

# Rights of the Women Worker of Readymade Garment Industry in Bangladesh: Gaps Between Law and Practice

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**Abstract:** Readymade garment industry is one of the most important sources of foreign currency of Bangladesh as well as this sector is the largest employment sector of women. There are more than 5000 garment factories in Bangladesh where 85% of the workers are women. There is legal framework to protect the rights of the women worker but in practice their rights are violated. The working condition, health and safety, minimum wages, working hours, maternity welfare facilities, difficulty to form trade union are the key areas where the rights of the women worker are violated most. Violation of the rights have thrown the women worker to vulnerable situation. This paper attempt to find out the rights of women worker and how the practice of violation of rights projected them to vulnerability. It also seeks to find out the cause of violation of the women workers rights and finally concludes with recommendations to implement the law in practice. This study has suffered from some limitations. Simple Random Sampling method used in this study may cause the problem of getting data from one part beside others which may have an effect on getting accurate results. Beside this, many women worker provide wrong information without understanding the fact.

**Keywords:** Ready-Made Garment, Labour Act, Women Workers Rights, Cause, Violation, Implementation

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## 1. Introduction

The ready-Made garments (RMG) sector plays a significant role in escalating the economic growth of Bangladesh. For the last 40 years the RMG industry started developing in Bangladesh as a largest export-oriented industry [14]. It is the leading sector in terms of employment, production and foreign exchange earnings [9]. This sector contributed 78 percent of the foreign exchange earning of the country and it is contributing 13 percent to the GDP which was only 3 percent in 1991 [13]. This sector creates employment opportunity for young female coming from rural areas. Out of 4 million manpower employed in RMG sector 3.20 (85%) million are women [3]. So, it cannot be denied that for the growth of economy of Bangladesh RMG sector is the vital sector. In RMG sector the workers are playing the most important role to create wealth for the country.

The constitution of Bangladesh has recognized fundamental rights of women worker at workplace including social protection and BLA [2] has included a large number of labour rights for protection of women worker. As well as in

international level Bangladesh has ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of discrimination against Women (CEDWA) as well as different ILO conventions [7]. That means there is legal framework to protect the rights of the Women workers of Bangladesh but the majority of this legislation has not been implemented in practice due to a lack of proper government and law enforcement supervision [15].

In recent years it is seen that the workers are the worst victim of many accidents in this sector. According to the Bangladesh Fire Department 414 garment workers were killed in at least 213 factory fires between the years 2006 and 2009. A further 79 workers lost their lives in 2010 in 21 separate recorded incidents [6]. In many cases there is violation of rights of the women workers like working condition, safety and health issue, maternity welfare facilities, minimum wages, trade union. This study aims to trace the rights of the women worker regarding these issues, like the continuous violation of the rights of the women worker and the cause of violation.

### 1.1. Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to analyze the rights available for the women workers of RMG sector of Bangladesh under the laws of Bangladesh and to find out the gaps between law and practice and finally to propose a way out to implement the rights of the women workers of RMG sector. Specifically:

- To analyze the development of RMG sector in Bangladesh;
- To review the existing laws of Bangladesh dealing with rights of the women worker;
- To examine the present scenario of the implementation of the rights of the women workers of the RMG sector in Bangladesh;
- To analyze the reasons of violation of the rights of the women workers of Bangladesh.
- To recommend the possible solution to implement the rights of the women worker.

### 1.2. Methodology

This study has been done applying multiple methods of research methodology. At the beginning of the study an intensive literature review has been made. The literature includes laws, Judgments, books, Journals and reviewed articles related to the rights of the women worker and violation of the rights of the women worker. Primary data was collected through self-constructed questionnaire. The questionnaire is mostly consisting of close ended questions. The researcher interviewed 200 female workers of 24 garment factories of Chittagong city area and area adjacent to Chittagong city using simple random sampling techniques. The respondents were personally questioned and the questionnaires were filled up by the interviewer and simple statistical analysis like percentage and frequency distribution is used for data collection.

## 2. Constructional Guarantees for the Protection of Women Worker of Bangladesh

Under the constitution of Bangladesh, the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth and Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life (Article 28). It is the responsibility of Bangladesh to ensure the right to work, that is the right to guaranteed employment at a reasonable wage having regard to the quantity and quality of work, and reasonable rest, recreation and leisure (Article 15). The constitution proclaims that work is a right, a duty and a matter of honor for every citizen who is capable of working, and everyone shall be paid for his work. (Article 20). Besides, these rights the Constitution of Bangladesh prohibits all forms of forced labour and forced labour is punishable in accordance with law (Article 34). A very important inclusion of right in the constitution is that the worker can exercise the right of freedom of association and right to form union (Article 38).

