



Social Abuses and Health Risk Assessment of Female Garment Workers in Bangladesh

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Abstract

This paper is an endeavor to depict the social abuses and health risks assessment of the female garment workers from two perspectives. One is social perspective and the other is health perspective. The objective is to explore socio economic condition of female workers and also know the maternal health problem of female garments workers. The analysis is based on the survey of 60 female workers of 3 garment industrial units located in different parts of Kanchpur are in Narayanganj. This study suggests that the frequency of sexual harassment against female garment workers is still in precarious condition and they are not free from social exploitation and face extreme difficulties in obtaining their basic needs for survival even. Most of all the study will inform the reader about unhappy condition of female garment worker at Kanchpur area in Narayanganj.

Keywords: Social Abuses; Health Risks; Garments Workers; Vulnerability and Work Environment

Introduction

Readymade garment sector helps to decrease poverty and to increase women empowerment in Bangladesh at present. In Bangladesh RMG industry contributed new employment opportunities i.e. especially for female employees and currently this sector is known as the most important source of employment for female workers of Bangladesh where more than 85 percent of the production employees are women [6]. In the garment sector, abuse of female workers starts from enrollment process by not providing the appointment letter [2]. Women are measured in a different way in case of salary and promotions. The working environment of the factory is not pleasant because of congested employees performing different activities in the same floor [9]. Socio-economic dimension, familial dimensions and psychological dimensions are three key dimensions of women's empowerment [8]. Female workers are measured as a cheaper, accessible, more vulnerable, submissive and manageable rather than male workers

in garment sectors. They are also showed less likely to be organized and capable to "anti-management propaganda" from outside [7].

Women are treated unequally by born in Bangladesh because of having patriarchal society. It starts from the family and goes up in different sectors like the garment sector in the outside world. Their family members sometimes prohibit them to go outside the home. Consequently, they face challenges to join outside workforce like the garment sector [4].

This is at the family level, where women's voice is not heard, and thus, it shows the disempowerment of women in the family. To shed light on women workers' absence of voice at home, this research aims to show the social and health condition of female garment workers. In the outside world, exploitation of garment women workers starts from the very beginning of their recruitment process in the garment sector. During the recruitment process, most of the women workers are not given formal job contract papers [2].

They face gender discrimination in terms of wages and access to higher ranking positions [1]. Sometimes they are victims of sexual and verbal abuse by their male managers and supervisors [5]. In addition, their working conditions in the garment factories are not good for them. The factory's air quality is contaminated, very hot and dusty as sewing, cutting and ironing are done on the same floor. Moreover, the work place is overcrowded [9].

There are not sufficient toilets for women workers in most of the garment factories. Because of this uncongenial working environment, workers in the garment factories suffer from various diseases like fever, headache, back pain, eye infection, jaundice, typhoid, weakness or anemia, skin diseases, diarrhea and so on [3].

Objectives of the study

Main objectives

The research is to conduct to know the social abuses and health conditions of female garment workers: A sociological study on Kanchpur area.

Specific objectives:

- To know the maternal health problem of female garments workers.
- To find out the consequence of heavy workload on family life.

Methodology

This research included research design, sampling, data collection methods, methods of data analysis. It needs both quantitative and qualitative approach to reach the purpose.

Study area

The study has been conducted at Kachpur in Narayanganj. Because Kachpur has most interesting combination of features that make it attractive as an area for study. Its geographical position makes it convenient to view in the context of changes that are likely to cause effect on urban living. Kachpur is a sub-city of Narayanganj and most of the garments industries are situated in Kachpur. That is why the garments worker lives in Kachpur near their workplace. Lack of time, money and for convenience of communication as well as to gets sufficient respondents researcher choose the area for facilitating the study.

Sample size

The study provided information and justification about sample size in the methodological section. This section provides the reader where the data has been collected, how we selected sample, and how many subjects has been included in the study. We collected data from Kanchpur city, taking sample using purposive sampling of non-probability sampling. Purposive sampling indicates selection by design by choice not by chance. As it is impossible to collect data from all the garment workers and is time consuming, we took 60 respondents of female worker.

Purposive sampling method

In this method, certain units are selected purposively for judgment by the researchers. In this selection, the researcher tries to make the selection as representative. The investigator selects the relevant and representative sample as far as possible. The investigator selects the relevant and representative sample as far as possible. The investigator also ensures that the frequency and the distribution. There are different types of female garment workers who get salary more than the other garment workers according to their educational qualification. Some of the female garment worker get more salary i.e. textile engineer and general manager of garment factory. The researcher has rejected those types of female workers who get more salary and who have higher social status or socio-economic condition. The researcher has purposively selected those types of female workers who get lower salary and having low social status, so that the researcher can find out the real socio-economic condition of female garment workers.

