

COMPLIANCE ISSUES AND FEMALE WORKERS: A STUDY ON BANGLADESH READY-MADE GARMENTS INDUSTRY.

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ABSTRACT

Bangladesh is a country where social oppression and economic inequality creates unfavorable situation for rural women who are actually belonging to extremely poor income group and most of these unskilled and less educated women are the major source of entry level labor forces in garments sector. As these women are vulnerable so they can easily be exploited within and outside of the job place. In this country, Ready Made Garments (RMG) sector is not only in the driving seat of economy but also in the leading position of women employment by creating employment for 2.8 million female workers in different garments factories. Earlier studies of garments workers revealed that they were physically and verbally abused by their supervisors, managers and male coworkers. Gender discrimination, unequal pay and working in unhygienic environment were the common phenomenon in earlier day's garments factories. However, the situation has been gradually improving by the close monitoring of buyers, Bangladesh Garments Manufacturing and Export Processing Associations (BGMEA) and also the government. Nowadays, the improvement of garments working conditions, zero tolerance on sexual harassments, and no gender discrimination has been observed in almost all of the enlisted garments factories of BGMEA because they maintain all compliance issues given by the buyers group of USA and Europe namely Accord and Alliances. This study is tried to find out what are the things generally included in the compliance check list and whether those variables have any significant correlation with the female employees' comfortable working environment. Compliances includes a number of list notably prohibition of force labor, prohibition of sexual harassment, timely payment of standard salary, hygienic working environment, building and fire safety, and freedom of associations which ultimately creates a congenial environment for female workers in garment factories. Research demonstrates that female employees' comfortable working environment vastly depends on hygienic working environment, timely payment of standard salary and building and fire safety of garments factories.

Key Words: Gender Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Compliances, Accord and Alliances.

1. Introduction:

RMG sector prospect depends on not only cheap labor and government's liberal policy but also depends on compliance with code of conduct. Compliance means to comply with something or yield to the wishes of another. Compliance ensures all labor rights and facilities according to the buyer code of conduct. The aim of compliance is to maintain strictly the labor law (Boral 2010).

In collaboration with the major trade unions, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) has formulated its own code of conduct and compliance unit that look after labor conditions in its members' factories (Rahman & Hossain, 2010). After twelve years discussion in different levels, Bangladeshi government passed a new labor code in 2006 that was applicable to all workers and the new sections include written contracts and identity cards, timely payment of wages, revised minimum wages, paid maternity leave and explicit laws against sexual harassment.

Rahman & Hossain noted that in 2009, Mr. Amin who was the Coordinator of the Bangladesh Garment Workers Unity Council (BGWUC) told that probably Bangladeshi garments workers were the most deprived labor force in the world as they were paid between US\$14 and US\$16 per month as salary. He also told that international standards were maintained only in the few factories and most of the factories did not implement health and safety measures.

Consumers, social workers, welfare organizations and brand name international buyers were more concern about the social dimensions of the RMG industry (Haider 2007). International buyers are very specific about compliance and many of them demand compliance with their "code of conduct" before placing any garment import order. Therefore, RMG industry needs to improve the factory working environment and various social issues such as informal recruitment, low literacy level, wage discrimination, irregular payment and short contracts of service in order to sustain in the industry.

Four factors determine the buyers' sourcing decisions those are price, quality, how long it takes to get produce to the marketplace and social compliance and compliance with labor standards. Quality is not only the parameters that are important towards acceptance of the product as per the intended end use but also the working environment, in which the garments are to be produced, is equally important so that sweatshop concept is totally taken care of and the code of conduct must be stretched towards achieving the objectives of social compliance issues, in order to export readymade garments (Das 2008).

In many cases, the buyers cannot be responsible for demanding compliance with the issues such as ensuring of safe working

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condition and other benefits to them as well as payment of adequate salaries to workers. The businesses find it hard to ignore the lawmakers, environmental and different civic groups demand to ensure compliance with these standards (Jagdish Bhagwati, 1995). However, in the context of meeting standards some of the buyers are noted to be making their exclusive demand on RMG exporters from Bangladesh.

It couldn't be denied that RMG producers from Bangladesh had been rather late in waking up to compliance issues on which the sustainability depend of their export activities. However, it was also not wholly true that they were quite stranger to the issue of awareness and there were many RMG units which had taken complete measures recognizing that this was crucial for the secured growth of their exports (Marsha Dickson, 2006). Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) was taking the initiative in identifying such non-compliant units and warn them as well as extend all sorts of assistance to them in meeting the compliance requirements so that all RMG units would be fully compliance at the earliest for the long term security of the sector as a whole though it seemed authoritative actions.

The RMG industries owner should welcome the fact that any progress made in the areas of financial and other benefits of workers, plus their working conditions, would only secure them against the breakout of the kind of troubles that were to all appearances about to deal fatal blows to this sector in the closing months of 2006. After that RMG industries have restarted normal functioning to a great degree with workers' dissatisfaction was bubbling which does not predict well for the industry in any way (Stephen S. Golub, 2007).

In 2010, Bangladesh Ministry of Commerce and the German Federal Ministry, stated a joint project named PROGRESS which full attention had to developed the area of social compliance and assisting the government in the following areas: implementation of the new labor law, media campaigns, training and retraining measures for compliance inspectors, advisors, and the introduction of a new monitoring and evaluation system. According to Hameeda Hossain, Convener of the Shromik Nirapotta Forum, newspaper reports and statements by business leaders suggested that they may now be willing to recognize genuine labor problems which had reflected by the fact that BGMEA and BKMEA were reported to have conceded the need to revise pay scales, issue employment letters, non-enforcement of overtime. The question of safety conditions had also risen (Hossain, Hameeda. 2007).

In the garment sector, exploitation of female employees has started from recruitment process by not giving the appointment letter (Absar, 2002). Women have considered differently in case of wages and promotions. The working condition of the factory was not congenial because of overcrowded workforce performing different activities in the same floor (Paul-Majumder and Begum, 2000).

