

The Rights of Women Employees under Bangladesh Labor Act: The Case of Ready-Made Garment Industry in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to investigate the reality of practices of Bangladesh Labor Act (BLA) in protecting the rights of women employees in the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry in Bangladesh. Moreover, this study finds the barriers in promoting gender equality in the workplace particularly in the sector under study.

Methodology: This study follows interpretative paradigm, qualitative in nature and cross-sectional in data collection. Using convenient sampling technique 20 women employees from different RMG factories are interviewed in Mirpur, Dhaka. Through the content analysis of the data obtained from the interviews, the reality and accuracy of constructs, sub-variables, and items are examined.

Findings: The findings of the study depicted that most of women workers have limited educational qualification and they also have the limitations in the knowledge regarding different provisions of BLA. All provisions specially related to women rights in the working place are not fully applied in RMG sectors. Gender discrimination is very common here in case of supervision, wages, and overtime facilities. Maternity leave, which is not enforced according to the law, was one of the major violations of rights mentioned by all of the women workers interviewed.

Practical Implications: The practical implication of this study is to make awareness among the women employees regarding their rights according to the BLA and fill up their discrepancies by the stakeholders (i.e. management, owner, government agents). This study fills the gap in the literature regarding the reality of gender inequality practices in the working place particularly in the RMG sector in Bangladesh.

Originality: The researchers focus on the provisions of BLA, 2006 and their practices in women employees' rights protection in Bangladesh in workplace particularly in the context of RMG industry in Bangladesh along with the barriers hindering the practicing of such provisions which are not earlier studied so far.

Limitations: The implicit assumption that the study's conclusions would not be applicable to all industries because data were collected solely from small RMG industrial zone. In this study only women employees were included its sample. Moreover, quantitative or mixed-methods is absent in this study.

1. Introduction

Bangladesh, as a developing country, has been unable to provide the amenities necessary for women's advancement, such as education and employment, but with the establishment of RMG

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factories, many women have been able to put their skills and abilities to use for the betterment of their families, societies, and countries (Sharma, 2020). Women are finding employment in Bangladesh mostly in the RMG and associated sector, tea gardens, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), health care services, food processing industry, export processing zone, services sectors, commercial enterprise, and informal sector.

The RMG has been a forerunner in the growth of Bangladesh's industrial sector (Chowdhury, 2010). The RMG Sector was a sector that not only contributed but also assisted in the nation's economic expansion. RMG exports grew from 0.54 percent of GDP in FY 1985 to 16.94 percent in FY 2020, according to Bangladesh's Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), while total exports to GDP increased from 6% to 20% (BGMEA, 2020). Bangladesh's RMG sector has created a surprising 4.4 million people were employed, with women accounting for almost 85 percent of the workforce (Matsuura, 2020). In reality, employment in the RMG industry has benefited women from the most disadvantaged sectors of society the most, as they have gained the ability to earn and have a stronger voice at home (Rahman, 2013).

According to Majumder and Khatun (1997), approximately 30% of women are the primary breadwinners in their households, with the rest serving as secondary breadwinners. These women workers in the RMG sector are the most vulnerable to the sector's weak legal provisions and compliance enforcement due to a lack of trade unions, poor working conditions, a low-skill, low-wage segment of production, limited child care facilities, inadequate health services, informal recruiting and irregular payments, job insecurity and sudden termination, wage discrimination, low level of education, long working hours, and overtime without reimbursement (Ahmed, 2004). Gender discrimination is the main reasons for the over-representation of women in insecure, low-wage jobs (Inclusive Labor Markets, Labor Relations and Working Conditions Branch, 2017). At the same time, senior decision-making positions remain male-dominated, even in those sectors where women are over-represented. Under the BLA, 2006, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) is accountable in principle for providing enough support to Bangladesh's RMG industry (IFC, 2011). Women's rights in Bangladesh's RMG industry are covered by the BLA, 2006 Act.

