

Empowering Women in Bangladesh: A Study on the Problems of Working Women in Garments Industries

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Abstract

Empowering Muslim women is a worldwide trend in almost all Muslim countries. Bangladesh is leading the way for all in this regard. It is constantly led by two prominent women for almost 30 years. Women in Bangladesh remain firm and strong in almost all sectors of life. This paper describes some major problems of working women in Bangladesh, especially in garment industry which is regarded to be the second highest foreign currency earner among other sources of Bangladesh economy. In Bangladesh, there are more than six thousand garment industries where around six million people work and majority of them are women. The problems faced by these working women are extreme in nature. It may pose a serious threat to the development of Bangladesh economy. The research asserts that if these problems persist and not tackled effectively, the number of working women will gradually diminish; consequently, the economic growth of Bangladesh will stand far from its desired goal. Among the major problems faced by the working women include the following: salary discrimination due to genders, late salary payment, sexual harassment, mocking, no leave during pregnancy and sickness, inadequate medical facilities, housing problems, insufficient transportation of companies, spread of various diseases and unhygienic workplace due to industrial discharges. The research has figured out the problems through an intensive study of the previous and current research papers, books, magazines, periodicals of government and different NGOs', surveys and newspapers. The research also reached its conclusions through personal interviews with the working women and selected administrative officers.

Keywords: Working women, Problems, Garment industries, Bangladesh

Introduction

Bangladesh is one of the fastest growing countries in South Asia whose growth rate was 7.1 percent and 7.2 percent in 2016 and 2017 respectively. In 2017 it was the second fastest growing country in South Asia which fell to 6.4 in 2018 (Economy 2018, May 30). Among the factors that contributed to this significant growth of the country were the large number of female workers from different parts of the rural areas of the country, and their selfless dedication and continued service in different garment and textile industries across the country. According to an update report, in total 6500 factories the

number of laborers is 4 million where 85% are women. However, this sector is playing significant role to advance Bangladesh to the current position. But because of lack of care of the concerned authorities this large number of women are experiencing constant problems in their workplace which deserve immediate attention of the authorities. This paper would analyze some major problems faced by the working women such as Salary Discrimination between Male and Female Workers, Late Salary Payment to Workers, Sexual Harassment, Verbal abuse and Mocking, Inadequate Maternity and Sickness Leave, Inadequate Medical facilities, Housing Problem, Insufficient Transportation, Unhygienic Work environment and Emergence of Various Types of Diseases, and has been ended with the Bibliography.

Methodology

The research follows the quantitative methodology. In references, it cited previously published and contemporary research papers, books, magazines, periodicals by government and semi-government NGOs, surveys, newspapers and online verified videos etc. The research also carried out a face to face interviews with different garment factories female workers and also its managerial bodies. This indeed added value to the primary information obtained through conducting surveys and interviews.

1. Salary Discrimination between Male and Female Workers

Bangladesh is a country where 50.6% population is male and 49.4% is female and total population of this country is 166, 809, 007 (Live Bangladesh Population 2018, June 22). The women are involved in every workplace across the country. According to a statistics of Labour Force Survey, the number of women workers is approximately 12 million and its 74% is involved with agriculture. Within last decade, 13 million workers newly joined the workplace where 5 million are women (Anjum 2017, April 30). Each year half a million women get engaged in workplace (*The Daily Inqilab*, May 3, 2016). Women though accomplish equal duty to men, their salary mostly is not equal to men. If a male worker gets BDT: 300 per day, a female worker is paid BDT:250 or less than this (*The Daily Amader Somoy*, May 1, 2016). Employers, in some cases, say that women are physically not strong like men and they cannot accomplish equal duties to men. Hence, women are paid less than men. “We Can” one of the women’s interest-based organizations of Bangladesh who are running their activism within around 15 countries throughout the world, whose only striving is to protect women from abuse and exploitation. Its Nil Famari District Branch Secretary General Mizanur Rahman said that women accomplish more duties than men, but they are paid less, we are acting on protection of their rights, regarding salary discrimination we talked to the government and we hope that its solution is very needed (*Prothom Alo*, March 8, 2017). Throughout the country, there are 6 thousand and 5 hundred garments and textile industries (*ATN News*, July 22, 2015) and in this sector the number of workers around 4 million and according to the World Bank research, its 80% and another research says 85% (Sikhdar 2014) workers is women (Sili 2018). The RMG (Ready-Made Garments) of Bangladesh is one of the second highest cloth exporters in the world after China. This sector has massively been contributing to the national GDP earning foreign currency and within last 32 years its export percentage increased from 3.89% to 82% (Adnan 2018) which is solely leading the economy of Bangladesh until now. Despite the frostbite labour of women workers, they are not provided equal salary to men although they have to carry out the equal duties to men. Recently, some garments industries have abolished this discrimination because of governmental imposed different rules and regulations, while some others still adhere to this injustice to women workers in workplace.