Generally, some people do job for survival while others do job to increase the living standard. Female workers are working in the garments sector for different push and pull reasons (Kibria, 1998). Financial hardship, different types of household crises such as losing in the business, unemployment, illness or death of the chief source of the family income are considered as push factors while pull factors are related with the attractive forces which influence women to enhance their standard of living (Kibria, 1998).

Majority workers of the garments factories are women who have very little or no formal education or no vocational training for the garment industry. For this, they start their career as a helper and after successful completion of three to six months they became machine operators. In this way, young girls are incorporated in the garments factories and the owners of the garments factories are also very interested about the young female workers because of their abundant supply at a lower cost. These young women workers are working very hard but they are not well paid as because their positions labeled as helpers. In November 2010, the widespread labor unrest bounded the decision makers to increase the minimum wages up to Tk 3,000 (\$43) which 80 percent more than the previous salary. The salary was jumped again after Rana Plaza tragedy on 24 April, 2013 and the minimum wage was rose to Tk 5,300 (\$68) per month. It has been observed that the worker below grade 7 is a worker on probation and is not yet a former member of the main workforce. Most of the female workers work as trainees and then as helpers so they work hard and work more than the older employees but they are paid very less which means majority of the workers mainly female workers are low paid workers. The research also demonstrated that men represent 15 percent of the labor force in garments industry and they have better job as because most of them work as general managers, production managers, line managers and supervisors (Shanzida 2015).

Shanzida noted that though workers are supposed to work eight hours a day but the reality is quite different since workers are bound to work extra hours in order to the meet production targets and normally eighty percent of the women worker leave the factory between 8pm and 10pm though the start work at 8am. In no circumstances workers are not bound to work more than 10 hours according to Bangladesh labor laws and most noticeable thing is that in most of the cases they are not avail the overtime payment because this payment has been balanced by payment cutting in the name of indiscipline, failure to meet targets, unnecessary talking with coworkers, absence without leave, making mistakes at work or protesting management decisions. As few workers have letter of appointment but most of them have ID card therefore they are not in a position to make any legal claims when they are cheated in the form of wages and overtime.

Shanzida also reported that women workers are in the risky positions in the factory because of poor building standard, inadequate and blocked fire exits, and overcrowded workplace. Factory managers do not proper attention about factories safety measures to ensure these women workers' rights. Some factory owners build factories without maintaining the building code and sometimes added extra floors to create- more space for the workers and for the machines and the consequences are major safety problems such as faulty electrical circuits, unstable buildings, inadequate escape routes, and unsafe equipment.

The good news is that Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) set standards for compliance like factories must have alternative stairs, basic fire equipment, approved layout plan from concerned authority for ensuring safe building construction, group insurance for workers, hygienic sanitation facility and first aid appliance, as well as ensuring minimum wages and flexible jobs for the workers in the member factories. Apart from these there are different international bodies are now working in Bangladesh to facilitate and to ensure compliance in the garment factories. LEED, BSCI, WRAP, Oeko-Tex Standard 100, ISO, ILO, GOTS, SEDEX, ACCORD and ALLIANCES are the different organizations who certify and facilitate compliance in the RMG industry of Bangladesh (Islam & Hossain 2015).

Since 2011, a total of 67 factories received LEED (Leadership in Energy and environmental Design certification from The US Green Building Council (USGBC) one of the top green building rating system in the world. Of the 67 factories 13 have been rated platinum, 20 gold and five silver and at least 222 companies have been registered with USGBC for LEED certification. Plummy Fashion Ltd is a certify LEED company in Bangladesh has scored 92 out of 110 and became the greenest knitting factory in the world (Ovi, 2017).

SEDEX is a supplier ethical data exchange, is a non-profit organization is based in London UK and membership is open to any company in the world. Sedex enables member companies to efficiently manage the ethical and responsible practices of their global supply chains, generating transparency through the provision of a data exchange. Sedex focuses on labor standard, health and safety, environment and business integrity. GOTS means Global Organic Textile Standard, in Bangladesh 331 companies were GOTS certified in the year 2016 and place in the fourth position in the world (Harbert 2016).

The OEKO-TEX® Standard was originally developed as a label that gives guarantees on various aspects of textile ecology, with the first module focusing on consumer health, especially to prevent adverse health reactions induced by textiles. From this perspective, OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 focused on requirements on hazardous substances, like heavy metals, toxic dyes, crop protection substances, and carcinogenic substances like formaldehyde (used in textiles as an anti-wrinkle substance). OEKO-TEX® 100plus requirements are awarded on the basis that the selected products are free of harmful substances according to the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 and are only manufactured in environmentally-friendly operations at socially acceptable conditions as per STeP by OEKO-TEX® – this process must be ensured along the entire production chain, from the production of yarn to ready-made products. OEKO-TEX has great impacts on Energy Consumption, Water Consumption, Water Emissions, Chemicals (Accepted/Restricted), Chemicals (Chemical Management), Chemicals (Consumer Safety), Air Emissions, and Occupational Health and Safety (Perratore 2015).

The Worldwide Responsible Accredited Productions (WRAP) Principles are based on generally accepted international workplace standards, local laws and workplace regulations, and include the spirit of the International Labor Organization (ILO). The Principles encompass human resources management, health and safety, environmental practices, and legal compliance including import/export and customs compliance and security standards (Seferian, 2015).

ISO 14001:2004 Environmental Management Systems, this standard obligates a company to commit itself to protect environment by close monitoring of Water Emissions, Chemicals (Accepted/Restricted), Chemical Management, Consumer Safety, Occupational Health and Safety, Management System, Record Keeping, Management Responsibilities/Roles, Training, Environmental Policy, Social Responsibility and Documentation (Puvanavar, Tian, and Vasu 2013).

