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**Working environment of Bangladesh garment industry in
perspective of international business**

Master's thesis

Programme International Business Administration

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the paper independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors has been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to explore and to examine how the working environment of garment industry on the basis of the investigated company can impact on its international or cross border business . International buyers always want to buy a better quality product at competitive cheap price. They neither want to know nor care about how a cheap product coming from this industry, what is the internal situation of this factory, or is this factory following the international standards, rules, good practices and regulation regarding laborhealth and safety. In this research perspective, author has chosen Bangladesh garment industry's working environment, along with an incident of Rana Plaza disaster, where more than 1,100 peoplewas killed, in order to demonstrate how working environment can impact directly on its international business.

The current research is explorative and aims at providing understanding of the contemporary safety management in the garment company in Bagladesh. It etapts to discover and to capture aspects about safety management system within the context of industrial company. This research applies an interpretive approach using both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to provide a few systematic conceptualizations on how safety is valued and managed in the investigated company. The study applied multiple (mixed) methods of data collection and data analysis, using bothqualitative (telephone interviews)andquantitative (online questionnaire) approaches. Online questionnaire and interview questions were developed based on literature review and research questions.

Keywords: RMG sectors, Labour Safety, International Business, Cheap Labor, Rana Plaza Collapse.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Bangladesh is a country with population of 160 million. The huge portion of the population live below the extreme poverty level. As a Muslim conservation country, women are not being promoted or motivated to work out of home. But reason of extreme poverty, women must need to go out for work. Garments industry in Bangladesh is the only one sector where 4 million people work at cheap wages (WB, 2018). It is known, that garments industry has become as one of the possibilities for the poor unemployed people in Bangladesh to find a job and to survive.

On the other hand, the export-oriented garment industry in Bangladesh has grown rapidly and took the place of main wheel of Bangladesh to run economy.(Mottaleb, 2011). This sector provides the single source of growth in Bangladesh's rapidly developing economy. Exporting garments and textiles are one of the main sources of earning foreign exchange earnings. The apparel industry, employer of 4 million workers, mostly rural women, contributed 83.49% of Bangladesh's total exports of \$36.66 billion to date(BGMEA, 2018).

In 1972, the World Bank approximated the gross domestic product (GDP) of Bangladesh at US\$6.29 billion, and it grew to \$286 billion by 2018, with \$41 billion of that generated by exports, more than 82% of which was ready-made garments. (Dhaka Tribune, 2018). In the year 2016, Bangladesh took place world second largest garments exporter just after China. Bangladesh's garments market are mostly western market oriented, more than half of exports to European buyers and almost forty percent to North American buyers. In Bangladesh garment industry, only 5 percent ownerships is from foreign investors and rest is local owners. In the financial year 2017-2018 the RMG industry exports \$36 billion, according to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA). (The Daily Star, 2018)

Case Analysis

In 24th April 2013, a disaster happened in Bangladesh history. A garment factory named “Rana Plaza” collapsed in Savar, Dhaka and left thousandlabours died on spot. In officially was declared 1134 people died, but it’s believed more than 2000 labours were died in this tragic incident, as Bangladesh government was being convicted of hiding dead numbers as fear of cricisism around the world. This incident had impact directly not only on Bangladesh’s economy, but also on the image of garment industry in international business(Donaghey and Reinecke, 2018). Bangladesh’s labour safety issue come into the front and being criticized from the world.

Rana Plaza had been marked as unsafe the days before the incident, but owner avoided the warnings and forced the labors to join the work, and building collapsed during morning rush hour.The incident of collapsed raied the issue of lack of auditing, safety management, the question of labor safety and the absence of worker voice in order to refuce to work in unsafe working conditions in Bangladesh (Donaghey and Reinecke, 2018). The factory manufactured apparel includingBentton, Bonmarche, The Children’s Place, El Crte Ingles, Joe Fresh, Monsoon Accessorize, Mango, Matalan, Primark and Walmart.(Forbes, 2014)

Bangladesh had been facing high pressure around the world to take reasonable action against this incident and to insure the labor health and safety (reference). Karel De Gucht, the formal EU commissioner for trade, warned that Bangladesh government and the retailers could face action to get access into the EU market, and also buyer shouldn’t spend their money there. (CNN, 2013). Pope Freancis also spoke out againt the labor slavery.“A headline that really struck me on the day of the tragedy in Bangladesh was 'Living on 38 euros a month'. That is what the people who died were being paid. This is called slave labour. Today in the world this slavery is being committed against something beautiful that God has given us – the capacity to create, to work, to have dignity. How many brothers and sisters find themselves in this situation! Not paying fairly, not giving a job because you are only looking at balance sheets, only looking at how to make a profit. That goes against God!” (Vatican Radio, 2013)

Not only that, Bangladesh had to pay a heavy price also in economically, as it lost a lot of potential foreign buyers. Many retail giants refused to buy products from Bangladesh garments market over labour safety(BDnews, 2014). Dozens of consumers in the United States and Australia spoke out against unsafe working conditions found in the factory building. People also

expressed their anger at retailers that are related to sourcing their products from there, but did not have any direct connections to that specific building, but are known to buy products at cheap price from factories located in Bangladesh.

In June 2013, US suspends GPS (Generalised System of Preference) facilities for Bangladesh over labour safety issue along with the incident of Tazreen Fashion fire and Rana Plaza collapse. In the fiscal year of 2013-14, Bangladesh exported goods to USA worth more than \$5.58 billion, with 95 percent of them being garment products, which were subjected to 15.61 percent duty. EU officials also raised the possibility of suspension of GSP in the hope of prodding Bangladesh into action as Bangladesh exports \$19 billion only into the EU market. (The Daily Star, 2013)

The tragedy had served as a huge wake-up call for the global industry regarding to Bangladesh when it comes to the human cost of cheap clothing. Bangladesh government started to facing huge pressure around the globe regarding working environment improvement. Even companies like H&M, Walmart, JC Penney, Inditex, Zara, Gap, M&S, Uniqlo, C&A, Tesco, Hugo Boss, Addidas were being questioned about buying a product from a poor labour safety place because of the cheap price, whose had been the biggest buyers of Bangladesh garments product. (Reuters, 2013). In regards of Rana Plaza incident, more than 200 major brands including H&M, Fruit of the Loom and Calvin Klein's parent company PVH signed onto the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh. Bangladesh government also started inspection of all the garment factories over the country, and sold more than 1000 garment factories over safety issue. Organization like BGMEA, ACCORD, Alliance, ILO, the Srimantro Garment Sramik Federation made a huge effort in order to improve the situations.

Research questions

Based on the above, the aim of the study is to explore and to examine how the working environment of garment industry on the basis of the investigated company can impact on its international or cross border business.

To achieve the aim of the study, research questions were defined as follow:

CRQ: Why working environment of Bangladesh RMG sector is a barrier for international business?

Through this research author will try to find out how an internal working environment of a company can impact on its external trade. For research purpose, some other questions will be followed: what had the impact of Rana Plaza tragedy in RMG sector in Bangladesh? How social organizations contributing to protect labour rights in Bangladesh? What are the factors need to be improved in RMG sector in Bangladesh?

Abbreviation

RMG – (Ready-made garments)

BGMEA – (Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association)

BKMEA – (Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporter Association)

NUK – (NariUddugKendtro) – *Centre for women's initiatives*

BLF – (Bangladesh Labour Foundation)

ILO – (International Labour Organization)

BLA – (Bangladesh Labour Act)

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Garment Industry in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is one of the world most densely populated country with 160 million people. Economic condition could be considered as developing country, but the vast majority of the population still below the poverty line. Lack of job opportunity is a main problem for this huge population. Bangladesh garment industry has become the main sector of hope for the Bangladeshi unemployed people. Especially it's a sector of blessing for the women workers in a country like Bangladesh, as an Islamic conservative society.

Table 1: Bangladesh garment factories and labor growth

Source: BGMEA

YEAR	NUMBER OF GARMENT FACTORIES	EMPLOYMENT IN MILLION WORKERS
1984-85	384	0.12
1985-86	594	0.20
1986-87	629	0.28
1987-88	685	0.31
1988-89	725	0.32
1989-90	759	0.34
1990-91	834	0.40
1991-92	1163	0.58
1992-93	1537	0.80
1993-94	1839	0.83
1994-95	2182	1.20
1995-96	2353	1.29
1996-97	2503	1.30
1997-98	2726	1.50
1998-99	2963	1.50
1999-00	3200	1.60
2000-01	3480	1.80
2001-02	3618	1.80
2002-03	3760	2.00
2003-04	3957	2.00
2004-05	4107	2.00

2005-06	4220	2.20
2006-07	4490	2.40
2007-08	4743	2.80
2008-09	4925	3.50
2009-10	5063	3.60
2010-11	5150	3.60
2011-12	5400	4.00
2012-13	5876	4.00
2013-14	4222	4.00
2014-15	4296	4.00
2015-16	4328	4.00
2016-17	4482	4.00
2017-18	4560	4.00

In the year of 1984-85, there were only 384 garment factories in Bangladesh with 0.12 million employees, according to the BGMEA data. Meanwhile, in year 2017-2018 there are 4560 factories with 4 million people. The rising of this industry is because of the quality of product and cheap labor. In table you can notice, in the year of 2012-2013, there were 5876 factories in Bangladesh, but in 2013-2014 year only 4222 factories are there. The reason behind is Rana Plaza collapse in 2013. After this incident, Bangladesh government along with BGMEA started inspecting all the garment factories in Bangladesh over building and fire safety issue, and they finally sealed more than one thousand factories in Bangladesh.