However, previous research has shown that the majority of this legislation has not been implemented in practice due to a lack of proper government and law enforcement supervision (Kabeer, 2018). At the best of the knowledge of the researchers, there is the lack of well documentation in the literature of investigating the reality of practices of the provisions of BLA, 2006 to protect women right in workplace particularly in the field under study. Moreover, there is no consensus in revealing the barriers hindrances in promoting gender equality by using the provisions of BLA, 2006 in RMG sector in order to empowering women so far. Therefore, in this study, the researchers focus on the provisions of BLA, 2006 and their practices in women employees' rights protection in Bangladesh in workplace particularly in the context of RMG industry in Bangladesh along with the barriers hindering the practicing of such provisions. Hence, the following questions will give insight to fulfill the research gap identified in this study.

1. What are the policies, provisions and legislative mechanisms of BLA relating to protection of women employees' right in the workplace in RMG sector in Bangladesh?
2. What are the realities relating to the practices of BLA in protecting the rights of women employees in the RMG industry in Bangladesh?

3. What are the barriers in promoting gender equality in the workplace particularly in the sector under study?

2. Research Objectives

The research problems, gaps and questions of this study guiding to fulfill the following research objectives:

- I. To go through the policies, provisions and legislative mechanisms of BLA relating to protection of women employees' right in the workplace in RMG sector in Bangladesh.
- II. To investigate the realities relating to the practices of BLA in protecting the rights of women employees in the RMG industry in Bangladesh.
- III. To reveal the barriers in promoting gender equality in the workplace particularly in the sector under study.

3. Methodology

The methodology used in the study influences the research's reliability. It should enable the researcher to gather valid and reliable data in order to analyze and draw conclusions based on evidence (Tanveer et al., 2008). Primary sources include journals, periodicals, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) annual reports, BLA, 2006, relevant books, internet articles, government and international organization reports, various websites, and various official and unofficial sources, while secondary sources include journals, periodicals, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) annual reports, BLA, 2006, relevant books, internet articles, government and international organization reports, various websites, and various official and unofficial sources.

3.1 Research Design

Specific research questions developed from theoretical considerations guide the design and data gathering of the study. However, the approach is typically inductive, when using a qualitative research strategy in a cross-sectional design (Bryman and Bell, 2007:63). In qualitative research, a small number of respondents are prompted to provide a large amount of data. A huge amount of information is acquired and a lot of insight is gained via qualitative research, but it won't be statistically reliable because there are just a few people who participate (Darlington & Scott, 2002). The research questions of this study required an in-depth investigation of the reality of practices of the provisions of BLA to protect women in the workplace in RMG sector along with the barriers hindering to practice such provisions within a practical situation. The qualitative technique seemed more intimately connected to the investigate reality of the respondents' experiences, as the research represented a preference for naturally occurring data in the form of observation and unstructured interviews through information conveyed by women employees in the sector.

3.2 Research Strategy

In research strategy, a case study approach is used. In management research, case study research is becoming more widely accepted as a scientific methodology (Gummeson, 2000). The purpose of a case study is to answer questions like "how" and "why" (Yin, 1994). The researchers obtained open-ended, unstructured data with the primary goal of identifying themes from the data to inform the

first phase's findings (Bryman and Bell, 2007). The data for the case study approach was collected using a variety of methods, including participant observation, interviewing, and other data collection methods (Bryman, 1989). Accordingly, case study strategy is employed in this research to investigate a contemporary practice of the provisions of BLA to protect women employees in the workplace in RMG sector in Bangladesh.

3.3 Sampling Technique and Design

Convenience sampling was employed in this research. In both qualitative and quantitative research, the process of convenience sampling is valid (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Personal contacts-based convenience sampling was applied (White, Lansky, Goel, Wilson, Hladik, Hakim & Frost, 2012). In qualitative research, there are no computations or power analyses that can be performed to determine the minimum number and types of sampling units needed a priori (Fugard & Potts, 2015). Sample size adequacy in qualitative study is relative. For certain kinds of homogeneous or essential case sampling, a sample size of 10 might be considered sufficient (Sandelowski, 1995). According to Van Kaam (1959), the sample size 10 to 50 is sufficient to discern its necessary and constituents in a qualitative research. In the existing research, 20 women employees were selected to be interviewed based on personal connections. This study sample size is sufficient to ensure credibility as the individual participant's insights are recognized effectively (Agarwal & Lenka, 2016; Bertaux & Crable, 2007; Montague, 2017; Yin, 2009).

