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IMPROVING WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE READY-MADE GARMENT SECTOR

Bangladesh Baseline Study

January - May 2017

International Labour Organization

1919-2019

BASELINE STUDY

IMPROVING WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE BANGLADESH READY-MADE GARMENT SECTOR PROGRAMME

(based on data collected between January and May 2017)

Canada

Kingdom of the Netherlands

UKaid
from the British people

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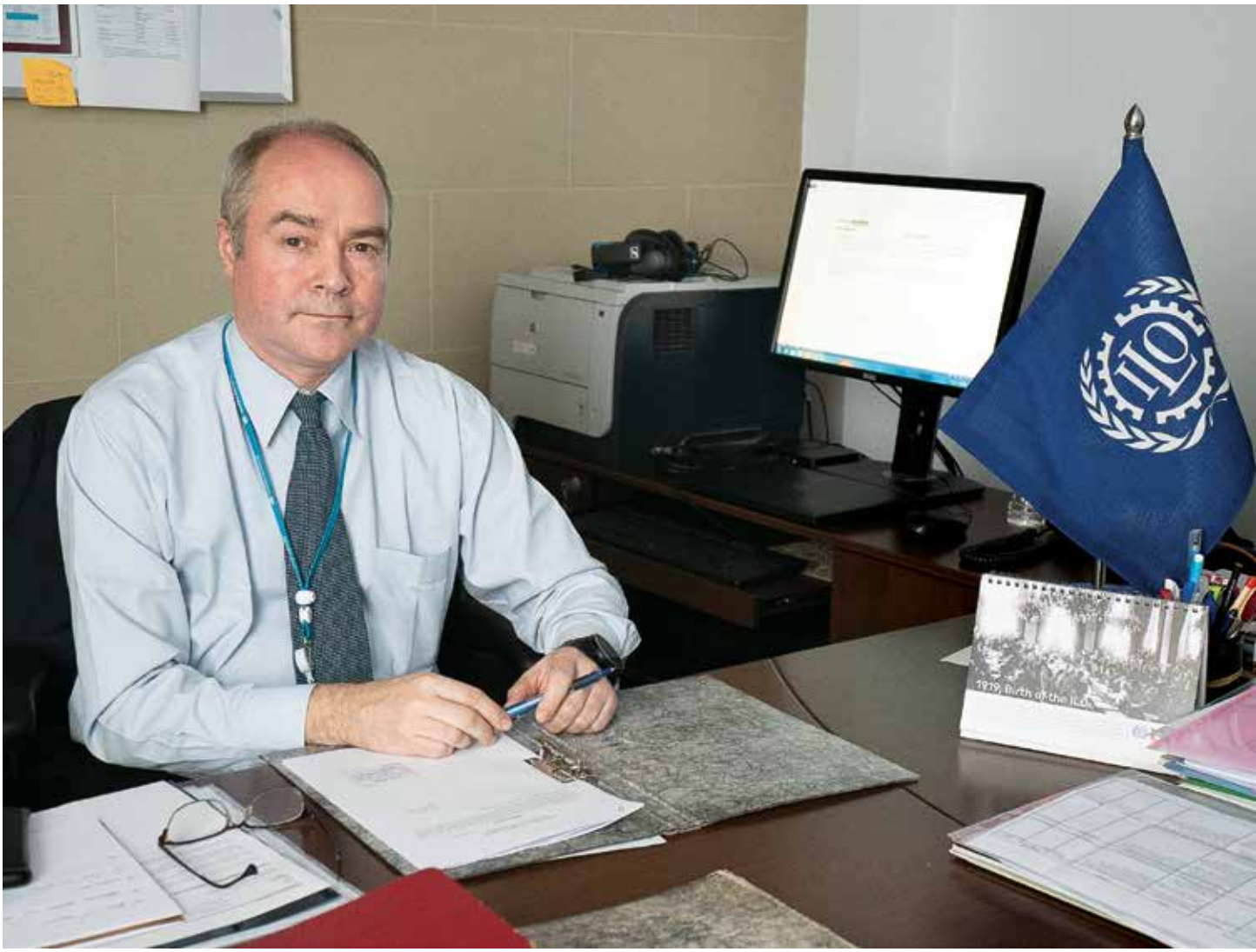

The ready-made garment (RMG) sector is a key contributor to the economic growth of Bangladesh, and is the country's main export industry. This sector is also the most important provider of formal employment in the country, in particular low-skilled, entry level jobs for young women and men with or without education. Current estimates indicate that the sector directly employs 4.2 million people – of whom approximately 60% are women (a downward trend in the recent past) – and indirectly supports as many as 40 million Bangladeshis (about 25% of the population).

The ILO-RMG programme, with the financial support of the Government of Netherlands, Canada and the United Kingdom, initiated a baseline study (January – May 2017) to establish an evidence-based repository of working conditions in the RMG sector of Bangladesh. The study analyses the demographic profile, health status and perceptions of workers and employers on working conditions in the industry. It highlights existing issues with a focus on their compliance with the Bangladesh Labour Act as well as International Labour Standards ratified by Bangladesh, and recognizes areas that require the attention of the government, workers, employers and other relevant stakeholders.

The study revealed that while many improvements have been made in the RMG sector, working conditions still needs to be enhanced to achieve decent work. A comprehensive list of recommendations, and short, medium and long-term priorities derived from this study had informed the further planning and action of the ILO-RMG programme.

We hope that the baseline study report will prove useful for policy makers, employers and workers organizations, researchers, academics and civil society to better understand the dynamics of the RMG industry, and help them determine future steps to ensure decent work for millions of workers.

Tuomo Poutiainen
Country Director, ILO Country Office for Bangladesh

Preface

This baseline study on the ready made garment sector of Bangladesh, **based on the data collected between January and May 2017**, was conducted by South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM), at the request of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Dhaka Office under its "Improving Working Conditions in the Ready-Made Garment Sector" programme in Bangladesh (ILO RMGP). The programme is funded by the Governments of Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

Based on a sample of 2,184 workers, 111 supervisors, and 111 managers from 111 facotries, gathered in 2017, the study forms an evidence-base of the working and living conditions of workers and supervisors in the RMG sector of Bangladesh. It analyses the perception of workers, supervisors, and managers. It highlights the existing issues based on the analysis with a focus on their compliance with the Bangladesh Labour Act.

In response to the Rana Plaza disaster and several fatal industrial accidents in 2012 and 2013, I hope this report will facilitate substantial improvement in the labour inspection system in the RMG industry of Bangladesh. This study is expected to have significant policy implications for the future of the RMG sector in Bangladesh with respect to improving the working conditions in this sector. It is also expected to ensure sustainable mechanisms for the long-term improvement of workers' safety within and beyond the RMG sector.

Dr Selim Raihan
Executive Director
South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM)

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

Accord	The Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
Alliance	The Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety
ANC	Antenatal Care
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
BGMEA	Bangladesh Garment Manufactures and Exporters Association
BILS	Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies
BKMEA	Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association
BLA	Bangladesh Labour Act
BMP	Bangladesh Mahila Parishad
BNWLA	Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association
BSR	Business for Social Responsibility
BWG	Better Work Global
CAP	Corrective Action Plan
CAPI	Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agents
CLC	Chancery Law Chronicles
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue
CSI	Consulting Service International
CSPro	Census and Survey Processing System
DEA	Detailed Engineering Analysis
DIFE	Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
ETP	Effluent Treatment Plant
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FLA	Fair Labor Association
HER	HER Project
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IDE	Institute of Developing Economies
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organization

JETO	Japan External Trade Organization
JPGSPH	James P Grant School of Public Health
KII	Key Informant Interview
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LEED	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
n.d.	No date
NGWF	National Garment Workers Federation
NLSY	National Longitudinal Survey of Youth
OEM	Occupational and Environmental Medicine
OJT	On-the-Job Training
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
OT	Overtime
PA	Public Address
PC	Participation Committee
PIL	Public Interest Litigation
PNC	Postnatal Care
PRI	Public Radio International
RISE	Research Initiative for Social Equity
RMG	Ready-Made Garments
RTI	Respiratory Tract Infections
SANEM	South Asian Network on Economic Modeling
SC	Safety Committee
SMI	Survey of Manufacturing Industries
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SRS	Stratified Random Sampling
TU	Trade Union
TUC	Trade Union Congress
UTI	Urinary Tract Infection
WBG	World Bank Group
WDR	World Development Report
WHES	World Hunger Education Service
WMSD	Work-related Musculoskeletal Disorders

Acknowledgement

This study is supported by the International Labour Organization (ILO) with funding from the Royal Netherlands Government, Governments of Canada and the United Kingdom. The study was conducted based on the data collected between January and May 2017. The research team would like to acknowledge the ILO-RMG Programme Office, Bangladesh, for supporting essential research on the ready-made garment industry and exploring factors associated with improving working conditions in this sector. The team expresses its sincere appreciation to Sohana Samrin Chowdhury, Programme Officer – Monitoring and Evaluation, ILO RMG programme, Bangladesh for her valuable inputs, constant guidance throughout the journey and diligently pursuing the completion of the report as well as its publication. The following colleagues from ILO also deserve a special acknowledgement for their precious support in finalizing this report – Mr Tuomo Poutiainen (Country Director, CO-Dhaka,) Mr George Faller (Chief Technical Advisor of RMGP II,) Ms Anne-Laure Henry-Gréard (Programme Manager of Betterwork Bangladesh,) Ms Belinda Chanda (Operations and Programme Support Specialist of RMGP II) and Ms Shammin Sultana (Programme Officer – Gender Mainstreaming of RMGP II.)