On the basis of above literature it has been clear that compliance factories have been maintained a certain standard which is guided by host countries labor law and buyers demand. The common agenda for all compliance certificate provider companies are the betterment of workers specifically female workers through sustainable development. The above literature shows some factors which have been included in the checklist of compliance certified factories such as prohibition of force labor, prohibition of child labor, prohibition of sexual harassment or abuse, prohibition of discrimination, standard working hours, timely payment of standard salary, hygienic working environment, building and fire safety, and freedom of associations. Earlier studies discussed about compliance and non-compliance factories profitability, challenges of garments sector, and women empowerment but there is no direct work which relates compliance issues and its impact on female garments worker. Therefore, the author intention was to find out whether these factors had significant impact on female employees working environment.

2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study is to examine the relationship of Compliance issues and comfortable working environment of female workers in Ready Made Garments sector of Bangladesh. The specific objectives are:-

- (i) To examine the relationship between the compliance issues in RMG sector and its impact on comfortable working environment of female garment workers.
- (ii) To make a rank among the compliance issues on the basis of the association with the female garments worker comfort level in the job place.
- (iii) To suggest some policy measures to be adopted by the planners and the decision makers.

3.0 METHODOLOGY:

In this study, the author only considers the garments factories which are BGMEA enlisted factories in Bangladesh. Data has been collected both from the primary and secondary sources. First of all, fifteen factories have been selected from four thousand three

hundred factories on the basis of their compliance activities and location and then secondary data were collected by consulting various documents, such as, compliance check list, Office-Order, newspapers, and relevant Journals.

This study mostly depends on empirical study for this observation method and Interview technique was used with structured questionnaire for collection of primary data. The judgmental sampling procedure was used to select the sample units from different employees of different garments factories who were willing to respond to the questionnaire. Total population was twenty eight hundred thousand female workers out of which seven hundred fifty selected from fifteen different factories of Dhaka division as sample by applying Sloven's formula at five percent level of significant. These female workers represent the total female workers of garments factories in Bangladesh. Before interviewing with the final questionnaire the author checked the questionnaire with 20 female garments workers to find out whether the questionnaire was understandable and match with objectives or need improvements etc. The questionnaire is made of 40 questions and four questions for each variable such as force labor, child labor, sexual harassment, discrimination policy, working hour, timely payment of standard salary, hygienic working environment, building and fire safety, freedom of association and female employees' comfortable working environment. The data, thus collected, was analyzed keeping in mind the objectives of the study. And for hypothesis test the authors used multiple regression analysis with the help of SPSS.

3.1 MODEL

The author has used the comfortable working environment of female workers as the dependent variable and the compliance issues of garments sector are the independent variable like prohibition of force labor, prohibition of child labor, prohibition of sexual harassment or abuse, prohibition of discrimination, standard working hours, timely payment of standard salary, hygienic working environment, building and fire safety, and freedom of associations. The author has run the OLS regression model to determine the significance level of the variables for comfortable working environment of female workers.

The basic model for the study was therefore as follows:

$$CWEFW = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \beta_8 X_8 + \beta_9 X_9 + e$$

Where, CWEFW = Comfortable Working Environment of Female Workers.

- X₁ = Prohibition of Force labor
- X₂ = Prohibition of Child labor
- X₃ = Prohibition of Sexual Harassment or Abuse
- X₄ = Prohibition of Discrimination
- X₅ = Standard Working Hours
- X₆ = Timely Payment of Standard Salary
- X₇ = Hygienic Working Environment
- X₈ = Building and Fire Safety
- X₉ = Freedom of Associations

And α is constant and $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5, \beta_6, \beta_7, \beta_8, \beta_9$ are coefficients to estimate, and e is the error term, which the authors assumed as NIL for this research.

3.2. HYPOTHEISIS

Null Hypothesis (Ho): There is no relationship between comfortable working environments of female workers and compliance issues in readymade garments sector of Bangladesh.

$$Ho: B_1 = B_2 = B_3 = \dots = B_k = 0 \text{ (Here, B = regression coefficient)}$$

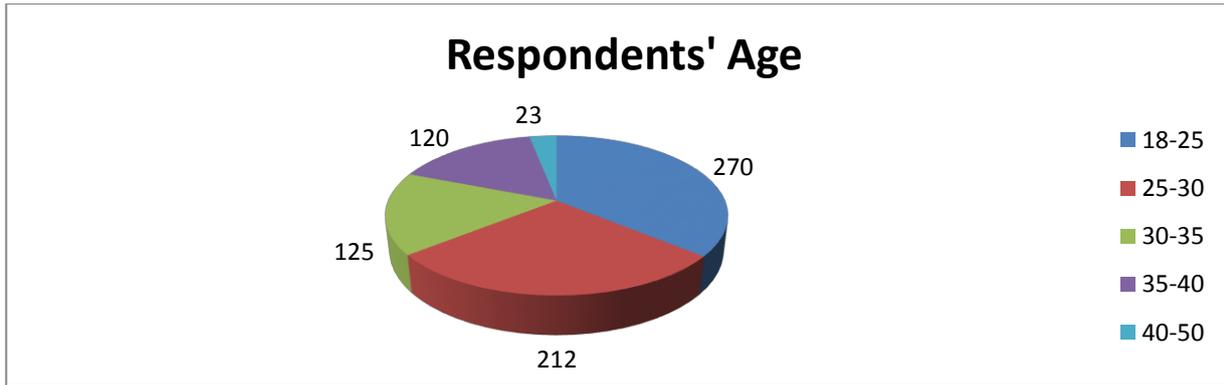
Alternative Hypothesis (Ha): There is a relationship between comfortable working environments of female workers and compliance issues in readymade garments sector of Bangladesh.

Ha: At least one B is not zero.