Table 2: Comparative statement on export of RMG and total export of Bangladesh

Source: Bangladesh Export Promotion Bureau, compiled by BGMEA

YEAR	EXPORT OF RMG (IN MILLION US\$)	TOTAL EXPORT OF BANGLADESH (IN MILLION US\$)	% OF RMG'S TO TOTAL EXPORT
1983-84	31.57	811	3.89
1984-85	116.2	934.43	12.44
1985-86	131.48	819.21	16.05
1986-87	298.67	1076.61	27.74
1987-88	433.92	1231.2	35.24
1988-89	471.09	1291.56	36.47
1989-90	624.16	1923.7	32.45
1990-91	866.82	1717.55	50.47
1991-92	1182.57	1993.9	59.31
1992-93	1445.02	2382.89	60.64
1993-94	1555.79	2533.9	61.4
1994-95	2228.35	3472.56	64.17
1995-96	2547.13	3882.42	65.61
1996-97	3001.25	4418.28	67.93
1997-98	3781.94	5161.2	73.28
1998-99	4019.98	5312.86	75.67
1999-00	4349.41	5752.2	75.61
2000-01	4859.83	6467.3	75.14
2001-02	4583.75	5986.09	76.57
2002-03	4912.09	6548.44	75.01
2003-04	5686.09	7602.99	74.79
2004-05	6417.67	8654.52	74.15
2005-06	7900.8	10526.16	75.06
2006-07	9211.23	12177.86	75.64
2007-08	10699.8	14110.8	75.83
2008-09	12347.77	15565.19	79.33
2009-10	12496.72	16204.65	77.12

2010-11	17914.46	22924.38	78.15
2011-12	19089.73	24301.9	78.55
2012-13	21515.73	27027.36	79.61
2013-14	24491.88	30186.62	81.13
2014-15	25491.4	31208.94	81.68
2015-16	28094.16	34257.18	82.01
2016-17	28149.84	34655.9	81.23
2017-18	30614.76	36668.17	83.49

Garment industry of Bangladesh is being considered as the economy wheel of Bangladesh. Garment sector not only employing four million people, but also contributing as the main export product of Bangladesh. In 1983-1984 economic year, RMG sector had only 3 percent of contribution to the total export of Bangladesh. Meanwhile, in 2017-18 economic year, it had 83.5 percent of contribution to the total export of Bangladesh. From this data, it's impossible to image Bangladesh economy and its export without garment sectors. Another important thing should be noted here, the overall export of RMG products didn't fall even after Rana Plaza collapse, rather it increased.

1.2.Women's contribution

Being a Muslim country, Bangladesh is not working friendly for women workers. Neither it's being considered as a positive women working outside of the house. But for the reason of poverty, women are going outside to work and to support their family and children. Bangladesh garment industry in the main sector of employment for women. The majority of women moved to the city from rural area for job opportunities. There are more than 70 percent of women are employed in Bangladesh garment industry. There are lot of sad news out from garment industry, including sexual abuse, overtime issue, low wages, maternity leave etc. In some garment factories, workers are set for a target production for a day. In anyone can't complete this target during the working hours, then they need to work overtime that not paid. Being a women specially the new women workers face such situations.However, women workers still being promoted in the Bangladesh garment industry.

1.3. Regulatory bodies

BGMEA

BGMEA (Bangladesh garment manufactures and exporters association) is the main organization for the Bangladesh garment industry. BGMEA was founded in 1977 in order to protect garment rights in Bangladesh along with increasing production and export. But now it has taken the charge of whole garment industry under its rules and regulation. Establishing any garment factory need to be registered in BGMEA and must be compiled with its rules and regulation.

As a parent of Bangladesh garment industry, BGMEA is involved with some activities regarding the betterment of this industry.

- Inspecting garments
- Building & fire safety
- Trading barriers
- Promoting Bangladesh garments
- Building relationship with foreign buyers
- Training and employee betterment

BGMEA is all about protecting the interest of Bangladesh garment industry. To build up better and skilled workforce, BGMEA established BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology. This university playing a great role in the Bangladesh garment industry.

BKMEA

BKMEA (Bangladesh knitwear manufacturers & exporters association) is an another important and powerful organization after BGMEA in Bangladesh. It was formed in 1996 in order to expand the ready made garment industry and assisting government and garment manufacturers according with guidelines. BKMEA is working to find out new markets for Bangladesh garment products. There are some other activities where BKMEA is involved with:

- Expanding global market of knitwear
- Sustainable development in knitwear sector

- Raise awareness in knitwear sectors
- Research and Development
- In house skill training
- Product diversification

BKMEA also working with other local and foreign organization regarding Bangladesh knitwear products and its expansions.

Social Organizations

NUK (NariUddugKendro)

NUK is a non government and non profit social organization working for women in Bangladesh. They work for women both in rural and urban areas to protect women's rights and to ensure their safety. Along with NUK works for implementing ILO standards in workplaces. NUK also engaged with some other social activities to empowering women in Bangladesh.

BLF

BLF (Bangladesh Labour Foundation) is an another non government and non profit social organization represents the interest of working people in Bangladesh. BLF works for creating productive and independent working environment by ensuring a safe, basic social, human rights and justice for labours in Bangladesh. BLF has huge contribution in Bangladesh garment industry for labour rights. The main objectives of this organization are followed:

- Awareness & capability building
- Strengthening trade union
- Elimination of child labour
- Prevention of HIV AIDS
- Workers welfare
- Combate human trafficking
- Ensure maternity and child care
- Promote gender equality
- Literacy for children and adult

1.4.Principles of Business Ethics

Ethics is a measure of standard to deal with moral principles, the person's behavior or conduct of an activity. Ethics refers to the moral philosophy that involves the concept of wrong and right conduct. According to world renowned philosopher Swami Vivekananda, "Ethics always says, "Not I, but thou." Its motto is, "Not self, but non-self." The vain ideas of individualism, to which man clings when he is trying to find that Infinite Power or that Infinite Pleasure through the senses, have to be given up — say the laws of ethics. You have to put yourself last and others before you. The senses say, "Myself first." Ethics says, "I must hold myself last." Thus, all codes of ethics are based upon this renunciation; destruction, not construction, of the individual on the material plane. That Infinite will never find expression upon the material plane, nor is it possible or thinkable." (Vivekananda 1964, p 63)

Meanwhile, business ethics refers all the ethical value and conduct or practicing in an organization regarding their business activities. Business ethics are applied in all the forms of activities in an organization either internal or external. "It is the study of how personal moral norms apply to the activities and goals of commercial enterprise. It is not a separate moral standard, but the study of how the business context poses its own unique problems for the moral person who acts as an agent of this system" (Nash 1990). John (1989) described, "business ethics in short can be described as a systematic study of moral (ethical) matters pertaining to business, industry or related activities, institutions or practices and beliefs". According to Strenberg, "business ethics applies ethical reasoning to business situations and activities. It is based on a combination of distributive justice – that is, the issuing of rewards for judgment that is placed on all activities" (Strenberg 1994).

Similarly, the concern of doing right and wrongs in business is measured by the organizational business ethics. "Organizational ethics is concerned with good and bad or right and wrong behavior and practices that take place within a business context. Concept of right and wrong is increasingly being interpreted today to include the more difficult and subtle questions of fairness, justice and equality" (Carroll and Buchholtz 2001). On the other hand, Peter F. Drucker

concerned about moral aspects of business discipline as business ethics. Business ethics as “it asserts that acts that are not immoral or illegal if done by ordinary folk become immoral or illegal if done by ‘business’” (Drucker 1981). “Drucker looked at business ethics as more of a ‘media event than philosophy or morals’ and recognizes that, while ‘fashionable’, business ethics is more of an ‘ethical chic’ based on good politics” (Malcolm and Hartley 2009). Some other authors also have a similar opinion as Peter F. Drucker. According to Murty (2006), business ethics is “moral principles that define right and wrong behavior in the world of business. What constitutes right and wrong behavior in business is determined by the public interest groups, and business organizations, as well as an individual’s personal morals and values”.

1.5. Concept of Safety Management

The concept of Safety Management Systems (SMS) has been studied and developed from the principles of good working conditions and strong organizational (safety) culture, high reliability organizations as well as organizational resilience.

Managing risk is one of the primary objectives of firms operating internationally. The current thesis will examine how the introduction of SMS is affecting the way safety risks are managed in the garment industry in Bangladesh, focusing on management decision-making.

Safety management systems (SMS) theory, on the one hand, seems to be a somewhat more specifically oriented towards the organization’s management and control processes as well as safety culture and on the other hand, seems to be related to the directives of the international standardization organization (ISO), management processes that are oriented towards safety control are awarded increasing importance.

The approach applied in the current study is safety management system based on Hale et al (1997) approach. Hale et al (1997) has build a theory and model of SMS design. They write: “Quality management systems are designed to detect and correct deviations from quality standards. This concept of deviation from a desired standard or ideal situation is also well known in safety” (1997, p. 128).

Principles of Labor Safety in Bangladesh

Bangladesh Labor Act 2006 consolidates the law regarding employments of labor, labor and employer relation, minimum wages, compensation for injuries and other matters. Managing health and safety is one of the top priority of this act. “One full time fire officer and one full time welfare officer are required by legislation if the factory has 500 or more workers” (Sections 55 (12) & 79 BLR). It was also recommended that organizations to make sure these persons to cover other OSH issues and also emphasized to appoint in smaller factories as well. It was also stated that these persons should have enough time to perform their duties and training and practices as well. Management must assure the workers that there will not be any adverse impact if they raise an OSH issue (BLA 86; BLR 79 & Schedule IV 1, 11 & 12).