This study also acknowledges the contribution of experts and key informants from local and international organizations, namely, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacture and Exporters Association (BKMEA), the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh (the Accord) and the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety (presently Nirapon) for sharing their own experiences and assessments on the nature of this industry. This helped the team to gain significant insights related to the study's objectives.

The team would like to extend its gratitude to the respective government officials and policymakers from the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE); the General Economics Division (GED); the Department of Factory and Establishments (DIFE); specialists, researchers and academicians from the the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD); the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS); and the University of Dhaka. Stakeholders from these areas actively participated as key informants during this study and provided valuable inputs that greatly enriched this study. The team would also like to acknowledge the support and cooperation provided by the management and respondents from 111 factories.

Furthermore, the team acknowledges the contributions of researchers from SANEM namely, Md. Mahedi Hassan (Research Associate), Fayeza Ashraf (Senior Research Associate), Mohammad Sadat Anowar (Research Associate), Sunera Saba Khan (Senior Research Associate) and Iffat Anjum Anika (Senior Research Associate) in the areas of data cleaning, software development, conducting focus group discussions and reviewing the report. Finally, the team is grateful to the field officers for their relentless effort to finish the data collection on time.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the first national level baseline study of its kind that looks at the ready-made garment (RMG) industry in Bangladesh. It was conducted by the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM), at the request of the International Labour Organization (ILO) under its "Improving Working Conditions in the Ready-Made Garment Sector" project in Bangladesh (ILO RMGP). The project is funded by the Governments of Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The study was conducted based on the data collected between January and May 2017. The objectives of the study were to establish an evidence-base of the working and living conditions of workers and supervisors in the RMG sector, analyse the perception of workers, supervisors, and managers, and highlight existing issues based on the analysis with a focus on their compliance with the Bangladesh Labour Act. In response to the Rana Plaza disaster and several fatal industrial accidents in 2012 and 2013, this study aims to contribute to improving the labour inspection system and ensuring sustainable mechanisms for the long-term improvement of workers' safety in the RMG industry in Bangladesh.

The study applied both quantitative and qualitative techniques to a sample selected through a stratified random sampling method. A total of 2,184 workers, 111 supervisors, and 111 managers from 111 factories were surveyed, and 20 focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted in four major industrial areas: Dhaka, Gazipur, Narayanganj, and Chattogram. The study covered four production areas: knitwear, sweater, woven and knit/woven. In addition, ten interviews were conducted with other stakeholders.

Demographic profile

The study found a poor representation of women who owned factories or who were in leadership positions in the RMG sector. Women had sole ownership of only 5.88 per cent of factories and shared ownership with men in only 4.41 per cent of factories. Even in those cases where there was shared ownership, in many instances it indicated a mechanism to keep the factory under family ownership. In terms of gender distribution in leadership positions, i.e., supervisors and managers, the entire sector was men-dominated, with only 9 per cent of supervisors and 4 per cent of managers being women. Factories such as the burden of care, an uneven distribution of family responsibility among women and men, the prevailing perception that women lack authority, and low levels of education were responsible for the lack of women representation in these leadership roles.

However, a higher level of women labour force participation was observed at the worker level, which requires less skills and attracts lower pay. Women's share of the workforce in the RMG sector was found to be 61.17 per cent, while for men it was 38.83 per cent. Interestingly, according to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacture's and Exporters Association (BGMEA) – the premier national trade organization of garment manufacturers in Bangladesh – 80 per cent of the workforce employed in their member factories are women. This apparent contradiction between the statistics from the BGMEA and the findings of this baseline study points to the possibility of the Bangladesh RMG industry experiencing 'defeminization' in recent years. The review of secondary literature also posits evidence in respect to the declining share of the women workforce in the RMG industry in recent years. One of the underlying reasons behind this phenomenon is the expansion of technology-intensive factories, especially knitwear factories, where production processes require skill and are capital-intensive. However, trends from the Survey of Manufacturing Industry (SMI) data in Bangladesh suggest that women participation has not decreased from 80 per cent to 61 per cent. According to their data, women participation was in the range of 72 to 76 per cent from 1985 to 1994, and gradually declined within a range of 65 to 70 per cent from 1994 to 2012.

The workforce was mainly comprised of youth (94 per cent) aged 18 to 35 years. Of the total workforce, 86 per cent were aged between 16 and 30 years and 9.48 per cent were aged between 31 and 35 years. Among workers, 1.28 per cent were reportedly adolescents. Among workers above 40 years, men dominate. Highlights of data on marital status suggest that a higher proportion of women were married compared to their men counterparts. Among workers, 62.26 per cent were married and 32.74 per cent were unmarried. Disaggregated by gender, 56 per cent of men workers and 66.02 per cent of women workers were married. Among women workers, 2.54 per cent were widowed, 3.22 per cent were divorced, 2.54 per cent were separated, and 0.07 per cent were single mothers.

In terms of educational attainment, although the percentage of workers with no education was minimal (only 1 per cent), most workers had educational qualifications from Class 5 to Class 9. Only 14 per cent and 8 per cent of workers had attained education up to secondary level (Secondary School Certificate and equivalent) and higher secondary level

(Higher Secondary Certificate and equivalent) respectively. Women workers were, however, lagging behind their men counterparts in the case of secondary education (11.09 per cent of women versus 20.49 per cent of men) and higher secondary education (5.83 per cent of women versus 11.95 per cent of men). Women workers had higher percentages of educational attainment compared to their men counterparts in other classes, especially up to Class 7.

Most workers (89 per cent) migrated to find employment in the RMG industry. In terms of workers' experience, most workers (69.28 per cent) had worked between one and five years in the RMG industry. The most experienced workers comprised only 3 per cent of the workforce with more than ten years of work experience. This implies that workers do not remain in the RMG industry in Bangladesh for a long period.

Regarding the burden of care issue for women, 66 per cent of women workers of the study sample were married, 75.4 per cent of whom were living with their families. This provides limited scope for an evaluation of the burden of care faced by these women. Among women workers living with their families, almost 21 per cent were the primary earners, contributing the largest proportion of their household's income. In addition, 51.5 per cent of these women had four or more family members. With respect of household chores for which working women were culturally responsible, it was observed that 12 per cent of those living with their families spent 30 minutes or more waiting to cook in a shared kitchen. Among married women living with their families, 34 per cent had to care for families with four or more members. About 10.5 per cent of these women spent 30 minutes waiting to cook. Among unmarried women living with their families, 71.2 per cent had to care for families with four or more members, while 9 per cent spent 30 minutes or more waiting to cook.

Health status of the respondents

The three most common health issues that workers and supervisors suffered from to a varying degree were thirst (68.5 per cent of workers and 63.96 per cent of supervisors), hunger (53.2 per cent of workers and 63.06 per cent of supervisors), and headaches (43.63 per cent of workers and 50.45 per cent of supervisors). Experiencing thirst is an indication of dehydration implying a possible lack of availability of drinking water, a pressure to work without time to drink, or a lack of knowledge or effort to remain hydrated.

Although long-term illnesses (those that last for more than six months) are less expected in this industry as it does not require a high level of physical fitness, about 7.05 per cent of workers, and 11.7 per cent of supervisors suffered from such illnesses, especially gastric ulcers and joint pains. These workers and supervisors apparently needed to work to earn their livelihood despite these health conditions. The presence of gastric ulcers and the initial symptoms of hunger indicate the possibility of a small percentage of workers and supervisors apparently being deprived of proper nutrition resulting from their working conditions and poverty. This calls for a scientific assessment of the nutritional habits of workers and supervisors. Focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) indicated a risk of coughs, colds, fevers, and tuberculosis in some factories, including in sweater factories and in the cutting section of garment factories.

Working conditions

(i) **Workers' welfare as per the BLA:** The study took into account the variation of workers' perceptions of their working conditions and found that there were 36 factories in total (32.43 per cent of 111 factories) where sickrooms were either unavailable, potentially ineffective or a

proportion of workers were unaware of their existence.[1] Although health centres were available at three factories as per the legal requirement, information collected from KIIs and FGDs suggested that "registered" medical or nursing staff did not make regular visits to these centres. In factories with less than 5,000 workers, health services such as training, family welfare and reproductive health consultations, and antenatal care (ANC) and postnatal care (PNC) for pregnant workers were usually not available as these are not mandatory under the Bangladesh Labour Act (BLA). According to workers, out of 111 factories, 72 per cent, and 35 per cent had ANC and PNC facilities respectively. Only 5.4 per cent of factories provided health education.[2] Furthermore, the inherent inconsistency in responses provided by workers, supervisors, and managers might allude to the possibility of the unavailability and ineffectiveness of these facilities or the lack of knowledge about these facilities.