2. Late Salary Payment

Workers' sufferings intolerably increase when they tirelessly work from morning to evening to night, but are not paid on time. Many massive demonstrations and violent incidents caused by workers are noticed around the workplace throughout the country due to not getting their salaries on exact time. Their salary could seldom suffice them for a month's expenses, let alone if sometime, they were not paid or delayed in receiving their due rights. However, the RMG's sector is the highest foreign money earner among all other sectors of Bangladesh. In January 2018, this sector has brought home \$3.41 billion (*The Daily Star*, February 7, 2018) which was the highest in the last five months. In 2016 this sector earned 2508 crore (i.e. \$25.08 Billions) dollars (*The Daily Vorer Kagoj*, June 12, 2016). Despite such a large amount of foreign currency earned by the RMG sector, the workers unfortunately are not paid in due time. For monthly salary, workers have to demonstrate and adopt the way of violent movement such as road blocking and vandalizing other institutions around the garments factories. It is also proved that Nasa Group's garment's workers blocked one highway, namely Mohakhali, Dhaka for 6 hours due to not receiving their salaries on time. And then police handled the matter and consoled the agitating workers talking to the owner of that garment (*The Daily Prothom Alo*, April 29, 2013). In such circumstance, many workers get injured because of teargas of police and their merciless beating as well as other tortures which compelled the agitating workers to disperse. In March 28, 2017 around more than one hundred workers of Lyric Industries showed a massive demonstration at Badda-Rampura-Malibag area of Dhaka. They claimed that the owner of Industries closed the industry without any prior announcement, as a result the workers were afraid that the garment's owner might not pay their salary, that is why they closed the industry without informing them (*The Daily Ittefaq*, March 28, 2017). There many workers and police both got injured because of both party's chase and counter chase. In May 30, 2018 hundreds of workers gathered at Savar, Dhaka with a demand of paying salary before Eid-ul Fitar. They claimed that their owners closed the industry without paying the salary. For their near relatives, they could not buy anything, and they were very much afraid of not going home to celebrate Eid with their family's members since still their salary was not paid (*The Daily Kaler Konth*, May 30, 2018). Some owners of garments pay salary in due time but some others do not. Sometimes, salary is paid after the first or second week of the month (Begum, Ali and others 2010). Due to not following the exact payment system and time, workers' sufferings are beyond the limit.

3. Sexual Harassment

One of the major problems faced by the working women in garment industries (Pradhan-Mallah 2005) and other workplaces of Bangladesh is sexual harassment. *Dhaka Tribune* states: "Sexual harassment has become a major cause for concern in Bangladesh, with an alarming rise in reports of women and girls being harassed" (Hossain and Mahmud 2018). This harassment is committed by their male colleagues, senior staffs or staff from management and administration. The forms of harassment include undesired comments, touching her body parts, forceful kissing and other ways which harass and sexually instigate women in workplace. Sometimes, women are raped as well in their workplace. Some examples and forms of sexual harassment have been described below to shed some lights on the issue:

- Sharing sexually inappropriate images or videos, such as pornography or salacious gifs, with co-workers
- Sending suggestive letters, notes, or emails
- Displaying inappropriate sexual images or posters in the workplace (Stevens and MCMillan 2017)
- Telling lewd jokes, or sharing sexual anecdotes
- Making inappropriate sexual gestures
- Staring in a sexually suggestive or offensive manner

- Making sexual comments about appearance, clothing, or body parts
- Inappropriate touching, including pinching, patting, rubbing, or purposefully brushing up against others
- Asking sexual questions, such as inquiries about someone's sexual history or their sexual orientation
- Making offensive comments about someone's sexual orientation or gender identity (Doyle 2018).

