

Analytical Study

Sexual Harassment of Female Workers in the Ready Made Garment Sector



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Preface and Acknowledgment Executive Summary

Preface and Acknowledgment

The study is primarily based on the lives of the female workers in the garment factories, who experienced sexual harassment from their male colleagues. The study has used both primary and secondary sources of information to understand the context of sexual harassment and its impact on the lives of the women workers in the Ready Made Garment (RMG) sector.

The use of abusive (sexual) words by the senior management officers is a very common phenomenon in the garment factories. Though the women workers are mostly open to talk about their wage, leave and overtime payment they prefer silence regarding sexual harassment. This is mainly due to the fear of losing honor along with the potential risk of being the further victims of repeated harassment and fear of losing their job. Unfortunately, the issue of sexual harassment is being relatively less prioritized by the trade union leaders and human rights activists, compared to other issues like security, safety, health and wages though it has equal or more significant impacts on the lives of the female workers.

Mostly the male dominant culture, unequal relationship, gender division of labor, strong cultural taboo on women's body and sexuality and changes in women agency are the contributing factors in creating such hostile situation for the female workers. The study report intends to describe its methodology, conceptual framework, narrative of the cases, findings and concluding remarks with recommendations.

Hope this study will contribute to a better understanding of "sexual harassment" is and its consequences within a broader perspective and will create a scope for taking an effective initiative to fight against the issue and for further research in the RMG sector of Bangladesh.

This research report is an output of the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) - Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) cooperation, and has been prepared by Monjun Nahar, Lead Researcher and Ms. Tajrian Chowdhury, Research Officer, BILS. The research team received generous

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The study has been commissioned by MJF under the "Jukta Hoe Mukta - United We Stand" project, implemented in partnership with Terre des Hommes (TDH) Italia. Our special thanks to the European Union (EU) for its financial support and the interested shown towards this topic. We are grateful to the "Jukta Hoe Mukta - United We Stand" project team members of Shobujer Ovijan Foundation (SOF), Occupational Safety Health and Environment (OSHE) Foundation, and Phulki, who have shared their experiences and views to carry on the study. Our deepest appreciation to all respondents who took part in the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews from different areas (Mirpur, Ashulia, and Gazipur), even after a long tiring working day or in a holiday and for trusting the team, disclosing the secrets of their personal experiences in the factories, and also for breaking their silence on "sexual harassment". A special thanks to the gender expert Professor Dr. Ainoon Naher, who took part in an in-depth interview and shared her own working experience on "sexual harassment".

Our sincere gratitude to Ms. Silvia Rovelli, TDH Italia "Jukta Hoe Mukta - United We Stand" Project Manager, for her detailed comments and fruitful review of the first draft, which further helped to clarify the theoretical approach and other relevant issues of the study.

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Executive Summary

The study explores how the different forms of sexual harassment are affecting the female workers in the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector. The study adopted a qualitative approach and collected data from primary and secondary sources. A total number of 49 female workers from different factories in Ashulia, Gazipur and Mirpur have been interviewed.

The study has found that verbal, non-verbal and physical abuse inside factories are still rampant and different forms of harassment like kissing, hugging, using slangs and touching the private/sexual parts of the bodies of the girls and women still occur inside the factories. The study further reveals that most of the perpetrators are the supervisors, line chiefs and production managers who are mainly their superiors. There are no time boundaries for the occurrence of such incidents as they may happen at any time, but the pattern of harassment can change depending on several factors: for example, night is associated with high risks of sexual assaults like rape.

The victims of sexual harassment are usually keeping silent about their experiences. Nevertheless, the study tried to explore their reactions and the consequences in their lives. It has been found that the silence is due not only to the fear of losing their jobs, but also to the fear of losing the honor and to be stigmatized in their communities. For this reason, this self-imposed "silence" needs to be understood in relation to the socio-cultural norms and values as well as the economic/financial consequences.

To understand its nature and impact on the female workers' lives, it is necessary to broadly define what sexual harassment is. Besides, there is a significant lack of awareness among the female workers on the different forms of sexual harassment as they perceive these behaviors as individual male's problems and thus the issues remain personal.

The study shows how strictly the gender division of labor, the notion of public private space, unequal power relations between men and women and the existence of the cultural perception of masculinity and femininity jointly contribute to influence men's sexual attitude and behavior towards women and reinforcing the occurrence of sexual harassment in the patriarchal structure of Bangladesh.

Most importantly, it has been found that in the compliance factories, complaint boxes are placed but they are inactive. Further, due to the risks of the loss of honor and jobs, women are in the grip of fear, and even if there is a complaint box, it remains unused.

To eliminate sexual harassment, its root causes should be addressed. Without changing the patriarchal values and norms, it is not possible to create a respectful working environment for them. Therefore, awareness campaigns, and the training of workers and mid-level management on one side and the engagement of trade unions, civil society organizations, media and community people on the other are imperative to bring about some changes.

Besides, advocacy initiatives can be undertaken to influence the government to formulate an appropriate and effective code of conduct for implementation in the RMG sector.

Acronyms

| | |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ADB | : Asian Development Bank |
| BILS | : Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies |
| BGFMEA | : Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association |
| CEDAW | : Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women |
| EU | : European Union |
| FGD | : Focus Group Discussion |
| GBV | : Gender Based Violence |
| GDP | : Gross Domestic Product |
| ILO | : International Labour Organization |
| MJF | : Manusher Jonno Foundation |
| PM | : Production Manager (Garment mid-level management staff) |
| RMG | : Ready Made Garment |
| TU | : Trade Union |
| UK | : United Kingdom |
| UN | : United Nations |

Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Background

The garments and textile sector in Bangladesh accounts for \$28 billion in annual exports, more than 80% of total export earnings, and 20% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Bangladesh Garment Manufacturer and Exporters Association- BGMEA, 2017-18)¹. This industry employs 4.0 million workers — mostly women (around 60%) — in formal private sector jobs in more than 4,500 factories (BGMEA 2017-18). The growth of the garment and textile industry has helped raise the income of the low skilled people living in poverty, especially creating job opportunities for women.

Women workers remain at the bottom of the supply chain, working long hours for low wages, denied basic maternity rights and often times, subject to violence including bullying and sexual harassment, both in and outside of the workplace.

There are serious discriminations, in terms of holding position by men and women, in the RMG sector. Almost 90% of the women workers play the role of sewing operators and helpers, (Khorshed Alam, 2011)² while men, in general, perform the better-paid jobs such as general managers, production managers, line managers and supervisors. This illustrates the gendered division of labor within the industry, with women only able to access lower paid jobs. The uneven power structure between men and women in the highly patriarchal society creates a situation where women workers in this sector become often victims of violence.

In addition to the common problems (i.e. wages, safety, leave problems that affect both women and men workers), women workers are facing many other issues for which they need protection, especially in areas as workplace discrimination and career prospects, harassment, working time including rest, occupation health and safety, welfare provision, social protection and freedom of association, collective bargaining and social dialogue. Women workers face severe discriminations in regard to the scope of promotion and their career prospect is limited. A study

1. <http://www.bgmea.com.bd/home/pages/index-information>

2. Alam, K. (2011). *Women Workers in the Bangladesh Garment Sector*. London, UK: War on Want.

(Hossain & Ahmed 2017)³ shows that only 5-10% of the women workers become supervisors; they have 7% chance of being promoted, and 45% hold out hopes of becoming line supervisors.⁴ Women workers face multi-faceted harassment, which include verbal, sexual, physical and mental abuses. And regarding their maternity issue, getting protection during maternity is still a dream for many workers.

A recent study of Hossain, Ahmed, and Sharif (2017)⁵ argues that there is still variation in practicing maternity leave. Some factories provide leave without payment, many others provide payment for fewer months than the stipulated months mentioned in the Labor Law. A study of Asian Development Bank (ADB) and International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2016⁶ claims that a negligible number of employers make childcare available for their employees. In many garment factories, mothers do not have space or time to breastfeed. Sample surveys conducted by UNICEF indicate that breastfeeding rates among working women in garment factories is as low as 10% (UNICEF 2015)⁷.

Although long working hour is common for both women and men, it has different implications for women. Long working hour affect women's health more adversely than that of the male workers. In fact, female workers are forced to shorten their time for leisure and sleep because traditionally they are required to take care of all domestic chores as well (Begum, 2001). Women garment workers frequently perform night duty, which poses threats to them both at the workplace and outside. In a study, 60% of the women workers said that night shifts cause significant problems in their family lives (Uddin, 2015)⁸. The combination of long working days, excessive production targets, frequent night shifts, paltry

wages and a lack of labor law enforcement severely affects the health, family life and reproductive health rights of women garment workers (Uddin, 2015). Many of the women workers become victims of violence including rape and sexual harassment on their way from factory to home when they finish their duty late at night.

Violence against women is the most pervasive, yet under-recognized, human rights violation in the world. It is also a profound health problem that saps women's energy, compromises their physical and mental health, and erodes their self-esteem. In addition to causing injury, violence increases women's long-term risk to get other health problems, including chronic pain, physical disability, drug and alcohol abuse and depression (WHO).

Women with a history of physical or sexual abuse are also at increased risk for unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and miscarriages. Despite the high costs of violence against women, social institutions in almost every society in the world legitimize, obscure, and deny abuse. The same acts that would be punished if directed at an employer, a neighbor or an acquaintance often go unchallenged when men direct them at women, especially within the family as well as within the workplace.