Despite being mandatory under the BLA, 63 factories had a range of 25 per cent to as high as 95 per cent of workers mentioning the non-availability of group insurance. Accidental insurance is recommended but not mandatory under the BLA. In 85 factories, 25 per cent to as high as 100 per cent of workers mentioned the non-availability of accidental insurance.

Despite the unavailability of several health services in the factories, 76.5 per cent workers and 78.4 per cent supervisors rated the quality of health treatment as 'good'. A probable explanation is the low expectations from workers who lack access to standard health care facilities, lack of awareness about the BLA, lack of education, and poverty. Being aware of these facts, factories tend to be reluctant to provide or improve health care facilities for their workers.

The availability of maternity leave is an area of constant concern in the RMG industry. Although the proportion of women workers in the sample survey was 61 per cent, and 66 per cent of them were married, the survey only found 86 women workers in just 53 per cent of factories (9 per cent out of 1,336 women workers), who had given birth to a child during their time of work at their respective factories. As such, there remains a strong possibility that these factories might discourage pregnancy during contracts, might not have recruited women workers who were planning to conceive, or might have made workers in the early stages of pregnancy to leave their job on the grounds of an "assurance" that these workers could return to their job after childbirth. There are concerns that factories avoid providing maternity leave employing the tactics mentioned above.

Regarding the availability of other welfare requirements under the BLA, there were no canteen facilities in 58 factories; no resting room facilities in 68 factories; no dining or lunch room facilities in 7 factories; and no children's room or crèche facilities in 29 factories.[3] Moreover, 16 factories did not have separate resting rooms for men and women workers. Although children's rooms (or crèches) should not be on the top floor for the convenience of women workers, this was the case according

1 Five per cent to as high as 75 per cent of workers mentioned the non-availability of sickrooms.

2 In the case of workers, it was assumed that factories provided a service (ANC/PNC/health education) if at least 60 per cent of workers agreed that this facility was provided.

3 At least 50 per cent of workers working in these factories reported the non-availability of these facilities.

to 23.36 per cent of workers. In this instance, the BLA needs to be more specific about the location of children's rooms.

According to the findings of this study and secondary literature, when workers were asked about their satisfaction in their particular job or the available facilities in factories such as drinking water, toilets, and washing facilities, generally they did not respond negatively as most of them had much worse facilities at home. However, FGDs provided the opportunity to ask more diverse questions on a few specific topics and workers were more comfortable in group discussions outside the factory premises. The study's FGDs raised several specific incidences, which although cannot be generalized, provide more insight into existing problems. For example, it was mentioned that the availability of a children's room was only highlighted to buyers; it was not for the workers' benefit. Although the survey findings depict entirely positive responses about satisfaction with drinking water, toilets, and washroom facilities, there were incidences of a lack of filtered water, an insufficient number of toilets, and the presence of wash basins, soap and towels only during audits.

(ii) Hours of work and leave: An overall analysis of hours worked, overtime, leave, and production targets indicate that workers were subjected to an excessive workload. Despite the tendency to understate working hours, findings show that out of 111 factories, workers had worked for 11 to 15 hours in 40 factories on the previous workday.[4] Working more than ten hours a day is a violation under the BLA. In woven factories, workers worked longer hours compared to other factories, followed by knitwear, knitwear/woven and sweater factories. Based on the mean value, workers in Dhaka (Savar) and Chattogram worked for longer hours in comparison with other locations. However, the proportion of workers working for more than ten hours was highest in factories in Narayanganj, followed by Dhaka.

Regarding overtime, if the highest estimated working hours are taken into account, workers worked overtime in 97.3 per cent of factories. Among the 111 factories, 40.54 per cent had the highest probability of excessive overtime, which is more than two hours under the BLA. However, 47 per cent of workers were in favour of excessive overtime (above two hours) as it resulted in extra income. This indicates that the existing wage scale may not be enough for them to live on. Furthermore, information gathered in FGDs suggests that in some factories, workers worked overtime for three hours but were only paid for two hours. Although most workers during the survey did not share information on night shifts in factories, findings from FGDs show that workers were generally obligated to work night shifts if required.

FGDs depict instances where workers had to work overtime on a Friday, including night shifts, to meet deadlines. There were incidences where the employer did not ask for consent from women workers to work night shifts, which is a violation under the BLA. In the case of failure to turn up for overtime and night shifts, workers faced an attendance bonus being deducted, and the threat of losing their job. Although sweater factories did not have any overtime system, according to FGDs, workers in some sweater factories had to work overtime on a regular basis without proper compensation.

4 Highest estimated working hours in factories.

There is an inconsistency around the availability of leave as opposed to not taking leave. For instance, around 19.3 per cent of workers did not take any leave during the previous year, and 70 per cent of workers took less than ten days of leave in total. Regarding sick leave, 56.3 per cent of workers did not take any sick leave and 41 per cent of workers took less than the 14 days of entitled sick leave as mandated by the BLA. As for casual leave, 34 per cent of workers did not take any casual leave in the previous year, and 91 per cent of workers took less than the ten days of entitled casual leave. The average days of sick leave and casual leave taken by workers stood at 2.97 days and 4.28 days respectively. Women workers took less days of casual leave than their men counterparts. Regarding festival holidays, 7.2 per cent of workers did not take leave for any festival holiday, and 12.53 per cent of workers did not take the 11 days of festival holidays that they were entitled to under the BLA. Fifty-four per cent of workers did not take any earned leave. According to findings from FGDs, earned leave is not available in most factories.

(iii) Wages, payments and other dues: Regarding job grades, most workers (67 per cent) fell into Grade 5, Grade 4 and Grade 3, implying that most workers in this study sample possessed mid-level skills as indicated by their job grade. As the grades progressed from lower to upper levels, the share of women workers in each grade gradually declined, which is a clear reflection of the men-women discrepancy in the share of the workforce. In Grade 1 and Grade 2, 16 per cent and 19.6 per cent of workers were women respectively. Concerning wages, payments and other dues, workers received BDT 8,827.66 (approximately USD 104) and supervisors received BDT 16,765 (approximately USD 198) as mean monthly wages, including overtime. Although not huge but wage differentials did exist between men and women. The mean wage of women workers was 89 per cent of men workers. For each grade, except Grade 5, the mean basic wage of women workers ranged between 92 per cent and 99 per cent of the mean basic wage of men workers. In the case of supervisors, the mean wage of women supervisors was 95 per cent of their men counterparts.

In total, 23.58 per cent of workers (65 per cent women and 35 per cent men) in 103 factories received a basic wage which was less than the respective minimum wage. Women workers experience more discrimination compared to men workers.

Wage slips were not generated in more than half of the factories, although this is a requirement under the BLA. In the case of supervisors, 26.13 per cent did not receive a wage slip and a further 33 per cent of them received a wage slip but did not understand its contents. Furthermore, 18.6 per cent of workers either did not receive a wage slip or did not understand its contents, or they were informed about the contents of their wage slip but did not receive any written document. In terms of knowledge about the minimum wage, there is a general lack of awareness. In the case of workers, 38.3 per cent had no idea about the minimum wage level. Women workers had less awareness than men workers (42 per cent of women workers versus 33 per cent of men workers).

(iv) Workplace training: There was a possibility that training systems were absent, ineffective or not in full compliance in 19 factories (in the case of introductory training) and in 12 factories (in the case of on-the-job

training) as less than 60 per cent of workers in these factories had received introductory training or on-the-job training in the six months preceding the survey. Although most workers had received training in the workplace in most of the factories, it only included training on occupational safety and health (OSH). Furthermore, FGDs indicated that a high prevalence of learning from peers or learning by doing demonstrated a lack of institutional training. Also, FGDs highlighted that OSH training for workers only covered fire safety training. It is apparent that following the Rana Plaza incident, factories have become more conscious about providing fire safety training. However, most factories critically lacked any other type of training. The survey found that factories did not facilitate adequate training on grievance and complaints procedures, labour laws, benefits, fines, upgrading skills, pay procedures, overtime regulations, working hours and workers' rights, new skills, new equipment, workplace cooperation, collective bargaining agreements, factory organization, and new operations, among others. Based on workers' responses, it appeared that in the case of OSH training, introductory training in 24 factories was either not fully provided or was ineffective, while this was the case for on-the-job training in 24 factories.

