taken up for a long time, this study significantly contributes to this issue with its empirical evidence by demonstrating that women in Bangladesh are not homogeneous and, hence, the experiences of women in micro-credit cannot generalise the situation of women in Bangladesh.

#### **8.4.4 Impact on Government Policy**

It can be argued that the government policy could be deemed effective in supporting women via the special scheme of bank lending, if the women could utilise the loans for their own businesses. The thesis sheds light on this utilisation aspect of funds to provide unique insights into how the women were exploited or oppressed in relation to the bank loans in the context of a high level of patriarchy and corruption. In Bangladesh, the government support for the women was not properly materialised due to the embezzlement of funds. Whilst in the previous studies on small businesses of women, the utilisation issue of a bank loan is under-researched this study contributes to the understanding concerning the effectiveness of the financial support of the government policy.

Researchers almost exclusively concentrate on bureaucracy and politicians pertaining to the government policy to support small business-owners in developed nations (Bannock and Peacock, 1989, Bennett, 2012). However, this study extends the view by pointing out the severe problems concerning the utilisation of loans. From the empirical evidence it is revealed that for nearly one third of the respondents, the husbands entirely or partially consumed the loans that the women took for their businesses. It is important to note that the loans were not only misappropriated within the families. There was also evidence of sharing the loan by the extortionists. Further, Zohora, a woman business-owner recounted about her first experience of taking a loan from a bank while a fraudulent person took away her funds. The cases of fraudulent people were also apparent during that time of the special scheme operation of the bank, as mentioned by another respondent, Shahnaz ('Section 7.2.2: Fraudulent People' explains in detail). Thus, it is unveiled that extortionists or fraudulent people, who were not in any way related to the family or the formal debt financing process, could also share the loans of the women. As a consequence, the loans were not employed for the businesses of the women; they were used by either male family members or other corrupted people in the society.

As a whole, the findings of the study broadly coincide with the research of Ahl and Nelson (2015). As explained by Ahl and Nelson (2015), the policy designed to support women business-owners practically does not bring any positive changes to the subordinated positions of women in society. Nonetheless, in that study, the

specific issue of fund utilisation did not receive any attention. By considering the perspective of utilisation of financial support, this doctoral study adds to the emerging body of studies about the policy concerning women business-owners. The thesis further provides a critical contribution about gender subordination that is presented with a more complex relationship concerning corruption. Accordingly, it brings to light that because of patriarchy and, in some cases, the interplay between patriarchy and corruption, the government policy for women business-owners was not properly materialised.

### **8.5 Chapter Summary**

The thesis significantly advances the debate on gender subordination in the context of accessing debt finance of women business-owners from developed nations to developing nations. Although research on developed nations is silent concerning the family issue related to debt finance, this study reveals how family was involved in this process in an inevitable way in a developing nation. Whereas according to the existing literature, the patriarchal practices of male family members are apparently limited to the household responsibilities of women business-owners (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1992, Marlow, 1997, Ahl, 2004, Mattis, 2004, Budig, 2006, McGowan et al., 2012), this study unveils that these practices were extended to the business activities of women. Thus, in the context of entrepreneurship, this thesis significantly contributes to the debate on gender subordination from its starting point, revolving around household responsibilities (Hartsock, 2004:36) to an advanced level, related to the direct patriarchal practices of the family in the businesses of women. In so doing, it specifically extends the patriarchal perspective of how male family members, particularly husbands, dominated women challenging the independent criteria of small business-owners, oppressed them in everyday life and exploited them through sharing the bank loans. The study also discloses that some women accessed debt finance without any negative interference from male family members. This finding is particularly important as it contributes to the understanding of how a few women gained a certain level of emancipation in the family or negotiate patriarchy in this highly patriarchal nation. Certain other family related context specific issues, such as child marriage, also provide distinct insights to explain the

diversified experiences of women that eventually enrich the prevailing knowledge of the debt financing process.

In addition, whilst the broader contextual issues are important to consider the gendered power relationships in society (Ahl, 2006), the thesis contributes to the understanding of these aspects, beyond the family sphere. As research on women's entrepreneurship is particularly concentrated on developed nations to date (Bruton et al., 2008), these context specific issues of the developing nation provide valuable insights for enhancing the understanding of gender subordination. Simultaneously, this highly patriarchal context facilitates in explaining some common gender specific issues that exist in developed nations in an implicit form. Moreover, the study contributes to the understanding of gender bias in the debt financing process in this patriarchal developing nation. Furthermore, by uncovering the consumption of the bank loans by corrupted people or the husbands of many of the women business-owners, this thesis contributes to the policy implication through potentially raising the question of the effectiveness of the government initiative for the emancipation of women.

However, since this context is under researched for small business-owners, the extant literature does not properly recognise the distinct aspects of a highly patriarchal developing nation, as identified and underscored in this study. It is important to acknowledge that while concentrating on gender specific issues, this feminist standpoint research restricts the extent for an in-depth exploration of these contextual issues. Nonetheless, as the aim of the research is to analyse the influence of gender, it is beyond the scope of the study to investigate these aspects with a greater attention but the findings of the research leaves the opportunity for future studies that is discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter-9

### Conclusion

*Women and girls should be able to determine their own future, no matter where they're born.*

- Melinda Gates

#### 9.1 Introduction

This thesis analyses how Bangladeshi women business-owners confront patriarchal challenges in accessing debt finance at the growth stage of their small enterprises. This feminist standpoint study explores the gender subordination of these women in their private as well as public sphere concerning the experiences of taking bank loans. Rather than considering gender as a variable, it analyses the influence of gender on accessing debt finance of women business-owners. The contemporary research also concentrates on the impact of gender on business activities of women (Marlow, et. al. 2009). Nonetheless, much of this is essentially focused on the US and Europe (Fielden and Davidson, 2005). The limited literature concerning other contexts challenges the assumed US/Eurocentric norms with evidence of noteworthy differences in the articulation of gender in different contexts (ibid). Accordingly, this study significantly contributes to the development of the gender theory within the context of debt financing in a patriarchal developing country with the research aim: *to analyse the influence of gender upon women business-owners' access to debt finance in the context of a patriarchal developing nation.*

The extant literature on developed nations presents the patriarchal practices on women's businesses in terms of domestic responsibility and childcare. In the case of accessing debt finance, the investigation of gender subordination is predominantly limited to the approach of banks towards women with respect to the issue of discrimination. Nevertheless, this study on a developing nation substantially extends this view by demonstrating the inevitable roles of the family and the impact of inescapable aspects of the broader context in the entire process of accessing bank loans. In this highly patriarchal context, the bank imposed the involvement of the male family members in the process with the pre-requisite of the guarantor issue. The strong private patriarchal practices are evident

concerning this process as male family members dominated, oppressed or exploited many of the women while directly getting involved in the business activities. Nonetheless, some women managed to carry out the process without the negative interference of the menfolk of the family in the highly patriarchal context. This study brings to the fore some context specific family related issues to account for these differences of experiences. Furthermore, in an attempt to carry out the process in the public place, the women were subordinated with some contextual issues which explains that regarding bank loans, in the public sphere, the issue of gender subordination is related to not only bank officers but also many other people in the society where patriarchy permeates everywhere.