4. Finding of the Study:

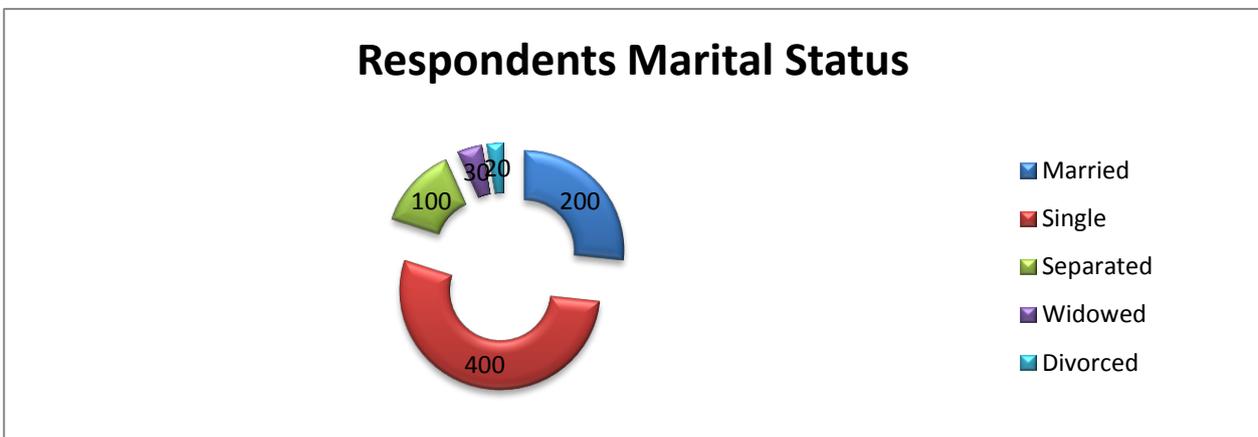
4.1 Background Information:

This study was conducted on seven hundred fifty female workers of fifteen different factories of Dhaka division and three fourth of the respondents age were in between eighteen to thirty five followed by 120 respondents were belongs to thirty six to forty age groups and remaining twenty three respondents age were less than fifty and more than forty.



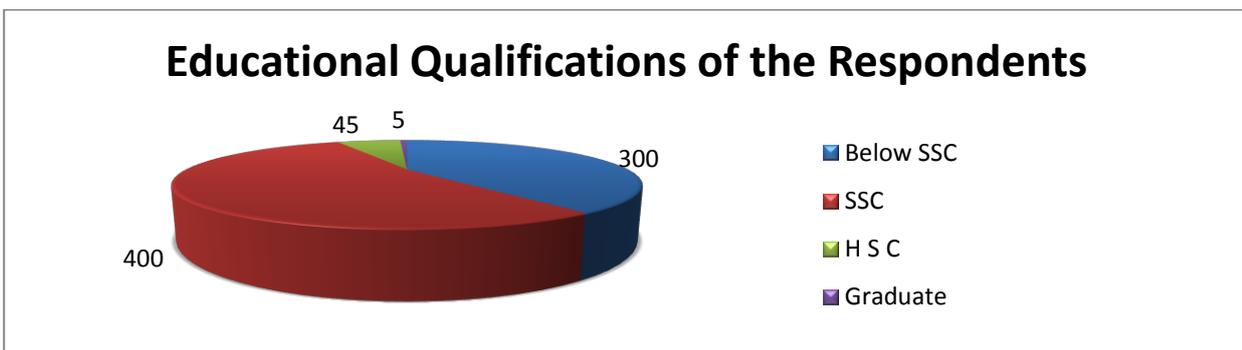
Source: Field Survey, September 2017

Respondents' age, marital status and educational qualification considerably influence the female workers responses about comfortable working environment in the garments factories. Out of 750 respondents 400 were single, 200 were married followed by 100 separated women participated in this study as samples. In addition to these, 30 widowed and 20 divorced female workers also shared their comfort level in the job place.



Source: Field Survey, September 2017

In ready-made garments sector, most of the female workers are less educated because highly educated person generally prefer other kinds of job which is less labor intensive. For this reason, a few female employees are working in the top level or mid level of a garments company. In my study, more than fifty percent respondents were S.S.C pass whereas less than fifty percent respondents were below S.S.C and 45 pass the H.S.C level and only 5 respondents were graduate.