(v) Social dialogue, workplace cooperation and workers' associations: Social dialogue, workplace cooperation and workers' associations are crucial issues linked to workplace harassment and occupational safety. The underlying sensitivity of these issues prevented workers in general from providing information during the survey at factory premises. However, in this study, information collected during the survey as well as in FGDs has been used to depict a more likely scenario. According to the survey, only 1 per cent of workers had made a complaint in the previous year. Against such a context of low complaints, participants in FGDs divulged that workers did not have a suitable platform where their complaints could be addressed. The optimum approach would be to inform the supervisor in-person, which often depended on the relationship dynamics between the supervisor and the worker. It was reported in FGDs that there was a possibility that both the complainee and the complainant might lose their jobs if a complaint was lodged. This discouraged workers from speaking out. Confidentiality and the fairness of employers are also important in such cases. In some factories, complaint boxes were placed inside the toilet to maintain confidentiality. According to 97 per cent of workers, factories did not have collective bargaining agents in their factories.

About 21 and 18 factories lacked participation committees (PC) and safety committees respectively.[5] Trade unions were present in three factories. FGD participants suggested that the reason behind the low number of trade unions could be the lack of their functionality and the negative attitude of management that trade unions might create labour upheavals. In the case of women representation on PCs and safety committees, as reported by management, the proportions were very low with only 26.6 per cent and 12 per cent of managers reporting that the figure was above 50 per cent in each case respectively. During FGDs some workers expressed concerns about the ineffectiveness of these associations.

5 Less than 60 per cent of workers in these factories mentioned the prescence of participation and safety committees.

Waste management

In respect of compliance to waste management issues, 73 per cent of factories reported not having any Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP), which is required by the law of the Environment Conservation Rules, 1997. Out of 111 factories, 86 per cent of factories were working for buyers who were either members of the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh (the Accord) or the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety (the Alliance). Less than half (45.83 per cent) were provided with sufficient funds to maintain the safety of buildings.

Workplace harassment

About 10.16 per cent of workers had concerns about verbal abuse, followed by 2.56 per cent of workers with concerns about physical abuse, and 2.47 per cent of workers with concerns about sexual harassment or sexual touching. Men workers were more concerned about physical abuse, while women workers were more concerned about verbal or sexual harassment. The social stigma attached to making complaints along with the legitimate fear of losing a job acted as strong disincentives to complaining. This probably resulted in an underreporting of these issues during the survey. There is also a possibility that workers who expressed their grievances regarding any type of abuse in the sample study factories might have had their contracts terminated. However, instances of abuse, harassment and inappropriate behaviour, either initiated by fellow workers or supervisors, were disclosed during all FGDs. Almost 42 per cent of workers (14.7 per cent of men and 27.1 per cent of women) from 110 factories mentioned the lack of a sexual harassment policy at their workplace. Moreover, there is still a lack of an explicit law at the national level regarding sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace.

Occupational safety

Most concerns related to occupational safety were about factory's temperatures being too hot or too cold (15.43 per cent of workers and 29 per cent of supervisors reported such a phenomenon), followed by concerns about injuries (reported by 12.45 per cent of workers and 15 per cent of supervisors), and air pollution (reported by 10.12 per cent of workers and 6.3 per cent of supervisors). In general, one out of every five workers had some concerns over occupational safety issues.[6] Relating to fire safety issues, only 0.73 per cent of workers complained about the lack of a sufficient number of fire exits in factories, while only 1.92 per cent complained about a lack of properly marked fire exits on every floor in factories, implying that there has been an improvement in fire safety measures in the post-Rana Plaza era. However, almost 28 per cent of workers (24 per cent men and 30.3 per cent women) did not know the location of a window without grills to use in the case of a fire, primarily due to a lack of awareness and training. 35 per cent of workers (44.5 per cent women) did not know how to use fire equipment. It is, however, not a violation of labor law as labor law mandates training on firefighting for at least 18 per cent workers employed in each department. Women workers had less knowledge compared to men workers.

6 At least 20 per cent of the surveyed workers were concerned.

Workers' feedback on post-Rana Plaza interventions

The majority of workers (72 per cent) expressed satisfaction regarding the safety measures that had been put in place during the post-Rana Plaza era. Workers appreciated the importance of safety procedures, training related to fire safety and the requirements of the Accord. and the Alliance as these were related to ensuring the overall safety of the industry's working environment.

Gender equality

The study shows that while at the workers' level there was a high degree of women participation in the RMG sector, representation of women in ownership positions, in managerial positions, in supervisor's positions, and on workers' associations and committees were either minimal or unsatisfactory. Even at the worker level, women participation was concentrated in the lowest categories of jobs, i.e., in Grades 6 and 7. Women workers seldom secured positions in higher ranks. The share of women workers gradually increased as the grades progressed from the highest, Grade 1, to the lowest Grade 7, implying that there were more women workers in the lesser-skilled sectors. Moreover, as has been already mentioned, the RMG sector is experiencing 'defeminization'. In addition to the lack of representation of women in leadership positions, women faced a lack of maternity protection and earned the minimum wage. Wage differentials existed at each grade.

Managers' perception of the role of workers

In general, managers (93.69 per cent) agreed that workers were skilled in their respective jobs. However, managers expressed reservations relating to workers' capacity in terms of a complete understanding of a given situation (whether the worker could work independently if the situation demanded). Only 57 per cent of managers agreed that workers had this capacity. According to 80 per cent of managers, allowing even a low level of trade union activity would not be helpful for business.

Innovation, productivity, and good business performance

Innovation in factories received less importance, as only 30 per cent of factories had invested in designing new product categories in the last two years. Moreover, 77.48 per cent of factories did not have any such plan in the coming year. Major future investment plans in these factories included marketing (67.6 per cent), new destinations (65 per cent), export promotion (52 per cent) and new plants (44 per cent). In general, factories' emphasis was on expansion with little focus on innovation. Access to utilities (93 per cent), law and order (65 per cent), corruption (54 per cent) and the business environment (31.5 per cent) were major factors affecting productivity. Main problems were political strikes, difficulties in maintaining different working condition requirements for buyers, and a lack of sufficient financing for compliance. The most important factors for good business performance were good relationships with buyers, good compliance reports, workers' skills and job satisfaction, and fair value chains and supply chains.

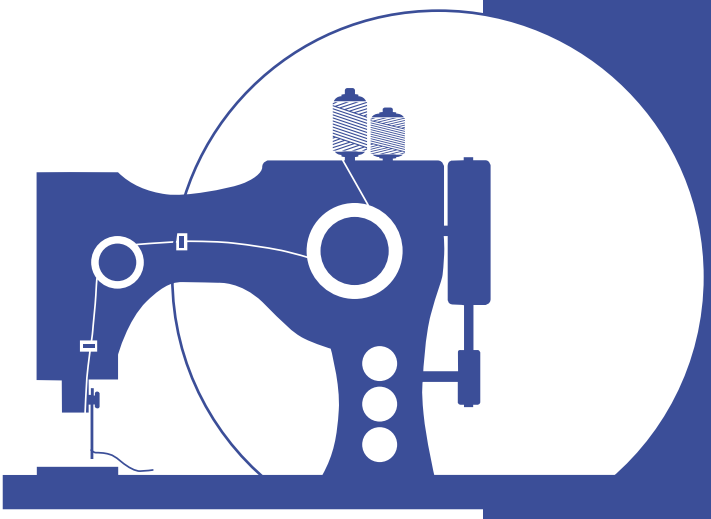
Conditions of employment and service: Compliance with the Bangladesh Labour Act

Around 6.4 per cent of workers did not receive any appointment letter. About 5 per cent of workers did not receive identity cards. Comprehensive maternity benefits were not

ensured. Wage statements were not received by 13.4 per cent of workers. Other partial or full breaches included inadequate health facilities, a lack of canteens, childcare rooms, resting rooms, lunchrooms, PC and safety committees, ETP (Effluent Treatment Plants), sexual harassment policies, authorizing leave, a suitable payment system for sweater factories and a lack of awareness regarding the BLA.

Scope for future research

There is a need for a further study that focuses on workers who no longer work in RMG factories so that the uncaptured insights of former workers regarding sexual harassment and other sensitive issues can be recorded. Cultural, psychological, and sociological aspects need to be included in future research to analyze the falling women labour force participation in the RMG industry. Outlining how automation and technology will affect the labour market and the implications of this need to be explored. Further studies should be undertaken where the scope for specialized training can be analyzed. Research regarding the internal monitoring and self-governance capacity of the RMG industry of Bangladesh needs to be undertaken as well as a cost-benefit analysis of the role of the Accord and the Alliance. Combining the results of this survey and FGDs with detailed information from an audit could give a new dimenion to future research. The dynamics of trade unions in Bangladesh, factory type-specific analyses, and the scientific analysis of health aspects could also have a long-term impact on the development of the RMG industry.



INTRODUCTION

The RMG industry in Bangladesh accounts for approximately 82.8[7] per cent of the country's exports. This industry employs around 4 million people[8] and the majority of them are women. Bangladesh has emerged as the second-largest global apparel exporter. Despite the dramatic growth and development, this sector has been subjected to increased scrutiny regarding its labour practices, especially after the consecutive incidents of factory fires and the Rana Plaza building collapse in April 2013. The need to improve compliance with international labour standards and national legislation has translated into several initiatives by the Government of Bangladesh, the private sector, multi-stakeholder groups and international organizations, including the ILO.

