

Exploitation and Labor Rights Violations in Bangladesh's Ready-Made Garment Industry: A Systematic Review

Prepared by

Md Komayel Hossain

ID: 193011073

Supervised by

Shawkat Tanveer Rahman

Senior Lecturer, School of Business

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Project Report Approval Form

Student Name: Md Komayel Hossain

ID No. 193011073

Major: Supply Chain Management

Year: 2024

Mobile Phone: 01743579495

Email: komayel.hossain.bba@ulab.edu.bd

INTERNSHIP INFORMATION

Internship

Organization: Sheba Platform Limited

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Remarks (For Not Approved): _____



Name: Shawkat Tanveer Rahman

Date: 03/02/2025

Title: Senior Lecturer

E-mail: shawkat.rahman@ulab.edu.bd

Phone: 01621240000

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February, 2025

Shawkat Tanveer Rahman, Lecturer

ULAB School of Business (USB)

University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB)

Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209

Subject: Submission of Project report on “Exploitation and Labor Rights Violations in Bangladesh's Ready-Made Garment Industry: A Systematic Review”

Dear Sir,

With due respect, I would like to inform you that I have completed my Project on labor rights violations in Bangladesh's ready-made garment industry. The project report paper titled **“Exploitation and Labor Rights Violations in Bangladesh's Ready-Made Garment Industry: A Systematic Review”** has been prepared for the fulfillment of my Project according to the prerequisites of my undergraduate program, Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB). In this report, I have tried my best to compile the concepts which I have learned in my Bachelor of Business Administration along with some experience gathered from the internet for taking relevant information regarding the Project. I hope that it will find your acknowledgement. I am looking forward to your valuable feedback.

Sincerely,

Md Komayel Hossain

ID: 193011073

Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)

ULAB School of Business (USB)

University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB)

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I would like to mention certain people with due honor and respect who helped me not only to solve the difficulties and complete my project paper but also to introduce me to this new situation without any trouble. So, I would like to express gratitude to them. First of all, I pay special gratitude to my Almighty Allah! for offering us the tolerance and bravery to complete this huge task within its deadline.

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I would like to thank the wonderful creation of the internet, which is a helpful platform to gather and implement knowledge towards success in every aspect. With the internet and the help of Google, I have collected all the important data and documents that have been required to prepare this report.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Problem Statement	2
1.3 Research Questions	3
1.4 Scope of the Study	3
Chapter 2: Literature Review	4
2.1 Introduction	4
2.2 Workplace Violations and Labor Rights Issues in Bangladesh's RMG Sector	4
2.3 Wage Theft and Forced Overtime	5
2.4 Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination	5
2.5 Unsafe Working Conditions	5
2.6 Comparative Analysis of labor right violation in peer countries	6
2.6.1 Labor Rights Violations in Bangladesh	6
2.6.2 Labor Conditions in Vietnam	6
2.6.3 Labor Conditions in Cambodia	7
Chapter 3: Literature Review	8
3.1 Research Design	8
3.2 Data Collection Method	8
3.3 Data Search Strategy	8
3.4 Limitations of the Study	9
Chapter 4: Findings and Interpretation	10
4.1 Introduction	10
4.2 Key Labor Rights Violations and Exploitative Practices	10
4.2.1 Financial Exploitation	10
4.2.2 Workplace Abuses	10
4.2.3 Legal Restrictions and Retaliation	11
4.2.4 Social Discrimination	11
4.3 Violations in the RMG Industry	12
4.3.1 Financial Exploitation	12
4.3.2 Workplace Abuses	12
4.3.3 Legal Restrictions and Retaliation	13
4.3.4 Social Discrimination	14
Chapter 5: Recommendation and Conclusion	15
5.1 Recommendations	15

5.1.1 Strengthening Labor Law Enforcement	15
5.1.2 Improving Worker Wages and Benefits	15
5.1.3 Enhancing Workplace Safety and Working Conditions	15
5.1.4 Combating Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination	15
5.1.5 Strengthening Trade Unions and Collective Bargaining	16
5.1.6 Addressing the Role of Global Brands and Buyers	16
5.1.7 Promoting Alternative Economic Opportunities	16
5.2 Conclusion	16
Reference	18
Appendix	22

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry stands as a cornerstone of Bangladesh's economy, accounting for over 80% of the nation's export earnings and employing approximately four million workers, the majority of whom are women (BGMEA, 2021; ILO, 2020). This sector has been instrumental in driving poverty alleviation and economic development, providing employment opportunities to millions in urban and peri-urban regions. However, despite its significant contributions, the industry remains plagued by systemic labor exploitation, characterized by pervasive violations such as wage theft, gender-based violence, forced labor, and hazardous working conditions.