The Safety Committee, fire safety officer and the employer must arrange training for the various groups (managers, supervisors, maintenance staff; first aid, Managing Health & Safety in the Workplace n 5 evacuation and firefighting teams; guards and workers).It is recommended to establish an annual training plan. The training must be free and happen during paid working hours. Workers must be trained before they begin working. Information must be repeated frequently, incl. after any change in production processes (BLA 78A; Schedule IV 1, 5 & 13).

According to this labor rules of Bangladesh, every factory or industry whose are employed with 50 workers or more is required to constitute a safety committee. The members of the Safety Committee need to conduct regular thorough inspections of the workplace to identify hazards (at least every quarter; Schedule IV 1, 2 & 4 BLR). Everybody in the factory needs to be informed about their responsibilities for OSH and understand the risks and control measures in place. An information board specific to OSH is required (BLR 80).

Bangladesh government also finalized very clear objectives for labor to be acknowledged in order of safety issue. Every workers need to contribute to the safety of the organization. A better knowledge of safety instruction among the workers can help the minimize of loses. According to the labor act of Bangladesh, Workers must take reasonable care to protect their own health, and the health of others that may be affected by their actions or omissions at work. Concretely this means, workers must:

- Comply with all safety procedures
- Follow reasonable instructions the employer gives on health and safety
- Ask questions whenever one is unsure about the procedure to follow
- Use the correct tools and equipment for the job; keep it in good condition
- Use machine equipment provided to protect health and safety as well as personal protective equipment
- Not block emergency pathways, exits and firefighting equipment
- Not work under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Immediately report any hazards they identify to management
- Report any arrangement intended to protect health which is not effective (not just ignore the problem and carry on working in unsafe conditions)
- Promptly report accidents to supervisors

(62, 78A,86, 150& 331 BLA)

In September 2018, Bangladesh government approved Bangladesh Labor Act (amendment) bill 2018. After lot of incident like Rana Plaza collapse, TazrinFashin fire in the labor industry, Labor act 2018 was more upgraded from previous experiences. The bill was upgraded with more ILO rules and regulation in order to provide more facilities for workers. Under this law, child labor has been taken very strictly. Anyone employ any child in his or her factory have to pay 5000 BDT as fine. If any female worker gives birth to a baby before informing the authorities, she will get an eight-week leave within three days after informing the authorities. If the factory authorities do not allow her to go on leave, they will be fined Tk 25,000. (BLA 2018, sec 47). In case of natural death, the family of the worker concerned will get Tk 2 lakh as compensation, which was Tk1 lakh in the previous law, and in the case of injury, they will get Tk 2.50 lakh, which is now Tk 1.25 lakh. (BLA 2018).

1.6. Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility generally known as CRS an important point of view in business ethics. Corporate social responsibility in an organization well described by stakeholder theory. The theory describes the value of all stakeholders not only shareholders. Customer, employees, suppliers, investors, communities and others who have the involvement with the organization should have the interconnected relationship between the organization according to the theory. “The 21st Century is one of “Managing for Stakeholders.” The task of executives is to create as much value as possible for stakeholders without resorting to tradeoffs. Great companies endure because they manage to get stakeholder interests aligned in the same direction.” (Freeman, 1984).

Similarly, Johnson and Scholes explained, “Corporate social responsibility is concerned with the ways in which an organization exceeds the minimum obligations to stakeholders specified through regulation and corporate governance” (Johnson and Scholes 2002). According to Jamali’s (2008) perspective, CSR is concerned and committed to contributing company’s sustainable development, maximizing shareholders interest and improvement of social conditions. On the other hand, Hopkins defines corporate social responsibility “concerned with treating the stakeholders of the firm ethically or in a responsible manner.” (Hopkins 2007). He also added, “The wider aim of social responsibility is to create higher and higher standards of living, while preserving the profitability of the corporation, for peoples both within and outside the corporation” (Hopkins 2007).

1.7. Business Ethics in Bangladesh

The business ethics in Bangladesh is not commendable. There is a long way of work and practices needed. Especially in public and small organization, the ethical approaches of business are being followed very poorly. But in large organizations, the practices of business ethics are being developed gradually. As Bangladesh is an economy in transition, the evolutionary process of transforming its business ethical values, norms and moralities has greatly hampered its organizational culture (Hoque, Khan & Mowla, 2013) and development. Business organizations are not yet fully implementing international standards or codes of ethics, though, Islamic motivation significantly can contribute to the organizational ethics in Bangladesh (Ather, Khan & Hoque, 2011). A survey was carried out by world bank (2009) based on the ten component of

factors among 180 countries in order to measure the business ethics standard in the organization. Singapore was taken place of the top meanwhile Bangladesh was in the below of list as of 119th position. This picture doesn't show the good scenario of practices of business ethics in Bangladesh. But recently it got more attention and organizations have started practices of ethics.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

The research methodology is generally gateway of research strategy which describes and implement the way of steps and actions in order to carry out the investigation and the results. Research methodology also describes the way of designing research, collecting data, sampling data, source of investigation, analysis data in a systematic process. The aim of this research was figure out a specific result, as why an internal working environment of a garment industry could be an issue for its cross border business. This research paper could be considered as a descriptive research for the surveys and fact finding inquiries. The research was designed with every specific element of research to touch the point of its specific targeted data and purpose.

Mixed method methodology is a method of research which uses both quantitative and qualitative methods together for a specific research. The word “design” has at least two distinct meanings in mixed method research (Maxwell 2013). One is about the process of design, and another one is a product of a design. Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e. g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration. (Johnson at al, 2007, p. 123)

For this research purpose quantitative and qualitative method has been chosen. As a mixed method, it focuses more on analysis and collecting data in two different ways. This method provides better understanding of the research problem than either alone approach. Quantitative research based on surveys gives the primary data to research, on the other hand qualitative research helps to collect data with open ended information through the interviews and observations. Mixed method methodology is being highly appreciated in a research for deeper understanding and concrete findings.

2.2. Research Method

Mixed method methodology was followed for this research. Throughout the study, author wanted to collect data from different groups of respondents.

Research method was designed with quantitative and qualitative method in order to get in different field of data to collect. The main purpose of this research was to figure out the working environment of Bangladesh garment industry along with why it's important in perspective of their international business. Quantitative and qualitative both was considered best suited method for this research as the collection of data was from different groups of people and fields.

Quantitative method was followed in order to understand the current situation of the Bangladesh garment industry. From this perspective, labor and employees in different field were the main target respondents in quantitative method. On the other hand, owner of a garment factory, senior incharge of organizations like BGMEA, ACCORD was under qualitative research method. A face to face interview was taken with owner of a garment factory, other responsible persons' interviews taken over telephone. Interview questions were developed aim with research perspective. Especially Rana Plaza collapse was an important issue of this research. Throughout the interviews, author wanted to know the consequences of Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh garment industry, along with how they faced the situation, their effort to change the scenario and future awareness etc.

Based on the research topic and to get different groups of respondents, questionnaire surveys and telephone interview were undertaken for this research. Survey questionnaire was developed based on the theoretical background. Every question in the survey questionnaire was a targeted data. Questionnaire was developed to get the respondents and convert these responses through the meaningful way and place it to the research. Collected responses data were taken on numeric figure and putted on the research. The survey based on the questionnaire was taken among hundred labor and employees in the field of Bangladesh garment industry. For the quantitative research purpose, an online questionnaire was created with Google in online platform and different types of question patterns have been used by focusing targeted respondents. The questionnaire was sent out to Bangladesh and the survey took place during the time January 15, 2019 to March 20, 2019.

On the other hand, face to face and telephone interviews were based on more open ended questions. These interviews were more fact finding inquiries. One face to face interview was conducted with a garment owner, meanwhile three other interviews were conducted over telephone from Estonia to Bangladesh. Interviews were conducted with one merchandising officer of a garment company in Bangladesh, one with additional secretary of BGMEA and another one with an admin of ACCORD in Bangladesh. Those interviews were focused more to figure out the impact of Rana Plaza collapse and working environment related to their international business. Interview questions were developed in a framework and interviews were recorded on transcripts and later put on the research paper.

Secondary data analysis is “a form of research in which the data collected and processed in one study are reanalysed in a subsequent study” (Rubin & Babbie, 2008, p. 408). Secondary data are derived from a range of sources, including micro level program evaluations. There are clear benefits associated with using secondary datasets in research, including efficiencies in time, money, and other resources, and the maximization of the use of potentially important data that might otherwise lie dormant (Glaser, 1998; Rubin & Babbie, 2008). Those data already available by publishing, newspaper, books, journal, online article, research papers, magazines, blogs, online platforms etc, were taken as secondary data sources. The main advantage of using secondary data is more time saving, more informative, free of charge,

detailed oriented. Meanwhile, there is a disadvantage of using secondary data as there no control of author regarding reliability.

2.3.Data Analysis

Data analysis plays a vital role regarding to keep research paper more dynamic and realistic. Author tried to skip all irrelevant data from the research paper. For quantitative data analysis, online made questionnaire was taken for the survey among 100 employees in Bangladesh garment industry. The collected data from respondents of this survey has transferred into Google Spreadsheet and exported to Microsoft Excel later. Microsoft function and some other tools have been used for data to figure out the percentage, ratio etc. Microsoft pie char, bar chart and other tools used for data visualization. On the other hand, for qualitative data author carried out three telephone interviews from Estonia to Bangladesh except one face to face interview. Data collected from the interviews was recorded on transcripts first. Later collected data were analyzed through the content analyzing. Interview questions were open ended with more descriptive manners.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

3.1.Survey Findings

The survey questionnaire was designed to figure out current situations in Bangladesh garment industry. The perspective of this survey is regarding of labor issues that relate to their daily working place. Each question was in a different specific field.