## 3. Rights of the Women Worker and Present Scenario of Violation

The Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 (BLA) includes many positive points for the protection of rights of the women workers. There are provisions covering occupational hygiene, safety measures, industrial accidents, conditions of work, trade union, working hours, welfare facilities etc. The provisions covering these issues are general in nature and in some cases, these are below standard. On the other hand, there is gross violation in some cases. In case of safety issue at work place the situation of women workers are really vulnerable. The finding of the survey is presented in the tables.

*Table 1. Appointment Letter, Service Rule, Service Book.*

	Frequency				Percent				Valid Percent			
	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total
Appointment Letter	130	70	--	200	64.4	34.7	--	99	65	35	--	100
Service Rule	49	76	75	200	24.3	37.6	37.1	100	24.5	38	37.5	100
Service Book	64	116	20	200	31.7	57.4	9.9	99	32	58	10	100

Source: Own Survey

### 3.1. Conditions of Employment

According to the Labour Act, 2006 every employer must give an appointment letter to the worker at the time of appointment where the terms of employment may be expressed or implied (Section: 5). The appointment letter is a proof of appointment and can be used by the worker for any further proceeding regarding employment. But in this study it is seen that among the 200 workers 65% were given appointment letter the rest 35% were not given appointment letter. Besides this the employer can formulate service rule for the worker of the establishment and if the employer does not

make service rule the provisions or standard of the BLA will be applicable (Section: 3). Existence of service rule is important because it helps the workers to understand the rights. Among the 200 workers 24.5 percent worker answered that in their establishment there is service rule and in 38 percent workers answered in their establishment there is no service rule and the matter of serious concern is that 37.5 percent worker do not know anything about the service rule.

As per law for every permanent worker the employer must maintain a service book. The service book is the document where very important information of service will be found. But reality is 20 percent of the respondents do not know

about the service book and 58 percent of the workers do not have service book. Only 32 percent of the worker responded that service book is maintained by the employer in their employment. From the three issues regarding employment we have found that as formal sector of employment there is clear violation of laws. Not maintaining service book, service rule shows that the employers are not at all willing to maintain the level of rights given to the worker under laws.

### 3.2. Conditions of Work

Safe working environment is a basic right for the worker. A society that seeks for social justice has to ensure decent workplace, not undermine self-respect and social standing [10].

But in Bangladesh, RMG factories are now in operation in the building which are not at all useable as RMG factories. As per BLA no work room in any factory shall be overcrowded and there shall be provided 9.5 cubic meter of space for every worker employed in a work-room (Section 56). Besides this effective measures shall be undertaken by the employer for securing and maintaining in every work-room adequate ventilation by the circulation of fresh air (Section 52) and in every part of the establishment where workers are working there shall be provided and maintained sufficient and suitable lighting (Section 57) and it is the duty of the authority to keep clean the work place (Section 51) and to take necessary steps to keep the work place dust and fume free (Section 53).

*Table 2. Location of the building.*

	Frequency				Percent			
	Industrial Area	Commercial Area	Residential Area	Total	Industrial Area	Commercial Area	Residential Area	Total
Where are the building situated?	68	70	62	200	33.7	34.7	30.7	99

*Table 2. Continued.*

	Valid Percent			
	Industrial Area	Commercial Area	Residential Area	Total
Where are the building situated?	34	35	31	100

Source: Own Survey

*Table 3. Workplace Safety issues.*

	Frequency			Percent			Valid Percent		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Is the Building Industrial or not?	58	142	200	28.7	70.3	99	29	71	100
Is the work place overcrowded?	168	32	200	83.2	15.8	99	84	16	100
Emergency exit gate available or not?	56	144	200	27.7	71.3	99	28	72	100
Whether Gate remains Lock at the time of working hour or not?	180	20	200	89.1	9.9	99	90	10	100
Fire protection equipment available or not?	134	66	200	66.3	32.7	99	67	33	100
Fire protection training	189	11	200	93.6	5.4	99	94.5	5.5	100