3.4 Data Collection and Preparation

In-depth face-to-face individual interview sessions were conducted with the women employee in the RMG industry of Bangladesh. The whole study was developed during the time period of 6 months including March to July 2021. First, the researchers contacted using cell phone with the women employee of the respective sector. Selected respondents had met the required criteria for reliability and validity. Finally, the insights of participants were attained using interacting interviews of 20 women employees that as the primary source of data. At the starting point, the researchers tried to convince respondents for their consent in keeping voice records of information using mobile device. There was clear evidence from the interview observations that the experiences and problems of them are almost same that resulted in impregnation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

After collection of data, the researchers have translated the verbatim of mobile recorders for coding, sorting, classifying and analyzing the raw data obtained from direct interviews. Because of limited sample size, content analysis approach was applied (Lune & Berg, 2017) to find out the connectivity between data and theoretical views of this field (Siltaoja, 2006). It focuses on exploring practical life facts in accordance with particular environmental surroundings (Patton, 2002). It is helpful to scrutinize the transcripts along with evaluate constructs, variables and the relationship between major issues and also reveal most relevant key words of the whole transcriptions. Subsequently, identical characteristics of those variables from previous studies were balanced with obtained variables. Cross-case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989) was performed to express similarities and differences in the experiences of respondents so that information can be combined in accordance with similar patterns of interests.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Ready Made Garments Industry in Bangladesh

The RMG industry of Bangladesh started its journey in the sixties. However, in the late seventies, the industry began to develop as an export-oriented sector. At present it is the largest export oriented industry in Bangladesh (Chowdury, et al., 2016). The garment industry is better known as Readymade Garments. The phenomenon of large-scale commercial production of garments in well-organized factories is relatively new in Bangladesh. The expansion of the RMG industry has brought significant changes in the society of Bangladesh. Directly about 4.4 million and indirectly, 7.5 million people are employed in this sector (Anner, 2020). According to Mapped in Bangladesh (2020), out of 4621 export-oriented garment factories, 1,006 are members of BGMEA. BKMEA has 512 member factories. Besides, there are 584 factories, which are not members of both the organizations (Chowdhury, F. S. 2020). With few exceptions, almost all non-member factories are supposed to work through sub-contracting. On the other hand, member factories also work in sub-contracting. However, no one has any exact information about the number.

4.2 Women in Workplace

Women employment in Bangladesh has lagged behind that of men due to both demand and supply-side restrictions. Women labor market involvement is influenced by a variety of socioeconomic characteristics, such as household income, age, marital status, education, household dependence ratio, and so on (Raihan & Bidisha, 2018). Women employment, on the other hand, can be affected by factors such as business size, type, technology utilized, location, and so on from a demand-side viewpoint (i.e. employers' desire for women labor) (Pimkina, et. al., 2020). There are also certain industry-specific challenges that might stymie women's job growth in some industries (Raihan & Bidisha, 2018). The participation of women in the RMG sector of the country is decreasing and the participation of men is increasing. However, the overall rate of employment in the RMG sector is not happening. About 4.4 millions workers now work in the RMG sector. Of these, 24 lakh 97 thousand are women and 18 lakh 22 thousand are male. 5 years ago, a total of 40 lakh 1 thousand workers were working in the garment sector (Asian Center for Development/ACD, 2021). According to ACD, the number of women was 25 lakh 91 thousand. And there were 14 lakh 10 thousand men. 2 lakh 19 thousand workers have been added in the garment sector in 5 years. They also added, the number of workers in the garment sector has increased at an average rate of 1.8 percent every year. At this time, the growth of male inclusion in the garment sector was 4 percent. On the other hand, the number of women workers has decreased at the rate of 0.6 percent every year (Better Work, 2021).