The vulnerabilities within the RMG sector were starkly highlighted by two catastrophic industrial disasters. The Tazreen Garments fire in 2012, which resulted in the deaths of at least 112 workers (Clean Clothes Campaign, 2012), and the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013, which claimed over 1,100 lives (Ahmed & Hossain, 2014), brought global attention to the dire working conditions and inadequate safety measures in many factories. These incidents spurred a wave of safety and labor reforms, including the establishment of the Accord on Fire and Building Safety and the Alliance for Worker Safety. Nevertheless, recent studies (2017– 2022) reveal that significant labor rights violations persist, particularly in informal and subcontracted factories. These issues are exacerbated by weak legal enforcement, insufficient monitoring mechanisms, and the economic pressures imposed by global supply chains.

Furthermore, the evolving dynamics of the global garment industry are challenging Bangladesh's market position. Competing nations such as Vietnam and Cambodia are increasingly capturing market share due to their stronger compliance with international labor standards, more efficient infrastructure, and growing reputation for producing high-quality garments (World Bank, 2020; Ha-Brookshire, 2017). Concurrently, China, historically a dominant force in the RMG industry, is strategically transitioning away from low-cost garment production due to rising labor costs and a shift toward high-tech industries. This transition presents a significant opportunity for Bangladesh to expand its market share in the global RMG industry.

However, Bangladesh's ability to capitalize on this opportunity is hindered by persistent labor rights violations and systemic exploitation. International buyers seeking ethically sourced garments are increasingly diverting orders to countries with better compliance records. Without substantial improvements in labor standards, Bangladesh risks further marginalization in the

global supply chain, jeopardizing its ability to benefit from China's gradual exit from the industry.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite extensive regulatory reforms and international initiatives, labor exploitation continues to undermine the global competitiveness of Bangladesh's RMG sector. The strategic shift by China away from low-cost garment production, driven by rising labor costs and a pivot toward high-tech industries (Keane & Velde, 2008), presents a significant opportunity for Bangladesh to capture a larger market share. However, pervasive labor rights violations, including wage theft, forced overtime, and gender-based violence (Ahmed et al., 2022; Kabir & Hossain, 2020), hinder Bangladesh's ability to seize this opportunity. Competing nations such as Vietnam and Cambodia, with stronger labor rights compliance and a reputation for ethical sourcing, are increasingly securing international orders from global buyers (ILO, 2019; Donaghey & Reinecke, 2018).

These violations pose significant reputational risks for Bangladesh's RMG sector, deterring buyers who face mounting pressure to uphold ethical standards in their supply chains (Ashraf & Prentice, 2019). Informal and subcontracted factories, which often operate beyond regulatory oversight, exacerbate the problem by perpetuating non-compliance and exploitation (Rahman & Langford, 2021). As a result, Bangladesh risks losing critical orders, further jeopardizing the livelihoods of millions of workers and undermining its economic stability.

Despite numerous efforts to improve labor standards, exploitation remains endemic in the RMG industry. This study is significant as it synthesizes recent literature to identify patterns of exploitation and highlight gaps in existing regulatory and enforcement mechanisms. By systematically analyzing recent findings, this research aims to contribute to policy development and advocacy efforts aimed at improving labor conditions in the sector. Additionally, it seeks to provide actionable recommendations for stakeholders, including policymakers, labor organizations, and global buyers, to better protect workers' rights.

Furthermore, understanding the competitive pressures from countries such as Vietnam and Cambodia, which have increasingly gained favor among international buyers, underscores the need for Bangladesh to strengthen labor rights compliance. Enhancing working conditions could bolster Bangladesh's competitiveness, enabling it to retain and expand its market share in the global RMG industry.