It is not only the women garment workers that face problems including sexual harassment in the workplace and at home. Other working women, particularly poor and marginalized, including Dalit women⁹, often fall prey of violence. More agonizingly, most of the crimes against women go unreported due to fear of social stigma. Even when incidents are reported, in most cases the perpetrators go unpunished, due to gaps and loopholes in laws and weak enforcement of the law.

With the given context, Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), under the framework of the "Jukta Hoe Mukta – United We Stand" project co-funded by the European Union (EU), assigned Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) to conduct a study with the aim to provide an analytical overview on sexual harassment in the RMG sector and its

3. Hossain, J. & Ahmed, M. (2017). Promoting Women Ready-Made Garment Workers' Rights through Labour Regulation. Dhaka: Care Bangladesh.

4. The Daily Star, March 8, 2015

5. Hossain, J., M. Ahmed, and J. H. Sharif (2017) Care Labour Standards Plus: Linking Trade and Development Work in Global Supply Chains in Bangladesh. A study for FES Bangladesh.

6. ADB and ILO (2016) Bangladesh: Looking beyond Garments: Employment Diagnostic Study.

7. UNICEF (2015). The Ready-Made Garment Sector and Children in Bangladesh.

8. Uddin, S. (2015). An Analysis of the Condition of Bangladesh Female RMG Workers. South-Asia Journal

9. Dalit women are mentioned being one of the target group of the "Jukta Hoe Mukta – United We Stand" project.

impact on women workers' lives from socio-cultural and economic perspectives.

1.2 Objectives

- To explore the pattern of sexual harassment in the RMG sector
- To understand the consequences of sexual harassment on female workers in the RMG sector
- To draw an analytical report including 15 case stories of women affected by different forms of sexual harassment, in relation to the broader socio-cultural and economic context of Bangladesh

1.3 Methodology

The study intends to understand the experience on sexual harassment faced by the female workers in the garment factories in Bangladesh. It is exploratory rather than definitive in nature. Therefore, it tries to address the research objectives from broader social, cultural and economic perspectives which include gender, class, age and work pattern to draw an analytical statement based on respondent's own life experiences.

The study employed three types of methodological tools: a) in-depth interviews with the victims; b) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with the garment workers and c) Interviews with trade union leaders, government officials and gender experts.

A total of 15 in-depth interviews with the victims and two FGDs with female workers have been conducted in the above mentioned project's areas, mostly in Gazipur and Ashulia, where the highest number of garment factories is concentrated.

The major challenge faced by the research team in carrying out the study has been to find out the victims due to the cultural context, where it is either appropriate or difficult (not appreciated by the interviewees) to talk about their personal experiences with an outsider, even with her close ones. In few cases, the respondents were telling their stories of sexual harassment in the guise of others, but as the interviews went further deepening a relationship of trust, they disclosed the fact they themselves were the victims.

At the beginning of the study, it was planned to collect case studies mainly among the "Jukta Hoe Mukta – United We Stand" project's beneficiaries, from the different services provided, as the "Amader Kotha" helpline call center and other women's and workers' groups established by several partners. During the interviews with them, they expressed mostly their complaints against getting the salary or the overtime payment on delay, not getting different types of leave, but they could not mention any case related to sexual violence or harassment. For this reason, the research team, in consultation with the project team and with the support of Trade Union leaders, decided to incorporate additional respondents who have been victims of sexual harassment and were willing to share their stories. The team applied storytelling method to get a deeper insight into the victims, creating at the same time a very trustworthy and friendly environment. The team assured them that the study will never disclose their names (fake names of the respondents have been used), or any specific information related to the harassment and these will be used only for this study.

Chapter Two
Contextualization of
Sexual Harassment

2.1 Conceptual Framework of Sexual Harassment

Generally, sexual harassment and sexual violence against women are not perceived as a violation of human rights or a form of gender-based violence (GBV), rather they are labeled as an "inappropriate" or a disappointing behavior against women (Sarah & Ruhak 2018). However, the boundary of "appropriate" and "not-appropriate" varies from culture to culture. The pattern of relationship in a particular society creates complexity to draw a boundary between 'appropriate' and "inappropriate" or "licit and illicit" (Naheer and Ferdous, 2018). For example, using either a sexual language or sexualized jokes like *shafii* (a sister-in-law younger than the wife) and *bhabhi* (wife of brother) by a man is not considered inappropriate behavior, while using a sexualized language like the sister-in-law (elder sister of wife) is inappropriate. The same statement applies to the relationship between the brother-in-law (*debor*) and the sister-in-law (*bhabhi*). So, it is very difficult to address this issue systematically in public discourses. Again, in most of the cases of sexual harassment, the women remain silent as they have learnt in the socialization process that it is secure for them to accept the convention due to the notion of "purity" and "impurity" and the sense of "honor" and "shame" (Naheer, 2018).

Thus, the actual statistical data of and the various forms of sexual harassment and level of consequences mostly remain ambiguous (ibid).

Over the last couple of decades, sexual harassment at workplace has become a growing concern for the feminists, academics, activists and different organizations globally and they started raising their voices extensively to combat it and to protect women's human rights, and their demand has been reflected in different conventions and policies.

In 1979, the United Nations Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW) included sexual harassment in its definition of violence. In 1992, the International Confederation of Trade Unions adopted a resolution recognizing sexual harassment as a legitimate trade union issue.

In this regard, the Equality Act 2010 formulated by the United Kingdom

Sexual harassment as an act that has the purpose or effect of intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive conduct. It includes a range of behaviors that include sexual jokes or comments, sexual appearance, display of sexual organs, sexual assault, or sexual harassment.

Sexual Harassment: A form of discrimination that results in physical, verbal, or written abuse, including threats of such abuse, whether occurring in the workplace or otherwise.

Sex-based behavior: that is based on sex. The ILO's Committee of Experts has defined it as behavior that falls within the scope of the ILO Convention, 1958 (no. 111) that form the basis of the Convention.

Sexual Harassment: any form of Gender Based Discrimination in a range of socio-cultural, economic and practices. For this reason, the ILO's perspective of human rights is that sexual harassment is a gender equality issue. It also has a broader perspective to the physical and economic harassment functions as well as the labor market. In that context, gender equality and economic development are closely linked.

Sexual Harassment: any form of Gender Based Discrimination that is leading to gender inequality and social structure. It is a form of violence that male violence lies at the heart of the production. In need, the

¹⁰ Feminist Perspective: (Babcock, 2007) (p.13)

Woman: A Sex Object

Jhorna, a 17-year-old girl, came from Sherpur to Dhaka in search of her livelihood, and with the help of a relative, she got a job in a garment factory. The supervisor started harassing her from the very beginning. He was used to tell her, "Your figure is seductive, and I want to touch your body" (তোরা ফিগার তো অসাধী আছে, আমার ধরতে মন চায়). The proposal was shocking, and annoying too.

Not getting any response from her side, he promised her she will be promoted as operator, but in return she was supposed to spend a night on his bed. "I felt so humiliated and shocked to get such an insulting offer. I was totally helpless and couldn't disclose the incident to anyone, even to my father who works in the same factory. I cried every day after returning home. My mother kept asking why but I remained silent" (এরকম একটা প্রস্তাব পাওয়ার পর আমার এত লজ্জা আর অপমান লাগছে বঙ্গার মত না। আমার নিজেরে এত অসহায় মনে হইছে, এই কথা আমি কাউরে বলি নাই। এমনকি আমার বাপেরও না যে একই কারখানিতে কাজ করে। জোজব বাড়ী ফিরা কানতাম, মায় জিগায় কিছ অসি চুপ করে থাকি).

Tears rolled down her cheeks while she was remembering these events in the interview. She remained silent for few months after being harassed every day; the perpetrator continuously tried to touch her body parts like breast, back and shoulder during her work. She cried with her mother many times but she did not share the reason.

One day she decided not to discuss the matter with a senior sewing operator, who used to work beside her. Her colleague advised her to lodge a complaint against the supervisor. Mastering her courage, she met the Admin Officer of the factory and complained about the sexual harassment by her supervisor, but he denied all the charges she brought against him.

The supervisor was not punished by the management, rather he started humiliating Jhorna even more than before, calling her "slut" and "prostitute". The aggravation increased gradually, and Jhorna got

12. Supervisor: A garment factory management staff who deals with general workers

traumatized. Every morning she used to wake up with a fear of going to work. She was assigned for overtimes without any schedule and fair work 5h sometimes she had to stand aside for long hours by the order of wages. Supervisor without any reason. It was like detention. Gradually, the supervisor went into such a stage that she had to resign from her job. torment

fears rolled down her cheeks while she was remembering these events in the interview. She remained silent for few months after being harassed every day; the perpetrator continuously tried to touch her body parts like breast, back and shoulder during her work. She cried with her mother many times but she did not share the reason.

No complaint box was usually kept in the factory, but it was shown only when a buyer or visitor was coming from abroad. "No security has ever been ensured for women in that garment factory" (গার্মেন্টস ফ্যাক্টরিতে কোন নিরাপত্তা দেয়ার জন্য কোন ব্যাবস্থা নাই), she added. "Few get used to it, but most of them like me leave the job without getting even the due wages. However, I need a job but it is really hard to get it without any reference. As I left my job, no one is supporting me to find another one" (কোরণ্ড কারও আসলেই ব্যবহার করে যায়, কিন্তু আমার মত অনেকেই আছে যারা তাদের প্রাণ্য কেতন না নিয়ে এইভাবে ছেড়ে দেয়। আমার জগের কাজ হাইজা পেয়ার পর নতুন একটা চাকরি খুঁজতে কেউ চাকরি দেয় না, আশা করলেই হাইজা পেয়ার পর নতুন একটা চাকরি খুঁজতে কেউ পাওনা পাবে না।) ■

socialization of sex roles, sex character, gender inequality, and gender difference are the by-products of patriarchy. According to these views, unequal power relationship is the main factor of women's sexual harassment.