4.3 Provisions of ILO and Women Rights

The International Labor Organization (ILO) has a legal obligation to promote gender equality in the workplace, which is reflected in relevant international labor standards. Conventions 100 and 111 are also among the eight fundamental Conventions, and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Concepts and Rights at Work encompasses the principles and rights entrenched in those Conventions (ILO GEDI report, 2016). The International Labor Conference, the ILO's top decision-making body, has approved relevant Resolutions that underline the organization's gender equality mandate. The

Governing Body's March 2005 Decision on Gender Mainstreaming in Technical Cooperation enforces gender equality in all elements of the ILO's technical cooperation (ILO GEDI report, 2016). The ILO's gender equality mandate is also put in the perspective of several other international conventions promoting gender equality (ILO GEDI report, 2016).

Gender equality will be legitimized into all ILO programs, including Decent Work Country Programs and national poverty reduction policies and strategies, as part of the overall policy. Through the participation of its gender specialists and gender focal points, the ILO assists participants in this process (ILO, 2007). Gender mainstreaming is a two-pronged strategy used by the ILO, and it is supported by research that analyzes the specific and frequently divergent demands and interests of men and women in the workplace. Where appropriate, gender-specific initiatives can be included in the mainstreaming procedure (ILO, 2013). The organization has produced a unique, overarching ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality, which tries to integrate the ILO's gender equality policy from 1999. In accordance with the June 2009 Resolution establishing Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work, the Action Plan also promotes effective and gender responsive delivery of the Code of Good practice (New Age Business, 2020).

4.4 Bangladesh Labor Act and Women Rights

Considering some important parts or provisions of the existing labor law, such as role, definition, employment and conditions of employment (such as rest and health protection), safety and security in the workplace, etc., it can be seen that gender-based employment is towards women workers. Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Prevention and Remedy of Sexual Harassment - There is no provision in the Labor Act to mention all these issues (The daily Star, 2021).

The term "women worker" has been used in the Labor Act [such as sections 2 (34), 45, 48, 48, 48, 49, 50, 59, 69, 6, 109, 332, 345, etc.]; which we think is an insult to women. Although the word "woman" is used in the constitution or various (above) policies, the use of the word "woman" in labor law is undesirable. Section 332 of the Act states, "If a woman is employed in any work of an organization, no matter what rank she may be in, no one else in that organization may engage in any conduct which may be deemed obscene or indecent, or which demeans the woman. It is against respect." Surprisingly, neither the law nor the subsequent labor regulations contained any definition or element of "obscene or indecent" behavior or "decency" or "respect." As a result, the provision did not bring any benefit. Another fundamental issue is that labor law is primarily for workers or employers, as defined in sections 2 (65) and 2 (49) of the law. So it is not clear what is meant by "any woman" in section 332 - is she a women supervisor? Women manager? No-what owner, who is a woman? Sadly, no women supervisor or manager is protected under labor law (BLA, 2006).

Because he is not a worker under section 2 (65); in this situation, it is necessary to reform and expand the 332 section and coordinate with other sections. The main message of Section 345 of the Labor Act is that equal pay for equal work shall be fixed for all men, women and persons with disabilities; In this case no discrimination can be made. The employment of women workers in certain hazardous jobs is prohibited (see sections 39, 40, 42, 69 and 7). There is provision for separate washing facilities for male and women workers (Section 91). However, the existing law requires separate and adequate laundry facilities (washrooms) and toilets for transgender people. In addition, the provision of section 109 is that no women worker can be employed between 10 pm and 6 am without her permission. If work is required subject to permission within that period, the

concerned owner has to provide proper security and safe vehicle when the work is completed in the medium term (BLA, 2006).

The maternity leave and other benefits and protections, including wages for maternity benefits [Sections 2 (34) and 45 to 49 and 50, respectively) are related to the reproductive health of women workers and the health and protection of the child on earth (BLA, 2006). However, in this case, as there is no connection and coordination in the provisions of sections 2 (34) and 47, women workers are not getting other benefits even if they get leave with wages. In this case special health allowance / insurance (such as maternity insurance), hospital expenses allowance and nutrition allowance needs to be added to the law considering the health aspects, risks and needs of the concerned women workers (BLA, 2006).