7 https://www.bb.org.bd/econdata/export/exp_rcpt_comodity.php

8 http://www.bgmea.com.bd/home/pages/TradeInformation

1.1 Background

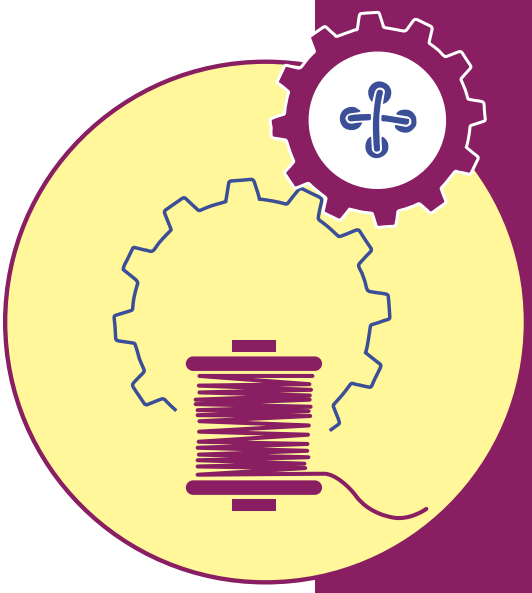
The International Labour Organization (ILO) through its ILO RMG project "Improving Working Conditions in the Ready-Made Garment Sector", funded by the Governments of Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, is investing in improving building safety, strengthening the labour inspection system, promoting occupational safety and health, supporting Rana Plaza survivors and implementing the Better Work Bangladesh programme. The ILO RMG project aims to improve the safety of workers in the garment industry in the long-term. The purpose of this initiative is to ensure that sustainable mechanisms are in place to prevent future tragedies and to ensure the maintenance of safe working conditions. The study observed improvements in compliance with international and national legislation that have led to changes in the labour inspection system and the strengthening of factory safety and other precautionary initiatives. It looked at the improvements in working conditions, the establishment of worker's rights and their well-being, and broader social and human development.

1.2 Objectives of the baseline study

The sustainable improvement of working conditions in the RMG sector is not possible without an evidence-based understanding of the lives and perceptions of people working at various levels in factories: workers, supervisors and managers. Against this backdrop, this study aimed to survey the demographic profile, working conditions and overall well-being of workers, supervisors and managers in the Bangladesh RMG sector. Under the broad section of working conditions, it investigated the health status of workers and the health services provided by factories, including maternity protection and benefits, production targets and hours of work, and existing compensation policies. Data on facilities available in the workplace, on-the-job training, social dialogue, workplace cooperation and workers' associations were also collected in the study. Furthermore, this report discusses pressing concerns regarding workplace harassment, occupational safety and gender-specific issues. It looks at investment in, and the innovation of factories along with factors affecting productivity and good business performance. Discussions on compliance and related issues expanded the scope of this research. The quantitative study and qualitative study were carried out simultaneously but separately. Attention has been given to the distinction in perspectives from men and women workers throughout the entire study.

This study looked at every area of interest from different perspectives and consolidated the information collected from workers, supervisors and managers. It looked at every finding critically, generated by the information provided by the broad study sample, and how it related to the need and scope for development. The study contributes significantly to the evidence-base about the RMG sector in Bangladesh and the agenda for reforms to improve and update this sector, in particular the labour inspection system, working conditions and factory safety, as well as the need to embark on new initiatives.

METHODS



2.1 Study design

This baseline study was designed to provide an evidence-based perception of the overall working conditions of the RMG sector using a mixed method approach of quantitative and qualitative methods. Under the quantitative method, baseline data was collected by conducting the survey. The qualitative method included focus group discussions (FGD) and key informant interviews (KII). Fieldwork for the study was undertaken from January 10, 2017 to May 30, 2017.

The rationale behind the mixed method approach

Quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other. The quantitative survey provides the study with statistical evidence for analysis. It provides numbers by asking respondents predetermined questions. FGDs do not provide numbers or figures. They enrich the analysis by providing case studies, examples or facts which might not be captured during the quantitative survey. Moreover, the quantitative survey provides the perception of individuals, while FGDs result in a consensus along with some individual case studies. As the survey took place on factory premises and FGDs took place outside the factory, the study was able to capture the impact of the different locations on the information provided. When findings from FGDs coincided with the survey findings, it provided assurance to the findings, whereas when FGDs came up with a contrasting finding it added a new dimenion to the study that required further analysis. The combination of both methods provided a complete analysis.

Questionnaire development

In the quantitative survey, information was collected from workers, managers and supervisors. The questionnaire was designed by choosing a broad category, then determining the necessary questions under each category. In the process, existing survey instruments of the ILO, the questionnaire of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) and the Labour Force Survey (LFS) by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) were studied, in addition to SANEM's bank of questionnaires. Questions were further modified by examining the ILO's and other stakeholders' processes. Each question was structured so that it was compatible with the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 and the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015.

For the qualitative study, focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) with workers, supervisors, managers, and stakeholders were conducted. The questionnaires for FGDs and KIIs were more focused and based on broad areas selected from the survey questionnaire. Separate questionnaires were designed for workers, supervisors and managers to match their area of knowledge. Questionnaires for KIIs were designed on the same basis based on the expertise of the interviewee.

All the questionnaires were designed under the supervision of experts and gender specialists. Several revisions were undertaken after detailed discussions with the ILO.

Data collection tools

For this baseline study, CSPro CAPI, an open source software, was used for data collection. The data entry template was developed using this software. After installing the android application of the CSPro data entry software on to the tablet, the completed template was installed. Survey data for the quantitative study was collected using the tablets. Each enumerator was provided with a separate tablet. The use of this software ensured that data could be received every day on a regular basis in Dhaka at a centralized location.

Training for enumerators

The training for field workers was held from January 1 to 4, 2017 in two phases. In the first phase of the training, the enumerators were given a clear idea of the study objectives and how to communicate with RMG workers to carry out the survey. The training instructors first explained all the sections of the questionnaire to the enumerators. The enumerators then took part in a role play exercise where half of them played the role of respondents, and the other half played the role of enumerators. After a mock survey session, the roles were reversed (one half became respondents and the other half became enumerators) for another mock survey session.

In the second phase of the training, enumerators learned to use the CSPro software (the software used in the survey) and the techniques for data entry. In the role play exercise the enumerators conducted mock surveys by changing roles amongst themselves, as in the first phase, but this time using CSPro.

Pilot field assessment

After the training, two pilot field assessments took place on 18 January, 2017 and 25 January, 2017. The pilot field assessments were to ensure that the enumerators were familiar with the questionnaire and the survey instrument. After the pilots, data were assessed and necessary revisions were affected in the questionnaire and the survey instrument. Enumerators were briefed again based on the experiences of the pilot field assessments.

During the two days of training and pilot field assessments, enumerators were assessed on their engagement throughout the training, and their performance during the role play sessions and the pilot field assessments. Fifteen enumerators were then selected to form the team of data collectors.

Team of data collectors

A team of 15 enumerators and three field data editors worked in the field for the duration of the fieldwork. Three of the enumerators assumed the role of supervisors during the fieldwork. There were five women and seven men enumerators who conducted the survey in the field. These enumerators and data editors were divided into three teams, each comprising four enumerators, one supervisor and one data editor. Each team went to each factory to collect data from 20 workers, one supervisor and one manager. Usually managers were interviewed by a supervisor from the respective team.

One team of enumerators, along with a data editor, went to Chattogram to survey all the sample factories located there. The remaining two teams conducted the survey in the remaining four areas.

Communication

The survey team continuously communicated with the ILO and other stakeholders: the Accord, the Alliance, the BKMEA, the BGMEA and the DIFE. The ILO and other stakeholders facilitated contact with the focal persons at the factories who ensured data collection was completed at each respective factory. Communications for initiating the survey included obtaining the contact information of factory focal persons and contacting them. At first formal emails were sent to the factories, followed by communication by phone. In the case of each factory, the factory focal persons were briefed on the objectives of the study and a tentative date for conducting the survey was proposed. If the factory agreed, the team visited the factory on the scheduled date. It usually required a couple of phone calls and emails and communicating with several representatives from each factory to get confirmation for the data collection.

2.2 Study sites

The study sites were determined by the concentration of the population group in the locations. In line with the population, the survey took place in four major areas: Dhaka, Gazipur, Narayangonj and Chattogram.

2.3 Sampling procedure and study sample

2.3.1. Sampling procedure

The stratified random sampling method, also known as the proportional/probability random sampling, was used to select the sample factories where both location and type of factory was considered. This is also called proportional/probability random sampling.