Source: Own Survey

BLA has also provided specific provisions regarding safety issue for example, in every establishment there shall have an alternative stair connected with every floor as means of escape in case of fire and be equipped with fire extinguisher. It is seen that the law is clear to provide a sound working place for the workers but in reality the scenario is harsh. In Bangladesh most of the RMG factories are established in rented premises. The rooms are crowded with low floor height. In the survey of the study it is found that 34 percent of the garments factories are situated in the industrial area, 35 percent is in the commercial area and 31 percent is situated in the residential area or area very adjacent to the residential area. It is a matter of concern that the factories must be established in a building which is actually designed to establish a factories but the result of the survey is 71 percent of the building are not designed to build garments rather those were commercial building or building made for other purpose. Among the workers 84 percent opines that the workplace is overcrowded that means these building were not built considering the healthy workplace for the women workers. Among the buildings 28

percent are with emergency exit stair but 72 percent do not have emergency exit stair. But for emergency like fire and other issue it is required to have emergency exit arrangement. Not having emergency exit arrangement or having the gate closed at the time of working hours resulted a very large number of death in many accidents in Bangladesh. Here 90 percent of worker answered that the gates were kept locked at the time of working hours. 67 percent of the garments have fire protection equipment but 94 percent said the employer never arranged any training or awareness program to train them about fire protection.

### 3.3. Women Workers' Health and Maternity Welfare Facilities

Women workers in the RMG industry have to face severe health related complications due to unsafe factory conditions, factory owners' stringent rules, frequent overtime work along with day long working hours, absence of maternity leave, etc. Most of the factory owners do not follow the BLA, which

protects the right to health. The government published a gazette notification on six months maternity leave for the public servants on 11<sup>th</sup> January, 2011 but it remains 16 weeks as per BLA for women worker of the garments [1]. In garments the employers even do not follow the rules of 16 weeks as provided by BLA. Thus this necessary right to maternity leave has long been breached. A worse consequence is that most of the time women workers have to lose their job after giving birth. In some factories, the owner accepts women workers returning to work after giving birth but they have to work at a lower grade. They cannot work at their previous grade. Another inhumane practice which impacts most of the women workers is that many of them are forced to work during the final stages of pregnancy to meet the production

targets which seriously hamper the health of both mother and child. Long working days along with frequent overtime work create a heavy load for women's health. It destroys necessary rest periods. It creates hurdles for needed domestic work. Most of the time women workers have to go to their home late at night and again come back to the factory for work early the next morning. It puts a great load on them as they have to complete their household chores within a very short time. It also takes away time to spend with their children and other family members. Naturally, these excessive pressures have an adverse impact on women workers' health and mental stability. Women workers reported concerns over long periods of separation from their children, particularly for women with young children who are breastfeeding.

*Table 4. Health and Hygiene.*

	Frequency			Percent			Valid Percent		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Separate Toilet	169	31	200	83.7	15.3	99	48	16	100
Cleanliness of wash room	23	177	200	11.4	87.6	99	12	88	100
Safe drinking water	78	122	200	38.6	60.4	99	39	61	100
Primary medical facility	96	104	200	47.5	51.5	99	48	52	100
Proper ventilation facility	69	131	200	34.2	64.9	99	34.5	65.5	100

Source: Own Survey

*Table 5. Maternity Welfare Facilities (Wages).*

	Frequency			Percent			Valid Percent		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Maternity leave	82	118	200	40.6	58.4	99	41	49	100
Wages at the time of Maternity leave	55	145	200	27.2	71.8	99	28	72	100

Source: Own Survey

*Table 6. Maternity Welfare Facilities (Leave).*

	Frequency				Percent				Valid Percent			
	1 to 8 weeks	8 to 16 weeks	Have to negotiate with the employer	Total	1 to 8 weeks	8 to 16 weeks	Have to negotiate with the employer	Total	1 to 8 weeks	8 to 16 weeks	Have to negotiate with the employer	Total
Tenure of maternity Leave	41	31	128	200	20.3	15.3	63.4	99	20.5	15.5	64	100

Source: Own Survey

To have clean and separate toilet and washroom is very important for the women workers of the garments industry. It ensures healthy environment for the women worker. Dirty washroom may cause diseases and threats the health of the worker. Among the 200 respondent 84.5 percent worker answered there is separate toilet for women worker but unfortunate is that 88.5 percent answered that the toilets are not clean that means having separate toilet will not be meaningful if those are not kept clean and hygiene. Pure drinking water is important but in this study we have found 61 percent of the respondents are not getting pure drinking water in their workplace. This may cause serious diseases to the worker. Besides this 65 percent worker thinks that ventilation facility in the workplace is not sufficient.