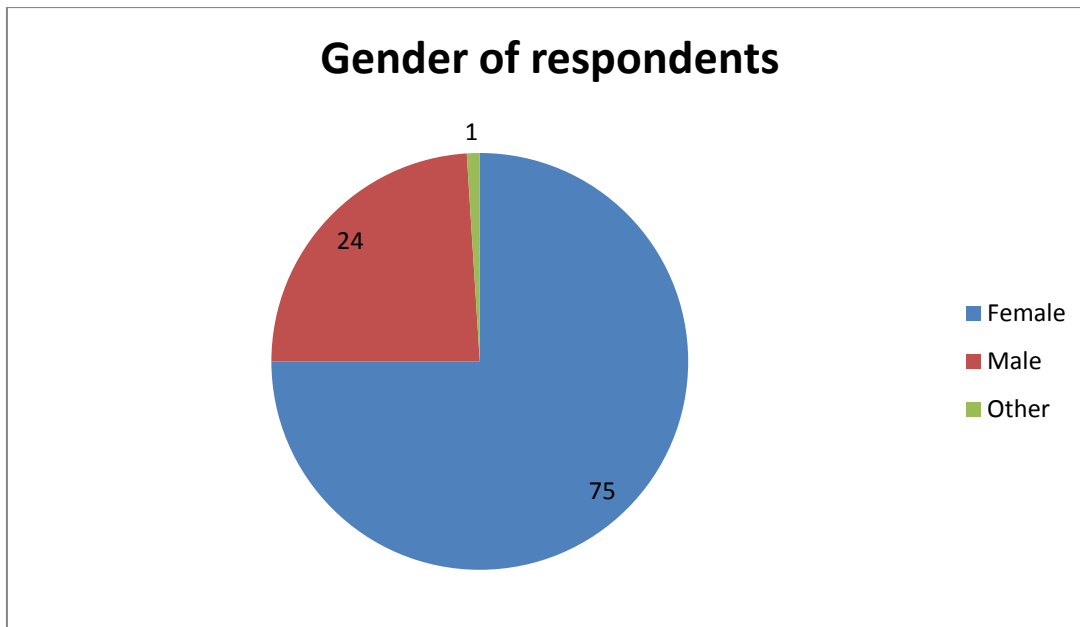


Figure 1. Gender of respondents

Source: Based on survey question 1(compiled by the author)

The first question from the survey questionnaire was regarding their gender. It was important to know their gender working in the Bangladesh garment industry and also author wanted to collect data from both male and female. According to the survey data, 75% of survey respondents were female, meanwhile 24% respondents were male, and only 1% respondent were among those were not interested to specify their gender identity.

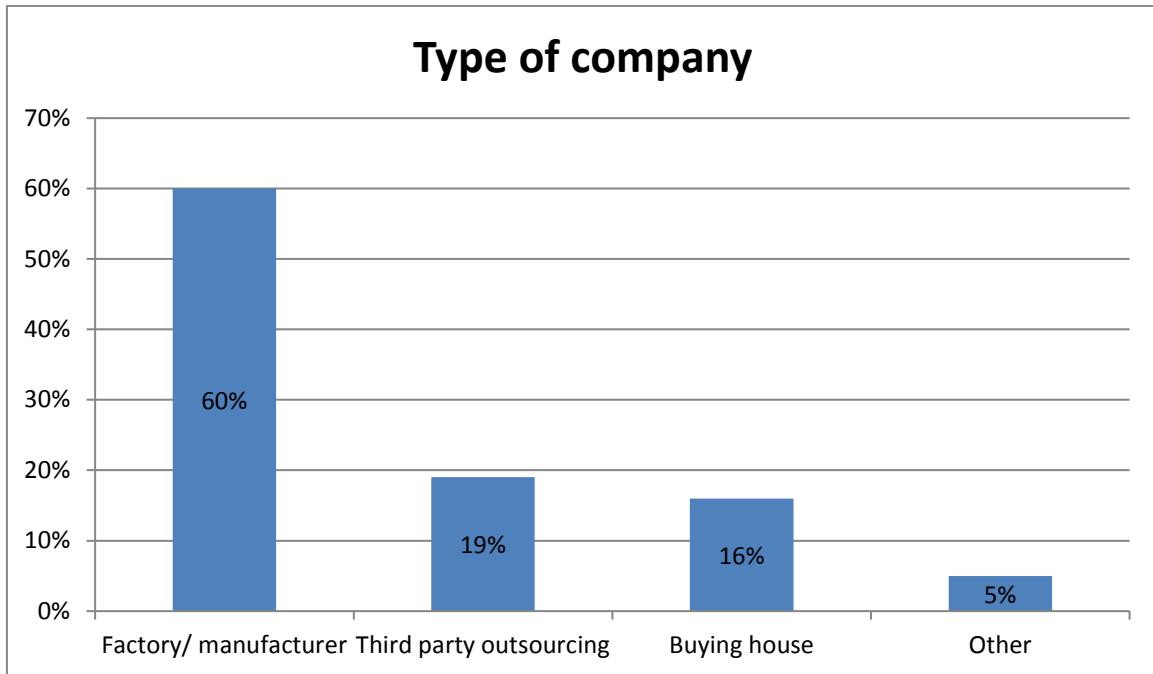


Figure 2. Type of company

Source: Based on survey question 2 (compiled by the author)

The second question was to know about what kind of company they work for. According to collected data, along with four given options, the highest number of respondents were from the factory / manufacturer section with 60%. The second highest respondents come from the section of third party outsourcing with 19%. Buying house and other was followed by 16% and 5% respectively. As based on on the survey data, it can be stated that the highest number of RMG workers in Bangladesh work in factories or manufacturer fields. Meanwhile, labor working for third party outsourcing was a notable number. Labors are working for a third party is an important issue in Bangladesh labor rights. Basically the bigger foreign buyers like H&M, Mango, ZARA, GAP etc. buy products from the top garment manufacturers of Bangladesh. But top garment manufacturers outsource many of their products from the third party as they have too much foreign orders. In such cases, foreign buyers like H&M, Mango ZARA etc couldn't handle labor rights of workers, those working for them from a third party outsourcing, even they don't know their products are coming from the third party outsourcing.

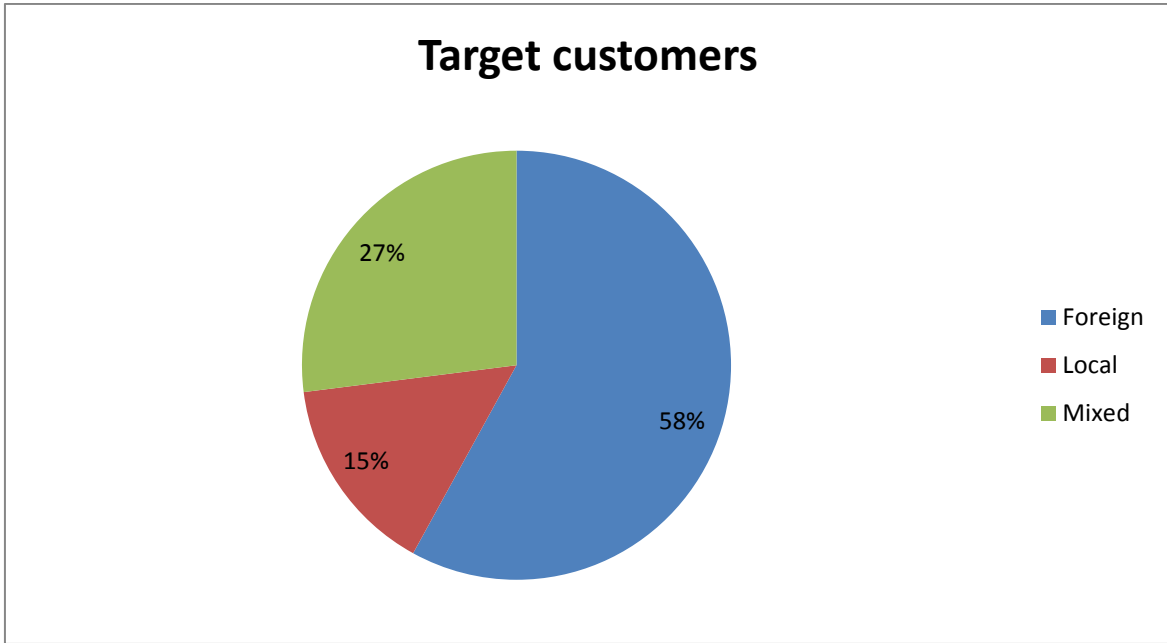


Figure 3. Target customers

Source: Based on survey question 3 (Compiled by author)

The aim of this question to know what kind of customers they are serving. According to collected data, 58% respondents were for foreign customers and only 15% were for local. Same time 27% responded as they work for both foreign and local buyers. From the collected data it can be stated that the maximum number of workers engaged with foreign buyers.