4.5 Provisions of BLA relating to Women Employees and Discrepancy

(a) The period of maternity leave or benefit is 18 weeks. This is six months (28 weeks) for women employees of the Republic. This situation is contrary to the provisions of Articles 26 and 27 of the Constitution. In this case, the state will have to take the initiative to coordinate with the necessary subsidies for the private sector. At the same time to ensure the continuity of the job.

(b) If a woman worker has an abortion before she goes on maternity leave, she will not get the applicable maternity benefits, leave and other benefits, section (2) (34) (47). This amendment was introduced in 2016, which has created complications. In this case, the health worker concerned will have to take leave due to health reasons, as abortion may cause more health complications. (Section 115), Disease leave (Section 116), Annual leave (Section 116) and Festival leave (Section 116) etc. are deducted or adjusted, which is basically illegal. The existing health leave under Section 47 must be separate from other leave and must be self-paid. But it is being misused on the pretext of ambiguity of law and the ignorance of the workers concerned.

(c) No owner of any organization may do any work with a women worker for eight weeks before childbirth and eight weeks after childbirth. No women worker is allowed to work for eight weeks after delivery. But the prohibition on women workers not working eight weeks before the probable date of childbirth does not apply to tea garden workers (Article 45). This is discriminatory provision.

(d) Workers working in tea gardens are exempt from the legal entitlements (compensation or gratuity) due to termination of employment under the Labor Act. This amendment has been brought in 2017. Although both men and women are affected by this, its adverse effect on the concerned women workers is greater.

(e) The provision of Section 26 of the Labor Act is that if a worker resigns before completing five years of service in an organization, there is no employment benefit (compensation or gratuity). This provision is discriminatory (in the light of Articles 26 and 27 of the Constitution). Although both men and women are affected, the impact is greater on the women workers concerned. According to various sources, 25 to 35 percent of the workers in our garment industry are below the age of five years. Among them women workers are more. It needs to be done in one year by amending this rule of section 26.

5. Reality in Practices of Provisions of BLA Relating to Women in the RMG Industry

Women in our country have relatively limited educational, technical, and vocational training, as well as career chances (ICFTU, 2006). Technology, on the other hand, appears to play an influence in women's employment. Machines that use automated processes and need a lot of physical strength require operators who are more skilled and stronger (World Bank, 2005). However, in Bangladeshi society, there may be a bias toward hiring men, who are thought to be more technologically proficient. Women employees are subjected to a wide range of exploitation in the RMG clothing sector. They claim that worker discrimination, harassment, and abuse were more common in Bangladesh than elsewhere. Verbal abuse, penalties for mistakes, and failure to meet output targets were among the most common forms of harassment, all of which were accompanied by a lack of defined disciplinary policies or supervisory training (Berik et al. 2007).

Women face prejudice in a range of fields due to a lack of enforcement of legal instruments designed to combat gender discrimination. Despite having the same degree and experience, women professionals earn much less than their male counterparts, the respondents stated that,

"When it comes to higher-paying white-collar and management occupations, women experience prejudice. Males are more likely to work at higher levels as supervisors, finishing and machine operators, and production managers, whereas women are confined to lower-paying positions such as helpers and operatives. This implies that wage imbalances between men and women in the clothing business are more widespread than elsewhere."

(Respondents 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14,16, 17, 19, 20)

The BLA, 2006 states, "One or more appropriate rooms shall be provided and maintained for the use of their children under the age of six years in every establishment where 40 or more women workers are usually employed." When it concerns to the practices of this section in the sector under examination, the respondents opined that,

"In the premises of the factory, we have insufficient childcare facilities. They must apply for the childcare center, and the authority will select those who require it the most. They claimed that the owner's confirmation was not absolute. Because there are no safe places for parents to keep their children while they are away at work, most RMG workers' children are sent to villages after they have finished breastfeeding."