As per BLA the tenure of maternity leave for the

permanent worker of the establishment is 16 weeks but in this survey it is seen that 15.5 percent workers answered in their establishment 1 to 8 weeks leave are allowed, 20.5 percent workers answered that employer allowed more than 8 weeks leave but 64 percent of workers have to negotiate with the employer. On the other hand, whatever be the tenure of leave 73 percent worker answered that they are not paid wages at the time of maternity leave.

### 3.4. Forced Labour

According to BLA the daily regular working hours of adult worker must not exceed 8 hours per day and weekly working hours must not exceed 48 hours and including overtime the weekly working hours must not exceed 60 hours where the worker must not be forced to work 02 hours overtime per day

but in RMG industries the female worker are ordered by the employer to work more hours. In many cases the workers are forced to work 10 to 13 hours per day but they have given payment for two hours overtime. There is no way to refuse the order of the employer because there is threat of retrenchment from service and sometimes if workers refuse to carry the order of the employer they were verbally harassed and sometimes harassed physically.

In this study among the 200 women workers 21 percent workers have to work 8 hours and 38 percent workers have to

work 10 hours per day but 41 percent workers are bound to work more than 10 hours per day. The study reflects that there is violation of statutory provisions of law because no worker is allowed to work more than 10 hours including over time. Among the respondent 6.5 percent answered that they are not given payment for overtime but according to BLA for overtime work the worker is entitled to receive payment for the extra hours of work. 98 percent answered that they are given payment for 2 hours overtime daily and 44.5 percent answered that they are given payment for all hours of overtime.

*Table 7. Working Hours.*

	Frequency				Percent				Valid Percent			
	08 Hours	10 Hours	More Than 10 hours	Total	08 Hours	10 Hours	More Than 10 hours	Total	08 Hours	10 Hours	More than 10 Hours	Total
Working Hour Per Day	42	76	82	200	20.8	37.6	40.6	99	21	38	41	100

Source: Own Survey

*Table 8. Payment for Overtime Hours.*

	Frequency				Percent				Valid Percent			
	Not Given	02 Hours	For all hours of overtime	Total	Not Given	02 hours	For all hours of overtime	Total	Not given	02 hours	For all hours of overtime	Total
Payment for overtime hour	13	98	89	200	6.4	48.5	44.1	99	6.5	49	44.5	100

Source: Own Survey

### 3.5. Minimum Wages

According to BLA the employer is bound to pay regular wages to the worker and within 7 days of the completion of the wage period the employer must pay wages to the worker but in Bangladesh one of the main cause of labour unrest is that the employers do not pay wages regularly. In the survey

69.5 percent of the respondent answered that they are given regular wages but 30.5 percent of the respondent answered that they are not given wages regularly, though 69.5 percent of the worker answered that they are receiving wages regularly but 86 percent of the workers are in a opinion that the wages which they are getting is not enough to meet their basic needs.

*Table 9. Wages.*

	Frequency			Percent			Valid Percent		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Regular Payment of wages	139	61	200	68.8	30.2	99	69.5	30.5	100
Whether wages sufficient to meet their basic needs?	28	172	200	13.9	85.1	99	14	68	100

Source: Own Survey

### 3.6. Trade Union and Collective Bargaining

*Table 10. Member of Trade Union.*

	Frequency			Percent			Valid Percent		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Existence of Trade Union	39	161	200	19.3	79.7	99	19.5	80.5	100
Member of Trade union	15	185	200	7	92	99	7	93	100

Source: Own Survey

*Table 11. Restriction by the employer to become member of trade union.*

	Frequency				Percent			
	Direct Restriction	Indirect restriction	No restriction	Total	Direct Restriction	Indirect restriction	No restriction	Total
Restriction by the employer to become member of trade union	35	86	79	200	17.3	42.6	39.5	99

**Table 12.** Restriction by the employer to become member of trade union.

	Valid Percent			Total
	Direct Restriction	Indirect restriction	No restriction	
Restriction by the employer to become member of trade union	17	43	40	100

Source: Own Survey

To establish trade union and to become member of the trade union is a right of the worker. Under BLA the workers are free to establish trade union and must not be discriminated on the ground of establishing trade union and becoming member of trade union. But the employers are afraid of trade union. In garments industries, there are few have trade union. The rights of collective bargaining are violated frequently here. In this study among the respondent only 19.5 agreed that in their establishment there is presence of trade union and 80.5 percent said there is no trade union functioning in their establishment. Besides this, among the respondent only 7 percent are the members of any trade union. Poor bargaining position is one of the major problems which is accelerating the violation of the rights of the worker. Among the respondent 17 percent confessed that their exists direct restriction from the employer regarding not to join in any trade union, 43 percent worker answered there is indirect restriction from employer.