Thus, the study unveils how the influence of gender is articulated in a substantially different way in the developing nation compared to that of developed nations. It also makes clear of certain common aspects of gender subordination that are existing in developed nations in a subtle manner but are very strongly presented in that highly patriarchal context. In addition, by bringing to light the issue of sharing the loans by husbands or other corrupted people, this study points out that even with the government support through finance, it is not feasible to bring successful changes in terms of emancipation of women in such a patriarchal context.

## **9.2 Theoretical Foundation and Methodology**

It is already argued that the extant literature on women's entrepreneurship is under-theorised (Carter et al., 2006, de Bruin et al., 2007) due to the lack of explicit implementation of feminist frameworks (Neergaard et. al., 2011). By providing an opportunity for women to express their own experiences (Bowden and Mummery, 2009), this study is grounded with the feminist standpoint theory to address the gaps in the prevailing knowledge. This thesis specifically stresses that whereas the family is a major source of gender subordination (Bradley, 2012), the existing studies on women's entrepreneurship is confined to only the impact of domestic responsibility and childcare on businesses. As the patriarchal segregation of work is considered as the starting point of the debate on gender subordination (Hartsock, 2004), this research argues that the prevailing literature on women's entrepreneurship needs to move beyond the analysis regarding the

impact of this compliance to the societal expectation of work. To have a more nuanced understanding on gender subordination, investigation is needed at the individual level of male family members regarding their direct dominating, oppressing and exploiting roles in businesses.

With the specific concentration on finance, a key area of entrepreneurship (Fraser, 2005), this research highlights the gap in the existing literature on women entrepreneurs of developed nations. It reveals that research on debt financing is converging around the debate on whether banks are involved in any gender discrimination or other issues are liable for the differential approaches of banks. The thesis uncovers that the existing literature related to the lending process is individual women business-owners' concentrated, paying almost no attention to the family or broader contextual issues beyond the family sphere. To properly analyse gender subordination, several scholars have put forward arguments to consider contextual aspects (Marlow, 1997, Rosa and Hamilton, 1994). The study also highlights that in the feminist study, rather than from an individual undertaking (Ahl, 2006), consideration of the family and broader contexts is needed to extend the understanding on gender subordination concerning the debt financing of women business-owners.

Nevertheless, it can be contended that the family and broader contextual issues might be less important to women's access to debt finance in western developed nations compared to highly patriarchal developing countries. In this regard, it should be noted that the prevailing research concerning the influence of gender on businesses mostly reflects the US and Euro-centric bias, whereas other contexts, such as developing nations, can provide immense opportunity to contribute to the existing knowledge (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2010). It is not a recent recognition to take into account context in entrepreneurship research (Welter, 2011) but regarding women entrepreneurs, the need to consider context is not well-recognised. Drawing attention particularly to the complexities and different dynamics of family issues and the diversified context specific aspects, this thesis explains and establishes the importance to consider context in research of women's entrepreneurship. In line with the logic, this study contends that conducting research on developing nations can advance the debate of gender subordination of developed nations to developing nations. The study also argues

that several common features exist in both developed and developing nations, for instance the respectable position of women, and due to the highly patriarchal nature of the context, the research on some developing nations can more vividly present these issues.

Research on developing nations is, however, almost entirely devoted to poor, almost illiterate women in micro-credit (Goetz and Gupta, 1996, Hashemi, et. al, 1996, Schuler, 1996, Amin, et. al, 1998, Naher, 2005, Ghosh and Wright, 2005, Roodman and Morduck, 2009, Naher, 2010). This study contends that recognising the heterogeneous nature of women, it also needs to consider the middle class, comparatively educated women engaged in small businesses. Nevertheless, in a context such as Bangladesh, a highly patriarchal developing nation, there is an effective operation of micro-credit (Bangladesh Bank, 2012). At present, the government is also offering a special scheme of bank loans for the growth stage of small enterprises of women (ibid). Against this background, investigation is needed of how gender subordination is articulated in the experiences of women business-owners' access to bank loans in the highly patriarchal context. This research provides a critical contribution by investigating gender subordination related to family aspects and the broader contextual perspective, by women business-owners accessing bank loans. The overarching research question of the doctoral study is: *How does gender influence women business-owners' access to debt finance in a patriarchal developing nation?*

In order to address this research question, two research objectives are developed. The first objective is clarified with three associated research questions. The research objectives, along with research questions, are presented below:

1. To investigate the role of the family in accessing bank loans at the growth stage of women-owned businesses.

*Research Questions:*

- (i) How do husbands play roles in accessing debt finance of women business-owners?
- (ii) How are other male family members as well as the domestic responsibility and child rearing issue related to the process?
- (iii) What are the family related aspects that are responsible for the diversified experiences of the women while accessing bank loans?



2. To explore how broader contextual issues of the developing nation are related to the experiences of women in accessing debt finance for their businesses at the growth stage.

To address the research objectives, the ontological position is pragmatic realism, whilst it accepts social construction and it is concerned with social realities informing social practices of people (Watson, 2013). In relation to this, the epistemological position is subjectivist, providing the platform to understand the socially constructed experiences of women business-owners by taking into consideration an objective reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). By placing women at the centre of the research (Brooks, 2007), the feminist standpoint research presents the voice of the women business-owners (Frisby, Maguire, and Reid 2009). For unveiling the women's experiences, a qualitative method is adopted for this concerned feminist study (Depner, 1981) and data are generated with semi-structured interviews that incorporate the effective involvement of the respondents (Graham, 1984). Employing thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) enables key themes to emerge from the data.