(Respondents 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 16, 17, 19, 20)

The revised labor law of 2006 decreased RMG workers' daily working hours to 8 hours per day from 9 hours per day before for both male and women workers. It specifies that an adult worker must work 8 hours per day, but an adult worker may work 10 hours per day if the employer agrees to pay the worker double her or his regular income in overtime. About the practices of this section in the sector, the interviewees stated that,

"According to them, workers in garment factories are compelled to work 14 to 16 hours each day, in violation of labor legislation, which stipulates a maximum of 10 hours per working day Women employees are typically unwilling to work after 6 p.m."

since they have home responsibilities. Male employees who live with their families are prepared to work overtime because it is their sole way of supplementing their income. The majority of them informed us that their factory is unable to give overtime pay and benefits to their employees.”

(Respondents 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19)

Under BLA 2006, the maternity benefit provision was extended to 16 weeks and the qualifying service duration was reduced to six months, even though this benefit is only guaranteed up to the birth of two living infants. Fewer women take advantage of their legal right to take complete maternity leave. The respondents gave their opinion that,

“Workers stated that maternity leave was not available in their workplaces. If a worker is pregnant, she will leave her job to have the baby, and when she is ready to return, she will look for a new job. According to the survey respondents, they only obtain paid sick leave if they can show a medical certificate. Despite the fact that all of the study's clothing manufacturers give maternity leave, none of the industries offer paid maternity leave to their employees.

Those industries that would provide paid leave simply pay their employees normal salary and a 20,000 taka delivery charge. Maternity leave, which is not enforced according to the law, was one of the major violations of rights mentioned by all of the women employees interviewed. They also said that some employees did not want to take any risks and chose to settle in the hamlet before becoming pregnant, and that supervisors inadvertently force workers to quit if they became pregnant.”

(Respondents 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20)

Gender-based violence (GBV) is, nevertheless, believed to be intertwined with the factory's normal working environment. In certain situations, sexual harassment at the workplace level has become normalized (i.e., workers are unable to tell whether or not it is harassment). The women employees of this study mentioned that,

“Many workers have claimed in their interviews that verbal abuse including swear words in the case of a worker's fault is as “natural” as the work itself, and that women workers are extremely susceptible to such harassment.”

(Respondents 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20)

In RMG sectors, for example, the majority workforce have women and they play crucial role in organizing, however men often dominate the leadership of the unions to which they belong, and they may be unlikely to accept women's particular requirements into consideration when bargaining on their behalf (Alam, 2017). The respondents stated that,

“According to our study, they are not interested in joining a trade union, but they do point out that many women employees are in positions of leadership in various trade unions in various industries.”

(Respondents 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19, 20)

Bangladesh Labor Code, 2006, Section- 59 spells out that there should be adequate number of specific type of latrines and urinals for the workers at the workplace. There should be separate latrines and urinals for male and women, as well as, there should be proper arrangements for keeping them in hygienic condition. During the in-depth interview the respondents mentioned that,

“They claimed that the workplace's latrines and urinals were sufficient, and that cleaned it on a regular basis. Separate washrooms for male and women employees, on the other hand, are thought to be sufficient.”

(Respondents 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19, 20)

Taking into consideration the above claims and quotations from participants of the field study, it can identify a number of discrepancies between provisions stated in BLA and the real practices in the field. The table 1 shows the frequency of the views mentioned by the participants during the field study.