## 4. Case Study

### 4.1. Case Study: 1

*Rahela Akter*, Age: 24, a women worker working in a garment factory of *Sadar Ghat* area. She is from a rural village named *Digor pan khali, Chakaria, Cox's Bazar*. She is working as operator in this factory for last 3 years. She is a permanent worker of this factory. In village, she has her old parents and three brothers. Brothers are married and they do not take liability to take care of their parents. Rahela migrated to Chittagong city because his parents are sick and cannot earn. She has to earn and need to send money for her parents.

Rahela lives in a rented room in Chittagong with three other garments worker. She has to wake up very early in the morning and need to cook food as she has to carry lunch for her. Her duty starts at 8a.m in the morning and she has to reach to work place before 8 a.m. as the employer never allow even 10 minutes delay. She has to work their till 8 p.m. She has to work long hours because the employer ordered them that if they do not work till 8 p.m. she is not allowed to get 2 hours overtime payment. Though she works 4 hours overtime daily but she receives payment for 02 hours per day. For lunch time she has a break of 20 minutes and Rahela and other workers of the factory has to take lunch standing. Rahela goes to her village house twice in a year to meet her parents. Her wages is with overtime 13000 taka. According to Rahela she can send money for her parents but the wages is not enough to meet all the necessities.

In the factory of Rahela there is no trade union and in her workplace she never experienced any sort of harassment by

the employer. But the employer is very harsh to allow them leave even if she becomes sick. The dream of Rahela is to make her parents happy.

### 4.2. Case Study: 2

*Bilkiz Begam*, Age: 30 lives in *Askar Dighi* area, *Chittagong* with her child and old mother. She is working in a garment situated in *Kornel Hut*. Bilkiz is working in garments for last 12 years. She is from a remote village of *Sonapur, Nowakhali*. She came to Chittagong and started working in a garment, at the beginning of her job she was very low paid and according to her it was so poor that after giving house rent, she cannot manage regular three times meal. After hardworking of 5 years, she got employment in a garment factory with good wages.

In that garment she met with a handsome supervisor and that supervisor offered her to marry. There after Bilkiz married that supervisor and left her job. They had their child within one year. After one year of leaving her job one day in a road accident the husband of Bilkiz died. With the child of 09 months Bilkiz was helpless and again she joined in garment. Every morning Bilkiz has start from house at 6.30 and she returns home at 9.00 p.m. Bilkiz has very poor time to pass with her child. Bilkiz earns 16000 taka per month. According to Bilkiz though she is working very hard and in comparison to hard working the earning is poor but this garment sector is the only way for Bilkiz to survive. According to Bilkiz in her workplace there are very few facilities available. No rest and meal room available but there is arrangement of drinking water. The employer pays the wages and two bonus on time. The dream of Bilkiz is to provide her child a secured life.

## 5. Causes of Violations of the Rights of Women Workers

Under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights everyone has the right to work in a favorable condition of work (Article: 23). So a secure working condition is the fundamental rights of the workers. Not only in international instruments but also the domestic laws of Bangladesh including the constitution of Bangladesh provides safe guards to the rights of the workers. But reality is that the workers of Bangladesh yet to enjoy the rights to work in a safe and secure environment as women in our country have relatively limited educational, technical, and vocational training, as well as career chances [14]. There are several causes behind the problem. The causes of violation of the rights of the women workers are given below:

### ***5.1. Improper Infrastructure and Poor Application of Safety Measures***

Lack of proper infrastructure and application of safety measure have contributed serious accidents in Bangladesh. The owner of the garments are responsible to ensure safety measures but still garments are in operation in building which are unsafe. Accidents in the country's largest earning sector claimed the lives of 1512 workers between 2005 and 2013 while 1691 workers were killed between 1990 and 2013 [8]. There are some common reasons for the tragic accidents, for which owners of this buildings are responsible, such as, congested air circulation, poor and artificial lighting system, improper wiring and electrical design, careless smoking and spitting habits, narrow staircase and insufficient number of staircases, locked exit points at ground level, overload on electricity and electrical machines etc [7].