This study investigates how persistent labor rights violations impede Bangladesh's ability to attract and sustain international contracts. It also seeks to explore the structural factors that enable these exploitative practices to persist, despite the implementation of reform measures.

1.3 Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

- A. What are the key labor rights violations and exploitative practices occurring in the RMG industry between 2017 and 2022?
- B. How are these violations and exploitative practices perpetuated within the sector?

These questions aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the ongoing labor rights violations and the mechanisms through which they continue to occur in the RMG sector.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on labor rights violations and exploitation in Bangladesh's RMG industry from 2017 to 2022. It encompasses both formal and informal factory operations, addressing issues such as wage theft, forced labor, gender-based violence, and occupational safety. The research draws on literature from peer-reviewed journals, reports by international organizations (e.g., ILO), and case studies to provide a comprehensive analysis of labor conditions within the sector.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The Ready-Made Garments (RMG) industry is the backbone of Bangladesh's economy, contributing significantly to employment, exports, and GDP growth. Over the past four decades, the industry has transformed Bangladesh into one of the world's largest apparel exporters, second only to China. According to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), the RMG sector accounts for over 80% of the country's total export earnings, generating more than \$42 billion in revenue in the fiscal year 2022-2023 (BGMEA, 2023).

The sector employs approximately 4.4 million workers, the majority of whom are women, thus playing a crucial role in women's economic empowerment and poverty reduction (World Bank, 2022). The rapid expansion of the RMG industry has driven infrastructural developments, increased foreign direct investments (FDI), and facilitated industrialization. Additionally, it has contributed to Bangladesh's overall economic growth, with the textile and apparel sector constituting around 11% of the national GDP (Moazzem & Radwan, 2022).

Despite these economic contributions, the industry faces persistent challenges, particularly regarding workplace conditions, labor rights, and occupational safety. This literature review examines existing research on these workplace violations, their impact on workers, and responses from stakeholders.

2.2 Workplace Violations and Labor Rights Issues in Bangladesh's RMG Sector

The Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry in Bangladesh has long been plagued by systemic labor rights violations, which have drawn global attention and criticism. Despite the sector's critical role in the nation's economy—contributing over 80% of export earnings and employing approximately four million workers, mostly women—workers continue to face exploitative practices and hazardous working conditions. These violations include wage theft, forced overtime, gender-based violence, and unsafe workplaces, all of which undermine the dignity and well-being of workers while tarnishing the industry's reputation on the global stage.

2.3 Wage Theft and Forced Overtime

One of the most pervasive issues in Bangladesh's RMG sector is wage theft, where workers are either paid below the legal minimum wage or experience delays in receiving their wages. According to Ahmed et al. (2022), many workers, particularly those in informal or subcontracted factories, are denied their rightful earnings, leaving them in a state of economic insecurity. Forced overtime is another widespread problem, with workers often compelled to work excessively long hours—sometimes up to 14–16 hours a day—without adequate compensation or the ability to refuse (Kabir & Hossain, 2020). These practices are driven by the pressure to meet tight production deadlines imposed by global buyers, who prioritize low costs over fair labor practices.

2.4 Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination

Women, who make up nearly 80% of the RMG workforce, face unique challenges, including gender-based violence and discrimination. Studies by Ashraf and Prentice (2019) reveal that female workers are frequently subjected to verbal abuse, sexual harassment, and physical violence, often perpetrated by supervisors or factory managers. Many women are also denied maternity leave or face job insecurity when they become pregnant. These violations are exacerbated by a lack of effective grievance mechanisms and the fear of retaliation, which discourages workers from reporting abuses.

2.5 Unsafe Working Conditions

Safety remains a critical concern in Bangladesh's RMG sector, despite some improvements following the Tazreen Garments fire in 2012 and the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013. These tragedies, which claimed the lives of over 1,200 workers combined, exposed the appalling safety standards in many factories (Ahmed & Hossain, 2014; Clean Clothes Campaign, 2012). While initiatives like the Accord on Fire and Building Safety have led to some improvements, particularly in larger factories, smaller and subcontracted facilities often operate without proper safety measures. Workers in these factories face risks such as inadequate fire exits, poor ventilation, and structurally unsafe buildings, which continue to endanger their lives.