Table 1. Key items opined by the respondents relating to the theory and practices of BLA related with women employees

| Items | Participants | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| Women professionals earn much less than their male counterparts. | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Insufficient childcare facilities. | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | | | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| Excessive work time but there is no overtime allowance | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | | | | √ | √ | | | √ | | √ | √ | √ | |
| Inadequate maternity leave and benefits in workplace | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Women are sexual and psychological harassment in their workplace | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Women in leadership position | | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | | √ | √ |
| Separate latrines and urinals for women | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | | √ | √ |

Source: Authors Developed

6. Discussion on Results

This study is conducted to examine the application of labor laws for protecting women rights of RMG in Bangladesh. In this study, the researchers focused both national and international legal aspects related to the workers in RMG sectors. The study results show seven essentials factors that identify from the interview of women workers in different industries. The factors are wages discrimination, childcare, working time and overtime payment, maternity leave and benefits, sexual and psychological harassment, leadership position and finally separate latrines and urinals for women. This study shows that women earn lower wages than men as well as they didn't get overtime payment as per laws include in Bangladesh Labor Act, 2006. According to BLA 2006, any organization has 40 or more women worker, it must have childcare or day care centre but this study

shows that it is insufficient for their employees. In the case of maternity leave, workers don't get proper leave and benefits from their industries. Misbehavior of supervisors and co-workers, inadequate separate latrines and urinals for women are significant issues in RMG industries that are shown in this study. This implies that if these factors are changed or addressed properly, the general legal and other environment of readymade garment industries will change and improve as well.

7. Barriers to Implement labor act in RMG Sector of Bangladesh

This study investigated into the working conditions of women in general, as well as the application of Bangladesh Labor Act of 2006. In some RMG factories, the application of BLA, 2006 reveals a significant lack of legal compliance in the workplace. The main concerns are welfare, health and hygiene, as well as safety and security. In some of the factories, welfare provisions are largely ignored. The major barriers of applying laws are as follows:

- The majorities of women employees in Bangladesh's RMG industry come from rural regions, belong to the lower social classes, are financially insecure, and have a limited educational background. For these reasons, they don't have any detailed idea about different provisions of laws. They learn about laws through working in industries and the basic that they want.
- In some factories women are interested to take lead. In the rest, women's reluctance to take responsibility is an obstacle to their rights.
- In some industries, owners are negligent, careless, lack of authority control and fund shortages.
- Lack of government inspection for implementing laws and lack of continuous improvement of laws that suits to the employees in RMG industries.
- It is also important to mention that there are no safety or security features. Working hours leave, and vacation provisions are judged to be in conformity with factory regulations to a greater or lesser extent.

8. Implications and Conclusion

The RMG industry has a massive economic influence in our country. However, employees are so deprived and dissatisfied with their most basic demands that they are unable to consider other aspects or higher-level requirements. The data collected shows the perspectives of women employees working in RMG industry in the Dhaka (Mirpur) area. Using the provisions of the BLA for the promotion of gender equality in Bangladesh's RMG sector, the researchers attempted to examine the case of the provisions of the BLA related to the rights of women employees and identify the obstacles in promoting gender equality by using the provisions of the BLA. It is evident from the results that they are required to work more than eight hours per day but are not compensated over time at double the rate of their wage as required by law. The majority of women employees do not have access to paid sick time and maternity leave as required by law. Other important aspects for women employees include service and employment conditions, health and hygiene, safety and penalties and sexual harassment. Safety is usually an important concern and most garment manufacturers are ensuring worker safety via regular maintenance, which should be sustained indefinitely for the sake of the country's readymade garment sector. If appropriate actions are adopted, not only will impediments be removed, but also numerous appealing facilities will be

able to attract a large number of women. This research assists the government, policymakers, and other relevant authorities in amending BLA 2006 and paying more attention to women's rights in the workplace. Furthermore, extensive case studies, theoretical studies, and quantitative research will be required to justify the outcome and develop the argument.

9. Limitations and Future Research Agenda

Finally, certain restrictions are discussed in this study. The implicit assumption that the study's conclusions would not be applicable to all industries is a significant weakness of this study. This study was unable to gather data solely from each industrial zone using several data collecting methods due to time constraints and restrictions imposed by the RMG authorities. As a result, the study's conclusions cannot be applied to the whole population. In this study only women employees were included in its sample. However, by utilizing managers, owners and government representative as sample responders obtain more precise and valid data that would depict the true situation of women's work life in Bangladesh's RMG sector. This might lead to more accurate results regarding how legal and other compliances are implemented in Bangladesh's RMG sector.

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