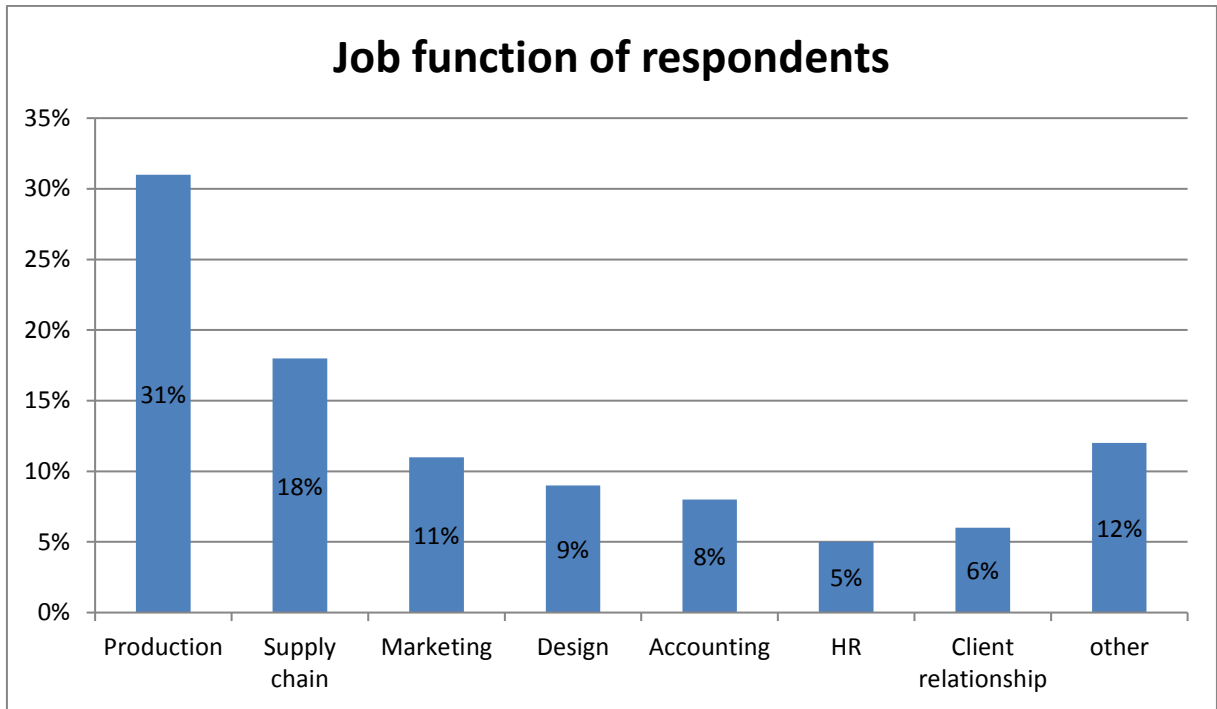


Figure 4. Job function of respondents

Source: Based on survey question 4 (compiled by the author)

This survey question was to figure out the departments they work in. The highest number of respondents came from the Production department, which is 31%. Meanwhile, Supply chain and Other (different function of works) placed the second and third with 18% & 12% respectively. On the other hand, respondents came from Marketing was 11%, Design 9% & Accounting 8%. Client relationship and HR were among the lowest group of respondents with 6% & 5% respectively.

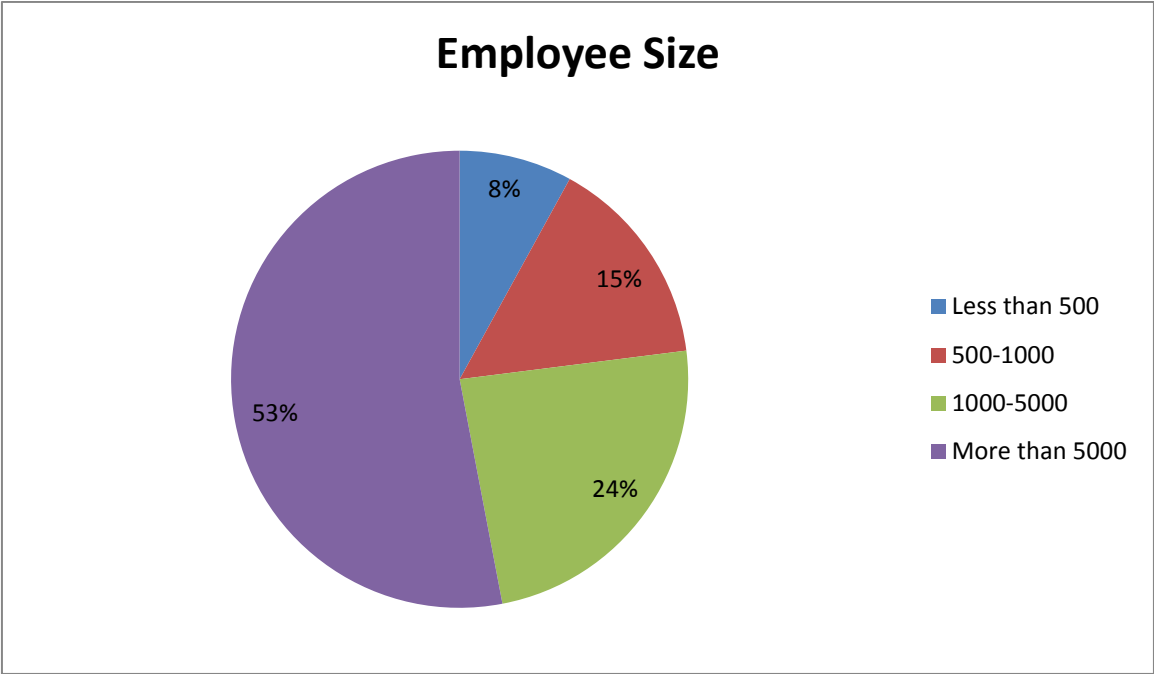


Figure 5. Employee Size

Source: Based on survey question 5 (compiled by the author)

This survey question with four given options was about to know the employee sizes of the company they work for. Highest number of respondents came from the group of workers where more than 5000 are employed. Meanwhile, 24% of respondents came from the group of 1000-5000 size of employees, and 15% were from the group of 500-1000. The lowest number of respondents recorded by the group of Less than 500 sizes of employees. According to the collected data, it can be said that most workers in Bangladesh RMG sectors are employed in the bigger sizes of company or factories. As a country like Bangladesh, protecting the labor rights in every field of bigger sizes of companies is really challenging.

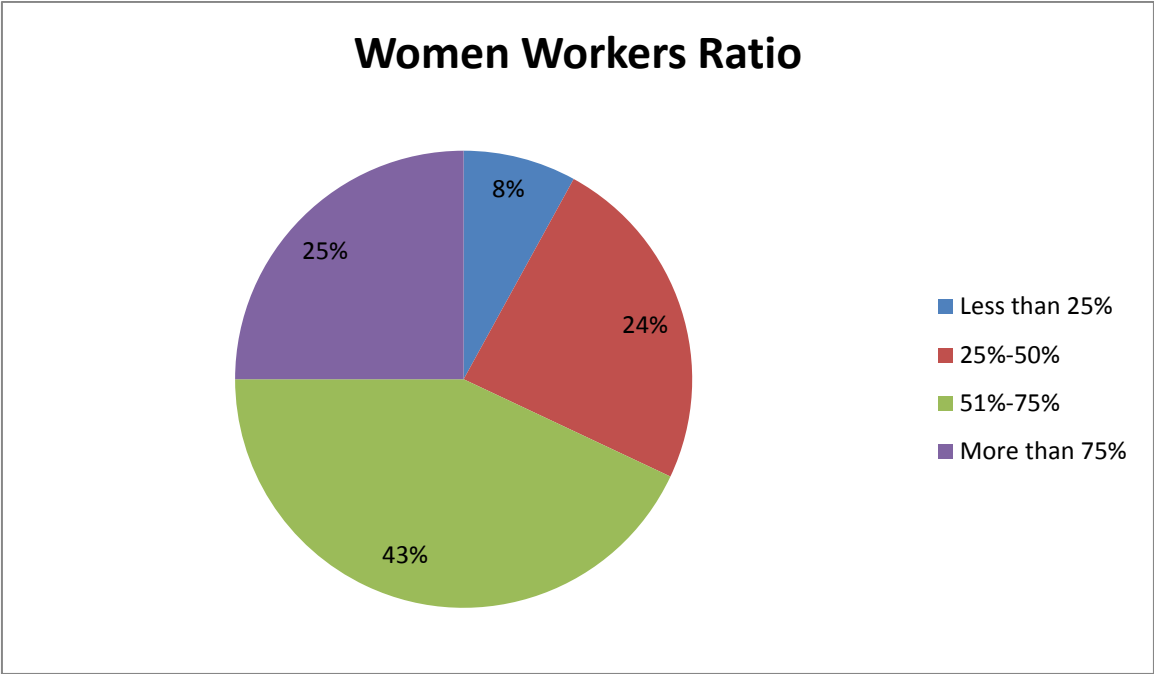


Figure 6. Women workers ratio

Source: Based on survey question 6 (compiled by the author)

Throughout this survey question, the author tried to figure out the women worker ratio in their organization or companies along with four given options by dividing quarterly. The highest number of respondents acknowledged of their respective organization with 43% in the group of 51%-75% of women workers ratio. Meanwhile, the group of More than 75% and 25%-50% placed the second and third highest response with 25% and 24% respectively. Interestingly, these two groups were almost closer to the percentage. The group of Less than 25% was among the lowest group of respondents with only 8%.