Stratified random sampling (SRS) is a probability sampling technique where the researcher divides the entire population into different subgroups or strata and then randomly selects the final subjects proportionally from the different strata. It is important to note that the strata must not overlap. If there are overlapping subgroups some factories would have higher chances of being selected as subjects. This completely negates the concept of stratified sampling as a type of probability sampling.

Proportionate allocation in SRS uses a sampling fraction in each of the strata that is proportional to that of the total population. For instance, if the population consists of X total individuals, m of which are men and f of which are women (and where m + f = X), then the relative size of the two samples (x1 = m/X men, x2 = f/X women) should reflect this proportion.

Stratified sampling ensures that at least one observation is picked from each of the strata, even if the probability of it being selected is close to zero. Hence the statistical properties of the population may not be preserved if there are thin strata. A rule of thumb that is used to ensure this is that the population should consist of no more than six strata. However, depending on special cases this rule can be changed, for example, if there are 100 strata each with 1 million observations, it is perfectly acceptable to undertake a 10 per cent stratified sampling on them.

The reasons to use stratified sampling rather than simple random sampling include if measurements within the strata have a lower standard deviation, stratification gives smaller errors in estimation. For many applications, measurements become more manageable and/or cheaper when the population is grouped into strata. It is often desirable to have estimates of population parameters for groups within the population.

The mean and variance of stratified random sampling is given by:

$$\mu_s = \frac{1}{N} \Sigma_{h=1}^{L} N_h \mu_h$$

$$\sigma_s 2_{=} \Sigma_{h=1}^{L} \left(\frac{Nh}{N}\right)^2 \left(\frac{N_h - n_h}{N_h}\right) \frac{{\sigma_h}^2}{n_h}$$

Where,

NN_h = Size of entire population, should equal the sum of all stratum sizes

$N_h N_h$ = Size of each stratum

η_h = Number of observations in each stratum

L = Count of strata

σ_h = Sample standard deviation of stratum h

μ_h μ_h = Sample mean of stratum h

2.3.2 Study sample

2.3.2.1 Population size

Four million workers are employed in the ready-made garment industry in Bangladesh.[9] The sample size of workers was determined by using the population of 4 million workers. The sample size of factories was determined using the total number of 3,516 active export-oriented ready-made garments factories under the National Initiative. The ILO was the source for this list of factories. The study surveyed randomly selected factories using stratified random sampling methodology from this population by factory location and factory type.

2.3.2.2. Study sample for quantitative study

Statistical method for determining the sample size of workers: The most suitable and widely used sample size determination process for baseline surveys is simple and efficient. In this approach, there are two initial critical considerations: (1) the desired width of a confidence interval and (2) the level of certainty with which inference can be drawn about the population characteristics. Given the population size it becomes possible to determine the sample size that achieves the two goals specified.

The level of certainty is indicated by the confidence level. It represents how often the true percentage of the population would be picked up during the survey and would lie within the confidence interval. Most researchers use the 95 per cent confidence level, which means it is 95 per cent certain that the true population mean (or characteristics) will fall within the constructed confidence interval.

The method of sample size determination, which does not require making assumptions about the population standard deviation, is defined as follows:

$$S = \frac{Z^2 * (p) * (1-p)}{c^2} \quad (1)$$

Where:

S= Sample size

Z = Z value (e.g. with a normal distribution the value is 1.96 for the 95 per cent confidence level)

P = percentage picking a choice (when determining the sample size for a given level of accuracy the worst-case percentage [50 per cent] is to be used)

c = confidence interval

To be more precise, a correction for the finite population can be introduced, which is defined as:

$$S^2 = \frac{S}{1 + \frac{S-1}{Pop}} xDF \quad (2)$$

Where, Pop stands for population.

With a population of 4 million, a 99 per cent confidence level and a 1 per cent confidence interval, the required sample size is calculated at 16,572, while the same confidence interval along with a 95 per cent confidence level will require a sample of 9,581. With a 2 per cent confidence interval, the sample sizes decrease to 4,156 and 2,400 respectively for 99 per cent and 95 per cent confidence levels. As the confidence interval increases, (i.e. as precision is lost), the sample size decreases further.

9 http://www.bgmea.com.bd/home/pages/aboutus.

In the baseline study, a 2 per cent confidence interval and a 95 per cent confidence level was used to determine the sample size which was 2,400 workers.

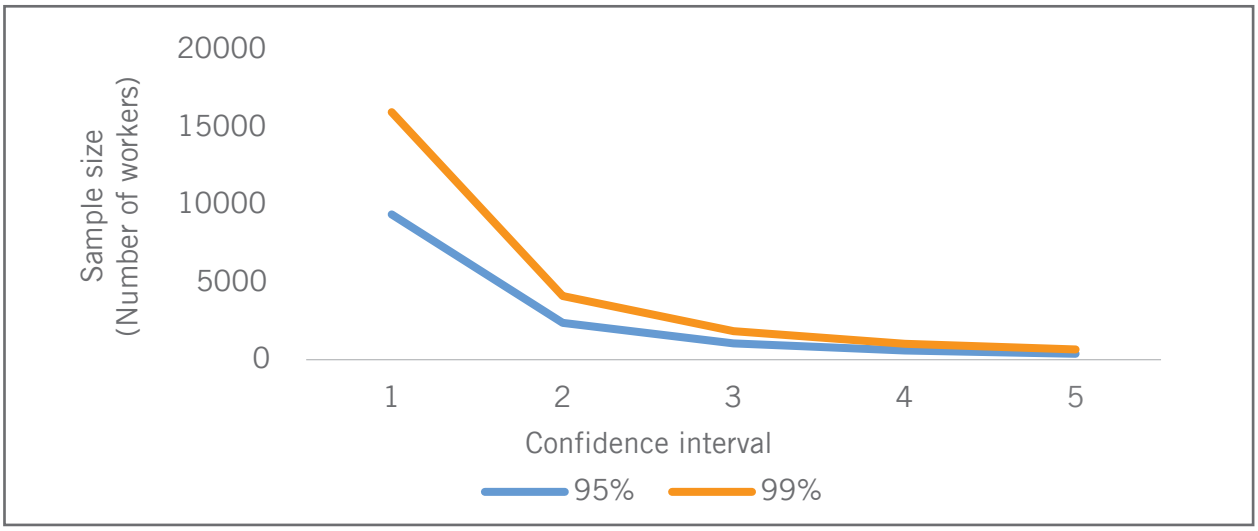


Figure 2.1 Sample size with different confidence interval and confidence level

Statistical method for determining sample size of factories: Using a similar formula the number of factories was determined to be 120.

Study limitations: As the baseline survey aimed to generate information on a wide variety of topics, it was necessary to cover a reasonable size of sample workers. On the other hand, since the survey had to be completed within a given time period, it was important to consider the feasibility of conducting the survey with a very large sample. Given that the 95 per cent confidence interval is most widely used and that the 2 per cent confidence interval is recognized as being fairly precise, the sample size was determined as 2,400 workers for the survey.

Due to the limited time period, and that certain stakeholders and factory focal persons were not enthusiastic about being involved in the study, gaining access to factories was challenging and time-consuming. Given all the challenges, the study was able to survey 2,184 workers from 111 factories. The gap between the determined sample size and the actual sample size was minimal in comparison with the large worker sample size.

Sample size for quantitative survey: A total of 111 ready-made garment factories were surveyed for the baseline study where 2,184 workers, 111 managers and 111 supervisors were randomly selected depending on their location, the size of the factory and the production type.

Number of strata/subgroup: Stratified random sampling methodology was used to draw up a list of the sample factories by location and product type. Thus, several subgroups or strata in this study were based on the number of locations and production types.

The information on the factory's location and production type in the population provided by the ILO was used to determine the number of strata. According to the information received, the RMG factories are concentrated in five major areas and manufacture four major product types.

Therefore, the total number of strata was 20 (=4*5). Table 2.1 below shows the distribution of the factory by location and by type of factory.

Areas	Knitwear	Sweater	Woven	Knit/woven	Total
Dhaka	462	163	693	144	1452
Gazipur	473	208	238	56	975
Narayanganj	498	29	52	21	600
Chattogram	142	30	199	108	479
Total	**1,575**	**430**	**1,182**	**329**	**3,516**

Table 2.1 **Distribution of factory by location and type of factory (Population)**

The 3,516 factories were grouped into four areas determined by the location of the factory. Then each area was assigned four subgroups determined by the type of factory. The four areas were Dhaka, Gazipur, Narayangonj and Chattogram and the four subgroups of each area were knitwear, sweater, and woven, while the rest of the factories had mixed production types (knit/woven). All were different strata.

Dhaka and Gazipur had the most factories. Knitwear was the main product type of these factories. As the study had to select 111 factories out of 3,516, it relied on the proportion of factories in each category. For example, 7.3 per cent of factories produced knitwear in Dhaka. Therefore, the study selected (0.073*111) = 8 factories from these strata.