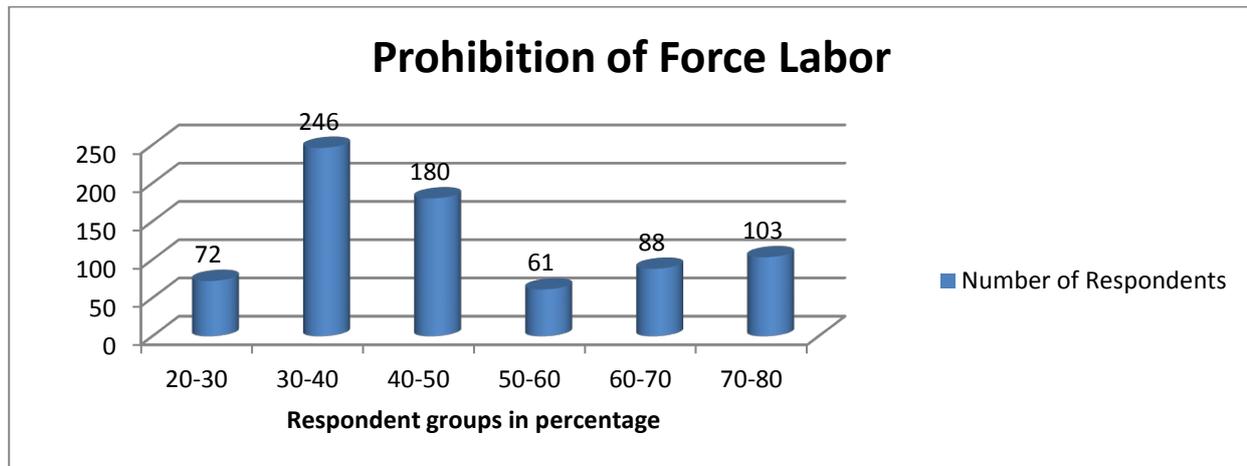


Source: Field Survey, September 2017

4.2 Discussion of the Findings:

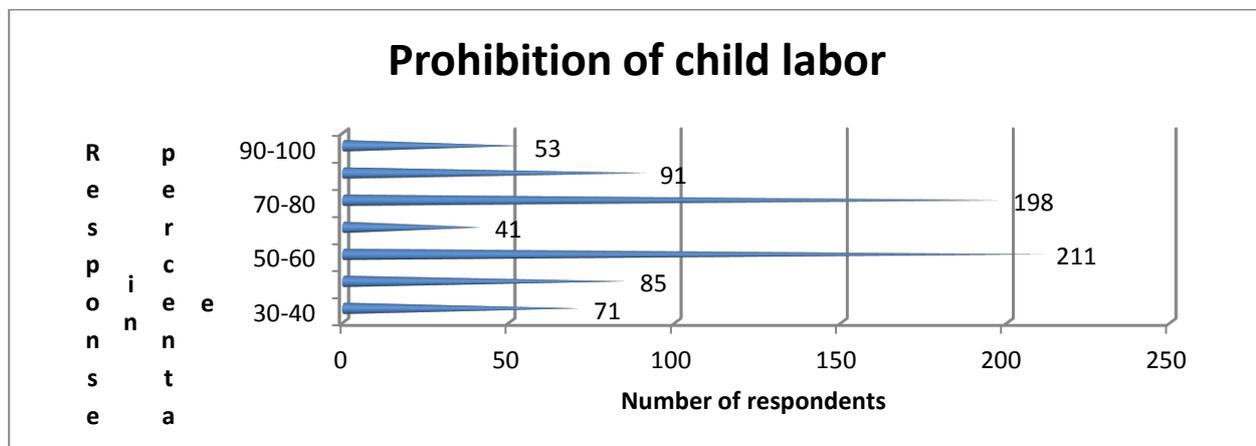
Force labor is neither permitted in Bangladesh labor law nor accepted by any compliance body. However, garments owners or managers have tendency to bind their female worker for overtime work to reach the target production. In this survey, near about one seventh of the respondent told that force labor has been prohibited up to 70 to 80 percent. Eighty eight respondents observed that force labor has reduced up to 70 percent followed by sixty one respondents believed that 60percent force labor has been eliminated. On the other hand, it was the opinion of half of the total respondents that force labor has been practiced in the

different factory up to fifty percent.



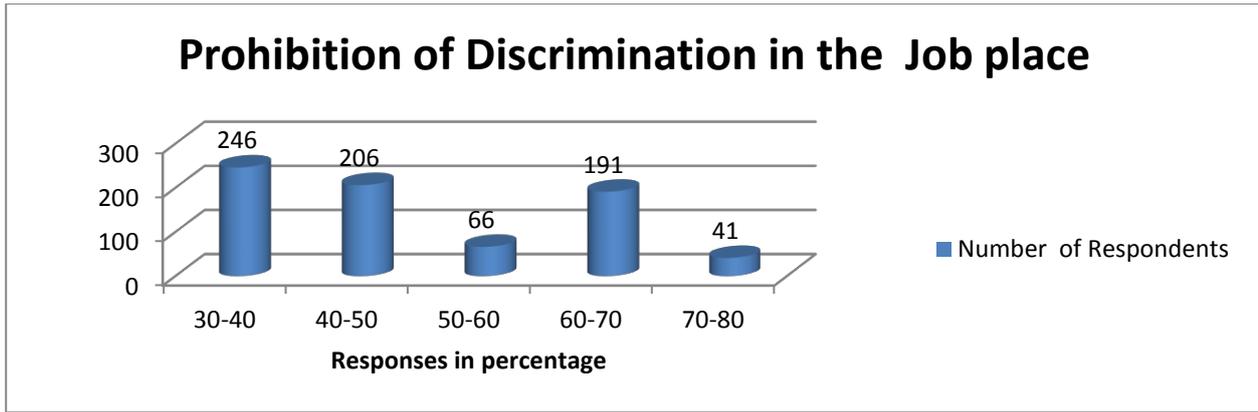
Source: Field Survey, September 2017

Child labor has also been prohibited in the readymade sector and no company recruit child labor but some employees submit fake birth certificate to get the job though they are child. Fifty three respondents believed that there is no child labor in the factory; eighty one said child labor has been prevented in the factory up to 90 percent and more than one fourth of the workers told that child labor has been eliminated up to 80 percent. One third respondent responses showed that child labor has been prohibited up to 50 percent.