### **9.3 Contribution of the Thesis**

The broad contribution of the thesis is to advance the debate of gender subordination in women's entrepreneurship from developed nations to developing nations. The studies on developed countries entirely concentrate on banks' discriminatory approach towards women business-owners regarding the debt finance process. Employing the feminist standpoint theory, this study extends the view by demonstrating the inevitable roles of family in the process of accessing bank loans in Bangladesh, a developing country. In so doing, it unveils the private patriarchal issues related to the experiences of the women in carrying out that process. Regarding the subordination of women business-owners, it also explains the impact of some broader contextual issues, such as corruption or superstition, which are considerably different from that of developed nations. Thus, whereas the prevailing knowledge of gender subordination in women's entrepreneurship is fundamentally based on developed nations (Fielden and Davidson, 2005), it extends the view with novel insights into the context of a highly patriarchal

developing nation. It makes a timely contribution to the women's entrepreneurship literature by responding to the call for conducting research on the contexts, other than developed nations (ibid).

Further, as the prevailing feminist studies on entrepreneurship are limited to the individual undertaking (Ahl, 2006), this feminist standpoint research substantially contributes to the understanding of gender subordination by drawing upon the family aspect and the broader contextual perspective. Regarding the family perspective, the major contribution is to advance the understanding on patriarchy in enterprises from the impact of the societal expectation of work (Bradley, 2012) to that of the individual roles of male family members directly in business activities. The discussion on sexual division of labour is considered as the starting point of the debate (Hartsock, 2004) and the extant literature on women's entrepreneurship revolves around this issue. This thesis markedly contributes by going beyond this issue and extending the view by establishing the direct and active dominating, oppressing and exploiting roles of menfolk of the family in getting involved in the businesses of many women. The overarching contribution of the thesis of exploring gender subordination goes beyond the central issue related to debt financing, to a wider issue of women's entrepreneurship in general. From the experiences of many women business-owners' access to bank loans, it concludes the direct patriarchal roles of male family members in businesses in general.

As far as the family aspect is concerned, there is another key contribution of the thesis by bringing to light some context specific issues related to the debt financing process. It provides novel insights into how early marriage or extended family had an influence on this process. For example, in relation to early marriage it is revealed that, in general, the women (two third respondents), who confronted negative attitudes from the male family members concerning access to bank loans, were found to have been married before the age of 18. In explaining the issue of child marriage, the study further illustrates that it was recognised as an obstacle for further education whilst the lack of education was a limitation for accessing bank loans. Whereas the literature tends to attribute the limitations to women and advises them to overcome the shortcomings (Ahl, 2006), this study contributes by going beyond this approach. It unveils the reasons behind the

limitations (i.e. lack of education) and, thus, provides a more nuanced understanding of gender subordination in the society. Moreover, the study uncovers that when the family was under the acute financial stress, few women had a certain level of emancipation within the family for operating businesses as well as accessing loans. This finding is particularly important as the studies rarely investigate family issues where women experience emancipation.

From the perspective of the broader contextual issues, the study contributes to the prevailing knowledge of women's entrepreneurship by adding different contextual issues from developing nations. Regarding corruption, the entrepreneurship literature is concerned largely on bribery (Dreher and Gassebner, 2007; Avnimelech, et. al., 2011) but the thesis extends the view into the issue of fraudulent people and extortionists. It further contributes with insights into gender specific issues in corruption in the developing nation. With the examples of the respondents concerning the broader patriarchal society to businesses or bank loans or other relevant issues, such as the problems of public transport, the study enhances the understanding on public patriarchal aspects in relation to debt finance.

While providing distinct insights into context specific issues of the developing nation, the study further contributes to the understanding of few common issues that also exist in developed nations. For example, the issue of respectable femininity is not so explicitly presented in developed countries (Bradley, 2012, Fernando and Cohen, 2013). The context of the highly patriarchal society provides a platform to analyse the issue more clearly. Certain features that are present in developed nations are better explained in the context of the developing nation. Thus, the study contributes to enhance the understanding of few common issues and extends its contribution beyond the boundary of a developing nation.

In terms of empirical contribution, this thesis has a remarkable role. It explores an under-researched area of a South Asian developing nation regarding women in small businesses. Specifically, in the context of Bangladesh, there is a dearth of research on women business-owners as researchers largely concentrate on women in micro-credit. This feminist study brings to the fore the voice and visibility of this comparatively unnoticed cohort of women. Another key

contribution of the thesis is to challenge the image of the women of that developing nation ('Bangladeshi Women') whilst the image was portrayed based on the experiences of women in micro-credit. Through exploring the empirical evidence gathered from women business-owners, this study indicates that the experiences of middle class, comparatively better educated women in small businesses are different than those of poor, almost illiterate women using micro-credit. The women in small businesses were not found to be as submissive as the women who used micro-credit. Hence, the image of the women in the country cannot be generalised based on only the women in micro-credit.

The thesis makes a contribution to the methodology regarding the data generation in a corrupted context. The study presents the challenges of generating data from women business-owners. The reason was mainly that many women were the documented business-owners but the male family members actually owned and operated the businesses. Whilst the reasons were related to corruption, some were not interested to disclose the issue of the original ownership. Subsequently, the study presents how to identify the appropriate sample and to generate data from women business-owners in the corrupted context.

The research also offers a contribution from the perspective of ethics. The personal reflexivity of the researcher presents the ethical concern of the researcher while conducting studies on the negative aspects of the native country. Whereas literature on emotional issues (Hochschild, 1998, Hubbard et al., 2001, Dickson-Swift et al., 2006) generally pivots around the interaction of researchers and participants, this research unveils the emotional aspect concerning the ethical perspective of carrying out a study. Nonetheless, it suggests the way to manage the emotional issues ethically and to go forward with the research.

Finally, a key contribution of the thesis is towards policy making. Whereas the literature on government funds for entrepreneurship converges around the issue of bureaucracy and politicians (Bannock and Peacock, 1989, Bennett, 2012), this study reveals the patriarchal practices regarding employing the funds. The study reveals that many women could not employ the loans for their own businesses as their husbands consumed the loans. In addition, in some cases, fraudulent people

or extortionists took a share of the loans. Nonetheless, the government funds could facilitate women's emancipation if the loans were effectively utilised for the businesses. By drawing attention to this aspect, the thesis challenges the assumption of the emancipation of women through financial support for small businesses.

The thesis provides significant contributions to theory, literature, empirical perspective and methodology. It also generates valuable contributions to policy practices. The next section sheds light on how the insights of the thesis can be employed in policies and practices.

#### **9.4 Implications for Policy and Practices**

This doctoral study is based principally on the special governmental scheme for bank loans for women business-owners. While analysing the experiences of women business-owners accessing debt finance, this study enlightens on several issues that can contribute to policy and practice. Thus, the policies can be effectively developed and employed for the emancipation of a specific cohort of women in Bangladesh. Further, the policy recommendation can be replicated in similar patriarchal countries of the world to reap benefit for the women in small businesses there.