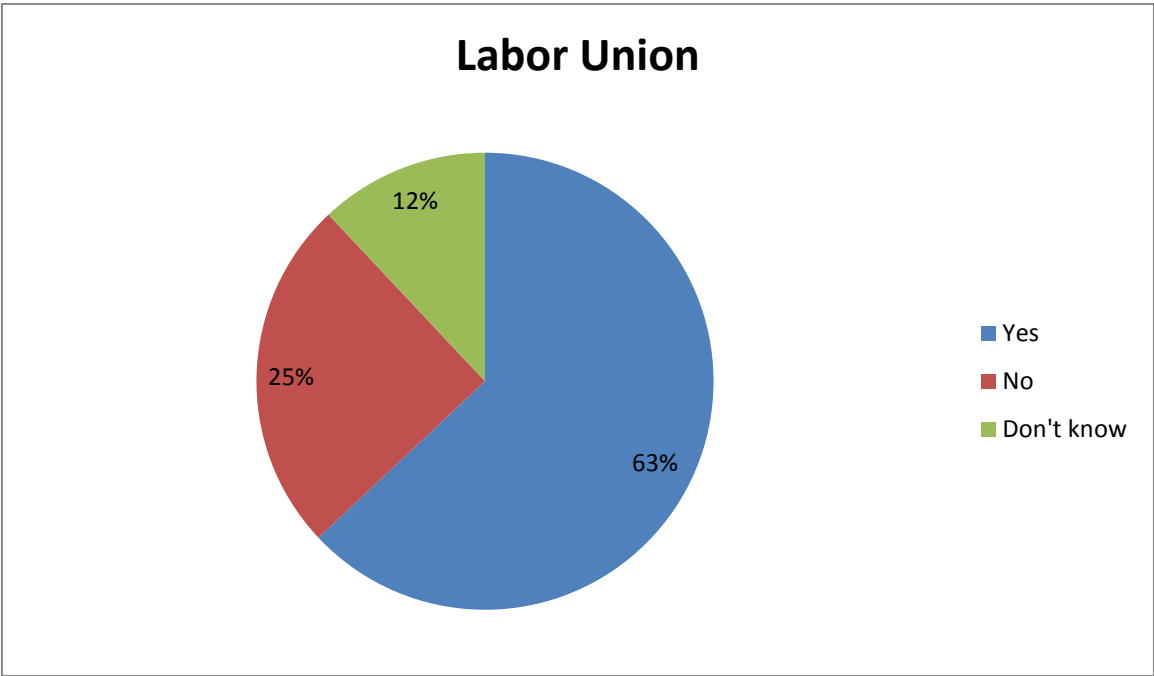


Figure 7. Labor union in their organization

Source: Based on survey question 7 (compiled by the author)

A labor union is a very important issue, especially in Bangladesh labor rights perspective. Throughout this question author wanted to know either they have a labor union in their organization where they work or are they allowed to join in a labor union. According to the collected data, majority number of respondents admitted of a labor union on their organization and they are free to join even they are allowed to join in a labor union outside of the organization. Meanwhile, 25% respondents said they don't have a labor union in their organization. Especially this group of respondent were more from Buying houses and Other types of company's employees. And unfortunately 12% respondents said they don't know about labor union. This group of respondents were more from smaller factory workers.



Figure 8. Fire & Safety Training for workers

Source: Based on survey question 8 (compiled by the author)

Bangladesh RMG sectors have been facing too much challenges regarding fire and safety issues. The aim of this question to know about workers of Bangladesh RMG sectors, are they trained about fire and safety issues in their organization. According to collected data, the majority of respondents with 68% gave a positive response as they have been trained for fire and safety issue. Meanwhile, 32% responded as No. This group of respondents were more from the smaller organization and from some Other groups.

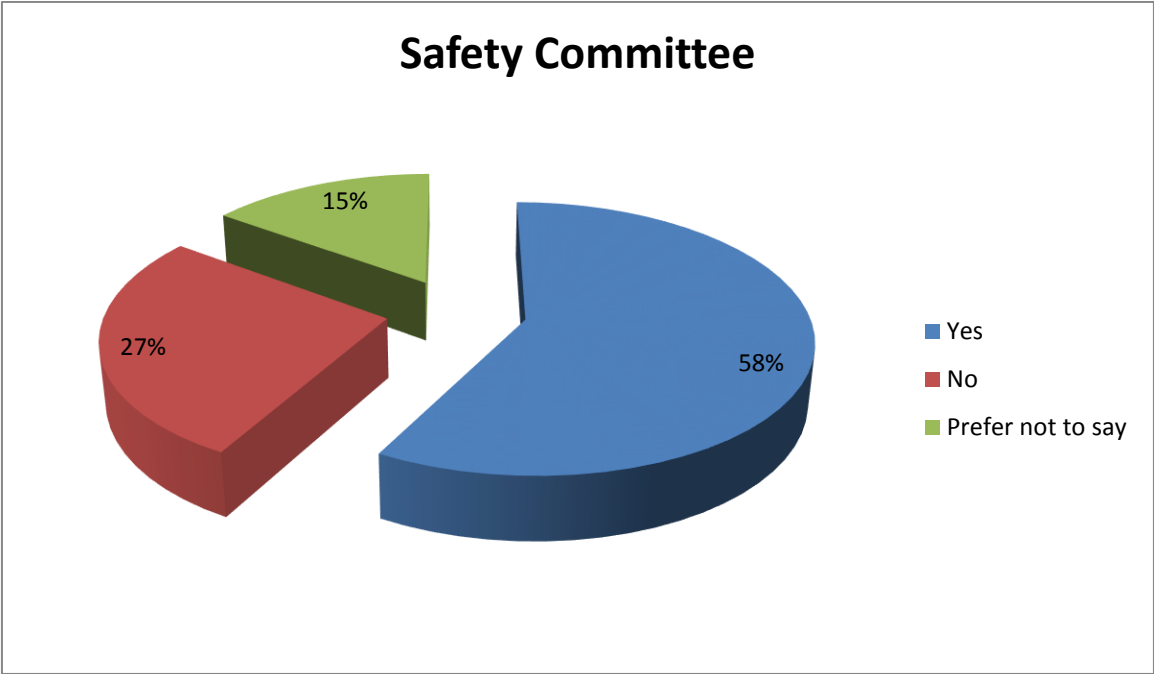


Figure 9. Safety committee in organization

Source: Based on survey question 9 (compiled by the author)

According to the Bangladesh labor safety law, organization employed with more than 50 employees or workers, need to be introduced safety committee in their organization. This committee will work for all the others employees and workers by proper training instruction and their perspective roles during any incident like fire or safety issues. Throughtout this survey question, majority of respondents said Yes, as they had been trained for fire & building safety at least for once in their organization, meanwhile 27% answered NO. On the other hand, 15% respondents prefer not to say.

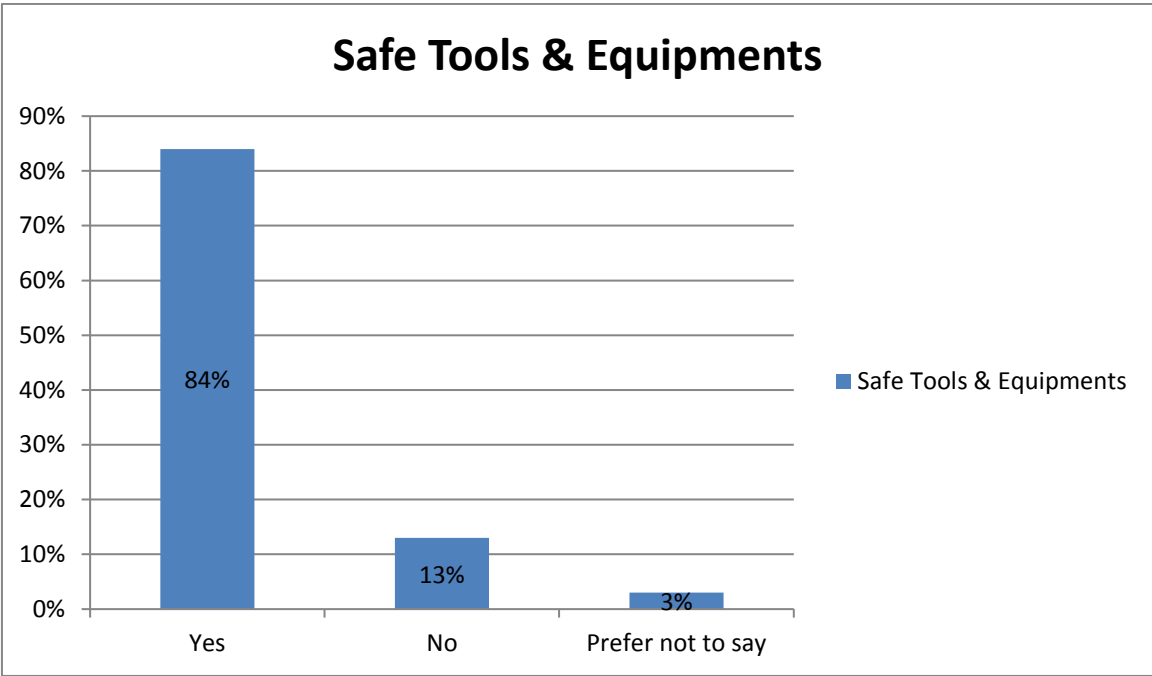


Figure 10. Safe tools and equipments at work

Source: Based on survey question 10 (compiled by the author)

This survey question was to find out are the tools and equipments safe to work for the workers. According to the recorded data, 84% respondents said Yes, as they feel they have safe tools and equipments to work. Meanwhile, 13% said No, as they don't feel their tools and equipments are safe to work. This group of respondents came more from production section. During the survey they said, especially those working in some risky production line and dealing with chemical stuffs. On the other hand, only 3% respondents prefer not to say.