Based on a study of 2015, 84% women and girls from 7 cities in Bangladesh experience derogatory comments and sexually abusive language. The study of 2017 depicts that 54.7% women living in urban areas experience violence, including physical, psychological (Aziz, Zarina and Ng 2001), financial, social violence as well as unwanted contact by strangers (ActionAid, P.111). Md. Razidur and Nishat in their article entitled "Sexual Harassment in Workplace in South Asia: A Comparative Study on Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Srilanka", showed that there are two forms of sexual harassment. These are *quid pro quo* and *a hostile work environment*. The first form came from Latin and it means something for something-refers to an exchange where one provides sexual favours in exchange for something else. And the second form describes about a workplace where due to some comments and behaviours of employees the workplace becomes an uncomfortable environment for women where they could easily be sexually harassed (Rahman and Jahan 2015). Due to common trait of shyness in women, they rarely reveal the incidence of harassment even if they face it constantly in fear of losing job or due to social stigma. Some of the victims think that if they disclose they might be treated as a cheap object in society, and that it might seriously affect their image which would tarnish the possibility of their marriage in future. (Siddiqi 2003). Hence, they silently endure the mental agonies and pass time with severe psychological damages to their minds. Although some working women dare to reveal to journalist or file case to the court, they would undergo bad experience which compel to go through a medical check-up if the court orders for a report. Or sometimes, they have to face the threat of murder by the harassers not to disclose to anyone. Thus, some women workers had to die, some of them commit suicide, and some others lost their lives due to attack by the harassers.

Sexual harassment in the factory by senior management and fellow male workers

Type of Sexual Harassment	Number of respondents	Percentage
Sexual harassment in the factory	25	20.83
Sexual intimate proposal from the higher Management	20	16.66
Sexual harassment from the fellow male workers	14	11.66
No comment	61	50.83
Total	120	100

4. Verbal abuse and Mocking

Every human being deserves rights to be well treated. In human nature, respect, affection and recognition are among the desired things. Mankind sometimes, is determined to dedicate all his or her possessions to preserve dignity. And this dignity prompts him to go ahead and work productively. But when he is disrespected and underestimated, he loses his enthusiasm to be more punctual and vigorously active in his duty. However, workers whether from male or female have due rights to preserve their honour. Women workers badly have been experiencing verbal and mocking harassment in workplace of Bangladesh by their senior stuffs and managers while they commit any sort of mistakes or fail to accomplish targeted portion of her duties. The boss uses such words to women workers is the expression of dishonour and overlook for them. One example of such behaviour in a garment industry of Chittagong is that Hanufa, she is a garment worker, she said that one day she was working at the production floor as an operator, one of her line leaders said to her to finish her production within the very limited time, if she could not, she would be punished and along with this, he threatened her and used a slang in a rough language. Then supervisor called her Shali (daughter in law)

and pushed her at back side and threatened her if she shouted, she would be kicked off from the garment factory. And said to her to go and fuck off at the brothel (Chowdhury 2018). Similarly, lot of indecent and unwelcome words come from supervisors' mouth to the women workers where most of the women workers are given lower level duties in factories. Due to inelegant language towards working women sometimes some of them resign from job or keep looking for another job. Statistics of impolite behaviour from senior stuffs or managers to working women in garment factory has been shown by the following table.

Indecent behaviour of senior management to working women in RMG sector in Chittagong' 2017

Types of indecent words	Frequency			Percentage		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Used local slang Language (Khanki, Magi, Chodmarani, Fakinni, etc)	66	54	120	55.00	45.00	100
Push in Back side and Neck push	20	100	120	16.66	83.33	100
Job threat	50	70	120	41.66	58.33	100
Slap	45	75	120	37.50	62.50	100

Source: Suman Chowdhury's survey, December 2017. (Table-2).

In the garment factories local slang, job threat and slap are very common which senior bosses and managers are using to working women. Based on the above-mentioned table, it is found that among 120, 66 women face local slang from their senior stuffs, 20 among 120 face physical harassment while 50 and 45 out of 120 respectively face job threat and slap from senior staffs in the workplace. On the other hand, majority of them do not disclose in fear of job threat. They silently undergo the torture where they think that if they lose jobs, their parents and other near relatives who are dependent on them may face hardship financially. That is why, despite such rough behaviours they are continuing the jobs and contributing to the economic development of family as well as the state.