Dobash & Dobash (1992) also connect violence to the larger social and cultural relations. This approach to gender violence focuses on the social system, wherein a man believes he is entitled to control and coerce a woman through various means including violence. This perspective connects all forms of male violence against women such as sexual abuse, rape, and sexual harassment.

Similarly, Dr. Naher in her study (The Current Status of Gender-based Violence at the Workplace in Bangladesh, 2017) mentions that the GBV occurs in a context where men have more social power and position, and as a result of structural violence which entails processes and policies that systemically produce and reproduce socioeconomic inequities and determine who will be at risk of assaults and who will be shielded from them.

For better understanding, this study will explore the link between tradition, change and gender violence because the patriarchal structure not only creates unequal relationship between men and women, but it operates social order through certain rules and norms to confirm this kind of relationship. However, in the changing context of Bangladesh, gender relations are subject to changes challenging the traditional norms and values, and creating tensions between men and women. Therefore, it is necessary to understand sexual harassment in relation to the specific process of socio-economic changes, which have a positive impact on women's mobility and economic status as well as question the traditional norms and practices. Various socio-political approaches suggest that patriarchal norms and values separated men-women role, social space (private and public) and position. As a result, men are dominant, and women dominated. This situation can be explained through Bourdieu's concept of "Doxa" that refers to tradition and beliefs which will exist beyond argument, un-discussed, unnamed, admitted without argument (Bourdieu cited in Nico, 1999:14).

According to Bourdieu (1977, cited in Agarwal 1994: 58-59), cultural traditions and norms are accepted as a natural and self-evident part of

the social order. It is not open to questions or queries. This acceptance of such practice also reflects women's relation towards men. The dominant group keeps the space of "Doxa", while the interest of the dominated group remains suppressed. According to Bourdieu, the change will take place when the dominated group will have the strong bargaining power and the symbolic means of rejecting what is imposed on them as real in terms of their roles and position in the society.

In Bangladesh, women's role is changing fast. A huge number of women are participating in the garment sector and this involvement has challenged their traditional role and also weakened the traditional patriarchal social order. Kabeer (cited in Nicco 1999) mentions how violence can be considered an attempt to assert male power in response to changes women do.

The idea of women's sexuality, honor, segregation of sex role needs to be taken into account to explain sexual harassment, and considering all these factors, for better understanding, the study will focus on socio-cultural perspectives, including economic and psychological ones.

Only the innocents are crucified

Nipa, a 16 years old worker, was shaky and uncomfortable while talking. From the beginning of the discussion, she was saying that the incidents happened to one of her friends, but later she hinted that this is actually her story. In her previous factory, she was teased and offered sexual advances almost every day by her Line Chief. Somehow, he managed to collect her phone number and used to call her regularly, repeating the same offers of starting an illicit relationship, as he was married and had two children.

He was middle-aged, and she was nearly 15. At one point she decided to complain to the authority and dared to talk to the Project Manager. After that, all on a sudden the Manager called her in his room and asked to sign a blank paper. She got fired from the job, but the perpetrator is still working there without getting any punishment. "সে অসহ্য করে দে সাতটা গায়ে না, পায়ে নিরাপত্তা, এটাই এখিকার নিয়ম" ("The innocent gets punished where the offender rooms free, this is the norm here"), said Nipa. ■

2.2 Gender Based Violence: Bangladesh context

GBV is a century-old, widely spread phenomenon, but the discussion on the issue is relevantly recent (Sexual Harassment: 1997). In Bangladesh, VAW is increasing day by day. According to a VAW survey (UNFPA and the BBS: 2015), 73% of the ever-married women in Bangladesh have experienced some kind of violence by their husbands, 55% reported any type of violence in the past 12 months, and 50% reported physical violence. The Daily Star¹⁵ reports that women have experienced various kinds of violence, like 27.3% sexual violence, 49.6% physical violence, 11.4% economic violence, 28.7% emotional violence, and 55.4 % controlling behavior in Bangladesh.

According to the report of the global journal of Human Social Science - Sociology & Culture (2016) various forms of GBV, including physical violence, sexual assault, psychological and economic abuse are still widespread at factories and places of residence and during commutes particularly in public buses and streets, where 70% of women still face harassment.

Those reports depict that the ratio of various forms of sex-based VAW is increasing in both the private and public places of Bangladesh.

However, over the last few decades, women's participation in workplace, especially in the RMG sector, has significantly increased. Almost 80% females are involved in this sector. This changing context is conflicting with the patriarchal society of Bangladesh. Jahangir (1990) mentions that Bangladesh is based on class and gender division. He argues that the society allows class mobility between the rich and the poor, but the division of social space and the difference in the norms between men and women are rigidly maintained. Arena & Beurdn (1980: 35) mentions that in Bangladesh women have been seen subordinate to and dominated by men, and this discrimination starts from their earlier childhood and it continues to be reflected in every sphere of life.

However, the 1972 Constitution of Bangladesh clearly states that no one will be discriminated against on the basis of sex, religion, color and so

15. Round table, 15th December 2016

Living in a Prison

Rumi is a 16-year old garment worker of a factory in Mirpur area, Dhaka city. She expressed her anguish with teary eyes, remembering how she was assaulted inside the factory and how she tried just to overlook at it to survive.

She belongs to a very poor family. Her parents are staying in the village while she resides in a slum of the city sharing a room with one of her colleagues. Every month she has to provide a good sum of money for her father to pay off his debts.

Supervisors and controllers used to touch the young women while working. If they get annoyed, they put nasty labels on them by saying that if they were decent they would not be working in a factory. *"The supervisors and the controllers touch us badly. If we protest, they say that we are not good girls and if we are so then we would never be garment workers. They use slangs for our parents, and call us "sluts" and "whores". I work in the finishing section, and I don't know about the sewing. Despite that they intentionally transfer us to other departments just to put extra pressure on us."* (সুপারভাইজার আর কন্ট্রোলাররা গায়ে হাত দেয় আর মান্ন করলে কয়, তোরা কি খুব জাঙ্গোনে? ভাল হলি কি আর গার্মেন্টস এ কাজ করস? মা বাপ তুলি গালি দেয়, বেগ্যা মাপী হাতু কণা কয় না, আমি কিনিসিং এ কাজ করি, সুইং জালি না, এটা জানার পরেও ইচ্ছা করে এতলা করতে বসে). "Slut", "whore" and many more slangs are usual words used by the supervisors. Girls/ young women are transferred to the sections in which they do not have any skills, as an additional trick to torture them more.

Rumi feels ashamed to work in the garment sector. As she doesn't look good, she gets often punishment and more workload whereas workers with good physique and pretty faces get more attention and privileges, as in example they get properly salaries and wages for overtime.

She mentioned several more examples of misconduct and daily misbehavior of the factory supervisors towards them. They used to wink at the girls and showed sexual gestures like smiling and staring at the bodies of those who work in the finishing section. She also cited an example of one of her distant relatives, who worked in the same factory. She got sexually assaulted and mentally disturbed by this kind of

harassment. After few days, she became very silent and left the job suddenly, going back to her village as soon as she could.

Rumi mentioned the Supervisor had some illicit activities with another girl named Shewly who was used to bring him food during lunch. Some other workers saw that one day he hugged her and harassed her. These people asked her what happened, but she couldn't reply. After few days, she left the factory and it was not clear whether she was forced by the supervisor or she felt ashamed due to the affair, but her termination

Rumi feels ashamed to work in the garment sector. As she doesn't look good, she gets often punishment and more workload whereas workers with good physique and pretty faces get more attention and privileges, as in example they get properly salaries and wages for overtime.

raised rumors inside the factory. The Supervisor continued his misconduct and had an eye on Rumi too; he kept knocking her to know whether she had any boyfriend or not.

While talking, she was about to cry and she said she wished she could quit as well. The Time Section Managers did not allow general workers to talk or make any complain to the higher management even in such cases. Also in this case, the complaint box has been found inactive mainly because she is working in a non-compliance factory where the box is kept only to show its existence to the foreigner buyers, not to protect girls/ women from being molested. ■

forth (Article 28). But, in practice, the state policies reflect the basic social and cultural attitude as stated in the first 5 Years National Development Plan, where it is clearly mentioned that policies facilitate women's stereo type roles and it has given emphasis to the women as reproducers (Jahan, 1994). Again, Jahan (1988) mentions that the state policies and laws keep women in a vulnerable position as the state follows two types of law, public and personal. Women's rights in marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance are dealt with by personal laws, which are based on Muslim Religious Codes; and thereby the religious laws have a strong influence on the legal system. On the other hand, socio-cultural powerlessness limits the scope of effective legal protection.

Similarly, White (1992) mentions that Bangladesh state legitimizes its own power on patriarchal structures and in this situation, women have become subject to dual roles. The state involves them in the development but at the same time it maintains patriarchal values and norms and this contradictory approach promotes their vulnerability and oppression. All these discussions reflect that women in Bangladesh are living in an unequal relationship. However, although in such a patriarchal state, more women are coming out from their defined private space and entering the public one for their livelihood. In this new perspective, the RMG sector is a key domain run mostly by the female labor force. In spite of this situation, women who are mostly working in this sector and playing different roles in this huge amount of production are ill-treated, low paid and facing different forms of GBV.

Although it is a less visible form of exploitation, sexual harassment represents a serious problem for the female workers due to its significant consequences, both for the workers' wellbeing and for the enterprises' efficiency (CPD, 2003). This study is trying to understand the root causes of sexual violence in the RMG sector considering the socio-cultural and economic context of Bangladesh.