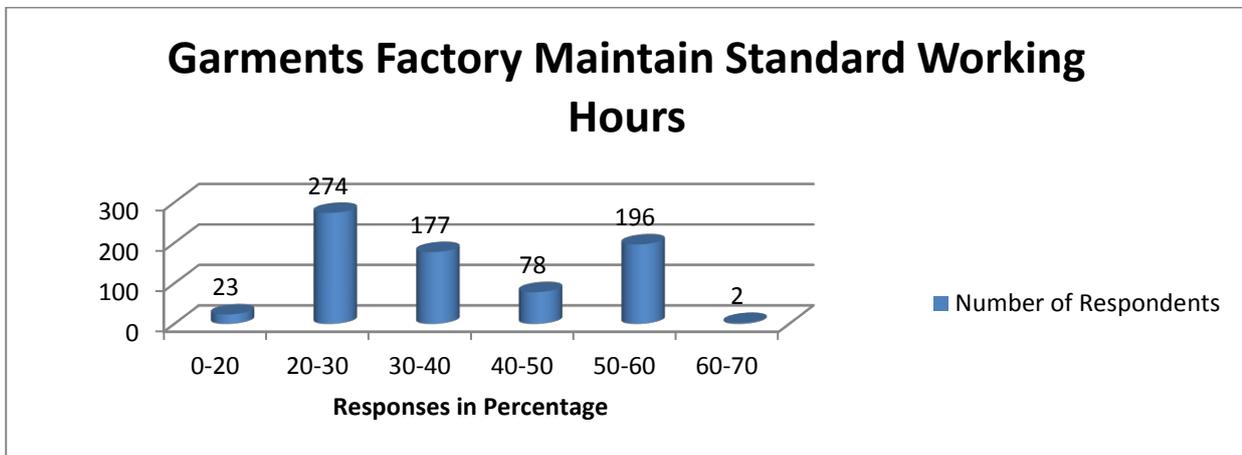
Source: Field Survey, September 2017

Although it is expected that no discrimination in the job place but gender, ethnicity, religious, and hometown are the sources of job place discrimination in Bangladesh. More than half of the respondents believed that present organization removed fifty percent of discrimination whereas 191 reported that 70 percent discrimination has been prevented and 41 told that 80 percent discrimination has been prohibited in the work place.



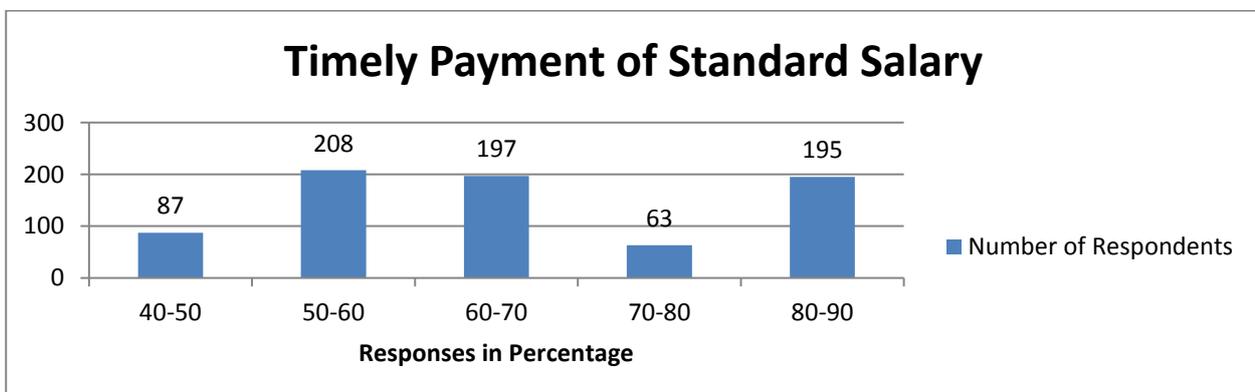
Source: Field Survey, September 2017

Standard working hour is eight hours per working day and it may be 10 hours including two hours overtime but it should not be exceed more than ten hours in any way. More than half of the respondents, 451 opinioned that garments factory maintain standard working hours up to 40 percent, consequently 78 people reported 50 percent followed by 196 employees believed it is up to 60 percent.



Source: Field Survey, September 2017

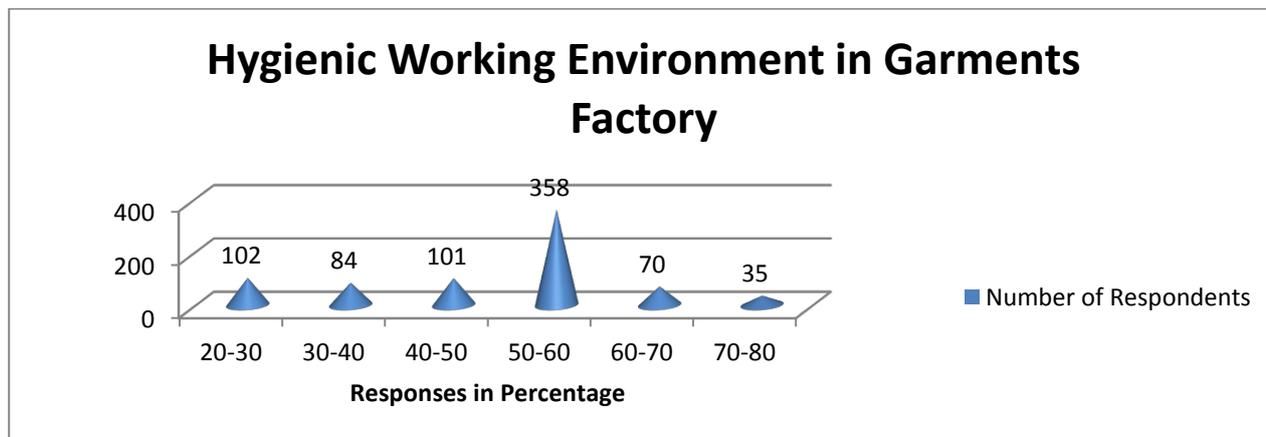
Payment should be in time within the first week of next month and standard salary means salary determine by the wage board and the highest salary for garments worker grade-1 is TK13,000.00 and the lowest salary grade-7 is TK 5,300.00 and Trainee or Apprentice salary is TK 4,180.00. 195 respondents told that they receive timely payment of their salary in 90 percentage time, 63 experienced 80 % in time salary and remaining majority portions of the respondents opinioned 50 to 70 percent in time payment