5. Inadequate Maternity and Sickness Leave

In Bangladesh, women are the most vulnerable to be affected by any sort of harms in society. For the economic development of the country, their contribution is undeniable. Most of the time, it is observed that majority of the working women in garment factories are married. When they get pregnant, they still have to continue their jobs. If they apply for seek leave for a few months, their application is rejected by the authority of garments except few. They are told that if they seek leave they have to quit the job permanently, otherwise they are not allowed to get leave. In this case, some women workers leave the jobs and after finishing the maternity period they come back and seek new jobs and that is why, sometimes, they have to look for jobs going to door to door of other garments (Chowdhury 2018, p. 26). In this circumstance, if they join the previous industries, they are paid salary less than before, their salary begins from lower level (Anam 2008). It is also reported that women when they are looking for job and are called to face interview; they have to conceal their marital status. Because garment industries' owners prefer unmarried women so that no one can apply for maternity leave (Anam 2008, p. 25). Yet, the government of Bangladesh its Labour Law 2006 guarantees all working women 16 week- maternity leave, eight weeks for prior to the birth of baby and eight weeks after delivery. In January 2011, the prime minister of Bangladesh declared that maternity leave would be increased to six months but still now its implication has not been implemented. And from which time it will be applied, still unknown. 12.50% women workers found to have complained that they had experienced humiliating and ill treatment by employers while they got pregnant and, they were denied while they applied to have sick leave during pregnancy although the Bangladesh Labor Law-2006 describes 20 days sick leave with full payment for working women (Anam 2008, p. 26). The study of (Md. Mehedi Hasan Sikdar, Md. Sujahangir Kabir Sarkar and Sumaiya Sadeka 2012) shows that 60% of the workers get 4-month maternity leave and 32.5% get 3-month but they are not paid salary with leave (Sikdar, Hasan and others 2014).

In foreign countries, working women are provided more facilities and well care than Bangladesh. In the UK, working mothers are provided 26 weeks maternity leave with paid for each child, the first six weeks 90% of full payment and 20 weeks at a fixed amount. Male workers also are provided two weeks paternity leave if they apply to take care of their new baby and to cooperate the mother. In Spain females are offered 75% of their salary as part of maternity leave, similarly, in Denmark and France women receive 90%, and Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany provide 100% up to maximum amount (Anam, p. 95).

6. Inadequate Medical Facilities

The health condition of working women also is at risk. They are affected by various types of diseases such as malnutrition, anaemia, dysentery, gastric, respiratory problem, diarrhoea, genealogical problems, tuberculosis and urine infection etc (S. Akhter, AFM Salahuddin and others 2010, p. 67). The owners of garment industries do not provide proper medical facilities except very few garments. Around more than 87% (S. Akhter, AFM Salahuddin 2010) women workers have been suffering from different sort of ailments and diseases. Among the workers who get sick, majority of them live job and go to village home to have treatment although they know that in the village, medical facilities are not better than city, despite that they go because they know that the expenditure of treatment is beyond their ability in city. In the public hospitals, getting seat is not easy most of the time due to huge number of patients. And if they want to get seat, they have to approach brokers or any other corrupt stuff who charge bribe to manage a seat quickly, otherwise they have to wait for long time. Having seen these irregularities, women workers prefer to go home living their jobs ((S. Akhter and AFM Salahuddin 2010). The study of N. Nahar and R. N. Ali (February 2010) showed that work pattern and surrounding environment severely affected workers' health condition due to restrained and confined work atmosphere in the garment factories. Their research concluded that the nature of work creates various types of health hazards among the workers such headache, malnutrition, musculoskeletal pain, eye strain, less appetite, chest pain, fainting, hepatitis (jaundice), food poisoning, asthma, fungal infection, helminthiasis, dermatitis etc (Ahmed and Raihan 2015). Another study found that many workers have been suffering from diseases such as 55% complained about musculoskeletal problem, which followed by neural problems such as headache (40%), respiratory (30%), skin problem (13%), numbness of hands and fingers (8%), while hearing and visual discomfort (5%) and (2%) respectively (Ahmed and Raihan 2015). Beside this, they suffer from many types of sexual transmitted infections, reproductive tract infections, menstrual and blood pressure problems as well (Riaduzzaman 2017). It has been reported that when some women workers get pregnant and along with this they somehow come to know that authority is reluctant to give maternity leave then they do not have any other way except abortion. And later, they adopt abortion in order to retain their jobs. Because they know that when they will leave job, they will not further be appointed on the same post. And if they want to join the workplace they will have to maintain huge procedures as the beginners have to do. As a result, they fall in poor health condition (Ahmad, and Raihan 2014). The study of Paul Majumder (1998) illustrates that the rate of miscarriage among garment workers is very high and majority of them experience abortion several times. He also found that working women face an embargo on having babies of fear of losing the job although having a baby is among the human rights, but they are deprived of it.