### ***5.2. Poverty and Illiteracy***

Women workers working in Garments are not highly educated and poor and mostly migrated from rural areas to cities. Because of poverty they are forced to accept employment in low wages and they have failed to raise their voice. On the other hand the average schooling of the women workers is 6.84 years, 2.50 percent are illiterate, 35 percent of the workers have primary education, and 48 percent have secondary education, while only 2.50 percent have higher secondary education. As their level of education is low, their working efficiency and working capacity is also low. For this, they have less bargaining power; they get poor remuneration and facilities from employers. Even they cannot explain what kind of jobs facilities they have in their present working place [11].

### ***5.3. Absence of Trade Union***

For the protection of the women workers trade union can play a vital role but it's unfortunate that in garments industries of Bangladesh the trade unions could never developed independently. In garments industries employers never welcome the tendency to unionize as they fear trade union. There are only 540 registered trade union in garments sector in Bangladesh [4].

### ***5.4. Absence of Regular Inspection***

Without regular inspection it is not possible to enforce labour laws. The Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishment is the body of the government to look after the enforcement of Labour laws in Bangladesh. The vision of the department is to ensure safe work place, favorable working environment and better life standard for worker. But this department has failed to fulfill the expectation. This department failed to conduct necessary inspection due to various limitations like insufficient man power, infrastructural limitations, lack of skilled inspector and lack of logistic support. The number of inspector is very poor in

comparison to the number of factories and establishment. In the year 1983, there were 63 inspectors engaged for inspection where there were only 50 factories. Now there are almost 5000 garments are in operation but we have seen number of inspector remained same. After Rana Plaza incidents on 24, April, 2013 this department started to inspect garments and till 16th March, 2016 they have completed inspection of 1549 garments factories though number of garments factories in the country is almost 5000.

### ***5.5. Corruption***

Corruption is a disease which hampers the implementation of the labour rights. The Garment owners are powerful. They use both money, their position and power. It is very common that in Bangladesh the trade union leaders are also take part in corruption. On the other hand according to law the chief labour inspector is empowered to approve many documents relating to labour issues but reality is that there is presence of extra money [12]. In some cases because of corruption the factory owners get rid of punishment too. The government incorporated industrial police for the safety of the workers but yet the activities of the industrial police is not satisfactory.

### ***5.6. Insufficient Number of Labour Court***

The present labour law is not sufficient to meet the present situation. In BLA the penalty for unfair labour practice is not enough. Besides this according to BLA for settlement of dispute there should be labour court. In Bangladesh there is only 07 labour court is functioning. The number of labour court is not sufficient to meet the large number of suit. Besides this the labour courts are suffering many problems [5].

### ***5.7. Unpunished Employers***

No offender should be unpunished. In Bangladesh a number of accidents took place and it is proved that the negligence and unwillingness to implement the safety rules on the part of owners are responsible for those accidents. But till today we have not seen that the employers are punished.

## **6. Recommendations and Way Forward**

For the economic growth of Bangladesh Ready Made Garment industry plays important role. If the rights of the women workers continuously violated and the rights are not implemented and protected one day the economy of the country will suffer. Economic condition can never sustain in good condition without protecting the women workers' rights. For improving situation it requires comprehensive plan and effort by the government, employer and national and international NGOs. The following suggestions may contribute to improve the situation:

- 1) For implementation of labour laws in RMG industries there should be established a separate department. This

department will be enriched with skilled, sufficient manpower and logistic support. The inspectors should be given power to enforce punishment for non-compliance of labour laws. The department must have a toll-free help line number so that the workers can make complain easily.