Areas	Knitwear	Sweater	Woven	Any 2 or 3	Total
Dhaka	14	5	22	4	46
Gazipur	15	7	7	2	31
Narayanganj	16	1	2	1	19
Chattogram	5	1	6	3	16
Total	**50**	**14**	**37**	**10**	**111**

Table 2.2 **Distribution of factory by location and type of factory (Sample)**

The computerized random table was used to randomly select the factories from each area and by the type of production.

2.3.2.3. Study sample for qualitative study

Number of strata/subgroup: For the qualitative study, a sample of ten ready-made garments was drawn-up from the list of factories provided by the ILO using a stratified random sampling strategy.

FGDs had been stratified for four areas (Gazipur, Narayanganj, Dhaka city, and Chattogram) for workers, supervisors and managers. Two factories from each of these areas were selected using the computerized random table for factories which had not been selected for the quantitative study.

Sample size determination: Ten workers were selected from each factory in the five different locations for the FGDs. Therefore, a total of 100 workers were interviewed in the FGDs. The total number of FGDs was ten.

FGD/interview	Number of FGDS/interviews	Total	Men	Women
FGD for workers	10 FGDs: 2 from 5 regions	100	43	57
FGD for supervisors	5 FGDs: 1 from 5 regions	25	23	2
FGD for management	5 FGDS: 1 from 5 regions	25	25	0
Interview with stakeholders	10 interviews	10	8	2
Total	**20 FGDs, 10 interviews**	**160**	**99**	**61**

Table 2.3 **Sample size**

Sample size of supervisors and management: In ten factories, five FGDs for supervisors and five FGDs for management were conducted in the five locations. At each location, one FGD was conducted for both supervisors and managers separately. Each FGD was comprised of five supervisors and five managers. Therefore, the total number of supervisors who participated in FGDs was 25 and the total number of managers was 25.

Sample size of stakeholders: A total of ten individuals including government officials, policymakers, academicians and researchers, representatives from relevant local organizations and international organizations were interviewed.

2.4 Data collection methods

2.4.1 Secondary data

Secondary data for the study was obtained through a review of relevant literature including academic research papers from journals, annual reviews by national and international organizations, reports of similar studies, and national and international newspaper and media reports. These reviews are supporting evidence for the findings from this baseline study in respect of both the survey and the FGDs. Moreover, references have been used wherever needed to support particular analyses. The Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 and the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015 have been referenced considerably to highlight the violations of the Labour Law.

2.4.2 Primary data collection

The primary data collection process for this study included a survey of workers using CSPro, KIIs and FGDs. The survey for the quantitative study was conducted on factory premises. FGDs were conducted outside factory premises in the locality of respective participants.

It took one day for each team to conduct a survey at each factory. The team reached the location at around 9 a.m. The first step was to brief the factory representative about the survey procedure. Twenty workers were randomly selected from different grades and different sections of the factory. The proportion of men and women workers was roughly based on the total number of men and women workers at the factory. While selecting the sample of workers, care was taken to ensure that the production process was not hampered. Each interview lasted an average of 40 to 50 minutes. The team completed the entire survey by 2 p.m.

The FGDs, each, around one hour long, were moderated by researchers along with enumerators. Measures were taken to make sure that participants felt comfortable to speak openly. Each of the FGDs took one to one and a half hours, depending on the depth of discussions. FGDs were

all recorded and documents were prepared from the recorded audio files and notes were taken during the FGDs. The interviewing of stakeholders was carried out by researchers. Ten stakeholders were interviewed separately, including two representatives of local and international organizations, three government officials, one policymaker, two academicians, and two researchers. The interviewer recorded (subject to permission) and took notes of the interview and prepared a document based on the recorded audio file and notes after the interview.

The information gathered from the FGDs and KIIs are reflected in the data analysis, along with the survey findings, in each respective chapter of this report.

The baseline survey questionnaire consisted of separate modules for the following topics:

- Health status of respondents
- Working conditions
    - Welfare arrangements (healthcare services, maternity protection and benefits, availability of other welfare facilities)
    - Hours of work and leave
    - Production targets
    - Wages, payments and other dues
    - Workplace training
    - Social dialogue, workplace cooperation and workers' associations
    - Compliance
- Workplace harassment
- Occupational safety
- Workers' feedback on post-Rana Plaza interventions
- Gender equality
- Manager's perception of the role of workers
- Innovation, productivity, and good business performance
- Conditions of employment and service: Compliance with the Bangladesh Labour Act (BLA).

2.5 Data management and analysis

There were three data editors at the field level to handle the primary data inspection and cleaning. The field data editors were responsible for supervising the data entry, as well as ensuring data quality. The researchers conducted further data cleaning and analysis after receiving the data from the field.

The data analysis was carried out to reflect the different perspectives of workers, supervisors and management personnel. One supervisor and one manager was interviewed from each factory; their individual perspectives represented each of the respective factories. In the case of workers, there were 20 different perspectives for each factory. Workers' responses for each factory were disaggregated to observe factory-wise variations. In the report, this disaggregation by factory is used, whenever necessary, to compare with the perspectives of supervisors and managers.

The analysis disaggregated data by three major dimenions: gender (men, women); factory type (knit, woven, sweater, knit and woven); and factory location (Dhaka, Chattogram, Gazipur, and Narayanganj). In some relevant cases, disaggregation based on factory size (number of workers) was used. These disaggregations were undertaken to identify the potential concentration of problems by gender, production type, factory location or size of factory.

The analysis of disaggregated data aimed to harmonize the information gathered from the survey, FGDs and KIIs. The information gathered from the FGDs and KIIs supported the implications/results/conclusions drawn from the survey data in some cases, whereas it contradicted it in others. Such conflicts/ contrasts and resemblances in the information were highlighted while analyzing the data and preparing the analysis report. Secondary data or references were also used to add support to similar findings or contrasts.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DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

This section provides a snapshot of the different demographic groups based on the findings from the survey and includes worker ratios; gender-disaggregated data by managers, supervisors, and workers; age group by sex; reproductive age group; educational qualifications; marital status; living conditions; and access to drinking water, among other issues. This section also attempts to summarize the findings on wage data, presenting the key facts on wage data and providing further insight into the findings from the FGDs and KIIs.

Age disaggregation of workers

An age breakdown of the workforce revealed that a large percentage of the workforce were aged between 18 and 30 years, comprising 85 per cent of the workforce, and that youth (aged 18-35 years) made up 94.4 per cent of the workforce.

Age group	Total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Below 18	1.28	0.83	1.57
18-25	60.26	55.54	63.25
26-30	24.68	28.18	22.46
31-35	9.48	10.26	8.98
36-40	3.07	3.07	3.07
41-45	0.87	1.42	0.52
45+	0.37	0.71	0.15
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 3.1 **Workers by age group**

A gender breakdown shows that 64.8 per cent of women workers were 25 years-old or younger, compared to 56.4 per cent of men workers within the same age range. Women workers are relatively younger compared to men workers. A gender breakdown across age groups revealed that the share of women was consistently higher. As the age range of groups increased, the women share of the workforce consistently decreased, except for the age groups 31 to 35 years and 36 to 40 years where women participation increased dramatically to 57.97 per cent and 61.19 per cent, respectively.

Age group	Percentage men	Percentage women	Total
Below 18	25	75	100
18-25	35.79	64.21	100
26-30	44.34	55.66	100
31-35	42.03	57.97	100
36-40	38.81	61.19	100
41-45	63.16	36.84	100
45+	75	25	100
Total	**38.83**	**61.17**	**100**

Table 3.2 **Gender breakdown by age group**

Workers aged below 18 years

Around 1.28 per cent or 28 workers were below the age of 18. Most of these workers were employed in woven factories (16), followed by knitwear (8) and sweater factories (4). Women dominate in this group as young, unmarried women below the ages of 18 and 20 years constitute a highly vulnerable group who leave education to start earning a living at an early age. Their

poverty, lack of skills, dire need of work and their position in a society dominated by strong gender hierarchies makes it easy for factories to employ them at a minimum wage.

Age	Knitwear	Sweater	Woven	Total
14	1	1	1	3
15	2	0	3	5
16	3	1	4	8
17	2	2	8	12
Total	**8**	**4**	**16**	**28**

Table 3.3 **Workers below 18 years of age by factory type**

Workers aged over 40 years

The men share of the workforce increased for workers over 40 years and was consistently over 60 per cent. Findings from FGDs and KIIs indicated that there are prevailing beliefs that women workers are unsuitable for such labour and this time-intensive profession once they are over 40 years of age. The FGDs and KIIs also showed evidence that the responsibility for families and domestic tasks places a more onerous burden on women than men; a socio-economic variant present in the current fabric of society. In addition, the detrimental health impacts of working long-term in RMG factories lowered the proportion of women workers aged over 40 years.[10]

As the data revealed that the share of women supervisors was below 10 per cent and approximately 4 per cent for managers, there appears to be a link between this low leadership representation and the decreasing share of women workers aged over 40 years. Further studies and investigation are required to determine the exact factors that are contributing to the low share of leadership and the declining percentage of women workers as they age.