Source: Field Survey, September 2017

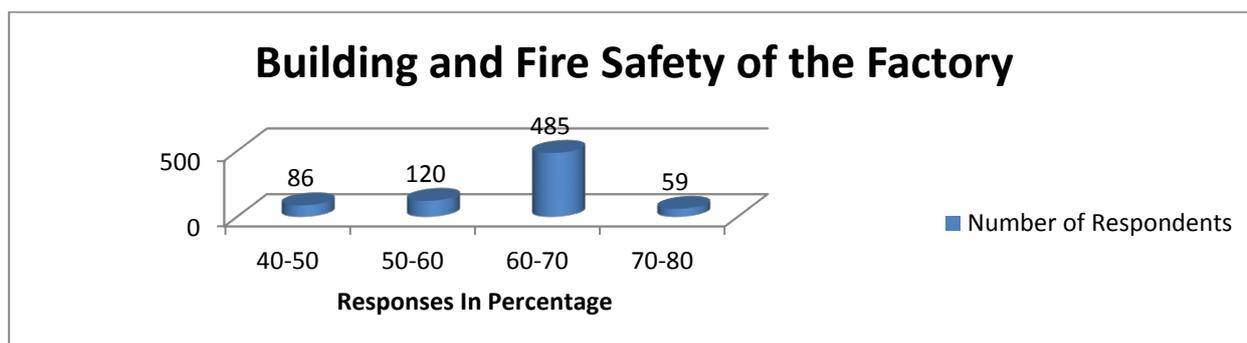
Hygienic working environment is very crucial for comfortable workplace environment as because a female worker has to spend ten to twelve productive hours in the factory. Clean floor, separate washroom for men and women, dining facility and sufficient space for movement of fresh air is the precursor of hygienic environment. Nearly, half of the respondents believed that garments factory maintain 50 to 60 percent hygienic working environment. Seventy respondents have experienced 60 to 70 percent

hygienic environment and thirty five respondents have better experienced up to 70 to 80 percent hygienic environments. On the other hand, one hundred eighty five female employees experienced 30to 50 percent healthy working environment and the least hygienic environment 20 to 30 percent have been reported by 102 female garments employees.



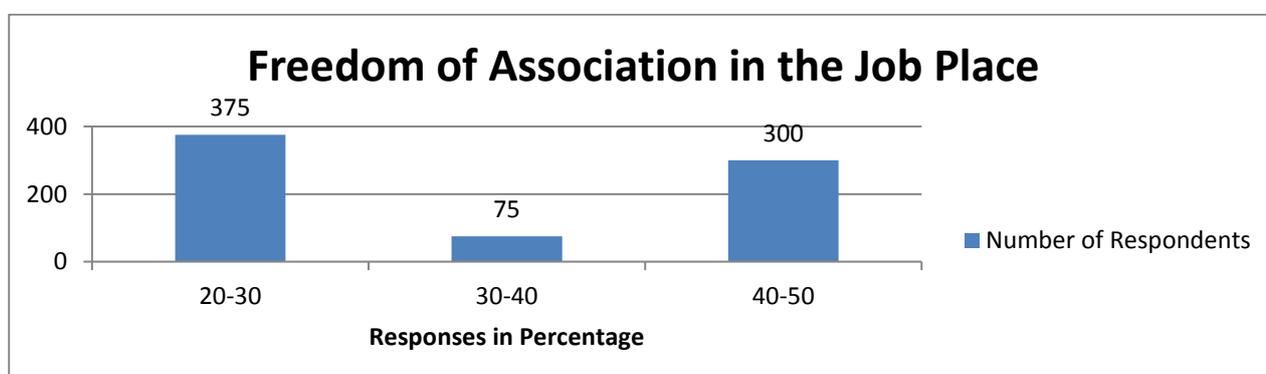
Source: Field Survey, September 2017

Bangladesh readymade garments sector has very bad experience regarding building and fire safety issues. Different organizations such as WRAP, Accord and Alliances are the major concern of the building and fire safety issues in the garments factory. Four hundred eighty five respondents thought that Garments Company has taken 60 to 70 percent initiatives for building and fire safety and fifty nine believed that the factory is 70 to 80 percent safe to work whereas 206 employees reported 40 to 60 percent safe factory in regards to fire and building construction and design.



Source: Field Survey, September 2017

Freedom of Association in the garments sector is a recent phenomenon. In the past, workers have no platform to raise their voices but nowadays Bangladesh Independent Garment Workers Union Federation (BIGUF) in Gazipur, Dhaka try to help female workers by providing training and information. Apart from this Bangladesh have 540 registered trade unions in the RMG sector according to State Minister for Labor and Employment M Mujibul Haque Chunnu (2017). In these contexts, 375 respondents told that they have 20 to 30 percent freedom of association in the garments factory, 75 reported that they have 30 to 40 percent freedom whereas the remaining 300 hundred female employees expressed that they have at best 40 to 50 percent freedom of association in the job place.



Source: Field Survey, September 2017

4.3. MODEL SUMMARY

Table 1: Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.920 ^a	0.846	0.844	.05744

Source: Field Survey, September 2017

From above calculation it shows that there was a significant correlation between dependent variable and independent variables. And at 5% level of significance the correlation is 92 %.

Here, adjusted R Square is 0.846 which told us that about 84 percent variation of dependent variable is explained by independent variables included in this model. And the independent variables of this model are Prohibition of Force labor, Prohibition of Child labor, Prohibition of Sexual Harassment or Abuse, Prohibition of Discrimination, Standard Working Hours, Timely Payment of Standard and Salary, Hygienic Working Environment, Building and Fire Safety, and Freedom of Associations.

Table 2: ANOVA Test

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.416	9	1.491	41.725	.000
	Residual	2.442	740	.003		
	Total	15.858	749			

Source: Field Survey, September 2017

From ANOVA test it shows that the table Sig. value 0.05 is greater than the calculated Sig. Value 0.000. So, it rejects the null hypothesis at 5% level of significance and also 1% level of significance. It means, there was a significant relation between dependent variable and independent variables. Therefore, comfortable working environment of female workers in the garments factory depends on Prohibition of Force labor, Prohibition of Child labor, Prohibition of Sexual Harassment or Abuse, Prohibition of Discrimination, Standard Working Hours, Timely Payment of Standard Salary, Hygienic Working Environment, Building and Fire Safety, and Freedom of Associations. However, it does not mean that all compliance issues in the readymade garments have significant impact on comfortable working environment of female employees. For this, the authors went for coefficient analysis for further study.

Table 3: Results of Multivariate (OLS) Analysis: Comfortable Working Environment of Female Employees (Dependent variable) vis-à-vis Compliance issues in Ready Made Garments (Independent Variables).