The thesis reveals that many women were strongly dependent on their husbands to carry out the process of accessing bank loans and thus, they were more susceptible to patriarchal issues. The study suggests that banks can consider simplifying the process for the women in order to have easy access to loans. From the study, it is evident that in some cases, bank officers went to women for the purpose of communicating with them or collecting documents from them. This practice can be widened so that other women can benefit. It would facilitate adjustment of time limitations due to household responsibilities and to avoid the problems associated with public transport. Women business-owners could benefit from talking to bank officers directly instead of having interference from their husbands.

In addition, the empirical evidence of the study demonstrates that the bank demanded the husband as first guarantor for the loan, even though for the special lending scheme, the government did not place such a requirement. As a result of this demand by the bank, the women were dependent on the good will of their husbands to approach the bank for a loan. Some women confronted a negative attitude from husband for this requirement and some expressed their grievance about the bank for not properly considering their own capability for operating the businesses. In light of these findings, this study strongly suggests policy makers assess the eligibility of women for accessing loans based on their capability to operate a business and not to use the condition of having the husband as the guarantor.

An additional policy consideration can be introducing development programmes regarding the capacity-building of women to prepare them for individually carrying out the debt financing process. The study demonstrates that for the process of accessing loans, the better educated women did their own work whereas comparatively less educated women were dependent on their husbands, implying that women business-owners might benefit from development programmes. From the interviews of the women, it is evident that the government arranged seminars regarding the special lending scheme which some women business-owners attended. In addition, a development programme for capacity building can also be initiated.

Further, as utilisation of loans for the businesses of women is a critical concern, this study firmly suggests the policy makers set control mechanisms to monitor employment of the loans. Banks need to confirm that within a reasonable timeframe, the loans are utilised for the stated purpose. In case of any deviation, the entire amount of the loans should be returned. Due to such monitoring, the husbands of the women might find it difficult to use the loans for their own intentions. Rather than entirely concentrating on the issue of loan disbursement, the policy needs to broaden its scope to the utilisation aspect to ascertain that women are benefitting from the investment of the loans in their businesses.

Nevertheless, while developing the policies of banks, it is also rational to consider the view of the banks. This issue is mentioned in Section 9.6: Direction for Future

Research. Moreover, as a point of caution, since qualitative research is intended to generalise the theory instead of population, policy-makers need to take into account this issue while considering the recommendations of this thesis.

### **9.5 Limitations of the Study**

This study has a number of limitations that need to be acknowledged. One limitation of the research is related to the sample selection as it concentrates particularly on one specific bank. All the respondents of the study were the clients of this particular bank, Barc Bank Ltd. Compared to other banks, this bank disbursed the highest amount of government aided loans to women business-owners which indicates that this bank had a relatively better lending performance. The experiences of women to have loans from other banks might reveal stories of different patriarchal issues related to the debt financing process. Nevertheless, taking into consideration only one bank is not a severe limitation for the research because a qualitative study is undertaken to generalise theories not the population (Bryman, 2016).

Another shortcoming of the sample selection is associated with the geographical concentration of the research. The field of study was Dhaka instead of different parts of the country. The women business-owners of areas other than the capital city might provide different insights due to the socio-cultural diversity within the country. The data collection was conducted in that particular area due to the limited time set aside for field trips. It is important to note that, as mentioned by the officers of Barc Bank Ltd. during the interview of the pilot survey, the majority of women business-owners were concentrated in Dhaka. Hence, it can be assumed that this bias did not have an important consequence. Nonetheless, again, the aim of the qualitative research is not to generalise the population (Bryman, 2016).

As alluded to above, there can be a possible limitation in identifying the growth stage of the women's businesses. The bank is supposed to provide loans to women if they satisfy the specific criteria of being at the growth stage. These conditions of assessing the stage of businesses were established by Barc Bank Ltd.. Some conditions were mentioned in the methodology chapter (Chapter-4)

but the bank was not explicit about explaining the detail of these conditions. Moreover, the study did not examine whether the bank followed these conditions rigidly while investing funds in the businesses. As the respondents were selected through this bank, there was a reliance on the bank regarding determining the stage of the businesses. This limitation can be reconciled in future studies by presenting the criteria of the growth stage of businesses in a more transparent form and assessing businesses based on the conditions before being selected for the sample. Nevertheless, this study confirms that the women had a few years of experiences of operating businesses. This information is important to analyse gender subordination in relation to access to bank loans considering their experiences of managing businesses.

As with any research, this thesis acknowledges limitations whilst also offering opportunities for future studies. The next section sheds light on further research.

#### **9.6 Directions for Future Research**

As the research on women's entrepreneurship in developing nations is very limited, this thesis provides an initial conceptual platform in order to conduct future studies in this area. For further exploration, it opens up a number of issues associated with entrepreneurship, gender and finance in different contexts. Opportunities for future research are not restricted to the investigation of the research questions in other contexts. The relevant interesting questions emerging from the findings and even the issues raised from the experiences of data collection of this study indicate many potentially fruitful avenues for studies in the future.

By replicating this study, the research questions of this thesis can be investigated in other contexts of the world to explore the influence of gender of women business-owners. As developing nations are under-researched areas, the research questions of the study offer potential opportunities for future research. By expanding the exploration in other developing nations, research can bring to light other context specific family related issues concerning women business-owners. Whereas this study identifies several broader contextual aspects, future research can add some context-specific issues of particular developing nations. Further, in



businesses, the direct patriarchal issues of male family members at the individual level can also be investigated in developed nations. The literature review on family businesses on developed nations of this study leads to the conclusion that there is a possibility of male family members to be involved in businesses whilst women are the sole-proprietors. Rather than solely concentrating on the domestic responsibility and child rearing issue, building upon the findings of this study, research needs to be conducted to explore the direct patriarchal roles of family members in businesses of developed nations.

The research questions of the study can be further explored with a homogeneous and small sample to have more nuanced and insightful findings. For example, by employing a case study, the first research question concerning private patriarchy can be explored in greater detail. Due to the involvement of different family members, the views or opinions of family members, particularly husbands, can be also considered. Thus, the research can contribute to provide more comprehensive understanding by shedding empirical light upon the access to bank loans of women business-owners within the family sphere. Conversely, a large scale quantitative research can be carried out based on the findings of the thesis to provide generalisability.