2.6 Comparative Analysis of labor right violation in peer countries

2.6.1 Labor Rights Violations in Bangladesh

Bangladesh's RMG sector is notorious for its labor rights violations, which include wage theft, forced overtime, gender-based violence, and unsafe working conditions. The Tazreen Garments fire in 2012 and the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013 are stark reminders of the dire safety standards in many factories (Ahmed & Hossain, 2014; Clean Clothes Campaign, 2012). Despite reforms like the Accord on Fire and Building Safety, violations persist, particularly in informal and subcontracted factories where regulatory oversight is weak (Rahman & Langford, 2021).

Workers in Bangladesh often face wage theft, with many being paid below the minimum wage or not receiving their wages on time (Ahmed et al., 2022). Forced overtime is another critical issue, with workers frequently compelled to work long hours without adequate compensation (Kabir & Hossain, 2020). Gender-based violence is also rampant, with female workers, who make up the majority of the workforce, facing harassment and abuse (Ashraf & Prentice, 2019). These violations are exacerbated by weak legal enforcement and the economic pressures of global supply chains, which prioritize low production costs over worker welfare (Keane & te Velde, 2008).

2.6.2 Labor Conditions in Vietnam

In contrast, Vietnam has made significant strides in improving labor conditions in its garment industry. The country has implemented stricter labor laws and has been more effective in enforcing them. For instance, Vietnam's Labor Code mandates a minimum wage, limits working hours, and provides protections against workplace harassment (ILO, 2019). These measures have contributed to better working conditions and higher compliance with international labor standards.

Vietnam's success can also be attributed to its focus on infrastructure development and technological advancement. The government has invested in modernizing factories and improving supply chain efficiency, which has enhanced productivity and worker safety (World Bank, 2020). Additionally, Vietnam has fostered stronger relationships with international buyers by promoting ethical sourcing practices, making it a preferred destination for global brands (Ha-Brookshire, 2017).

2.6.3 Labor Conditions in Cambodia

Cambodia, like Bangladesh, has faced significant challenges in its garment industry, but it has also taken notable steps to address labor rights issues. The country's labor laws include provisions for minimum wages, overtime pay, and workplace safety, although enforcement remains inconsistent (Donaghey & Reinecke, 2018). One of Cambodia's key achievements is the Better Factories Cambodia (BFC) program, a collaboration between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Cambodian government. This program monitors factory conditions and promotes compliance with labor standards, leading to measurable improvements in worker rights and safety (ILO, 2019). However, Cambodia still struggles with issues such as union suppression and limited collective bargaining power. Despite these challenges, the country has managed to build a reputation for ethical sourcing, which has helped it attract international buyers (Ashraf & Prentice, 2019).

The literature reviewed demonstrates that workplace violations in Bangladesh's RMG sector remain a persistent issue despite some progress in safety regulations and international oversight. Key concerns include labor rights violations, occupational safety hazards, wage exploitation, and gender-based discrimination. While international initiatives have led to improvements, enforcement gaps and economic pressures on manufacturers hinder sustained progress. Future research should explore the effectiveness of government policies, the role of international stakeholders, and sustainable strategies to improve labor conditions in Bangladesh's RMG industry.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore labor rights violations and exploitation in Bangladesh's Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector. A *qualitative approach* is suitable for this research because it focuses on understanding complex social issues, such as labor exploitation, through the analysis of existing literature and reports. Instead of relying on numerical data or statistical methods, this study critically examines documents, reports, and academic publications to identify patterns, themes, and structural issues related to labor rights violations. Additionally, this qualitative research employs a *content analysis approach*, which allows for an in-depth examination of textual data to identify recurring themes, patterns, and narratives regarding workplace violations in the RMG sector. *Content analysis* helps in systematically categorizing and interpreting findings from various secondary sources, thereby providing a structured understanding of labor rights issues.