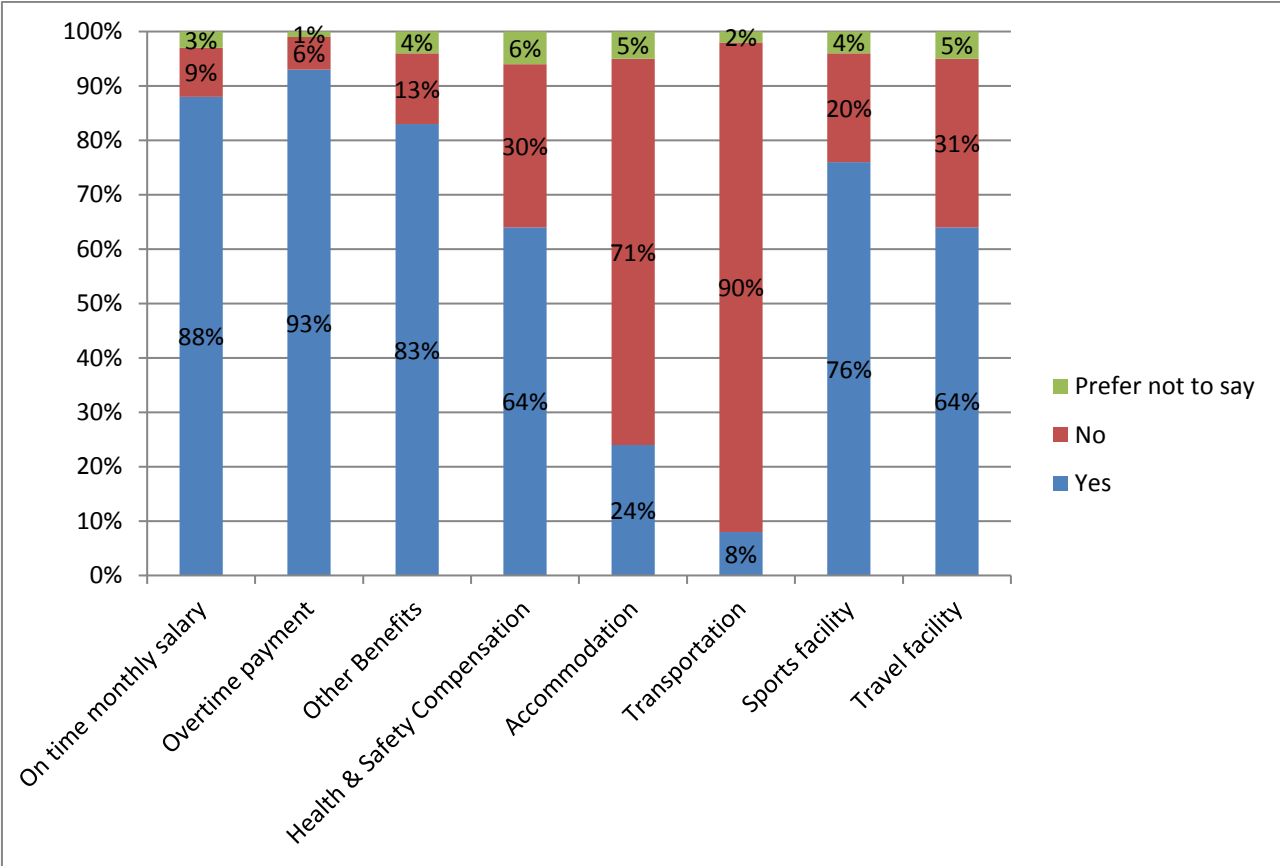


Figure 11. Response on facilities

Source: Based on survey question (compiled by the author)

Throughout the satisfactory questions, author tried to figure out workers satisfaction regarding their jobs and positions. In the response of On time monthly salary, Overtime payment, Other benefits and Health & Safety Compensation, the majority of respondents gave their feedback with 88%, 93%, 83% and 64% respectively. Meanwhile, in the response of Accommodation and Transportation facilities, the rate of positive feedback was very poor. Whereas 71% & 90% respondents respectively said No, as they don't get these facilities. Enjoying Sports and Travelling facilities were hopeful as the percentage was 76% & 64% respectively.

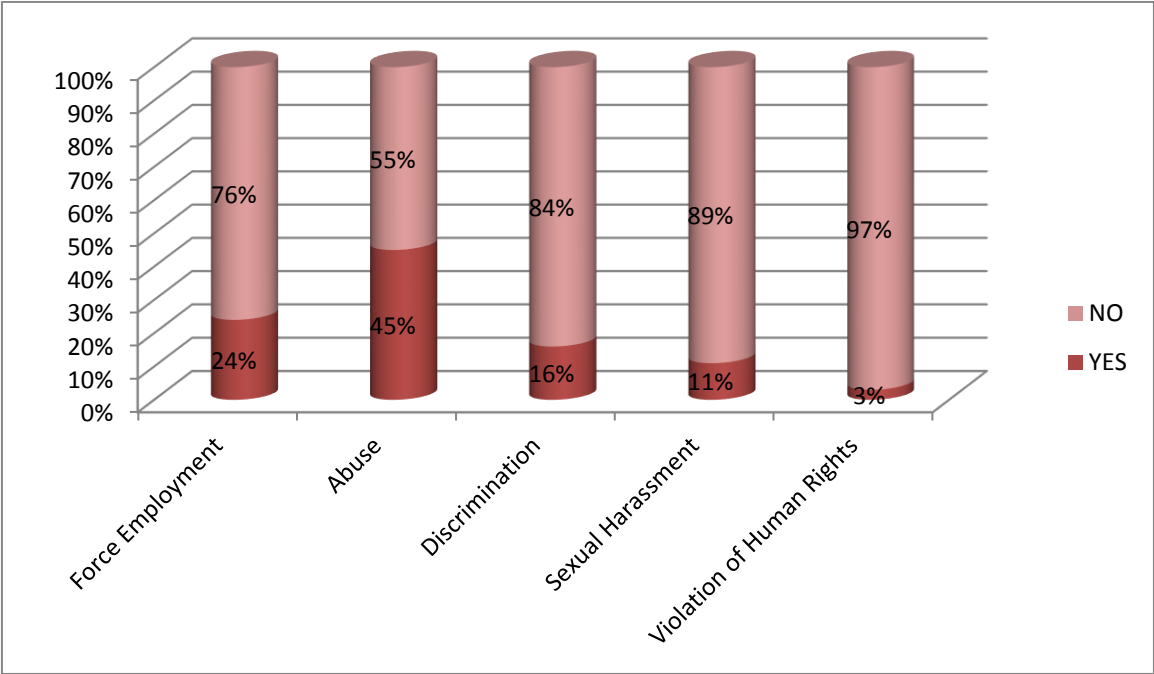


Figure 12. Response to harassment

Source: Based on survey question (compiled by the author)

Throughout this survey question, author found the respondents on the harassment issues. 24% of respondents said they have ever faced force employment in their life at least for once, while 76% said NO. Meanwhile, the rate of Abuse in Bangladesh RMG sector is high. Where 45% respondents said as they faced abuses, while 55% said NO. On the other hand, Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Violation of human rights, 16%, 11% & 3% respondents respectively admitted as they have faced at least once.

3.2.Results from interview

Interview 1

For the research purpose author conducted several interviews over telephone. The main aim of these interviews is to figure out the impact of Pana Plaza collapse in the Bangladesh garment industry, and afterwards how Bangladesh coped up this situation. The first interview was held with an ownership member and in charge of foreign marketing director of IFRAT Enterprise, Mr. Ahsan Razib Khan. IFRAT Enterprise is small garment factory with more than 1000 workers.

What had the impact of Rana Plaza collapse in the Bangladesh garment industry?

During the interview, Mr Khan said, the main impact had on the image of Bangladesh RMG sectors. Bangladesh had been exporting RMG products with a good will along with quality product. But couple of incidents like Rana Plaza collapse, Tazreen Garments fire has ruined the image of this sector. Especially after the Rana Plaza collapse, Bangladesh garment sectors along with Bangladesh government have been facing too much international pressure regarding labor rights.

Why foreign buyers are concerned about the internal working environment of a garment factory?

This is the reason of their retail customer. They are concerned because their customers won't buy a product from a country which is convicted with human rights violation on their labor. This kind of incident such as Rana Plaza collapse sent a very negative messages to the international customer of a Bangladeshi product. A product "Made in Bangladesh" got a huge backlash in international markets. Now international buyers are more curious about the internal condition of a factory than ever, before dealing with a contract. Mr. Khan as one of the owners of a garment factory doesn't like foreign influence or instructions in Bangladesh internal garment issues.

Why Bangladesh garment industry can't provide facilities to their worker like other Western countries?

This is an important question, foreign buyers want better quality products but with cheap price. They come Bangladesh because they know here labor costs are too cheap. They even talk about improvement of working environment as with like European standard, but unfortunately they are

not willing to pay the price as European wages. Mr. Khan also stated that sometimes labor wage increases by the government put them on burning. They even couldn't afford such decision as their profitability goes in pressure.

How do you think the women labor contribution in the Bangladesh garment industry?

Mr. Khan said, he is very much optimistic and happy to see the women's contribution in this industry. There are lots of challenges for women in Bangladesh. Bangladesh garment industry has become one the place of their hope of employment. Basically almost all of the women labors come from the rural area and the majority of them are illiterate. So now a days at least they are getting a job to support their family and children.

What about the maternity leave in your company?

About the maternity leave in his company, Mr. Khan said they offer women maternity leave for 3 months. But he also admitted that women working here for a long time are allowed for maternity leave. There is no new women employees are being granted maternity leave.

Mr. Khan also assured that his factory is fully complaint with Banladeshlabour law and safety and ensures all the facilities to the labour.

Interview 2

Second interview was with Mr. Syed Mufassir Ali, merchandising officer of Muhammadi Group Garments. The interview was help via telephone. Muhammadi Group is one of the biggest garment manufacturer in Bangladesh with more than 15000 workers.

What had the impact of Rana Plaza collapse in your company?

In regard to this question, Mr. Ali said, they had faced a lot of challenges after the Rana Plaza collapse. As a bigger company they had lot of business with foreign buyers including renowned apparel brand like H&M, GAP, ZARA, MANGO etc. Foreign buying stoped buying product for a while until they assure them about their internal labor safety.