Her Dream Died Silently

Ananya is a lively and beautiful young woman with a smiling face who meets and greets everyone who passes by her path every day. It seems that she is living a life which she has once dreamt of. But the more you come closer to her the more you find her broken heart weeping inside. She is in her late 20s, married and from a very conservative and religious family. She has completed her higher secondary school level degree from Begum Badrunnesa College, Dhaka. Once she was an artist, and she participated in several art competitions and exhibitions. Because of her father's religious ideology she had to stop her painting activities. Later on, due to a sudden family economic disaster, she had to stop her education and start working to support her family. She joined a garment factory as an embroidery helper as she did not have any other choice in the job market. From that moment, her life took an adverse turn. She said, "Art died silently. I am a garment worker now. There is no value of our work here, only body has its value" (শিল্প অস্তিত্বই শেষ. প্রতি আসি গার্মেন্টস এ; এখানে কোন মূল্যায়ন নাই কাজের, মাত্র শুধু শরীরের।). She explained how most of the male colleagues look at the young women with a sexual desire. "We are not treated as workers, here we are just women having a sexual body. Kissing or hugging from behind is a very normal practice in our factory especially at lunch and break times" (আমাদের শরীরকে হিসেবে দেখে না। এইখানে আমরা শুধুই শরীরওয়ালী একজন মেয়েমানুষ। দুপুরে খাওয়ার সময় অথবা ব্রেকের সময় খুঁটা দেয়া অথবা পিছন থেকে জরাইয়া ধরা আমাদের কার্যক্রমিত্তে খুবই নরমাল।).

A friend of her working in a factory in Ashulia every now and then gets offers to sleep with her supervisor and her male co-workers.

"What a disrespectful life that we are living. We are helpless as no one is there to hear our voices as we are poor women" (কি যে অসম্মানের জীবন আমরা বাঁচি! আমরা অসহায়, এখানে কেউ নাই আমাদের কথা শোনার কারণ আমরা গরিব।) ■

The Only Option: Leaving the Job

Tuli came to Dhaka to find a job. As she was underage, the big and compliant factories refused to appoint her as they might be convicted under the Child Labor Act. She came to know about this only when she applied for a job.

She is one of the 8 members of her family. With only her father earning, she desperately needed a job. So she finally somehow managed a work in a small factory near Gazipur. After a month working there, the in-charge of the section had a bad eye on her. He asked her phone number, and as she denied, he forcefully held her in his arms and dragged beside the stairs.

One day he ordered her not to leave the workplace until he allowed her to. She kept standing for one hour. The man pushed her to the washroom and asked her to take off her pajamas to allow him a sexual intercourse, ensuring no one will know about that. Tuli warned him she would complain to the Production Manager. After work he followed her and blocked her way. Tuli dared to lodge a complaint instead of tolerating his behaviour, but the situation took an unexpected turn. She did not get any support from the factory management, rather the torment increased.

The in-charge used to hit and smack her in the back or anywhere in the body whenever he got a chance, he threatened her after she complained. He started creating troubles everywhere, from the work schedule to the payment of the overtime and wages.

It gradually became impossible for her to tolerate. "Your size is good. Why do you react? I brought you here just for sex." ("খালি কইত তোর সাইজ ত ভালই, এত দাগে কেন? লিফার সাইজই ত ভালই তুমারে।") Tuli also knew that she would hardly manage a job as she was underage. She mostly suffered when intentionally she was shifted from one section to another where she was unable to perform the jobs without prior skills and experience. That was a nasty trick to apply more tantrums. When she wanted to share all these to other colleagues she couldn't, because she had fear to lose her job. In her words, Tuli justified the silence, and said, "We accept the

torment. What should I do? I need work. And we are girls". ("gvBbv by wbyv wK KiZvg Kvg Z KibB jvMc, Avi Avgiv tZv gvBqv gvbyl |"). She tries to cope with the situation as she has to continue working. In many cases, RMG workers have a pre-mindset which tells them there is no rule to save them from all the pestering and it's very normal to be molested on a daily basis. However, saving the job is their priority. At the end, Tuli couldn't tolerate it anymore and she left the job last month. ■

Complaints cost our jobs

Amirunessa is a worker of around 32 years who is in the garment industry since 7 years. She has gone through a divorce and filed a case for getting the custody of her son, reason why she was always in need of a job. She could mention some examples of other women being abused by their supervisors who did not talk about it for the fear of losing their jobs.

She is one of those who can't leave the job for that; either she has to tolerate when he comes for her or to overlook when it happens with other women. She also suffers from unwanted body touching during work hours like breasts, back and hips. The factory where she is currently working is located in Gazipur area, and women are bound to please the Production Manager (PM) according to his will. The PM used to call them in his room and talk with them for hours, during which he also molested them pressing their breasts and touching private parts. Female workers are used to endure through this pain without saying anything or protesting. In response to the question of why they don't lodge any complaint, Amirunessa replied, "What's the benefit of complaining? We are going to lose our jobs instead of getting justice. Madams (female mid-level management staff) will yell at us and gives punishment if we try to talk to them." ("অভিযোগ কইরা লাভ কি? চাকরী সাইব কিয়া আর যাওয়ার মেয় আরও পাইল, সাজ'ও দেহ, একদিন যারা অনার না করে তারা'স সাজা পায়।") The ugliness still exists and every day she goes to her work suppressing her voice because of her financial needs. ■

A Tale of Horror

Sharmin, a 13 years old girl, started to tell her story with teary eyes. "I wanted to go to school with my friends, but my father was very poor, how could he feed us? So, I started to work in a garment factory at the age of 12" (আমি আমার বন্ধুদের সাথে গুলে হাইতে চাইতাম; কিন্তু আমার বাবা ছিল অনেক গরীব; আমাদের ঋণায়বে কিভাবে? তাই আমি ১২ বছর বয়সে গার্মেন্টস ফ্যাক্টরিতে কাজ নেই।). Her story is very similar to other respondents though she is so young. According to her, she was appointed as a helper earning 3,000 taka per month. After joining the factory, in the first few months everything gone well, but later the supervisor started creating trouble both inside and outside of the workplace. He used to touch her shoulders and hands whenever he wanted. She said, "He touched my body whenever he liked and wanted to take me outside." (যখন তখন আমার শরীরে হাত দিত, আমারে দিচ্চা বাইরে হাইতে চাইত). Gradually he became crazy to get her and he proposed her to meet outside of the factory. Sharmin's continuous refusal made him much aggressive, but she did not discuss the issue with anyone even not with her mother. She tried to give her best efforts to save her job.

Her story is very similar to other respondents though she is so young. According to her, she was appointed as a helper earning 3,000 taka per month. After joining the factory, in the first few months everything gone well, but later the supervisor started creating trouble both inside and outside of the workplace.

One weekend morning the Line Chief of the factory invited her at his place and Sharmin accepted the invitation as that person did not seem harmful to her. But after going there she found the supervisor sitting in that place and the Line Chief was not at home. She immediately rushed away and luckily she managed to save herself. This incident made her almost mad and she lost her all patience. She complained to the Production Manager. Verbally, he assured her to take care of the issue but

in reality, he supported the supervisor and jointly started to abuse her with more vulgar sentences like "Our touch will make your body more beautiful and you will then be ready to sleep with your husband" (আমরা হাত দিলে তোমার শরীর আরও সুন্দর হইবে আর তুমি তোমার জামাইয়ের সাথে শোবার জন্য প্রস্তুত হইয়া যাক।).

Moreover, they put the undue workload on her without or with delayed payments. Only for the sake of her family, she tried to save her job but their dirty intentions and slang languages along with the inhuman workload made her deciding to leave the factory hopelessly, indeed without getting any payment. ■

Slangs and Slaps: Normal Behavior

I used to sell flowers in front of a bus stand in Gazipur and used to go to an evening school – but one night my father told me to join a garment factory for a better earning. I cried a lot, but my mother said that there were no other options to run our family. Our father was the only earning member and we were 6 in the family, depending on him. I followed their instructions, but I felt so unhappy to leave my flowers selling and the school." (আমি গাজীপুরের একটা বাস স্ট্যান্ডে ফুল বিক্রি করতাম, আর বিকালবেলায় স্কুলে হাইতাম; কিন্তু এক রাতে আমার বাবা আমাকে বলে যে গার্মেন্টসে টাকা বেশি, তাই ঐখানে কাজ দিতে। আমি অনেক কাঁদলাম; কিন্তু আমার মা বলল যে, সংসার চালাইতে হইলে আর কোন রাস্তা খোঁসা নাই। আমাদের পরিবারে ৬ জন ছিল আর আমার বাবাই শুধুমাত্র টাকা

one night my father told me to join a garment factory for a better earning. I cried a lot, but my mother said that there were no other options to run our family. Our father was the only earning member and we were 6 in the family, depending on him.