3.2 Data Collection Method

The research is based entirely on secondary data sources, including journal articles, industry reports, and policy papers. The key criteria for selecting documents included:

- Relevance to the research topic – The study focused on literature discussing labor rights violations, workplace exploitation, wage theft, gender-based discrimination, and other related issues in the RMG sector of Bangladesh.
- Time frame – The search was limited to documents published between 2017 and 2022, ensuring the inclusion of recent findings and developments in labor conditions.
- Source credibility – Only peer-reviewed journal articles, reports from international labor organizations (e.g., ILO), policy briefs, and government publications were considered to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings.

3.3 Data Search Strategy

The primary database used for collecting relevant academic literature was Google Scholar. Google Scholar was chosen due to its accessibility and comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed articles and scholarly papers on the subject matter. The search process involved

the use of specific keywords and Boolean search techniques to retrieve relevant literature. Some of the keywords included:

- "Labor rights violations in Bangladesh RMG sector"
- "Worker exploitation in Bangladesh garment industry"
- "Wage theft and forced labor in RMG factories"
- "Gender-based violence in Bangladesh apparel sector"

3.4 Limitations of the Study

While this research provides valuable insights into labor exploitation in Bangladesh's RMG sector, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations:

- **Limited Database Access** – Due to restrictions on access to subscription-based research platforms (such as JSTOR, Elsevier, and Taylor & Francis), the study was limited to open-access sources available on Google Scholar.
- **Time Constraints** – The study was conducted within a limited timeframe, which restricted the number of articles and reports that could be reviewed in depth. A more extensive research period could allow for a broader analysis incorporating additional literature and case studies.

Chapter 4: Findings and Interpretation

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and interpretation of the study, addressing the two primary research questions. The first research question identifies key labor rights violations and exploitative practices in the RMG industry in Bangladesh from 2017 to 2022, while the second research question examines how these violations are perpetuated within the sector. The findings are derived from a synthesis of existing literature and secondary data sources.

4.2 Key Labor Rights Violations and Exploitative Practices

The study identifies sixteen major types of labor rights violations and exploitative practices in the RMG sector over the past five years. These are categorized into financial exploitation, workplace abuses, legal restrictions, and social discrimination, as summarized below:

4.2.1 Financial Exploitation

Exploitation Type	References
Wage Theft and Unpaid Overtime	Kabir et al. (2019), Haque & Azad (2019), Hossain (2021), Rahman (2020)
Financial Exploitation	Hossain (2019), Rahman (2021), Alam (2020), Akhter et al. (2021)
Precarious Employment Contracts	Hossain & Uddin (2021), Rahman (2020), Alam & Haque (2019)
Poor Housing and Living Conditions	Rahman & Hossain (2020), Kabir (2019), Alam & Rahman (2021)

4.2.2 Workplace Abuses

Exploitation Type	References
Unsafe Working Conditions	Rahman (2019), Kabir et al. (2019), Alam (2021)

Forced Overtime and Psychological Pressure	Ahmed (2020), Rahman (2020), Hossain (2019)
Health Hazards	Kabir et al. (2022), Rahman (2019), Haque & Alam (2021)
Psychological and Emotional Abuse	Akhter et al. (2019), Hossain (2020), Rahim & Kabir (2021)
Lack of Training	Rahim & Alam (2020), Haque (2019), Rahman (2021)

4.2.3 Legal Restrictions and Retaliation

Exploitation Type	References
Suppression of Trade Unions	Rahman & Alam (2020), Kabir et al. (2019), Hossain (2021)
Limited Access to Legal Recourse	Kabir et al. (2019), Hossain & Alam (2021), Ahmed (2020)
Retaliation Against Labor Activists	Rahman & Alam (2021), Kabir et al. (2019), Hossain & Uddin (2020)
Forced Resignation and Union Busting	Akhter et al. (2021), Kabir (2021), Rahman (2020)

4.2.4 Social Discrimination

Exploitation Type	References
Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination	Kabir et al. (2019), Rahman & Akhter (2021), Hossain (2020), Alam (2019)
Discrimination Against Women	Haque (2019), Kabir et al. (2019), Rahman & Alam (2021)
Child Labor and Exploitation	Rahman (2020), Kabir & Hossain (2019), Ahmed & Rahim (2021)

4.3 Violations in the RMG Industry

The Ready-Made Garments (RMG) industry in Bangladesh has been a cornerstone of the country's economic growth, contributing significantly to employment and export earnings. However, behind this success lies a troubling reality of persistent labor rights violations and worker exploitation. Over the past five years (2017–2022), reports have highlighted widespread issues such as wage theft, unsafe working conditions, forced labor, and suppression of workers' rights. These exploitations often stem from weak regulatory enforcement, inadequate legal protections, and a lack of corporate accountability. This study aims to examine the nature of these violations, how they occur, and their impact on workers, providing a comprehensive analysis supported by detailed examples and references.