How do you see the interfere of foreign buyers in internal environment?

There something they brought positive for our garment industry along with they are taking the chances of our weakness. But day by day we are becoming more self compliant. Another thing is that markets are more competitive. Buyers have more option to source their products. Reason why we try our best to delivery accordance with the buyers.

How do you think about ACCORD?

In this question about ACCORD, Mr. Ali said, he personally doesn't like ACCORD longer activities in Bangladesh. Basically ACCORD was signed between foreign apparel brands and Bangladesh garment manufactures after Rana Plaza collapse. But right now Bangladesh garment is more self complaint. During the interview he hinted that by the ACCORD some other foreign competitors of the Bangladesh garment industry might take the chances of showing negative regarding Bangladesh garment industry.

Why Bangladesh can't provide better facilities and wages to garment workers?

There are lots of elements behind the reason. Markets are so competitive and it's easy to source their product for a buyer from anywhere in the world with a cheap price. That's the one and most important thing that we produce foreign products but we get paid in average of Bangladeshi market.

Interview 3 (with BGMEA)

BGMEA (Bangladesh Garments Manufacturer & Exporter Association) is the largest organization in Bangladesh and in charge of Bangladesh garment industry. BGMEA was established in 1983 in order to protect the garments rights and exports. Now BGMEA also working to protect labor rights in the Bangladesh garment industry. Author conducted an interview over telephone with Mr. Joglu Islam, the additional secretary of BGMEA. He was in charge of injured people after Pana Plaza collapse and also worked for them for better recovery.

During the interview, Mr. Islam said about the all afford BGMEA has taken especially after Pana Plaza collapse. In regard of Rana Plaza collapse, he said that there is no doubt Bangladesh garment industry passed a difficult time after this incident. There was lots of international

pressure along with domestic politics as well. But Bangladesh handle it very well. BGMEA along with Bangladesh government started suspecting the risky factories and unconducted buildings by rules and law after this incident, and they sealed more than thousand garment factories.

Now BGMEA following rules very strictly against the factories those are violating labor rights in their organization. He also admitted that still there is a long way to insure labor rights in Bangladesh garment industry, but Bangladesh is honestly working to change this picture. As author asked “what is the main obstacle for a garment factory to improve it’s internal working environment? Mr. Islam said the main problem is financial support. There are almost 5 million people working in this industry, and their wages still competitively low with other countries like India, China, Vietnam. Foreign buyers want good products, but not willingness to pay better price. Garment industry can’t afford all the facilities and ensuring the labor rights properly unless they can get a competitively good price for their products.

Interview 4 (with ACCORD)

The Accord on fire and building safety in Bangladesh was signed in 15th May 2013 after Rana Plaza collapse in order to protect labor safety in Bangladesh garment industry. The Accord is an independent and legally binding sign between more than 200 international brands like H&m, GAP, Addidas, Mango etc. and trade union regarding garment industry. Author conducted an interview with Sadia Tarannum, the admin of ACCORD in Bangladesh over telephone. During the interview Ms. Sadia said the perspective of ACCORD in Bangladesh and their success. Regular building and safety inspecting, monitoring remediation, safety training, solving safety complaints are the main tasks for them in Bangladesh. The Accord was established and approved by Bangladesh government for five year to operating in Bangladesh. This time is already over. Later Bangladesh government extended this validity for six more months. Now a case pending in Bangladesh high court as can they operate in Bangladesh or not. Bangladesh government and the local garment owners don’t like foreign regulation over their stuff. Meanwhile Accord believes there is still need to work in order to improve the picture of labor safety of Bangladesh garment industry. ACCORD inspects every factory once in a year, and if any factory can’t meet the required standard of safety, in such cases they visits several times.

3.3.Limitations of the study

There are some limitations in this research paper regarding the size of sample and respondents' attitude towards the survey. There are four million employees working in the Bangladesh garment industry. The survey was carried out among 100 employees in Bangladesh. It's very difficult to present the whole industry based on 100 respondents. On the other hand, the size of female respondents was small compared to male respondents. Most of female respondents were shy or afraid to talk to strangers, and many of them uninterested or refused to participate in the survey. Meanwhile, overall all the respondents had a trend of being afraid to be honest or disclose information about their workplace. The majority of labor were illiterate and had difficulties to understand the questions, and in many cases, they were not all aware of everything in their company. Another barrier was language problem. The online survey question was made in English. It was tough to understand all questions easily, especially the respondents from the factory workers.

In the interview questions, the author tried to figure out the relation between the internal labour working condition and it's international business. Plaza Plaza collapse and the situation of this industry afterwards the incidents were emphasized during the interviews. But there is an issue to have proper information from the interviews as a matter of disclosing information about their organizations. In some cases, regarding the labour safety or facilities, the survey results and interview results were contradicted. The working environment of Bangladesh garment industry is a sensitive issue in domestic and international stages. There is a trend to defend their own company or organization from the owners. Author thinks there is a problem to get proper internal information.

CONCLUSION

Garment industry could be considered as a backbone of Bangladesh economy, as it contributes more than 80 percent of total exports of Bangladesh. Not only that, four million people are employed in this sector. Bangladesh garment industry has been facing a lot of challenges and obstacles, but still it's growing. This research paper was about the working environment of Bangladesh garment industry and how it relates to international business. In modern business era, there is nothing possible to hide in a business deal. The consumers are also smart to choose their products. This paper will draw conclusion based on the research questions regarding the working environment of Bangladesh garment industry and its relation with international business.

Why working environment of Bangladesh garment industry is a barrier for international business?

To find out answer of this research question, the author reached by the senior responsible persons in Bangladesh garment sectors. In regard of this question, their answer was clear that it's impossible for Bangladesh to remain in a strong position of RMG exporter in the global market without ensuring a safe labour working environment in Bangladesh garment industry. What is going on in the inside of a Bangladesh garment industry, it's taking just couple of minutes to spread the news in international media. International buyers like H&M, GAP, MANGO, ZARA, Addidas etc. have warned to continue business because of their consumer's concern. The customer will hesitate to buy a garment product named with "Made in Bangladesh" because of negative news like cheap labour slavery.

What had the impact of Rana Plaza tragedy in RMG sector in Bangladesh?

Bangladesh had faced huge consequences after Rana Plaza collapse according to the collected data. During the interview with responsible persons from Bangladesh garment industry, they admitted that it has ruined Bangladesh garment sector's image in the global market, along with warning of trade sanction from EU and the cancelation of GSP facilities by the US. It's also true that this incident has changed the Bangladesh garment industry. More than 1000 garment factories were closed by inspecting because of required labour safety standard. Bangladesh government also made a huge effort to improve the building and fire safety in the garment industry.

How social organizations contributing to protect labour rights in Bangladesh?

According to the collected data, there many non government and non profit organizations are working to protect labour rights in Bangladesh garment industry. NUK, BLF, ACCORD are among them. Social organizations are contributing to improve the situation by providing training and standing by labour with the law and their rights. Social organizations have huge effort to raise awareness among the labour and factory owners.

What are the factors need to be improved in RMG sector in Bangladesh?

Despite being world second largest exporter of RMG products, Bangladesh garment industry still haslots of challenges in regard of improving labour working condition and safety. According to the survey result, there are some issues that need to be quick fixed like sexual abuses and harassment in the industry. From the collected data, the majority of workers don't get accomodation and transportation facilities except higher position employees. Lack awareness was among the workers author found during the survey, sometimes they are also not interested to participate in any fire and safety training. There need to be create more awareness among the workers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Online Survey Questionnaire

A survey to understand the working environment of Bangladesh garment industry

Bangladesh garment industry is considered the economic wheel of the country, that contributes more than 80% of total export of Bangladesh and employed 4 million people. This fastest growing industry has made Bangladesh world second largest RMG exporter in the world. Meanwhile, there is a negative reputation on Bangladesh garment industry regarding working environment and labour safety. Incident like Raza Plaza collapse that has shaken the world.

The aim of this survey to understand the overall current situations of Bangladesh garment industry regarding labour safety and facilities. Data collection and outcome of this survey only will be used for academic research purpose and the participants will be anonymous.

Gender

Male

Female

Other:

Type of company you work for

- Factory/Manufacturer
- Third Pary Outsourcing
- Buying House
- Other:

Target Customers

- Foreign
- Local
- Mixed

Job Function

- Production
- Supply Chain
- Marketing
- Design
- Accounting
- HR
- Client Relationship
- Other:

Employee size company

- Less than 500
- 500-1000
- 1000-5000
- More than 5000

Women workers ratio

- Less than 25%
- 25%-50%
- 51%-75%
- More than 75%

Labour union in your organization

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

Are you trained on fire and safety?

- Yes
- No

Safety committee in your organization?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Is your tools and equipment safe to work?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Answer the following benefits in your organization.

	Yes	No	Prefer not to say
On time monthly salary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overtime payments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health & safety compensation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accommodation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transportation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sports facility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Travel facility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Have you ever faced the following situation in your organization?

	Yes	No
Force employment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Abuse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discrimination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sexual harassment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Violation of human rights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix 2

Interview plan

Four interviews were conducted for qualitative research purposes, during January 15, 2019 to April 30, 2019. The questions of interview 1 & 2 were developed with same approaches to get data regarding their international business and how it relates with their internal workplaces or environment. Meanwhile, interview 3 & 4 were from the background of their perspective field and figure out their contribution to the Bangladesh garment industry, labour safety and rights. The very first interview was conducted face to face by the author, and rest were conducted via telephone from Estonia to Bangladesh.