কামাইত। আমি আমার মা বাবার কথা মাইনা নিলাম। কিন্তু আমার ফুল বিক্রি আর আমার স্কুল ছাড়ি আসতে আমার অনেক ব্যাপার লাগতেছিল। Rani is a 14 years old girl who has joined a garment factory as a helper and has been working since the last one year. "I am trying to adjust with the abusive culture of the factory as there is no door that is open for me. I realized that I must survive here for my family, though almost every day I get slapped and touched badly (sexually) by my supervisor." (আমি ফ্যাক্টরির এরকম একটা অপমানকর পরিবেশের সাথে মানিয়া নেয়ার চেষ্টা করতছি, যেহেতু আমার জন্য আর কোন দরজা খোলা নাই। যদিও আমার সুপারভাইজার আমাকে এতদিন চড় খাওয়ার সময় অথবা শরীরের বিভিন্ন জায়গায় বাজে ভাবে হাত দেয় (যৌন নিপীড়নের উদ্দেশ্যে), আমার পরিবারের জন্য আমাকে এই অবস্থাতেই টিকে থাকতেই হবে, সেইটা আমি বুঝতে পারছি।)। In her words, "If we fail to do anything, they slap or hit us, use slangs like "slut". We deserve it, and it is normal because we are girls" (কাম নাগরনে চড় খাওয়া দেয়, ঝাঝকি, মারি কইয়া গালি দেয়, দিবই তো, আমরা তো মাইয়ামানুষ)। According to her, generally touching, slapping and using slang words with the women workers are very common practices in the factories.

However, no one dares to respond or to protest against such humiliating behaviors due to the fear of losing their jobs. Some of the female workers adopted their own way to accommodate with such cruel situation building a close relationship with the bosses (Production Manager, supervisor, and in-charges) to avoid the torture, and even to get promotion and other benefits. But all their efforts work for a very short time as the male expectations towards the female workers are high.

"It is taken for granted that the males can do anything with the females," said Rani. Even when she shared the male attitudes with her family, they replied that males are like that and as a girl she must adjust with that. "But I cannot take it anymore, I felt so insulted and ashamed, when they touched the private parts of my body and looked at me with a mean eye. Every night, I dreamt of getting free from such unhealthy and disgraceful life, but I am a little girl with poor knowledge, what can I do except accommodate with this brutal culture?" (যখন তারা আমার শরীরের বিভিন্ন জায়গায় হাত দেয় অথবা আমার দিকে ব্যাপার তোষে তাকায়, তখন আমার এত অপমান লাগে, এত লজ্জা লাগে ব্যাপার মত না। আমি এইভাবে আর নিতে পারতজিগাম না। এতি হাতে অতি ভীতভা, কবে আমি এরকম বাজে একটা জীবন থেকে মুক্তি পাব। কিন্তু আমি একটা বাচ্চা মেয়ে হার কোন জ্ঞানই নাই বলতে গেলে। এইরকম ব্যাপার একটা পরিবেশের সাথে মানিয়া নেয়া ছাড়া আমার আর কিই বা করার আছে?)। ■

Chapter Three

Socio-cultural and economic perspective and Sexual Harassment in the RMG sector

This section presents the experiences of the victims and views of the gender expert, trade union leaders, and policymakers to understand sexual harassment in relation to gender, class and work pattern.

Before describing and analyzing the findings, we would like to give a brief description of the 15 respondents.

3.1 Brief profile of the respondent

| Name | Age | Education | Designation | Ave.e Monthly Income | Working Area | Marital Status |
|------------|-----|-----------|-------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Jhorna | 17 | Class 6 | Helper | 4000 | Gazipur | Unmarried |
| Rumri | 16 | Class 4 | Helper | 3500 | Mirpur | Unmarried |
| Ananya | 28 | Class 12 | Embo Helper | 7000 | Ashulia | Married |
| Tuli | 12 | Class 5 | Helper | 3500 | Gazipur | Unmarried |
| Rupali | 14 | Class 6 | Helper | 4000 | Gazipur | Married |
| Sharmin | 13 | Class 5 | Helper | 3000 | Gazipur | Married |
| Shanta | 23 | Class 3 | Operator | 6500 | Ashulia | Unmarried |
| Rani | 14 | Class 6 | Helper | 4000 | Gazipur | Divorced |
| Tania | 22 | Class 5 | Operator | 5700 | Mirpur | Unmarried |
| Amirunnesa | 32 | Class 8 | Operator | 6500 | Gazipur | Divorced |
| Minara | 29 | Class 2 | Operator | 6500 | Mirpur | Married |
| Nipa | 16 | Class 6 | Helper | 4500 | Mirpur | Unmarried |
| Sultana | 17 | Class 5 | Operator | 6500 | Ashulia | Unmarried |
| Momina | 20 | Class 8 | Operator | 6000 | Ashulia | Unmarried |
| Shefali | 24 | Class 7 | Operator | 6500 | Gazipur | Married |

The profile of the respondents of the study indicates that all of them are from the rural part of Bangladesh having a very poor economic and educational background; and age is between 12 and 32. Some of them are married, some divorced and some unmarried. The common factors among them are that all belong to poor families and that all of them are struggling to survive.

3.2 General feature of sexual harassment in the factories

From the interviews and discussion with the female workers, they reported that verbal, non-verbal and physical abuses inside factories are very common and any form of harassment take place at any time. Kissing, hugging, using slangs and touching private parts of the body are the most common forms of harassment female workers are facing. In addition to that, physical violence like slapping, and pulling by the hair are also reported by the respondents. The perpetrators are the supervisors, line chiefs, and Production Managers. During the study, 49 female workers have been interviewed and among them no one dropped any complaint or they heard anyone who did that. In their opinion, it would not work, and they believe there is a high chance to lose the job. Even when the buyers talked with them, they did not discuss any sort of problem-related to their factory, but everyday use of slang words like bitch, slut, whore (বেশা, মামী), indicating even their parents, became a practice. Few workers reacted to it negatively, but most of them remain non-reactive as if this is very normal.

One of the respondent, Rumi, says, “সুপারভাইজার জার কট্টোনরা গারে হাত দেয় আর কিছু কাজি কর, তোরা কি খুব ভালোরে? ভাল হলি কি আর গার্মেন্টস-এ কাজ করল? মা বাপ তুজি গাজি দেয়, বেশা মামী জাড়া কথা কয়না, আমি ফিলিসিঃ এ কাজ করি সুইং জানিনা, এঁ জনার পরেও তুঁকি আমি ইচ্ছা করি করে এলনা. (“Supervisors and controllers touch us inappropriately and if we protest they say stuff like why are you reacting? Are you a good girl? If you were good, you wouldn't have joined the factory. They do not talk to us without saying words like whore and slut. They also call our parents by name. I work in finishing, I don't know sewing, despite knowing that they want to create trouble for me on the basis of not knowing how to sew.”) Rumi shared that words as whore, slut and mentioning their parents in vulgar language (Ma Baba tute gal) are very common for them and intentionally they want to create troubles to the workers so that they can get more chance to torture them. Unwanted touching, highly sexualized vocabulary, winking, pinching, kissing, expressing illicit proposal, bullying are very common as reported during the study.

“There is no specific time to harass us, it can happen any time” (হয়রানি করার কোন নির্দিষ্ট সময় নাই, যখন ইচ্ছা করতে পারে), said Anannya. She added that there is an increasing risk of being sexually harassed (rape) especially in the night shifts. The experiences of other respondents also support such

Living with fear

“আমি রাতে ঘুমাইতে পারি না সবসময় শুয়া থাকি। (“I can't sleep at night, I am always in fear”). Sultana started working in a factory for 10 months is her first job. She is 17 years old. For the first few months, it went on normally except for few issues of verbal abuses like using slang words. Suddenly, the behavior of her supervisor changed, making her feeling uncomfortable, as he always tried to touch her back intentionally during the working hours, used slangs like slut, bitch, etc. But she didn't dare to protest against these abuses. “If I protest, I think he might get more arrogant and will assault me, both in and outside of the factory.” (আমার মতে হয় আমি প্রতিবাদ করলে সে আরও খারাপ কিছু করতে আর আমাকে ফ্যাক্টরিতে বা ফ্যাক্টরির বাইরে লাঞ্ছনা করবে) stated Sultana.

She responded to our questions very un mindfully, as if lost in another world, as the advances and threats were aching her inside. She is living with fear, but she is very confused and feeling insecure whether she will get another job or not. She is still working there traumatized both

She is living with fear, but she is very confused and feeling insecure whether she will get another job or not.

In her heart and mind. “I don't feel comfortable to go at work, but due I have to go to survive. I can't beg because of shame and I feel threatened that at any time he can hold me from the back or attempt to do any other abuse. I cannot sleep at night as he comes like a nightmare to me” (আমার কাজে যাইতে ভালো লাগে না কিন্তু বেঁচে থেকে থাকার জন্য যাইতে হয়। লজ্জা লাগে তাই ভীক্সা করতে পারি না আমি সবসময় এই ভয়ে থাকি সে হয়ত আমার পিছন থেকে জারাইয়া ধরবে অথবা অন্যভাবে আরও খারাপ কিছু করবে। এই মানুষটো আমার জীবনে একটা দুঃস্বপ্নের মত, তার শুয়ে আমি রাতে শক্তিতে ঘুমাইতে পারি না)।

statement. Most of the respondents opined that males are more powerful than the women and any sort of behavior towards women is taken as normal by the community.

The consequences for workers' physical and mental well-being, and for levels of productivity, will be discussed later in the paper. However, the study explains the findings in four major parts based on the discussion with the victims.