The findings of the thesis pave the way to investigate a number of relevant issues. The thesis substantially contributes by exploring and establishing the patriarchal roles of male family members through their active interference in the businesses of women and, thus, patriarchy is articulated beyond the issue of household responsibilities. Whilst it was revealed through the experiences of women while accessing bank loans, it is important to recognise that many of the activities associated with this issue were not part of regular work of the business and, hence, the women might require more involvement from male family members. While revealing the particular perspective of finance, this scenario provides an indication of the overall subordinated position of the women in relation to their businesses. In some cases, the involvement of the husbands in the everyday business activities was transparent or the consumption of the earnings of the businesses by them was established. Nonetheless, in order to have a more precise conclusion regarding overall business activities, future studies can be undertaken to delve into the roles of male relatives in the regular

business activities. The aspect of the direct patriarchal roles of male family members in terms of regular business activities is a field ripe for further studies.

In addition, the thesis identifies diverse patriarchal experiences of women business-owners and investigates the family related issues responsible for the different experiences. While this study starts an interesting debate by revealing many context-specific issues, future studies can be developed based on this research. Whilst the educational and professional background of the women were found as important factors in their experiences, it is also important to examine whether these qualifications of husbands have any impact on private patriarchal issues. Furthermore, from the findings of the thesis, early marriage emerged as a significant issue with an influence on women business-owners indicating the rural background of the natal family but this study is not explicit about the class of the families. The families might be lower-middle class, hinting at a cause for their different experiences. There is further scope to focus on the natal family regarding the early socialisation process of women in order to identify whether or how the process influences women when accessing debt finance.

This thesis presents the views of women regarding the bank in relation to their experiences of applying for and, subsequently, continuing with bank loans. Nonetheless, to properly contribute to policy-making, attention needs to be paid to the perspectives of the bank. For instance, this study reveals that the women confronted many problems associated with document preparation for the application of loans. Exploration is needed to address whether there is any opportunity to simplify the document-related issues and, for that reason, it is important to take into account the view of the bank officers. Scholars can further explore the approach of the bank from its own perspective.

The valuable insights on the growth stage of businesses of this doctoral study indicates that future research would also benefit from exploring gender subordination at the initial stage of financing ventures. Rather than narrowly concentrating on the finance related issue, the study on the initial stage can further investigate whether there exist obstacles from the family as well as the broader society in commencing small businesses and in case of such constraints, how these are related to the initial funds for ventures. Considering these

additional barriers associated with the identity of small business-owners, the study may also bring to light valuable insights concerning the negotiation of women in their attempt to secure funds to start businesses.

As alluded to above, future research can be concentrated on the influence of gender on succession in highly patriarchal developing nations, whilst in the developed country, it has been already revealed that for this issue, gender is a key determinant (Keating and Little, 1997) and consequently, daughters are found to be ignored there (Martin, 2001, García-Élvarez et al., 2002, Curimbaba, 2002, Vera and Dean, 2005, Griffeth et al., 2006). Specifically, for women business-owners in developing nations, it is important to investigate whether they also prefer sons rather than daughters in handing their businesses whilst they experience many gender specific obstacles in such contexts, as supported by this study. In other words, it can be explored whether and how their experiences of gender subordination have impact on the succession process.

There are many other areas to develop research based on this thesis. For example, with a longitudinal study, whether the influence of family dynamics on women business-owners are changed over time can be investigated. Researchers can also concentrate on unveiling gender subordination regarding women business-owners whose loan applications were rejected by banks. Moreover, this doctoral study reveals differences in experiences when taking loans of middle class and better educated women engaged in small businesses compared to that of women in micro-credit. More rich and robust studies can be conducted to identify the variation of experiences of women in micro-credit and small businesses in this developing nation. It can present more strongly how gender subordination varies based on different issues, such as class, educational background, rural or urban set up in the same context.

The experiences of the data collection of this research unfold or hint at different issues of corruption. Some women were found to receive loans in their own names but, practically, the businesses were owned and operated by the husbands. This implies that women were employed to manage funds from banks for male family members. Given the research objectives, this study does not incorporate such exploration into this issue. Nonetheless, uncovering gender

subordination in relation to this issue is a worthy line of enquiry. Whilst mentioning the name of wives as business-owners, in several cases, there were hints that the businesses were corrupted in nature. It is suspected that in so doing, the husbands tried to protect themselves from probable legal consequences. This issue warrants further exploration. Future studies based on a few of these cases can provide an invaluable contribution into how corruption is at play in gender subordination in the context of entrepreneurship.

As far as future research is concerned, it is also important to critically concentrate on the boundary conditions of the theory. This feminist standpoint research unveils how patriarchy is articulated in the experiences of women business-owners' access to debt finance in the highly patriarchal developing nation. In general, this study demonstrates consistency with the theoretical concept of patriarchy (Walby, 1990) but it also provides an evidence of instances where the existing patriarchal notion is challenged. Under the acute financial situation of the family, women can have a certain level of emancipation and even the patriarchal segregation of labour can be reversed to an extent. The challenging finding of this thesis strongly suggests a need for further study to investigate such cases to provide more insightful and nuanced explanation of gender subordination.

Moreover, whereas the notion of patriarchy was developed based on western countries (Walby, 1990, Walby, 2002), while testing this theoretical concept in a highly patriarchal country in the context of entrepreneurship, this study extends and enriches the concept by uncovering the impact of different context-specific aspects. For example, based on a highly patriarchal and corrupted context, this study adds to the prevailing knowledge with the novel insights of how government officers employ bribery to subordinate women. The example of corruption, thus, illustrates the way a distinct aspect of a highly patriarchal developing nation can extend the theoretical concept of *state* as a structure of patriarchy (Walby, 1990, Walby, 2002). Simultaneously, it is important to acknowledge that as the context of a developing nation is under-researched in entrepreneurship scholarship (Bruton et al., 2008), the understanding of different contextual issues of these areas is extremely limited. But proper knowledge on these aspects, i.e. the impact of these issues in general, may facilitate to have more nuanced understanding on gender specific obstacles. As feminist standpoint

theory is not intended to critically analyse the contextual issues in general, scholars can avail the opportunity to delve into these insightful context specific issues with appropriate theoretical lens. Building upon that, the knowledge of gender subordination of women business-owners of developing nations can be enriched.

In brief, as this thesis analyses the gender subordination of women business-owners in a comparatively underexplored area of studies, it significantly contributes to the prevailing knowledge. Ultimately, it raises several interesting, pertinent issues to investigate. Building upon this study, there is ample scope for future research in the context of the West and the rest of the world.