Techniques of data collection

The selection of the research approach is the core of research approach is the core of research design. It is a most important decision, the investigator or researcher has to make. There are two approaches of research; quantitative and qualitative and both has different techniques of data collection. In this research I followed the quantitative approach to get a statistical and analytical measurement of my findings.

Survey method

For conducting this survey, an interview schedule has been used containing pertinent questions in relations to the objectives of the study. For the constraints of time and resources, it is convenient

to conduct social survey method to conduct data from primary sources.60 respondents of working women are selected for interview schedule.

Question paper

Instrument development of female garment workers: A sociological study on socio –economic and health condition of female garment workers: A sociological study on Kanchpur area. A necessary question with a number of sub questions has been formed for collecting the quantitative data. Both the open ended and close ended question for the study has been used.

Sources of data

The study is primarily dependent on primary data. Data were collected directly from the respective field through survey and researcher’s keen observation. Some secondary data have also been used to strengthen the rationality of the study and for better and comprehensive analysis. Secondary data were collected from different journals, books, research publications, reports and other documents. Data from both secondary and primary sources helped a lot to give the study powerful logical framework.

Data collection procedure

This research is an analytical; the researcher has employed an interview schedule for collecting necessary data of the study. Before going to interview, the researcher made an effort to create such an atmosphere in which the respondents would be comfortable to talk in an independent manner. Each interview session was with an individual respondent. The researcher tried to spend maximum period of time with each of the respondents to discover their insights, perceptions and experiences about the nature of workload of Garment Workers and Its Impact on Health and Family: A Sociological Study.

Result and Discussion

Socio-demographic information of the respondent

This section focuses upon the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The demographic characteristics refers to a group of people that has a particular set of quality such as age, gender, religion education, types of family, monthly family income and so on. However following are the data presentation and analysis of the socio-demographic information of the respondents.

Major Characteristics	Variable Categories	Frequency	Percent
Socio-Demographic information	Age of the respondents		
	15-25	19	31.67%
	26-35	24	40%
	36-45	14	23.33%
	45-above	3	5%
	Religion of the respondents		
	Islam	54	90%
	Hindu	6	10%
	Christian	0	0%
	Others	0	0%
	Educational qualification		
	Primary	17	28.33%
	Secondary	14	23.33%
Higher secondary	4	6.67%	
Illiterate	25	41.67%	
Marital status			
Married	34	56.67%	
Unmarried	19	31.67%	
Divorce	07	11.67%	

Table 1: Socio-Demographic information of the respondents N = 60.

Table 1 shows the percentage distribution of the age of the respondents. There are four aged groups of female garment workers in this study. The data of the mentioned table shows that, there are 31.67% respondents are 15-25 aged groups, 40% respondents are 26-35 aged groups, 23.33% respondents are 36-45 aged groups, and 5% respondents are above 45 aged groups. So the table indicates that, most of the respondents belong to 26-35 age range. Table-1 indicates the percentage distribution of the religion of the respondent. Most of the respondents (90%) are the believer of Islam, a very few number of respondents (10%) are the believer of Hinduism. There are no respondents from Christianity and Buddhism. Most of the people of Bangladesh are Muslim so the respondent from Muslim is more. The educational

qualification of the respondents is represented on table. The level of education is divided into four parameters such as primary, secondary, higher secondary and illiterate. The table shows that about 28.33% respondents completed their primary education, 23.33% completed their secondary education and only 6.67% completed higher secondary education and a significant number of respondents (41.67%) have no education. Table shows the percentage distribution of the marital status of the respondents, where a significant number of respondents 56.67% are married and 31.67% unmarried and among the respondents 11.67% are divorcee.

Major Characteristics	Variable Categories	Frequency	Percent
Reason behind joining as a garment worker	Illness of husband	16	26.67%
	Death of husband	5	8.33%
	Inability of husband	8	13.33%
	Economic solvency	27	45%
	Other	4	6.67%
Types of harassment	Eve teasing	21	35%
	Sexual	6	10%
	Physical	10	16.67%
	Economic	23	38.33%
Harasser	Boss	2	3.33%
	Manager	18	30%
	Supervisor	8	13.33%
	Colleague	32	53.33%
Types of social restriction	Socially neglected	23	38.33%
	Insecure for women	18	30%
	Problem during marriage	16	26.67%

Table 2: Socio-Economic information of the respondents N = 60.