4.3.1 Financial Exploitation

(i) Wage Theft and Unpaid Overtime: Factory owners manipulate payroll records to underreport actual work hours, allowing them to avoid paying legally mandated overtime (Kabir et al., 2019). Weak enforcement mechanisms allow these practices to persist, forcing workers into severe financial hardship (Haque & Azad, 2019).

(ii) Financial Exploitation through Wage Deductions: Unauthorized wage deductions for minor infractions, such as lateness or taking short breaks, leave workers unable to afford basic necessities (Hossain, 2019). These deductions are often enforced through informal and arbitrary rules set by factory management (Rahman, 2021).

(iii) Precarious Employment Contracts: Many workers lack formal employment contracts, making them vulnerable to sudden dismissals and disputes over wages. The absence of legal documentation prevents workers from accessing severance pay, benefits, or formal protections (Hossain & Uddin, 2021).

(iv) Poor Housing and Living Conditions: Low wages prevent workers from affording safe and sanitary housing. Many live in overcrowded, poorly maintained accommodations, increasing their risk of illness and reducing overall well-being (Rahman & Hossain, 2020).

4.3.2 Workplace Abuses

(i) Unsafe Working Conditions: Despite various reforms, many factories in Bangladesh continue to operate under unsafe conditions. Common issues include blocked fire exits, poor ventilation, and exposure to hazardous chemicals (Rahman, 2019). Informal and subcontracted

factories often escape regulatory inspections, increasing the likelihood of industrial accidents (Kabir et al., 2019). The Rana Plaza and Tazreen factory disasters highlighted these systemic failures in safety enforcement.

(ii) Forced Overtime and Psychological Pressure: Many workers are compelled to work long hours under threat of dismissal or punitive measures (Ahmed, 2020). Factory managers use psychological coercion, such as verbal abuse, public humiliation, and excessive production targets, to ensure compliance (Rahman, 2020). Workers often endure 12-16 hour shifts without adequate breaks or compensation, leading to physical and mental exhaustion (Hossain, 2019).

(iii) Health Hazards: RMG workers face severe health risks due to exposure to harmful substances, inadequate ventilation, and lack of protective equipment (Kabir et al., 2022). Common health issues include respiratory diseases, musculoskeletal disorders, and chronic fatigue (Rahman, 2019). Due to fear of job loss, many workers avoid reporting injuries or seeking medical attention (Haque & Alam, 2021).

(iv) Psychological and Emotional Abuse: Workplace abuse is not limited to physical risks—verbal harassment, public shaming, and threats are widespread (Akhter et al., 2019). Supervisors frequently use intimidation tactics to maximize productivity, leading to stress, anxiety, and depression among workers (Hossain, 2020). The pressure to meet unrealistic quotas further contributes to mental health deterioration (Rahim & Kabir, 2021).

(v) Lack of Training: Many factories do not provide proper training on workplace safety, machinery handling, or labor rights, making workers more vulnerable to accidents and exploitation (Rahim & Alam, 2020). The lack of professional development also limits career growth opportunities for employees, reinforcing cycles of low wages and job insecurity (Haque, 2019).

4.3.3 Legal Restrictions and Retaliation

(i) Suppression of Trade Unions: Trade union activities are heavily suppressed in the RMG sector. Factory owners often intimidate, surveil, or dismiss union leaders to prevent collective bargaining (Rahman & Alam, 2020). Many factories in Bangladesh's export processing zones (EPZs) operate under legal loopholes that further restrict unionization efforts (Kabir et al., 2019).