### **9.7 Concluding Remarks**

This thesis moves beyond the parochial nature of women's entrepreneurship theorising of developed nations. To explore and analyse gender subordination in Bangladesh, an under-explored area, this study has not readily adopted the "normative presumptions" regarding women's entrepreneurship of developed nations (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2010:14). This feminist standpoint research acknowledges that as different women, living in different parts of the world, are oppressed in diversified manners, they have their "distinct insights" concerning gender subordination (Harding, 2004:9). Consequently, for interrogating into family aspects, following research of developed nations, this study is not restricted to the impact of the sexual division of labour on enterprises. Rather, considering the highly patriarchal context, this feminist research raises the question of direct patriarchal practices of male family members in business activities of women to generate novel insights. Further, to provide the voice and visibility of women, the researcher fine-tuned the method or employed strategies to generate appropriate data, considering patriarchal along with other context specific issues, such as corruption. As a native of that developing nation, the knowledge and experiences of the researcher also inevitably facilitated to analyse data (Karra and Phillips, 2007, Corbin and Buckle, 2009). Eventually, the study identifies as well as makes proper sense of valuable or even distinct aspects of that context. Therefore, the design and execution of this research clearly mark that the insider knowledge of a

researcher is crucial to gain a good understanding of gender subordination of women business-owners of an under-researched area.

Nevertheless, it is also important to note that calls have been made to avoid the superficial approach of considering contextualisation in entrepreneurship research (Hjorth et al., 2008). It has been recognised that instead of taking into account context as a variable, it needs to uncover contextual issues for explaining entrepreneurship (Zahra and Wright, 2011). Nonetheless, researchers are not properly explicit about how the context can be incorporated in the study in order to reveal the contextual insights. As demonstrated in the study, the replication of normative assumptions of developed nations would extremely limit the scope of the research. Therefore, this study firmly argues that in order to have a nuanced understanding, researching on how gender influences women's business-ownership in a specific context needs to be appropriately framed based on the context instead of being imbued with the normative presumptions of developed nations. In so doing, the insider knowledge of the researcher can inevitably facilitate to not only design but also execute such a study, as vindicated in this doctoral research. Put simply, for future researchers, this study provides a strong evidence of how the insider knowledge of a researcher can incorporate the context as a "part of the story" (Zahra and Wright, 2011:72) to bring to light valuable or distinct contextual aspects to reveal gender subordination in a specific context.

Furthermore, this doctoral study ignites future studies with an urge to unveil gender subordination from the policy practice perspective. While the introduction of governmental support regarding debt finance for women business-owners is a welcomed development, this research highlights that due to patriarchal issues, not all the women could employ the bank loans for their own businesses, and hence, it was not feasible to have the effective implementation of government policy to financially support women for their emancipation. In line with the logic, it cannot be expected that the deep rooted patriarchal problems can be resolved merely with financial aid from the government for the growth of businesses. Thus, within the patriarchal context, the impact of gendered structures, stereotypes, customs and practices, whether explicit or implicit, must continue to be uncovered and

recognised, if progress towards greater gender equality for women at home or in their businesses is to be achieved.

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### Annexure-1

#### Information about the Businesses of the Respondents

SI No.	Name of the Woman Business Owner	Name of the Enterprise	Type of Business	Size of Bank Loan (in TK.)
1	Zafrin	Maria Boutique	Boutique and Tailoring (Manufacturing, wholesaling and retailing dress)	2,500,000
2	Maliha	Mimi Boutique	Boutique and Tailoring (Manufacturing, wholesaling and retailing dress)	900,000
3	Zohora	Farhana Fashion and Tailors	Boutique and Tailoring (Manufacturing, wholesaling and retailing dress)	850,000
4	Mariana	Zed-2	Boutique and Tailoring (Manufacturing dress and selling in the showroom)	3,400,000
5	Fahmina	Smiling Babies	Boutique and Tailoring (Manufacturing dress and selling in the showrooms)	1,000,000
6	Roushan	Fashion Craft	Boutique and Tailoring (Manufacturing, wholesaling and retailing dress)	800,000
7	Nahid	Fusion Formula	Boutique and Tailoring (Tailoring and wholesaling)	400,000
8	Lisa	Abrar Tailors and Boutique	Boutique and Tailoring (Tailoring and wholesaling)	800,000
9	Fiza	New Wave Fashion	Boutique and Tailoring (Retailing dress)	550,000

<b>10</b>	Amrin	Amrin Traders	Boutique and Tailoring (Retailing dress)	950,000
<b>11</b>	Sheeta	K.S. Embroidery	Boutique and Tailoring (Embroidery Factory)	2,500,000
<b>12</b>	Shahina	Shahina Craft	Manufacturing Dress and Handicraft Products (Manufacturing dress, handicraft products etc. and selling in the outlet)	800,000
<b>13</b>	Masuma	Mamun Screen Corner	Trading (Retailing curtail, bed- cover etc.)	850,000
<b>14</b>	Barna	Moushumi Enterprise	Trading (Retailing curtail, bed- cover etc.)	550,000
<b>15</b>	Shahanaz	Babli Collection	Trading (Retailing dress, toiletries, accessories etc.)	600,000
<b>16</b>	Nurunnahar	Nurunnahar Enterprise	Trading (Retailing accessories, henna etc.)	900,000
<b>17</b>	Lopa	Tulip Collection	Trading (Retailing shoes)	1,500,000
<b>18</b>	Rizia	Touch Beauty Parlour	Beauty Parlour	400,000
<b>19</b>	Papia	Sraboni Beauty Parlour	Beauty Parlour	500,000
<b>20</b>	Nasima	Fair Value	Grocery Shop	300,000
<b>21</b>	Rini	Rini Grounded Spice	Manufacturing Grounded Spice (Producing grounded spices in factories and wholesaling the products)	800,000

**Annexure-2**  
**Interview Guide**  
**(With the Explanation of the Intended Information in Parenthesis)**

**General Information about the Business**

1. Please, tell me about your business.

*(It is an opening question for the convenience of starting the conversation with the woman business-owner. The researcher gains a general idea of the business before the interview and conveys the information. However, she likes to know more about the type of business – if there are any specialty concerning products or operations, whether wholesaling, exporting, number of employees and so on to have an idea about the extent and nature of business to proceed for relevant issues later.)*

**Information about the Respondent**

2. Now I would like to know something about you and your family. Please, tell me about the members of your family.

*(Whether unit/joined family – to explore the impact of other family members,*

*Profession of the husband – may be relevant to analyse husband's role in the concerned business*

*Age of marriage – to proceed for further questions related to family impact*

*Number of children and approximate age – to ask pertinent questions later, for example, the support of adult son for the business, impact of household responsibilities)*

3. Please, tell me about yourself also.

*(The issues incorporates – age, religion, educational background, training related to the business. Information is used later for other questions)*

**Information about the Early Stage of Business**

*(This section provides the platform to start the discussion on the bank loans. Moreover, it facilitates to explore whether or how there exists any linkage of initiating the business with the process of bank loan.)*

4. Why did you start the business?
5. In case of starting the business, what was the response of your family members?
6. What was your source of start-up capital for the business?