Table 2 shows the percentage distribution of the reason behind joining as a garment worker. Women from both rural and urban areas joined the garment factory for different causes. The above table shows that most of the respondents joined as a garment worker because of poverty and for economic solvency and their percentage is about 45% among all of the respondents. 26.67% respondents joined work for their husband's illness, 8.33% for husband's death, 13.33% for inability of husband and 6.67% for

another reason. Table shows the percentage distribution of types of harassment of the respondent. The female garment workers have to face different type of harassment during their work at their workplace. The types of harassment suffered by the respondents are according to its percentage is 35% for eve-teasing, 10% for sexual, 16.67% for physical and 38.33% for economic harassment. Table shows the percentage distribution of the harasser by whom the respondent being harassed. The female garment worker suffers by different types of harassment in their workplace and they are victim to these problems by the boss, manager, supervisor and colleague. 3.33% suffered by the boss, 30% suffer by the manager, 13.33% by the supervisor and 53.33% are being harassed by the colleague. Table shows the percentage distribution of the types of social restriction faced by the respondents. The above table mentioned that there are 38.33% respondents who think that they are socially neglected. 30% female garment worker seems that the workplace is not secure for them. 26.67% respondent has to face problem during their marriage, as a garment worker they cannot get married in any develop family.

Major Characteristics	Variable Categories	Frequency	Percent
Harmful aspect	Unhygienic environment	21	35%
	Duty during night shift	14	23.33%
	Work by standing/sitting for long time.	25	41.67%
	Over workload	16	26.67%
Problem during pregnancy	Lack of nutritious food	24	40%
	Lack of treatment	14	23.33%
	Below 2 month	23	38.33%
Duration of vacation during pregnancy	2-3 month	32	53.33%
	3 month and above	5	8.33%
	Workplace environment	Instability of job	6
Risk of accident		29	48.33%
Deprivation by the owner		15	25%
Physical and mental harass		10	16.67%

Table 3: Health risks of the respondents.

Table 3 shows the percentage distribution of harmful aspects of garments during pregnancy of the respondents. The study of this research is mainly focus on health condition of female garments worker. Women's are related to give birth of child, they are the productive issue. So the world pregnancy is related to women. In a garment factory women have to work for a long period of time that effects on their body during pregnancy. Table shows that 35% women think that the environment of garment is harmful for their health during pregnancy. 23.33% blamed the work during night shift is risky for pregnant female garment worker. Most of the respondent 41.67% thinks that it is very harmful to work by standing or sitting for a long period of time for the pregnant women. Table shows the percentage distribution of problem faced by the female garments during pregnancy. The female garments worker faced different problem during problem. The above mentioned table that women are facing different problem like over workload 26.67%, lack of nutritious food 40% lack of treatment 23.33%. Table shows the percentage distribution of duration of vacation during pregnancy. Before we knew that most of the respondent gets vacation during their pregnancy. But the vacation is not enough for the pregnant women. Women who are pregnant have to suffer most for the workload of their workplace. They need enough vacation but the table show that 38.33% get vacation below 2 month, 53.33% get vacation for 2-3 month and only 8.33% get vacation above 3 month but these are very low according to the need of a garment worker. Table shows the percentage distribution of the aspect of workplace that negatively effect on family life of the respondents. The workplace is not good for the work their possibility of different problem. 10% respondents have the fair of instability of job, 25% deprived by the owned, and 16.67% physically and mentally harassed during their work.

Table shows the percentage distribution of the type of effect that affects the children of the respondents. 35% respondent think as they cannot get enough time to look after about the education of their children it negatively effect on the education of their children. 23.33% think that it effects on the food of their child, their child cannot take food in time. 30% respondent thinks that it effects on their child's security.

Conclusion

At beginning of each interview the researcher had collected socio-demographic background of garment workers. The objective

of this section is to know about their age, religion, education, marital status work environment and so on of the workers. The study indicates that most of the respondents are believed that there is inequality of income between male and female at workplace. Most of the respondent believes that income inequality between male and female depend on the nature of job. It is seemed that workers are weak than male workers. Besides, female workers lost their job frequently because of pregnancy. The study finally reports that most of the respondents don't know of labor rights and even the authority doesn't know of this properly as well as they don't obey the rules and regulation. As the female garment workers are not proper educated they have no knowledge of this. There is no opportunity to get economic solvency by working in a garments factory with this little income but they desire for that if they get economic solvency, they won't work in the garment factory and they will start new business and became self-employed.

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