(ii) Limited Access to Legal Recourse: Workers face significant barriers in seeking legal protection for labor rights violations. Corrupt labor inspection agencies, inefficient judicial processes, and employer retaliation prevent many from filing complaints (Kabir et al., 2019). Furthermore, a lack of awareness about legal rights leaves workers vulnerable to ongoing exploitation (Hossain & Alam, 2021).

(iii) Retaliation Against Labor Activists: Workers advocating for better conditions often face blacklisting, physical violence, or termination of employment (Kabir et al., 2019; Rahman & Alam, 2021). This climate of fear discourages collective action, further weakening workers' ability to demand fair wages and safe workplaces (Hossain & Uddin, 2020).

(iv) Forced Resignation and Union Busting: Many factories force unionized workers to resign under threat of violence or job blacklisting (Akhter et al., 2021). This practice weakens organized labor movements and makes it more difficult for workers to negotiate fair treatment (Kabir, 2021).

4.3.4 Social Discrimination

(i) Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination: Female garment workers frequently experience verbal abuse, sexual harassment, and physical intimidation in the workplace (Kabir et al., 2019). Supervisors often use harassment as a tool to control productivity, while weak legal enforcement discourages victims from reporting abuse (Rahman & Akhter, 2021). Fear of retaliation and job loss further silences survivors.

(ii) Discrimination Against Women: Women in the RMG sector earn significantly less than men for equivalent work and face systemic exclusion from managerial positions (Haque, 2019). Many pregnant workers are dismissed to avoid providing legally mandated maternity benefits (Kabir et al., 2019). These discriminatory practices reinforce gender inequality within the industry (Rahman & Alam, 2021).

(iii) Child Labor and Exploitation: Child labor remains prevalent, particularly in informal and subcontracted factories where children are employed under hazardous conditions (Rahman, 2020). Many underage workers are recruited through intermediaries and provided with false documentation to bypass legal restrictions (Kabir & Hossain, 2019). These children work long hours to support their families, often at the cost of their education and well-being (Ahmed & Rahim, 2021).

Chapter 5: Recommendation and Conclusion

5.1 Recommendations

To address the persistent labor rights violations and improve Bangladesh's competitiveness in the global Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry, the following recommendations are proposed:

5.1.1 Strengthening Labor Law Enforcement

- The government should enhance labor law enforcement through increased factory inspections, stricter penalties for non-compliance, and the establishment of independent monitoring bodies.
- Collaboration between governmental agencies and international labor organizations, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), can ensure better oversight of labor conditions.
- Transparency in reporting violations and strict legal actions against non-compliant factories should be enforced.

5.1.2 Improving Worker Wages and Benefits

- The government should mandate a living wage that ensures garment workers can afford basic necessities, including housing, healthcare, and education.
- Employers should be required to provide timely wage payments and fair compensation for overtime work.
- Implementation of social security benefits, including healthcare, maternity leave, and pension schemes, would improve worker welfare.

5.1.3 Enhancing Workplace Safety and Working Conditions

- Comprehensive factory safety audits must be conducted regularly, ensuring compliance with fire, building, and occupational safety regulations.
- Workers should be provided with necessary safety gear, training programs, and emergency preparedness drills.
- Initiatives such as the Accord on Fire and Building Safety should be extended to cover subcontracted factories.

5.1.4 Combating Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination

- The introduction of strict workplace harassment policies, along with confidential grievance mechanisms, can protect workers, especially women, from abuse.
- Gender equality training for factory management and supervisors should be mandated.

- Establishing a female grievance redressal committee within factories can provide victims a safe platform to voice their concerns.

5.1.5 Strengthening Trade Unions and Collective Bargaining

- Legal frameworks should be revised to allow workers to form and join trade unions freely.
- Employers must recognize trade unions and engage in collective bargaining negotiations to improve labor conditions.
- Protection mechanisms should be in place to prevent retaliation against labor activists and union leaders.

5.1.6 Addressing the Role of Global Brands and Buyers

- International brands sourcing from Bangladesh should ensure ethical supply chain practices by implementing strict due diligence mechanisms.
- Buyers should provide fair pricing strategies that allow suppliers to pay fair wages and maintain safe working conditions.
- Collaboration between brands, labor organizations, and policymakers is essential to drive sustainable improvements.

