

## Chapter 2

# Implications of Citizenship Discourse on Female Labour Force Participation: A Case Study of Bangladeshi Women in the UK

**Masreka Khan**  
*Erciyes University, Turkey*

### **ABSTRACT**

*Immigrant women's labour market participation remains a long standing concern in the context of developed countries. Bangladeshi women are persistently reported to be one of the lowest participant groups in formal labour market in the UK. Where there is plethora of research to point out this fact, hardly any persuasive explanation is offered to unfold the phenomenon. The intrinsic bond between the rhetoric of citizenship and identities as immigrant is blurred in the surge of literatures. In this milieu, present chapter contributes to develop the understanding of the complex notion of citizenship and its implication in labour market participation, broadly on immigrant women and narrowly on Bangladeshi immigrant women. It reveals how 'identity shaped by citizenship discourse' influences one of the important indicators of economic empowerment - market participation.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

One of the significant current discussions in studying women from ethnic minority is their participation in labour markets, particularly in developed countries. Day to day realities of an immigrant, who are yet to confirm to be a permanent member at the recently arrived society, is formed by the idea that they are not ‘citizens’; their rights are different and so does their entitlement to opportunities and access. Where there are number of immigrants outperforming in many sectors, statistics does not show an optimistic picture of economic participation for majorities of them in most of the developed countries.

In context of the United Kingdom (UK) there is remarkably little research on Bangladeshi community that unpack issues around women and work. Most of the studies concerning employment participation of women from this community tend to reproduce results grounding on socio-cultural and religious values and practices. While these are important factors accounted for one’s attitudes and decisions, such explanation leaves to be unpersuasive because of the diverse and complex dimension of this community with changing magnitude of migration flows. On top of this, critical structural process akin to citizenship and related policies are hardly pointed out as a contributory factor that may shape immigrant women’s choices and attitudes towards economic participation.

Present chapter aims to develop a sophisticated understanding of immigrant women’s labour market participation, by demonstrating the interplay of migration economy and the framing of citizenship through a feminist standpoint. Providing with a broader overview of market participation by immigrant community in the context of developed countries, it demonstrates that the realities of this group, particularly recent immigrants’, is different and mostly negatively different than that of their native counterparts.

The chapter first briefly draws on the dynamics of citizenship, discourse analysis and migration. This is to underscore the complex interplay of these three factors in regard to gender and labour market participation. Subsequently it offers a personalized overview of migration and work from a global perspective. Then locates Bangladeshi women in the spectrum of workforce literature in the context of UK. Finally this chapter argues that, even though there are scopes to accommodate recently arrived immigrant community in high and low skilled jobs, the exclusionary concepts of citizenship perhaps leave immigrant women in a career wise uncertainty.

The identity as a Bangladeshi immigrant woman in the UK is continuously reproduced through attitudes and decisions. Present chapter analyses this particular identity and analyses the contribution of discourses associated with it in terms of labour market participation. The chapter is explicitly intended to let the reader

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