7. Housing Problem

Housing problem is one of the major problems of working women in RMG sector of Bangladesh. Women workers, most of them come from the rural areas of the country. Many women migrate to the cities from hundreds of miles away in order to earn a livelihood for them and their families in villages. Garment factories are the suitable job place for them since educational qualification is not amidst the requirements to have a job; only technical efficiency is enough. And after joining the workplace, within few months they achieve the technical knowhow since expert trainers have been appointed on

behalf of the factories to train up the new comers. When they find job, they have to think for housing. On behalf of the companies, accommodation is not provided. For millions of workers to manage a room for living near to the workplace is often hard. They have to rent room far away from the factory while they cannot manage around the industry. To join the job, each day huge number of them are to travel miles and, in this case, sometimes they have to interchange of transportation as well while direct communication system is unavailable.

In addition to this, since the salary of workers is insufficient, they are to face extreme hardship to pay the rent of the house. Along with the development of the standard of people's life, the salary amount of garment workers has not been increased. Each year, government increases salary of its stuffs, but garment workers are far away from this system. After long experience of workers, industries' owners increase the salary but that amount also is not sufficient. It is also reported that around 60% of the earned wages is consumed for room rent (Assignment Point 2018). House's owners increase house rent several times throughout the year. As a result, the garment workers are to face hardship to maintain and balance between wage and cost. The study of Zohir and Paul-Majumder (1996), Paul-Majumder and Begum (2000) shows that for millions of garment workers, at present housing is not adequate. Accommodation crisis for workers is very high in the industry areas. For a single worker to rent a room is not possible most of the time because of high cost of rent. That is why, they have to manage others to have a family room so that the cost is shared among all. Since for a women worker to live in a single room is not quite safe and affordable, she has to seek other companions where she can live in a familial atmosphere, but wideness of the room is very consistent. For married workers, they also have to face terrible problem. They have to bring their children to live with them. According to a study, 73.4% female workers live in a house with family whereof only 1.5% live alone (Assignment Point 2018). To escape the high cost of room, some of workers choose slums to live and the environment of that slums is neither healthy nor friendly. Water, gas and electricity supply is very poor. In a consistent place, lots of people live. Due to overcrowd, there exposes the outbreak of many sorts of diseases among them as well. The report of 2015, describes that there has been a MoU agreement between Central bank and BGMEA to finance low-cost housing facilities for garment workers which has been welcomed as a right step to address housing problems. In that agreement, it has been stated that the central bank will cover 60% and factory owners will bear 40% of the cost and along with this government land will be provided to build the quarters for workers (Housing For Garment Workers 2015) but that agreement has not come into existence yet. Another study tells that in 1998, the government passed a budget of TK 160 crore and disbursed loans amounting to TK 222.48 crore till 2006. The current size of housing fund is TK 358.97 crore. It further illustrates that total 65,436 houses have been built till now with the money of that fund where the number of beneficiaries is 327,180 (*The Daily Star News* August 01, 2016). Recently, the central bank held a meeting with officials of world Bank where they have been assured to be supported by world bank in case of low-cost housing project.

8. Insufficient Transportation of Companies

Working women terribly experience transportation crisis. Factories do not provide transportation facilities to the workers. Due to lack of proper communication, workers have to commute to job places on their feet. Some workers have to walk more than one hour because of long distance. Paul-Majumder, stated that most female workers travel to and from the workplace on foot. It has been estimated that, on an average, garment worker travels more than 5 kilometres a day on foot (Begum, Ali and others 2010). Since the duty begins from early in the morning, they have to wake up very early and cook the breakfast and lunch together so that lunch can be brought to the job place since many garment factories do not provide lunch. In this case, they have to wake up before *Fajar Azan* in order to take preparation to join the job on time. It is quietly hard for those who do overtime until 10:00 pm and finishing the duty; they return home and cook dinner and within short time they have to go for sleep again. They find very little time to sleep. Some of them sleep 5 hours and some 6 hours, not more

than that. The Executive Director of MJF-Manusher Jonno Foundation, Shaheen Anam said that accommodation and transportation problems of female garment workers have to be addressed properly (*The Daily Star*, March 22, 2018). In the morning, when workers go to their workplace, sometimes roads become blocked as a result, bus, track and other all types of vehicles slow down and create huge jam on road for around one hour until the workers enter the factories. In such circumstance, sometimes, many road accidents take place, consequently some pedestrians face death due to being hit from behind. Among the dead victims, garments workers also exist. In a study which has been conducted in the Dhaka Metropolitan area over the casualties of pedestrians, has been shown that 41%, 34% and 24% pedestrian accidents occurred while the workers made crossing manoeuvres, walked along the road side and occupied effective road space respectively (Hoque, Mahmud, and others 2007).