How did you get that capital?

7. Please, tell me how have you managed finance to grow your business to date?

#### **Information about Bank Loan**

8. Why did you decide to apply for a bank loan for your business?  
*(Reasons for taking loans – to relate the information with the utilisation of funds*  
*Whether first time borrower for that concerned bank – if not in brief the experience of accessing loans from other banks – to investigate relevant issues of gender subordination)*
9. To what extent was your family involved in this decision for the loan?  
*(To explore private patriarchy and to relate the issue to the later part)*
10. From your experience, what do you think about the bank loan process for women business owners in Bangladesh?  
*(It includes whether they consider the process as challenging and why. The general view about financing businesses of women is sought)*
11. What was your experience of dealing with the bank loan officers? Was it easy to manage? If not, why?  
*(It also explores relevant issues like whether the officer was male, whether she dealt alone – to explore patriarchal issues from the bank and the assistance of or related problems with the male family-members concerning this issue)*

12. It requires preparation of different documents for the loan undertaking process. Tell me about your experience of this document preparation process in brief.

*(It includes whether seeking assistance from others and why, whether there is any corruption – to scrutinise private and public patriarchy and also the role of the male family-members regarding this issue)*

13. Who are the guarantors of your loan?

*(It also is about how she managed the guarantors – to explore patriarchal issues in the case of male guarantors)*

14. Please, tell me about the collateral you used to guarantee your loan.

*(It incorporates different issues, such as, whether the property was purchased/inherited from parents, problems for acquiring/possessing the property, providing mortgage, how she managed the issue – To analyse different aspects of gender subordination related to the problems)*

In case of not having the loan with collateral, do you have any intention to take large loan with collateral? If yes, how will you manage the collateral?

*(Additional issues are – whether any challenge associated with collateral – To explore patriarchy)*

15. How did you utilize the loan?

*(It intends to know whether they used the loan themselves to explore private patriarchy)*

*(This section also intends to find the impact of religious practice, corruption or other contextual issues. Again examples of gender subordination are requested wherever relevant.)*

### **Other Questions about Financing**

16. Can you tell me anything else about the challenges for women seeking bank finance for small firms in Bangladesh?

*(Provide them space to add something that might be missed)*

17. In Bangladesh, generally, if we consider business for the women, we think about micro-credit. The women engaged in micro-credit, face challenges from their family and the society. How do you differentiate the challenges regarding financing your business from those women of micro-credit?  
*(Directly contrasting the experiences of women in micro-credit and small businesses from the point of view of women business-owners)*

**Annexure-3**  
**NOTTINGHAM UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL**  
**RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW CHECKLIST: STAFF/DOCTORAL RESEARCH**

Research ethics approval is required for every research project that involves human participants or their data, whether that project is externally funded or not. Research projects may not start without ethical approval.

Please complete this form electronically and email it to Stella Fuller ([stella.fuller@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:stella.fuller@nottingham.ac.uk)), along with any annexes, from your UoN email account.

<b>Research Project Title:</b>	[PhD] The influence of Gender upon Women Business-owner's Access to Finance in Bangladesh in the Context of a Patriarchal Developing Nation
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Doctoral students should name their supervisors under "co-investigator" and add [PhD] before the project title.

<b>Principal Investigator</b>	Jasmine Jaim
<b>Co-Investigators (and affiliation)</b>	Professor Susan Marlow (Haydn Green Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, The University of Nottingham) Dr. Janine Swail (Haydn Green Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, The University of Nottingham)
<b>Project Funder(s)</b>	Vice-Chancellor's Scholarship for Research Excellence from The University of Nottingham for the full tuition fees and Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh for partial living expenses in the first year of PhD.

<b>Project start/finish dates</b>	October, 2012 (Start date)	<b>Date of Ethics Application</b>	January 29, 2014
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<b>Questions about the appropriate REC to review the application:</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
Will the study involve recruitment of patients through the NHS or the use of NHS data or premises and/or equipment?		N
Does the study involve participants age 16 or over who are unable to give informed consent? (e.g. people with learning disabilities)		N

If the answer to either of these questions is 'yes', then you may need to seek approval through an NHS Research Ethics Committee. If this applies to you, please contact the University's Research Governance team ([sponsor@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:sponsor@nottingham.ac.uk)) (and cc [adam.golberg@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:adam.golberg@nottingham.ac.uk)) before proceeding with this application.



NUBS LREC cannot approve projects which involve: the administration of drugs, placebos etc to research participants; tissue collection; the infliction of pain; or invasive, intrusive or harmful procedures.

Questions about involvement of researchers from outside NUBS:	Y	N
Are colleagues from another school or institution involved in the research?		N
If you are leading the project, does this application cover their involvement?		
If they are leading, have they obtained ethical approval for your involvement?		

If a project is led from outside NUBS, ethical approval by her institution will normally be accepted in lieu of a NUBS REC review. In such cases, please complete this page only and attach a letter confirming ethical review. Similarly, NUBS REC will normally be willing to write to external project partners to confirm that we have reviewed the project. It would be up to their respective institutions to decide whether to accept our review or to carry out their own – you should not assume agreement.

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University of Nottingham's Code of Practice on Ethical Standards and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study.

**This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data.**

Any significant change in the question, design or conduct over the course of the research should be notified to the School Research Ethics Officer (adam.golberg@nottingham.ac.uk) and may require a new application.

Brief summary of project goals:

The PhD thesis analyzes the influence of gender upon women business-owner's access to finance in Bangladesh in the context of a patriarchal developing nation. The specific research question of the thesis is: How does gender influence women business-owner's access to finance in the context of a patriarchal developing nation?

To address the research question, I will explore how women business-owners access finance to support early stage businesses and then investigate how women business-owners experience the bank loan process. Finally, the process will be critically evaluated to analyze the influence of gender.

Brief description of research methods to be employed:

A qualitative method will be adopted. Semi-structured questionnaire will be used to conduct the interviews. I will take face to face interview and expect to have 25 women business-owners as a sample. Interviews will be conducted in Bangla, the native language for the convenience of the respondents about communication. Then interviews will be translated for data analysis. In addition, I will keep record of any special observation of each interview in separate memos. All participants will be provided with a consent form for the research; they will have to sign the form and return it to me. The form will also be written in Bangla. (An English version of the form is provided in the annexure.) However, it should be noted that though the title refers the country as a patriarchal one, it is an uncontroversial

thing to mention and therefore, I do not expect anyone to be offended for that.