3.3: Women as sexual objective

Johnson (1987: 55-6) explains that everything about women is both grounded in and defined by her female body, and in particular its sexuality in a chauvinist society. The experiences of the respondents about their workplace life indicated that their bodies are sexually marked, and a product. *"Your figure is seductive, and I want to touch your body"* (তোর ফিগার তো জগাই আছে, আমার ধরতে মন চায়), Jhorna commented from her supervisor. *"We are not treated as workers, here we are just women having a sexual body. Kissing or hugging from behind is a very normal practice in our factory especially at lunch and break times"* (আমাদের শ্রমিক হিসেবে নেবে না। এইখানে আমরা শুধুই শরীরওয়ালী একজন মেয়েমানুষ। দুপুরে খাওয়ার সময় তখনা বেতের সময় চুমো দেয়া তখনা পিছন থেকে জরহিয়া ধরা আমাদের ফ্যাক্টরিতে খুবই নরমাল।). Anya described the scenario inside the factory in this way. During her interview, Sharmin mentioned that both the supervisor and the Production Manger harassed her almost every day and kept knocking to her with such nasty invitation. *"Our touch will make your body more beautiful and you will then be ready to sleep with your husband"* (আমরা হাত দিলে তোমার শরীর আরও সুন্দর হইবে আর তুমি তোমার জামাইয়ের সাথে শোয়ার জন্য রেডি হইয়া যাবে।), said one of the respondents.

All the 15 victims and the respondents from FGDs stated that most of the female workers have experienced sexual harassment in their working place. Their body becomes more important than their work. Even some of them explained that beauty is another quality to be a good worker. Female workers who have fair skin and an attractive physique, get their wages and other benefits on time. Besides, in comparison to other female workers they hear less slangs (Gali in Bangla) from their supervisors. Indeed, for them beauty is the main quality of a woman. In

Silence: The Only Way to Keep Honor

Tania, a married woman, has been working in a garment factory for one year. During this tenure, she has experienced abuse like an offer of having sex and has been molested by the general manager (GM) and the supervisor. She felt insulted, humiliated by this unwanted attitude and behavior.

Once she was working in the folding section, the GM came to her and asked whether she was married or not. However, this is not a matter for him and he gave her his visiting card asking her to call him.

"I was very confused and asked him why should I call you?" (আমি বুঝতেহিলাম না কি করব, তাই আমি তাকে জিজ্ঞেস করলাম আপনাকে আমি ফোন দিব কেন) The answer was: *"It is your duty to talk with me after the office hours"* (অফিস শেষ হওয়ার পরে আমার সাথে কথা বলা তোমার দায়িত্ব). He also offered her a cellphone to talk and again she refused. The GM became very arrogant with her and at every moment of her work, the Production Manager tried to find out her faults as per the GM's instructions. *"My life became miserable"* (আমার জীবন অসহ্য হয়ে গেছিল). She could not share this situation with her husband and other close relatives as there was a chance to be misunderstood and get divorced with blame. So, she remained silent to save herself and her respect. Usually, no one lodges complaints to the management due to the negative consequences as increment of unusual workload, which they have to face after protesting against such incidences. Tania is still working there as her family needs financial support, every day she tries to restore her broken spirit and goes to work. *"Tolerance is the only way I find, as I cannot tell my husband about all this. If I inform him, either he will not allow me to work or he will leave me."* (আমি কি করতাম? স্বামী জানলে তাকে দিবে, মোকে জানলে খারাপ কইবে। একমাত্র পথ হইল চুপ থাকা।) "Shami janle talak dibo r loke janle kharap koibo. Ekmatro path e hoilo chup thaka." said Tania to conclude this crude reality of her life. ■

this regard Minara added: “Workers like me have to wait long time to get our wages as we are not good looking, and this is the normal attitude of the male workers towards us” (আমাদের মত যারা দেখতে ভালো না, তাদের বেতন পাইতে অনেকটা অপেক্ষা করা লাগে; আর এইটাই আমাদের প্রতি পুরুষ কর্মীদের স্বাভাবিক মনোভাব)। During the interviews with the trade union leaders, they also expressed similar experiences of the workers. In their views, attractive female workers get more attention by their line managers. They are also victims of such incident, but they are preferred to be promoted in upper positions and to be given company benefits and leaves. They further added that most of the female workers are facing such harassment, and it does not depend whether she is beautiful or not, rather her body matters to the male employees or higher-ups. “There is no value in my work – I am woman, and this is my only identity (আমার কাজের কোন মূল্য নাই; আমি একটা মেয়েমানুষ, এইটাই আমার একমাত্র পরিচয়),” vented Anannya. Shanta, one of the respondent who had to leave her job because of sexual harassment in her

Purity and impurity

“Why are you reacting? You are not a good girl - you are working in a garment factory – I was told in such rude way by the supervisor when I refused his offer. (কি আমি করতেই কেন? তুমি তো ভালো মেয়ে না, তুমি তো একটা গার্মেন্টসের মেয়ে; সুপারভাইজারের এভাবে মানা করার পর আমাকে এত বাজে ভাবে কথা বলা হচ্ছে)। Momina is a married woman suffering from a distressful married life with all the economic burden. She had work to pay the dowry to her husband, if she wanted to hold her marriage. Her Supervisor came to know about all these personal situations and he started taking advantage. Her husband at the end left her by blaming her as a ‘bad woman’. While she was madly looking for him, her Production Manager (PM) and supervisor started abusing her. The supervisor usually tried to touch her back and shoulder while working, and the Production Manager used to touch her in the guise of sincerity like tapping her back again and again.

Many times Momina found the supervisor and PM pointing at her and saying, “Momina won’t you fulfill the target? Tonight we have to meet the

work-place by her supervisor and is presently living in a very helpless condition, expressed her frustration by saying: “I hate the factory and hate my body (আমি গার্মেন্টস খুণা পাই, আমি আমার শরীর ঘৃণা করি),” as she thought her body is responsible for her to be into such vulnerable situation where she lost all hope.

The image of women’s body is deeply rooted in the Bangladeshi patriarchal culture, as Wolf (1991) mentioned that VAW is hidden inside of women’s body. Therefore, the traditional norms, values are reinforcing, promoting and sustaining the male behavior towards women. This is not only applicable to the garment sector, but it is a common practice in most of the working and other public places in the country. There are anyway differences depending on the class and socio-political context.

target, so be fast!” (মমিনা তুমি টার্গেট পূরণ করো না; আজকে রাতেই টার্গেট সব পূরণ করতে হবে, তাড়াতাড়ি কর)। An evil intention was clearly visible in their words. Such a male dominated and distressful environment has engulfed her with uncertainty. She can’t leave the job, nor she can go back to her village as garment workers are treated as bad women and no respectable family wants to accept garment workers as brides. She is passing her days in total despair. Social taunts, abandoned by her husband and harassed at the workplace, she became even more vulnerable. One day, justice came through one of the foreigner partners of the factory, as he found the supervisor was harassing another girl with nasty comments and touching her very badly. He immediately fired him from the factory as he caught him red-handed. Though the complaints in the inactive complaint box remained unheard, the sudden decision taken by the foreigner owner gave an unusual turn to the system, at least a pinch of ease. “We need the money, but we are not bad women because of working in a garment factory” (আমার টাকা নষ্ট না, নষ্ট আমি কারণ আমি গার্মেন্টসে কাজ করি)। ■

3.4 Power relation

"If I protest, I think he might get more arrogant and will assault me, both in and outside of the factory" (আমার মনে হয় আমি প্রতিবাদ করলে সে আরও ধারণা কিছু করবে আর আমাকে ফ্যাক্টরিতে বা ফ্যাক্টরির বাইরে লাঞ্ছনা করবে), - Sultana. *"Men can do anything as they have the power, therefore no one says anything to them"* (যাটা মানুষের কোন সোধে নাই তাদের কেউ ধারণা বলে না তারা যা যুশি তা করতে পারে। তারা ই তো কমতাবান) - Shefali. *"It is very normal and all of us turn a blind eye to it."* *"Not only me, there are so many women in the factory who are victims of such grievance of the male bosses,"* (ওধু আমি না, এরকম আরও অনেক মহিলা ফ্যাক্টরিতে কাজ করে যারা তাদের পুরুষ বসের এরকম অত্যাচারের শিকার।) - Minara said.

All these experiences of the respondents clearly depict an unequal relationship that exists in our society and leads to sexual harassment to women. In her interview, the gender expert explained that the male-dominated culture and the concept of masculinity and femininity lead to sexual harassment.

The patriarchal, patrilineal society of Bangladesh approves the segregation of the sexes and imposes strict gender division of labor, creates clear different spaces for men and women and fosters a systematic bias of male supremacy and women inferiority (Jahan, 1988). Similarly, Siddiqi (M. Siddiqi, 2003) mentions that the most obvious cause for sexual violence, including harassment, is due to the unequal power relations in the society. Arens & Burden (1980) said that in the Bangladeshi society different spaces for men and women clearly exists and therefore, men control property, income, women labor and their daily lives.

All these statements are deeply related to this study findings, where it emerged that the male supremacy over women can be viewed through their highly sexualized vocabulary, body language and sexual demand, etc. Besides, beating female workers by their superior and/or male colleagues is also quite common from the findings. A general perception about such males' behavior is seen as 'normal' and it is almost granted. *"They are male, so they can do anything with us"* (তারা পুরুষ, তাই তারা আমাদের সাথে যা ইচ্ছা তাই করতে পারে), a respondent informed the team in her interview.

Indeed, all instances of sexual harassment by the respondents provided men's sense of entitlement or right to regulate all women's mobility and sexuality. The unequal power relation between men and women works to encourage and legitimate sexual harassment towards the female workers.