- 2) There should be a committee consisting of experts in different areas empowered to conduct inquiries of the accidents in RMG sector. This committee should be given freedom to conduct the inquiries fairly and necessary facilities. The reports of the committee must be published publicly. And importantly the government must take initiative to punish the wrong doers on the basis of the reports.
- 3) Persons authorized to manage the workers in garments must be well trained. Proper training on Human Resource Management can ensure proper management of the worker.
- 4) There should be an arrangement for fire protection tanning in every establishment with the supervision of the fire brigade department of Bangladesh.
- 5) The workers should be given appointment letter, Identity card and in every establishment the conditions of employment of the worker must be expressed and must be informed to the worker.
- 6) Considering the price hike and inflation the government must declare new salary structure for the worker.
- 7) The maternity leave period must be increased 6 months with full wages.
- 8) The number of Labour court must be increased and there should be legal aid facilities for the women workers.
- 9) The workers must be allowed to form trade union and the government can take necessary steps so that the workers can exercise the right to organization.
- 10) Finally Government, NGOs, organizations, media and the employer needs to undertake comprehensive awareness program so that the workers can be aware about their rights and raise their voice against the violation.

## 7. Future Implications and Limitation of the Study

An important implication of this study is that factory owners should emphasize on rules and policies practiced in their organization to maintain better working environment for women workers. The current study is pertinent to practitioners as well as union leaders, as the findings may help them to identify the problems and also some recommendations with which the industry owners will be able to facilitate their organizational goals. Despite the positive implications, the study has suffered from some limitations. Simple Random Sampling method used in this study may cause the problem of getting data from one part beside others which may have an effect on getting accurate results. Beside this, many women worker provide wrong information without understanding the fact as they were illiterate.

## 8. Conclusion

Workers in the Bangladeshi RMG industry have been denied their legal rights, they are even deprived of very basic rights given to them under the Labour Act, 2006. The workers are the worst victim of the violation of the labour rights. There is misconception among the garment's owners that implementation of labour rights require huge investment but true is labour rights can certainly promote a prudent industrial relations which encourages a conciliatory and relatively harmonious relation among the various parties involved in garment business. Labour law is most useful thing in implementing labour rights. But workers often claim that those right only exist in document but in practice largely overlooked and not implemented. That means there is gaps between law and practice. For mitigation of the gap it requires to take more co-ordinated initiatives by Government, garment entrepreneurs, international organizations and national and international NGOs. It is hoped that if the suggestion of the study implemented the violation of the rights of the worker will be reduced.

## Appendix

Enclosure (Questionnaire):

1. Name: 2. Age: 1. 18-25 2. 25-35 3. 35above
3. Name of Garment: 4. Marital Status: 1. Single 2. Married
5. Nature of Job: 1. Permanent 2. Probationer 3. Temporary 4. others
6. Whether appointment letter was given at the time of appointment or not?
  1. Yes 2. No
7. Is there any service rule?
  1. Yes 2. No
8. Does the employer maintain Service Book?
  1. Yes 2. No
9. In which area the garment building is situated?
  1. Industrial area 2. Commercial area 3. Residential area
10. Is the building a industrial building?



1. Yes                      2. No
11. Is the work place over crowded?
  1. Yes                      2. No
12. Is there any alternative stair for emergency exit?
  1. Yes                      2. No
13. Whether the entry/exit remains lock at the time of working hour?
  1. Yes                      2. No
14. Is there any arrangement for fire protection?
  1. Yes                      2. No
15. Does the employer arrange any fire protection training?
  1. Yes                      2. No
16. Whether separate toilet available for male and female?
  1. Yes                      2. No
17. Whether the toilet and wash room are clean?
  1. Yes                      2. No
18. Is there arrangement for safe drinking water?
  1. Yes                      2. No
19. Is there any arrangement of primary medical care facility?
  1. Yes                      2. No
20. Is there proper ventilation facility in the work place?
  1. Yes                      2. No
21. What is her working hour per day?
  1. 8 Hours    2. 10 Hours.    3. More than 10 Hours
22. For how many hours overtime has been given?
  1. Not given    2. 2 Hours    3. For all hours work of extra work
23. Are the worker bound to work more than 10 hours per day?
  1. Yes                      2. No
24. Does the worker receive regular wages?
  1. Yes                      2. No
25. Is the wages enough to meet your basic needs?
  1. Yes                      2. No
26. Whether maternity leave is given or not?
  1. Yes                      2. No
27. Tenure of maternity leave:
  1. 1 to 4 weeks    2. 4 to 8 weeks    3. Have to negotiate with employer
28. Whether Wages at the time of maternity leave is given or not?
  1. Yes                      2. No
29. Is there any trade union?
  1. Yes                      2. No
30. Are you a member of any trade union?
  1. yes                      2. No
31. Is there any restriction imposed by the employer to participate in the trade union?
  1. Direct restriction    2. Indirect restriction    3. No restriction

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