Compliance Issues in Ready Made Garments	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Prohibition of Force labor	.091	.027	.097	3.346	.001
Prohibition of Child labor	-.059	.035	-.064	-1.655	.098
Prohibition of Sexual Harassment or Abuse	.202	.064	.136	3.151	.002
Prohibition of Discrimination	-.147	.038	-.151	-3.847	.000
Standard Working Hours	.051	.039	.044	1.301	.194
Timely Payment of Standard Salary	.309	.046	.286	6.760	.000
Hygienic Working Environment	.356	.029	.318	12.137	.000
Building and Fire Safety	.512	.060	.263	8.489	.000
Freedom of Associations	.238	.031	.193	7.764	.000

Source: Field Survey, September 2017

Coefficient analysis shows the relationship between dependent variable and each independent variable. According to Sig. value Prohibition of Force labor, Prohibition of Sexual Harassment or Abuse, Timely Payment of Standard Salary, Hygienic Working Environment, Building and Fire Safety, and Freedom of Associations have significant influence on female employees' comfortable working environment in the garments factory. Here, table Sig. value is 0.05 which is greater than calculated Sig. value 0.001, 0.002, 0.000, 0.000, 0.000, and 0.000 respectively. However, the calculated Sig. value of prohibition of child labor

and standard working hour are greater than the Table Sig. value. And then, these factors have some impact on female employees' comfortable working environment but these are not significant.

At last final model includes six independent variables such as Prohibition of Force labor, Prohibition of Sexual Harassment or Abuse, Timely Payment of Standard Salary, Hygienic Working Environment, Building and Fire Safety, and Freedom of Associations which have significant impact on employees' empowerment on the basis of $t \text{ value} \geq 2.146$.

Here,

β_1 (Hygienic Working Environment) = 0.318, i.e., 100 % change in hygienic working environment leads to 31.8 % change in female employees' comfortable working environment.

β_2 (Timely Payment of Standard Salary) = 0.286, i.e., 100 % change in timely payment of standard salary leads to 28.6 % change in female employees' comfortable working environment.

β_3 (Building and Fire Safety) = 0.263, i.e., 100 % change in building and fire safety leads to 26.30 % change in comfortable working environment of female employees.

β_4 (Freedom of Associations) = 0.193 i.e., 100 % change in freedom of association leads to 19.3% change in comfortable working environment of female employees.

β_5 (Prohibition of Sexual Harassment or Abuse) = 0.136, i.e., 100 % change in prohibition of sexual harassment or abuse leads to 13.60 % change in comfortable working environment of female employees.

β_6 (Prohibition of Force Labor) = 0.097 i.e., 100 % change in prohibition of force labor leads to 9.7% change in comfortable working environment of female employees.

According to significant correlation, between dependent variables and each independent variable, we can arrange it in order from most significant correlation to less significant correlation.

Table 4: Dependency of Female Employees' Comfortable Working Environment on Compliance Issues of Readymade Garments Sector

Factors	Value of β	Rank order on the basis of significant
Hygienic Working Environment	0.318	1
Timely Payment of Standard Salary	0.286	2
Building and Fire Safety	0.263	3
Freedom of Associations	0.193	4
Prohibition of Sexual Harassment or Abuse	0.136	5
Prohibition of Force Labor	0.097	6

Source: Field Survey, September 2017

5. CONCLUSION

Comfortable working environment is the prerequisite of employees' job satisfaction, sound health and productivity. In the RMG sector, female employees' suitable working environment vastly depends on compliance issues of the factory. In general, hygienic working environment, timely payment of standard salary, building and fire safety are the key compliance factors upon which female garments workers' comfort level in the job place depend on a large extent. Safety of worker' life in the job place depends on building and fire safety and workers' sound health mostly depends on hygienic working environment. In this study, it has been observed that freedom of associations; prohibition of sexual harassment and prohibition of force labor also play a significant role to improve the working condition for female workers in the garments sector. Therefore, to boost the sound working environment in the RMG sector Bangladesh Garments Manufacturing and Export Associations (BGMEA), Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturing and Export Associations (BKMEA), Ministry of labor of Bangladesh, and buyer's association have to work cordially to ensure compliance in all the garments factories. The study revealed that six major compliance issues have noticeable impact on female employees working environment out of which three factors (hygienic working environment, timely payment of standard salary and building and fire safety) each has more than twenty five percent impact and other three variables (freedom of association, prohibition of force labor, prohibition of sexual harassment) each has less than twenty percent impact. The collected data was the representation of the institutional practices of different garments factories as well as the personal characteristics of the respondent such as age, marital status, education etc. Therefore, the study suggests doing in depth study on this issue covering other types of institutions and larger sample size. To consider all these circumstances, the results of the study may be useful in creating healthy working environment in the garments factories for female workers.

5.2 Policy Recommendations:

Here the author proposed to deal with policy issues arising out of the study and make some specific recommendations as follows:-

- (i) Garments factories should be building up with all modern facilities and architectural design by maintaining building code, enough space and emergency exist in case of fire and firefighting instruments along with trained manpower. Neat and clean floor, sufficient number of separate washroom for man and women, and proper ventilation system also helps to create hygienic working environment.

- (ii) Force labor creates dissatisfaction among the workers and the output is low quality products. However, some managers believe that force labor is essential to meet the target. For this, BGMEA have to develop the mechanism for properly monitoring force labor and timely payment issues in all garment factories of Bangladesh. In general, concern authorities of all factories should be alert about force labor for ensuring satisfactory working environment.
- (iii) More emphasis should be given on freedom of associations and ensure zero tolerance for sexual harassment and also create a victim support center for women in each factory which definitely enhance the confidence of female workers.

If all these suggestions are accepted and implemented by the policy makers and the owners of the garments factory it is expected that garments factory in general workplace will be the safest and comfortable place for female workers.

————— The end —————

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