Due to lack of transportation facilities from companies, especially women workers have to undergo sufferings. Lack of safety of honour and life sometimes discourage them to join workplace while they do not find safe job place. On April 09, 2018 one of garment female workers, 24-year-old has been gang-rapped in a moving bus on Dhaka-Aricha high way in Dhamrai. The women, has boarded the bus around 10: 00pm to go home after work. She said when all passengers got down, they (helper, other two assistants and driver) suddenly closed the doors and all windows, and some of them tied my hands and legs along with my eyes then they started rapping me one by one by tying cloth on my mouth. And one of them was driving the bus. When I screamed and shouted aloud, several people came forward from near fuelling station and they became able to rescue me stopping the bus. After a while, police came and arrested the culprits all (*The Daily Star*, April 10, 2018). Such many incidences are always happening in case of working women of garment factories. Most of the time, garment owners' think that providing transportation to the workers costs too much which reduces profit because they have to buy buses and along with this they have to also hire drivers whom they have to pay monthly basis and other many more expenditures they have to count. That is why they try to escape transportation facilities for workers. But if they do not provide enough transportation to workers, in future the number of women workers might be decreased day by day and eventually, its impact will befall directly to the economic growth of Bangladesh which will lessen the amount of foreign currency's earnings which the government has been receiving for decades. In this term, government steps are very much needed to communicate with garment owners to manage transportation facilities for workers if the government wishes to keep growing its economic progress.

9. Unhygienic Workplace and Emergence of Various Types of Diseases

For workers, sound health is very crucial. As long as workers have healthy life and happiness in mind, the production increases. For the productive life of workers, workplace is one of the main factors. When workplace is not convenient and un-friendly to environment, remain dirty and narrow in space, many types of diseases occur.. In case of garment factories of Bangladesh, most of the factories are not environmental friendly in nature, hence it lacks hygienic and usually bellow standard (Habib 2014). The air quality is also badly affected, and the workplace is generally overcrowded (Paul-Majumder and Begum, 2000:15). A Handbook on the Bangladesh Labor Act, 2006 describes that "No work room in any establishment shall be overcrowded to an extent injurious to health of the workers employed therein". Moreover, the temperature of workplace is also very high and dusty as sewing, cutting and ironing are done on the same floor (Habib 2014). Through a study it has been found that in many factories there is scarcity of safe and pure drinking water facility. As a result, workers suffer from different types of diseases such as fever, back pain, headache, eye infection, typhoid, jaundice, weakness or anaemia, skin diseases, and sometimes there is outbreak of diarrhoea as well (Habib 2014). In the garment industries women workers have to work in a noisy environment. Mehta (2012), her study found that female workers face hearing disability due to noisy atmosphere created from machines while numbers of sewing machines are switched on, it makes surroundings noisy for laborers. In addition to this, they suffer from neural problem as well when lightening systems are fixed improperly. There are also respiratory problems due to dust and loose fibre. In this case, piercing of

fingers is one of the most usual causing accidents. It has been noticed that none of the workers has been provided thimble which can protect their fingers from occurring accident and machines also have not been properly positioned resulting in hand arm vibration which later leads to fatigue, pain, numbness and tingling of fingers and arms, and headache as well. He further said that in the quality section, there is huge stress on the eyes which leads to headache and visual discomfort. Due to working in humid condition arising from steam ironing causes respiratory problems for example: asthma and breathing difficulty and workers suffer from hearing problem as well which causes due to excessive noise (Ahmed and Rahihan, p. 49).