Male: The power agency

"I left my job as my supervisor abused me in several ways." (আমি কাজ ছাড়িছি, কারণ আমার সুপারভাইজার আমারে নানাভাবে নিৰ্বিভন করত). Sefali, a poor woman from a village, came to Dhaka for the survival of her family, and got a job in a factory. From the beginning, she felt very uncomfortable with the bad look especially of the supervisor and Line Chief. She tried to ignore them, but the Line Chief kept knocking at her and proposed her constantly for a relationship. *"After the continuous refusal, one day the Line Chief came to my house to check whether I really have a husband or not. Luckily my husband came to Dhaka to live with me at that time. To save my family life, I went back to my village with my husband."* (বারবার মানা করার পরও আমার লাইন ম্যানেজার একদিন আমার বাসায় আইসা পড়ে এটিটা দেখার জন্য যে আসলেই আমার স্বামী আছে নাকি নাই। আমার কপজ ডালো যে ঐদিন আমার স্বামী ঢাকা থেকে আসছিল আমার সাথে থাকার জন্য। এই ঘটনার পর আমার সংসার বাঁচানোর জন্য আমি আমার স্বামীর সাথে গিয়ে ফেরত যাই).

During her interview, she told a story of another friend of her who also worked in a factory. The girl was taken somewhere by the supervisor, but he was caught red-handed. He was punished and forced to marry the girl. Factory workers attacked the supervisor's house and damaged many things. After the incident, many workers were terminated, and rules increased. *"After the marriage, my friend got divorced and again she joined in another factory."* (বিয়ার পর আমার বান্ধবীর তলাক হইয়া যায় আর তারপর সে আরেকটা ফ্যাক্টরিতে কাজ নেয়). She added, *"Men can do anything as they have the power, therefore no one says anything to them"*. (যাটা মানুষের কোন সোধে নাই তাদের কেউ ধারণা বলে না তারা যা যুশি তা করতে পারে। তারা ই তো কমতাবান) Like her friend, Shefali joined another factory for her survival. ■

Sexual gratification leads to fair wages

Minara Begum is a married woman who comes from a very poor family. In her experience, most of the female workers have faced some sort of sexual harassment by their male co-workers. "It is very normal and all of us turn a blind eye to it." (এইটা অনেক নরমাল আর সবাই এইটা দেখেই না দেখার ভাল করে). According to her, most of the female workers can increase their wages and get other benefits if they agree to the supervisors' sexual offers, especially those who are senior.

On the other hand, women who refuses are going through hardship and punishment. Minara said: "As I did not agree to such sexual advances, it took me long time to get my overtime wages and benefits, even after my hard work, I was not paid fully and sometime not at all" (যদিও আমি অনেক পরিশ্রম করি তারপরেও তাদের কথায় রাজি হইনি বলে আমার বেতন তাইতো পেতে অনেক অপেক্ষা করতে হয়। আর শুধু আমি না এরকম আগে অনেক মেয়েই অপেক্ষা করে।) She further added, "Not only me, there are so many women in the factory who are victims of such grievance of the male bosses." (শুধু আমি না, এরকম আরও অনেক মহিলা ফ্যাক্টরিতে কাজ করে যারা তাদের পুরুষ বসের এরকম আচরণের শিকার।) Sometimes, she has to wait for a long time to get the allowances and she is detained by the supervisor for not being friendly with him. Minara is also being abused at home, reason why she can't leave her job, but she has to continue such a painful life in the factory. ■

3.5 Changing of women agency

It is well known that the rapid growth of the RMG sector creates more job opportunities for women from the most backward segment of Bangladesh. Traditionally, their roles have defined them in the private space, but due to the changing economic scenario and the country development, more women are visible in the working place and their role is changing fast. Increasing mobility, internal networking, access to paid employment contributed to transform the women agency and challenged the traditional gender relations determined by the society. On the other hand, the socio-cultural norms and values do not change in

line with the changing economic and development context. This traditional gender hierarchy determines men's authority and position in the society. In this challenging context, men suppress women and the male defense is, however, regarded as part of the social order.

3.6 Complain box: causes of fear

During the study, 49 female workers were interviewed by the team at both compliance and non-compliance factories and it was found that in the compliant ones complaint boxes are established, but they are totally ineffective. It is just an ironical symbol of judgment. From the individual interviews and the FGDs, it emerged that it is rare for anybody to get proper resolution through the complaint box, and in most of the cases innocent workers are punished and they suffer. When foreign buyers come to visit the factories, they are taught to be utter good staff like a parrot. In non-compliance factories, there was not such mechanism. Several examples were cited by the respondents and the sole reason of not dropping complaints in the boxes is the fear of losing the job.

Aminun, a respondent, told us that in her factory if anybody complains regarding sexual assaults, that person becomes more vulnerable. Nipa, another worker complained to the Production Manager against her supervisor, but after few days she was called by the Manager and she was terminated without getting her 3 months' wages. A Trade Union (TU) Leader Sumi, who raises her voice in favor of the workers, used to work in a compliant factory, but when the authority came to know that she is a TU leader, they fired her by taking her signature in few blank pages without giving her any proper reason for the dismissal. From the experiences of the victims, it is clear that the issue of sexual harassment is seen as a normal attitude of male's behavior and it is almost granted. Therefore, the factories' management gives less priority to it. Even the interview with the TU leader reveals that managers are more focused on wages, leave, safety issues rather than on different kind of sexual harassment, as it is still seen as an individual attitude of males towards women. On the other hand, the absence of effective monitoring and implementation of existing policies, makes the judgment process of the factories faulty.

voices as we are poor women (আমরা অসহায়; আমাদের মত গরীব মহিলাদের কথা শোনার মত কেউ নাই)" - said Ananya, one of the respondents of the study. This statement expresses thousands of untold and unheard situations. Most of the respondents mentioned that inside the factory the whole environment is making them struggling every single day, but they can't leave their jobs due to their livelihood. If they would get any other option, they might not be garment workers. By reviewing the respondents' profiles, it is clear that they belong to poverty-stricken families and in some cases they are the sole earner of the family, so leaving the job or not tolerating the situation would be an unaffordable luxury. This will not be real and living in such a nightmare already shattered their hopes, but they have to survive here as they are poor women with limited skills. Financial needs make them bound to tolerate all these harassments. "I was so humiliated and shocked to get such insulting offer. I was totally helpless and couldn't tell about such incident to anyone, even to my father, whereas he works in the same factory. I cried every day after returning home, my mother kept asking why, but I remained silent." (একজন একটা শক্তির পাওয়ার পর আমার এত লজ্জা আর অপমান লাগছে বজায় মত না। আমার নিজের এত অপকার মনে হইছে, এই কথা আমি কাউর বলি নাই; এমনকি আমার বাপেরও না যে একই ফ্যাক্টরিতে কাজ করে। রোজ বাত্মি ফিনা কানতাম, মায় জিনায় কিন্তু আমি চুপ করে থাকি। Jhorna knows that her father needs support to run the family as they are 6 members and it is not possible for him to bear all the weight alone. For this reason Jhorna started working in the same factory. She is telling about her condition after joining the garment sector. "No security has ever been ensured for girls/ women in garment factories, some get used to it and many like me left the job without getting the due wages" (গার্মেন্টস ফ্যাক্টরিতে মহিলাদের জিরাপজা দেয়ার জন্য কোন ব্যাবস্থা নাই, কারও কারও এইটাকে অভ্যাস হয়ে যায়; কিন্তু আমার মত অনেকেই আছে যারা তাদের জিরাপ কেতন না নিয়ে চাকরি ছেড়ে দিচ্ছে।).

Not only economic insolvency, but also social vulnerability makes them think they are not able to do any other job. Rani, another respondent said, "I am trying to adjust with the abusive culture of the factory as there is no door that is open for me. I realized that I must survive here for my family, though almost every day I get slapped and touched badly (sexually) by my supervisor (আমি ফ্যাক্টরির এরকম একটা অপমানকর পরিবেশের সাথে মানায়া নেয়ার চেষ্টা করতছি, যেহেতু আমার জন্য আর কোন দরজা খোলা নাই। যদিও আমার সুপারভাইজার আমাকে প্রতিদিন চড়ু বাগার শেষ অথবা শরীরের বিভিন্ন জায়গায় হাত

3.7 Silence: reflection of strong cultural taboo

"My life became miserable. But I could not share this with my husband and close relatives as there was a chance to be misunderstood and get divorced with blame on me. So, I remained silent to save my life and my honor" (আমার জীবন অসহ্য হয়ে গেছে; কিন্তু আমি এই ব্যাপারগুলি আমার স্বামীর সাথে বা আমার আত্মীয়স্বজনের সাথে শেয়ার করতে পারত না। কারণ তারা আমাকে ভুল বুঝবে, আমার স্বামী আমার হাতে দোষ দিলে আমাকে তালক দিয়ে দিবে; তাই আমি আমার জীবন আর সম্মান বাঁচানোর জন্য চুপ করে আছি). During one of the FGDs, some of the respondents mentioned "We are not bad girls so how they would do such attitude with us, it only happens with the bad girls of the factory" (আমরা তো খারাপ মেয়ে নই; আমাদের সাথে একজলি কিভাবে করবে? এইকলি শুধু ফ্যাক্টরির খারাপ মেয়েগুলির সাথেই হয়). Similarly, one of the respondents who is victim of sexual harassment, mentioned that her father also worked in the same factory where she was victimized, but she remained silent not to hamper the respect and honor of her family. From the victims' experiences, the study explored the patriarchal ideology linked with women image, honor and women's body and sexuality. Furthermore, the modesty of women is often expressed in terms of the concept of shame (সম্মতি-শরম).

In the Bangladeshi society, women are expected to behave in a way that they would not bring shame on themselves, their family or their community. There is a Bengali proverb saying that "modesty is the adornment of a woman" (সম্মতি নারীর ভূষণ). Therefore, if any woman loses her shame, she is seen as an ill-character woman and she receives no respect and honor from the society. Moreover, she is blamed by "labeling her as a bad girl or a bad woman". "These things do not happens to her, these only happens with bad women" (অমরার সাথে ইতা হয়না, এতলা হয় ঠিকই কিন্তু খারাপ মাইয়া মানুষগের সাথেই). Female workers who are sexually victimized feel guilty and to keep the honor they remain silent, as this is the only way to save the good image in the society. This culture of silence creates a strong barrier to address the issue in the public discourse.

