

# WORK FROM HOME: The struggles of working moms

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No matter how you slice and dice it, being a mother is never an easy task. And working moms always struggle more to maintain work-life balance. Most people picture this 'work from home' system as a blessing for such moms as they can now spend more time with their family at home. But in reality, many of them are struggling since it is likely to be both a stay-at-home and working mom at the same time. We have talked to a few working moms to know about their difficulties during this pandemic.

## Dual challenges of homeschooling and work

Due to the pandemic, many schools are operating with distance learning where women bear the lion's share of the responsibility of childcare distance learning work. A faculty member of a private university in Dhaka, who wishes to stay anonymous, shared her experience as a working mom. "Usually my child and I have classes at the same time. So he needs to start and do the zoom class alone, which is a bit difficult for such a young child. Sometimes he shows up with his problems, while I'm taking a class. For which I pause for a moment to instruct him, as I cannot move from there and I resume my class again. I somehow struggle to look after both sides simultaneously." She also shared how she had a fixed time frame for her work before the pandemic and she could've given much time to her child and help him to finish his homework. But now as everything is online and her students also need assistance more than before, it seems to have a job of 24/7.

## New moms with more responsibilities, more challenges

Working mothers with toddlers are more likely to face the hustle of handling the responsibilities of both parenting and office duties. Nusrat Zaitun Hossain, Senior Research Analyst, IFPRI expressed her struggles just after her maternity leave ended. "There was absolutely no work-life balance, especially with a six-month-old who still requires breastfeeding. On top of everything, I had to cover up for my absence from work for a long six months due to maternity leave. It became a double burden because I had to get updated



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

about what I missed in six months and find work-personal life balance". Another new mom Samara Shameem working as a teacher at Sunnydale School said, "In the morning, I need to take classes of my students while worrying about my baby girl who can start crying at any moment after waking up. As she is still a toddler, she is more dependent on her mother.

And she becomes frustrated if she doesn't get my attention". She also shared that she tried to finish all the teaching tasks when her baby was in sleep as doing both duties at the same time was too overwhelming for her.

## Meeting deadlines, staying far from the cubicle

Most of the employers and employees had no experience carrying out office tasks online or from home before this pandemic. It's already challenging to be productive all the time in the remote work environment. And for working mothers who are already in charge of

most of the household chores, it is like going over the top. "During this pandemic, bosses have become over conscious to ensure that their teammates are working, and not holidaying. Works that previously needed only one update in a month, now require a daily update in written format along with a pressure to have a change in the status. In a nutshell, the same job suddenly requires four times effort with one-fourth time allocated to ensure the management that we are working", said Maliha Jahan, portfolio manager at a multinational company. She also added that most of the teammates who were male could never understand female members' struggles. "While I was thinking that I would need to do the cleaning after the meeting, they were talking about how to be fit, who bought a treadmill, how to keep the mind positive by watching movies and so on and so on," said Maliha.

## The extra burden of household chores and less time to take a rest

Due to societal expectations, women are more likely or sometimes forced to involve in most of the household chores. And as domestic help is not available during this pandemic, the overall pressure is on female spouses. This doubled pressure of work causes women to have less time to take a rest or relax. Those working mothers with whom we talked, shared how they tried to complete their official duties when their children are asleep or while doing different household chores. In this situation, Nusrat said, "Mothers like me hardly get mental peace and isolation to concentrate on the work to be delivered in a particular time". "It is a 24/7 office-child-household chores- office; no boundary in between, and a nightmare for almost 5-6 months," added Maliha, another working mom struggling with her duties.

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