Table 3¹ demonstrates that pruritus is one of the diseases which the garment workers have been suffering from in majority time. The female workers have to work in such an environment which is often moist and closed that results in malaises such as pruritus, skin allergies and other types of skin related diseases which they have been experiencing after joining the workplace. It also depicts that the factory premises are unhygienic and noisy as a result majority of workers suffer from diseases like dermatitis, diarrhea disease, hearing problem, fungal infection, asthma, conjunctivitis and dysentery. Such unhealthy atmosphere is mainly liable for the following health problems which bear high factor loadings.

Health Problems Caused from Unhealthy Environment

Serial No	Variables	% of Health Problem	Factor Loading
1	Pruritus	59.0	.722
2	Dermatitis	57.0	.683
3	Hearing problem	53.5	.679
4	Fungal infection	49.0	.628
5	Skin allergies	55.0	.607
6	Diarrhea disease	66.5	.589
7	Asthma	50.5	.558
8	Cut injuries	54.5	.453
9	Conjunctivitis	52.5	.451
10	Dysentery	65.5	.390

Source: Shaheen Ahmed and Mohammad Zahir Raihan's survey, 2014. (Table-3).

So, to turn the unhygienic workplace into hygienic and to remove the emergence of various types of diseases created from unhealthy environment of factories, government should invigilate over the case to keep growing the economic revolution of Bangladesh since garment industry is the second highest foreign currency earner amid other sectors.

Findings

There are around 6,500 garment and textile industries in Bangladesh where six million workers are involved and 85% of them are women. This garment sector is the second most significant remittance earner of Bangladesh. In the last January 2018, this sector has brought home \$3.41 billion which is the highest in the last five months. In 2016, this sector earned 2508 crore dollars (i.e. \$25.08 Billions). Even then, the workers are not well treated by the companies. The workers, in general, experience numerous problems in the country. For example, in May 30, 2018 hundreds of workers had to gather at Savar, Dhaka with a demand of paying salary before Eid-ul Fitr (celebration of Eid after month long fasting of *Ramadan*, Hijri 9th month). Companies do not follow proper payment schedule. Women workers face frequent sexual harassment. It is called one of major problems for them. According to one study in 2015, 84% women and girls in 7 cities of Bangladesh experience derogatory comments and sexually abusive language. Another study illustrates that among 120, 66 women face local slang

¹ Ibid. 51.

(abusive language) from senior staffs, 20 among 120 face physical harassment while 50 and 45 out of 120 respectively face job threat and at times slapping. Maternity leave still is not abundant for women in factories. Women seeking for job have to conceal their marital status because companies prefer unmarried girls over women so that none may apply for maternity leave. Labour Law 2006 of Bangladesh guarantees all working women 16 week-maternity leave, 8 weeks pre-delivery and 8 weeks for post-delivery care of the new-born. In January 2011, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh (Shaikh Hasina) declared six months maternity leave for women, but its implementation is yet to see the light of the day. Besides, the authority should also consider granting leave for paternity as well, so that the father may stay besides mother to help her manage household chores. 12.50% women workers complained of humiliation while applying for sick leave. Yet, Bangladesh Labour Law-2006 says 20 days sick leave with full payment shall be applied. About 87% working women suffer from some kind of diseases. Medical facilities are not sufficient in factories. Some women prefer abortion over having babies due to the fear of losing jobs. The companies mostly do not provide accommodation for its female workers. It is extremely difficult to find suitable places of stay for working ladies. Even they manage one, after settling higher room rental, a meagre amount of money is left in their hands to survive. There has been an MoU between Bangladesh Central Bank and BGMEA (Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association) to finance low-cost housing facilities for them where 60% of cost will be covered by Central Bank and 40% by the owners but the agreement never saw the light of the day. Transportation services were also not sufficient. Many working women have to commute to their workplace on foot every day, where on an average they have to walk (or say 'compulsory exercise') for more than Five kilometres a day. They could hardly enjoy sufficient time for sleep which adversely affect their health and mind.

Conclusion

Engaging or empowering a large population of women in workplace indeed, is a sign of progress and prosperity for a developing yet rising country like Bangladesh. Women mark their active and dynamic presence in every sector of the country. Their contribution and participation are unparalleled. It must be recognized by the ruling classes and the top brass of the companies. Their contributions should be rewarded financially and emotionally. They should be given sufficient pay compared with their male counterparts. Ensuring proper security and friendly environment should be the top priorities of the companies. A peaceful friendly and secure environment should be guaranteed. If they receive financial and emotional rewards from the companies, they would give their best for the development of the factories, which would ultimately keep the wheel of the progress for the country move steadily to the right direction.

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