3.8 Consequences: Question of survival

"What a disrespectful life are we living (কি অসম্মানের জীবন আমরা চলিছি?)" and she answered herself, "We are helpless as no one is there to hear our

No Hope for Life

A girl was sitting quietly for a long time but suddenly she burst into anger to express her frustration about her life and the world during a focus group discussion.

Shanta, a 23 years old young woman, is a victim of sexual harassment and lost her job. "My supervisor wanted to touch my breast and kiss me, and I strongly refused with hatred." (আমার সুপারভাইজার আমার বুকে হাত দিতে আর আমাকে চুমু দিতে চাইছিল, আমি ঘৃণার সাথে খুব শক্তভাবে তাকে মানা করি।), she said. She further added that he often asked her to hang out with him and after her refusal, he started mistreating her. She ignored both his advances and mistreatment and tried to be more efficient¹⁴ and punctual at work. In spite of this, the supervisor used bad words, including addressing her mother as a prostitute. She could not bear the slangs against her mother and she left the job. After almost 5 months, she still does not have any job nor any single penny for herself.

For this reason, she took shelter in her sister's house, helping her in the household chores. Her sister is married, has a boy and lives with her husband.

Shanta is not comfortable to stay there as they are also poor, and it is difficult for them to provide her a shelter. Shanta expressed all her frustration, "I lost all the hope for my life and I am seeing my future as dark, I hate garments, I hate my body, I will prefer to live without food rather going back to the garment sector" (আমি জীবনের সমস্ত আশা হারানো ফেলেছি আর সামনে অন্ধকার ছাড়া আর কিছুই দেখতেছি না। আমি গার্মেন্টস খুঁচা করি, আমি আমার শরীর ঘৃণা করি। আমি না খাওয়া থাকব, কিন্তু তাও গার্মেন্টসে ফেরত যাব না।). After sharing her inner anguish, she went back sitting hopelessly, sighed and gazing out of the window like disgusted by the whole world. ■

**"I lost all the hope for my life
and I am seeing my future as
dark, I hate garments, I hate
my body, I will prefer to live
without food rather going
back to the garment sector"**

ভালো হাত দেয় (যৌন নিপীড়নের উদ্দেশ্যে)). In her words, "Once I used to self flowers in front of schools, but my mother asked me to leave that and join a garment as I could earn more to run my family" (একসময় আমি স্কুলের সামনে ফুল বেচতাম। কিন্তু আমার মা এই কাজ হাইজা সিয়া আমাকে গার্মেন্টসে কাজ দিতে বলে যাতো আমি সংসার চালাবোর জন্য আরও বেশি টাকা কামাইতে পারি). Here it emerges that girls/ women like Rani and their families think garments are the only option to earn better income, sometimes knowing the inside scenario and sometimes without knowing it.

Shanta developed so much hatred that she left the job and said even she could live without food, which is better than surviving in the factory environment with such humiliation. Slaps, unwanted touches, dirty offers and continuous slangs have created a deep scar in her mind, as the respondent shared during the interview. Many consequences they might have to face, and the uncertainty for the future makes them bound to live in such fear of getting molested and humiliated every day. As Momina, a garment worker who stays in the city since few years, also says "If I lose my job and go back to my village, no one will accept me as a good girl and no good family wants to marry off their sons with a garment worker" (আমি যদি আমার চাকরি হারাই আর ভদ্রপার আমার গ্রামে ফেরত যাই, আমার কেউ ভালো মেয়ে হিসেবে গ্রহণ করবে না আর কোনো বয়সি তানের ছোলকে একটা গার্মেন্টস শ্রমিকের সাথে বিয়া দিবে না।).

"Why are you reacting? You are not a good girl - you are working in a garment factory - I was told in such a rude way by the supervisor when I refused his offer (আমি এমন কনভেই কেন? তুমি তো ভালো মেয়ে না, তুমি তো একটা গার্মেন্টসের মেয়ে। সুপারভাইজারের প্রস্তাবে মানা করার পর আমাকে এত বাজে ভাবে কথা জমি বসাইল). "The money we get is useful, but we are not bad women because of working in a garment factory (যেই টাকাটা আমরা পাই সেইটা অনেক কাজে লাগে কিন্তু গার্মেন্টসে কাজ করি বলেই যে আমরা খারাপ মেয়ে তা না।) - Momina said.

There is no doubt that female workers are suffering from psychological trauma, job scarcity, and social vulnerability, but they have to run their working lives as it is a question of survival, so they are accommodating with such hostile environment.

14. Line-Chief. A garment factory management staff deals with general workers

Fear of a Monster House

Rupali works in a factory in Gazipur and stays with her parents and 6 siblings. Her father is a day laborer. She started working in a non-compliance garment factory when she was 14. Her family needs a lot of money as they are 8 members. Rupali stopped going to school and started working, accepting the reality. The factory supervisor started harassing her few days after she joined. He threatens and proposes other girls too. Slangs like “whore” and “fuck” are his everyday language. It was very common that every slang was associated with female body’s private parts like vagina. For example, to illustrate this, Rupali cites an example by saying, “If any thread remained uncut or he found any stain on the products, he shouted on me saying he will insert it into my vagina” (যদি কোন সূতা কাটা থাকত, অথবা আঁচনি ধোঁড়োর উপর কোন দাগ লাইপা থাকত, সে সাথে সাথে ডিল্লিয়া বলত এইজিদি একদম জল্পনা মত ঢুকাইয়া দিতু ।).

When he proposed Rupali, she denied. Many times anyway after work he asked her to visit kunabari with him. According to her, other women have gone there and shared their experiences with each other about how the male staff bring young women over there to hang out and have sexual intercourse. Kunabari has become a threat, as the supervisor is used to tell the female workers when they make any mistake at work “I’ll take you to Kunabari, and then you will understand” (এককত কুনাবারিনিয়া যামু, তখন কুকিন ।).

Rupali had a flashback remembering when her parents used to scare her by threatening to send her to the monsters’ land for being naughty. It is not a fairy tale where a monster lives. This is Rupali’s life, living every day in fear of ending up in the monsters’ land. ■

Chapter Four Concluding remarks

The RMG sector created huge job opportunities especially for the poor, low skilled rural women and girls in Bangladesh, and to some extent this opportunity promoted women's social and economic freedom, though there are multiple factors that further produced vulnerability. Among multiple contributing factors, this study only focuses on sexual harassment which creates mental and social trauma to the female workers, and analyses its findings based on the experiences of the interviewed victims.

From this study, a clear definition and common understanding on sexual harassment, legal framework, changing economic context and gender construction in Bangladesh have emerged has the main points which should be systematically addressed.

The victims' experience proves that women's behavior is prescribed by tradition and constructed in such a way to promote men as well as to isolate women from the public domain. Any woman entering it is perceived at risk of losing her chastity, which is considered a loss of respect. Besides, women's bodies are highly sexualized, and their work is getting less importance compared to their bodies.

The consequences of sexual harassment not only affect women workers' lives, but they are reflecting also on the production of the factories which ultimately affect the Bangladesh social – economic development status and inclusive growth.

At present, there is no comprehensive legal provision to combat sexual harassment and to address the high rate of cases in the RMG sector. Compliance factories have 'complaint boxes', but they are just like a paper tiger, as the mechanism does not help the victims rather in most of the cases, it has been identified that the workers lost their jobs due to their complaints or they became a target for more victimization.

Recommendations

In combating sexual harassment, a comprehensive approach is required as multiple factors are contributing to make the working environment hostile for women in the RMG sector. However, in terms of concrete actions, the following initiatives can be taken by the relevant stakeholders like garment factory owners and management, government, trade union leaders and civil society organizations.

Owners and Management

- The system of recruitment needs to be more formalized. Appropriate document should be provided to the workers during hiring and firing.
- All the findings of the study reveals that the root causes of sexual harassment are embedded in the social structure. Therefore, they must be addressed to improve the relationship between men and women. Considering this fact, factories should take a series of sensitization/ awareness programs on gender/ gender based violence and sexual harassment for their mid-level management as well as its workers to change their attitudes towards women.
- The complaint redressal system must be effective.

Government

- The government has a significant role to play in making the owners and management accountable through strong monitoring and supervision.
- The effective implementation of the High Court verdict on "Sexual Harassment" must be ensured and monitored.
- Government should enact Law on Sexual Harassment at Workplace.

Trade Union Leaders

- From the discussions with the trade union leaders, it has been found that they are focusing priority mostly on wages, leave, recruitment process and workplace safety, with a limited focus on sexual harassment. The leaders and other members of trade

unions need to enhance common understanding on the issue and need to give priority to “sexual harassment”.

- Networking is a must for reducing women worker's vulnerability from such backward segment. Therefore, one of the key agendas of the trade unions must be to strengthen and extend the network among the workers.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

- Activist groups and their related allies must continue to be vocal to influence the owners, management and policy makers, both for ensuring proper law enforcement and formulation of new legislations. Besides, the relevant legal provisions that exist (and could limit sexual harassment) are not being implemented properly either.
- Campaigns for breaking the silence involving media and civil society organizations are very crucial to eliminate sexual harassment from the working places.
- The CSOs should increase awareness among the workers, Trade Union leaders, and community people on gender-based violence, gender discrimination and sexual harassment.

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