Each interview will probably be for approximately two hours and will be recorded. Interview transcripts will be sent back to the participants for their review and agreement. Follow-up interviews may be conducted due to the issues arising from data collection.

It is expected that data will be collected from the end of February, 2014 to May, 2014. During the period of data collection, there will be regular communication with the supervisors about the research. However, in terms of security, data will be stored electronically on computer with password protection and also in hard copy version in a locked cupboard. Data will be used and reproduced for different publications.

<b>Questions about consent</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
Does the research involve vulnerable groups: children, those with cognitive impairment, or those in unequal power relationships (e.g. students)		N
Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited? (e.g. students at school, members of self-help group, residents of nursing home, employees)	Y	
Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and/or full informed consent at the time? (e.g. covert observation)?		N
<b>Questions about confidentiality</b>		
Will research involve the sharing of data or confidential information beyond the initial consent given? Will data collected be (or potentially be) used for any other purpose?		N
Will the research involve administrative or secure data that requires permission from the appropriate authorities before use?		N
Will any payments, compensation, expenses, or incentives be offered to participants?		N
<b>Questions about the potential for harm</b>		
Will the study involve discussion of personal or sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use, commercially or legally sensitive topics)?	Y	
Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?		N
Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?		N
Is there a possibility that the safety of the researcher may be in question beyond everyday risks (e.g. in some international research in trouble spots)?		N
<b>Location of the research</b>		
Will any of the research take place outside the UK?	Y	

If you have answered 'yes' to any of the questions above, please explain your reasons below, and any steps you will take to deal with the ethical issues raised. Please note that answering 'yes' will not in itself adversely affect the chances of approval. For guidance on completing this section of the form, please contact [adam.golberg@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:adam.golberg@nottingham.ac.uk)

Initial access to the respondents: The contact details of the small business-owners will be collected from a bank. The bank is currently lending to Bangladeshi women business-owners across the country and initial agreement has been reached to have the contact details of a sample of their female clients. The bank has already had permission from the clients to provide me the contact details. However, the contact list will be destroyed afterwards.

As the research explores the influence of gender, it will require the personal information of the respondents. However, if the participants feel discomfort to any degree, they will be free not to continue.

The research will be conducted in Bangladesh. However, as my origin is Bangladesh and I am familiar with Bangladeshi norms, it seems to me that there is no specific additional issue concerned with that country that needs to be considered for data collection.

To what degree will individual research participants and organisations be anonymised in the research outputs? Please list any potentially-identifying characteristics that you may wish to use. Please attach a copy of your participant information sheet and/or consent form (where appropriate) as annexes.

Research interviews will be transcribed verbatim and anonymised accordingly. Demographic details such as participant age, the business sector and so on will be reported but participant anonymity will be ensured throughout the research process. Thereafter, interview transcripts will remain confidential and may only be read by the doctoral research and supervisory team.

Useful links:

A link to the University of Nottingham Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics can be found on Nexus  
<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/business/nexus/index.phtml?sm=645&smt=6&st=222>

ESRC Framework for Research Ethics  
<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/about-esrc/information/research-ethics.aspx>

UK Research Integrity Office Code of Practice for Research  
<http://www.ukrio.org/what-we-do/code-of-practice-for-research/>



### **Information for Research Participants**

You are being invited to take part in a research study – ‘The influence of Gender upon Women Business-owner’s Access to Finance in Bangladesh in the Context of a Developing Nation’. Your experience of financing the business is the concern of the research. Before you decide to take part, it is important to understand the purpose of the research as well as what it will involve. Please, take your time to read the following information carefully. Please, ask the researcher if there is anything you do not understand or of you would like further information.

This study is undertaken in partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Philosophy degree of The University of Nottingham, the UK funded by principally the university itself. The information gathered during the interview will be used solely for the academic purposes. Moreover, it is expected that conference papers and research papers for journals will be developed later - based on the findings of the field work. All information obtained during the study will be confidential. Data will be stored electronically in the computers with password protection and in hard copies in a locked cupboard. Direct quotes from the interview may be used but your name as well as the name of the organization will remain anonymous and disguised with pseudonyms where necessary.

For the purpose of the research, the participants will be the sole-proprietor of the business which will be operating in Dhaka and have undergone the loan application process from a bank. Therefore, you have been identified for this study with the co-operation of the bank from where you are undertaking loan. However, I can assure you that I will not share any information with the bank that passed on your details.

This interview will take no more than two hours and will be recorded. During the interview, you will be asked about your start-up phase of the business, management of your initial capital, support of your family during start-up and operational stages of your business, access to and management of bank finance and so on. Please, feel free to expand the topics. However, if you do not feel comfortable with any question, inform me and I will proceed with the next

question. At any time, if you decide that you do not want to continue to take part in the study, you are free to withdraw and you do not have to give any reason.

I hope that you will be able to help me with this study.

Yours sincerely,

Jasmine Jaim

**Contact details**

Researcher: Jasmine Jaim, Nottingham University Business School, Jubilee Campus, Nottingham NG8 1BB, Phone: +44 (0) 7448227470, e-mail: [lixjj8@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:lixjj8@nottingham.ac.uk).

Supervisor: Professor Susan Marlow, Nottingham University Business School, Jubilee Campus, Nottingham NG8 1BB, Phone: +44 (0) 115 9515257, e-mail: [Susan.Marlow@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Susan.Marlow@nottingham.ac.uk)

**Complaint procedure**

If you wish to complain about the way in which the research is being conducted or have any concerns about the research then in the first instance please contact the supervisor.

Or contact the School's Research Ethics Officer:

Adam Golberg

Nottingham University Business School

Jubilee Campus

Nottingham NG8 1BB

Phone: 0115 846 6604

Email: [adam.golberg@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:adam.golberg@nottingham.ac.uk)



**Consent to Interview Form**

**Project Title** The influence of Gender upon Women Business-owner's Access to Finance in Bangladesh in the Context of a Developing Nation

**Researcher's Name** Jasmine Jaim

**Supervisor's Name** Professor Susan Marlow and Dr. Janine Swail

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that the information will be recorded during the interview.
- I understand that data will be stored electronically in the computers and hard copies in the locked cupboard. Anonymised transcripts may be provided to the supervisors.

**I agree to participate in the study.**

**Participant's Signature** ..... **Date**.....