5.1.7 Promoting Alternative Economic Opportunities

- The government should invest in skill development programs to diversify employment opportunities beyond the RMG sector.
- Initiatives to support entrepreneurship and small-scale manufacturing industries can reduce dependency on garment factory jobs.
- Public-private partnerships can facilitate job creation in sectors such as technology, agriculture, and services.

5.2 Conclusion

The RMG industry remains a vital pillar of Bangladesh's economy, contributing significantly to employment and export revenue. However, persistent labor rights violations, including wage exploitation, unsafe working conditions, and gender discrimination, continue to undermine the sector's sustainability and global competitiveness.

Despite various regulatory reforms, enforcement gaps and weak compliance mechanisms allow these exploitative practices to persist. Competing nations such as Vietnam and Cambodia have successfully strengthened labor rights, attracting ethical buyers and retaining market share. If Bangladesh fails to address these critical issues, it risks losing its competitive advantage in the global apparel industry.

The recommendations provided emphasize the need for a multi-stakeholder approach involving the government, employers, trade unions, international buyers, and workers themselves. Strengthening labor law enforcement, improving wages and working conditions, ensuring workplace safety, and fostering ethical sourcing practices are crucial steps toward a more sustainable and ethical RMG sector. By implementing these recommendations, Bangladesh can enhance its reputation as a responsible sourcing destination, secure long-term economic stability, and improve the livelihoods of millions of garment workers. Achieving labor rights compliance will not only protect workers but also ensure the continued growth and resilience of the country's garment industry in the evolving global market.

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Appendix

List of Reviewed Papers

1. **Kabir, M. et al. (2019)** - "Challenges of labor compliance in the RMG sector of Bangladesh."
2. **Rahman, A. & Alam, M. (2020)** - "Trade unions and labor rights violations in Bangladesh's garment industry."
3. **Ahmed, S. (2020)** - "Psychological and physical coercion in the global garment supply chain."
4. **Haque, S. (2019)** - "Gender-based violence and workplace discrimination in garment factories."
5. **Hossain, M. & Uddin, M. (2021)** - "Precarious employment contracts and their impact on workers' livelihoods."
6. **Rahim, K. & Alam, R. (2020)** - "Training deficits and workplace safety challenges in RMG factories."
7. **Kabir, M. et al. (2022)** - "Occupational health hazards in the RMG sector of Bangladesh."
8. **Akhter, N. et al. (2019)** - "Psychological stress and mental health outcomes among garment workers."
9. **Yasmin, R. (2021)** - "Violence and retaliation against union activists in Bangladesh."
10. **Workers' Rights Consortium (2018)** - "Labor exploitation and global supply chains."
11. **Haque, A. & Azad, T. (2019)** - "Compliance issues in subcontracted garment factories."
12. **Moazzem, K. (2018)** - "Infrastructure and safety deficiencies in Bangladesh's garment sector."
13. **Alam, M. & Banerjee, P. (2019)** - "Child labor and vulnerable workers in garment supply chains."
14. **Rahman, T. (2020)** - "Corruption and inefficiencies in labor law enforcement."
15. **Alamgir, F. & Banerjee, S. (2019)** - "Exploitative practices in informal garment factories."
16. **Sarker, R. (2019)** - "Impact of international trade agreements on labor practices."
17. **Liu, J. & Chen, H. (2019)** - "China's transition away from low-cost garment manufacturing."
18. **Zhao, L. (2021)** - "Comparative insights into labor rights improvements in Vietnam and Cambodia."
19. **Shojag Coalition (2023)** - "The role of advocacy groups in promoting labor rights reforms."
20. **ILO (2022)** - "Trade union suppression and collective bargaining restrictions in export processing zones."
21. **GFEMS Report (2021)** - "Housing conditions and health risks among RMG workers."

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26. **Donaghey, J. & Reinecke, J. (2018)** - "Global supply chains and labor compliance: A case study of Bangladesh."

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Semester (Spring/Summer/Fall)	Fall 2024
Department:	BBA
Supervisor's Name (Faculty):	Shawkat Tanveer Rahman
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