Reproductive age

In this report, based on the definition provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), the reproductive age group is defined to be women aged 15 to 49 years. Of 1,336 women participants in the study, 98 per cent were within the reproductive age group.

Age disaggregation of supervisors and managers

Most supervisors were aged between 26 to 31 years, followed by the age group 32 to 38 years. However, youth between the ages of 19 to 25 years accounted for 17 per cent of supervisors, providing a clear indication that a large percentage of youth become supervisors as illustrated by the data (see table 3.4).

Age group	Total supervisors	Percentage men	Percentage women
19-25	17.11	15.84	30
26-31	45.96	47.52	30
32-38	26.13	25.74	30
40-48	10.8	10.89	10
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 3.4 **Share of supervisors by age group by gender**

Most managers were aged between 31 to 40 years. Women managers were all experienced and aged between 31 to 62 years. Therefore, unlike men managers, women might only be recruited as managers after a certain age.

10 According to Carr (2004). The capacity of the garment industry 'to continue to generate employment is tied up with its capacity to survive'. Working in this sector is not sustainable for women workers due to the extremely long working hours and the limited possibilities of promotion. Women cannot continue to work as they have to look after their children. Consequently, they find another job at a lower pay but with more flexibility. Educated women with some savings usually opt for self-employment.

Age group	Total managers	Percentage men	Percentage women
22-30	18.01	18.86	0
31-40	54.96	53.78	80
41-62	27	27.35	20
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 3.5 **Share of managers by age group by gender**

Marital status

Among workers, the majority (62 per cent) were married. About 66 per cent of women workers were married, while for men workers this figure was 56 per cent. A tendency to marry early, particularly for women, plays a major role in constructing this composition as illustrated in the data (see table 3.6).

Marital status	Total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Currently married	62.04	55.78	66.02
Unmarried	32.74	43.99	25.6
Widowed	1.6	0.12	2.54
Divorced	2.01	0.12	3.22
Separated	1.56	0	2.54
Single mother	0.05	0	0.07
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 3.6 **Marital status of workers**

Of the total workforce around 33 per cent were unmarried. There were more unmarried men (44 per cent) than women (26 per cent). Around 4 per cent of workers were divorced or separated, most of whom were women (3.51 per cent of the total workforce). For the most part, workers lived with their spouses (89 per cent), while 11 per cent lived away from their spouse, but were not necessarily separated.

Variable	Total married workers	Men	Women
Live with spouse	89.08	81.18	93.31
Live away from spouse	10.92	18.82	6.69
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 3.7 **Domestic arrangements of married workers**

At the time of the survey, 77 per cent of supervisors were married (76 per cent of men versus 80 per cent of women).

Marital status	Total supervisors	Percentage men	Percentage women
Currently married	76.58	76.24	80
Unmarried	22.52	23.76	10
Widowed	0.9	0	10
Total	100	100	100

Table 3.8 **Marital status of supervisors by gender**

Education level: Workers, supervisors, and managers that work in the RMG sector have a minimal level of education. About 95 per cent of workers could read or write. Among workers, 60 per cent had received education up to Class 5 and Class 9, while only 14.8 per cent of workers had attained a secondary school certificate (SSC) or equivalent. The study found that around 6 per cent of workers had never attended school, while only 1.25 per cent of workers had obtained a degree or equivalent education. The presence of extremes in terms of educational attainment was minimal in the study. To compare the

literacy rate reported by the study (95 per cent) with national level data, it is observed that in the Preliminary Report on Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2016, released by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), the national literacy rate was 65.6 per cent.

Education	Total workers	Men workers	Women workers	Total supervisors	Men supervisors	Women supervisors
No education	0.96	0.61	1.2	0	0	0
Below Class 5	14.18	10.61	16.52	0	0	0
Class 5	19.05	14.63	21.95	4.5	4.95	0
Class 6	6.75	5.73	7.42	0	0	0
Class 7	10.13	7.56	11.81	1.8	1.98	0
Class 8	15.2	15.73	14.84	16.22	14.85	30
Class 9	8.92	9.27	8.7	17.12	13.86	50
SSC/equivalent	14.81	20.49	11.09	34.23	35.64	20
HSC/equivalent	8.25	11.95	5.83	22.52	24.75	0
Degree/equivalent	1.25	2.44	0.48	2.7	2.97	0
Vocational	0.05	0	0.08	0	0	0
Other (specify)	0.43	0.98	0.08	0.9	0.99	0
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 3.9 **Educational background by gender**

A breakdown of educational data by gender highlights that the education levels of women workers are concentrated within the range of below Class 5 and Class 8, unlike their men counterparts. In terms of educational achievement, the data infer that men in the RMG sector have higher shares in the upper segments (degree, higher secondary school certificate (HSC), and SSC) than their women counterparts. Women have higher shares of educational levels below secondary education than their men counterparts (Class 8, and Class 5, among others). This low level of education could be a potential factor in the lower probability of women gaining promotion.

Most supervisors had an educational level equivalent to an SSC or higher, and managers had a master's degree or equivalent. FGDs with supervisors suggested that in most cases in addition to a certain level of educational qualification, selection for higher responsibilities (supervisor or management) depended more on the individual's experience, and their ability to monitor and discipline the workers' and to represent their demands and rights.

Educational level	Total managers	Percentage men	Percentage women
SSC	3.6	3.77	0
HSC	7.21	7.55	0
Honours	4.5	4.72	0
Master's	54.05	53.77	60
Other (specify)	11.71	11.32	20
Degree	18.92	18.87	20
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 3.10 **Educational background by gender (managers)**

Discontinuing education

The primary reasons contributing to workers discontinuing their education were affordability, followed by the responsibility of taking care of or supporting family members. In the case of women, marriage (31.5 per cent) was one of the major reasons for discontinuing their studies.

Reason	Total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Illness	1.56	1.89	1.35
Lack of affordability	49.82	49.06	50.30
School too far away	0.50	0.35	0.60
Restricted mobility	0.73	0.12	1.12
Lack of safety	0.73	0.35	0.97
Transportation too difficult	1.05	1.18	0.97
Taking care of and supporting family members	41.39	46.22	38.32
Did not want to continue school	14.97	21.82	10.63
Working in family enterprise	1.28	2.12	0.75
No time to study	1.33	2.12	0.82
Completed school required by law	0.18	0.24	0.15
Still studying	3.62	6.37	1.87
Marriage	21.70	6.25	31.51

Table 3.11 **Reasons for discontinuing education**

Supporting their family (burden of care) hinders most women from pursuing their education or furthering their career. These factors are interlinked to a certain degree. Poverty requires these workers to start working at an early age to support their families financially, forgoing their education. Poverty also prompts the early marriage of women, in a society where they are viewed as a burden. Early marriage leads to children being conceived at an early age, with women taking responsibility for the care of children, adding to their existing burden of care of supporting elderly family members. Against these demands, their education takes a backseat and workers seldom return to education later in life.

Migration, employment history, plans, and retention issues

Among workers, 89 per cent reported that they had migrated to find employment in the RMG industry. Almost 89 per cent of all men and 89 per cent of all women migrated to cities to find work. For 45 per cent of workers it was their first job in the ready-made garment industry. For a higher share of women (49 per cent) compared to men (38 per cent), it was their first job in the garment industry, indicating that a relatively higher share of men might have had an earlier exposure to the garment industry than their women counterparts.

Worker migrated	Total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Yes	89.06	88.44	89.45
No	10.94	11.56	10.55
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 3.12 **Distribution of workers that migrated by gender**

First-time worker	Total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Yes	44.87	38.21	49.1
No	55.13	61.79	50.9
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 3.13 **First time employed in the garment industry by gender**

Approximately 72.5 per cent of these workers cited a limited availability of work in their villages as a driving reason behind their migration to the city in search of employment. This criterion is also true of the group of workers (62.5 per cent) who cited poverty as a major driver behind their decision to migrate. A husband or family's migration played an active role in 10.6 per cent of women workers' migration, while 9.3 per cent of women workers cited marriage as their reason for migrating.

Reason for migration	Total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Too poor in village	62.5	24.18	38.32
Limited employment opportunities in village	72.5	28.34	44.18
To escape child marriage	0.82	0.09	0.73
Not poor but wanted to earn more money	3.07	2.38	0.69
Family or husband migrated	12.5	1.88	10.62
Marriage	11.4	2.20	9.25

Table 3.14 **Reasons for migration by gender**

Employment history

The survey found that 69.28 per cent of workers had worked for one to five years, while 16 per cent had worked for six to ten years in their respective factories. Only 3 per cent of workers had more than ten years of work experience, which is reasonable given that youth comprised most workers. Twelve per cent of workers were employed with less than one year's work experience. (see Annex 1, table A1). In regard to the employment history of workers in the RMG industry, most workers (55 per cent) had been employed in the ready-made garment industry for one to five years. Almost 31 per cent of them had been working in the industry for six to ten years. Around 9.5 per cent of workers had been working for more than a decade in the industry. Among the decade-long workers, the gender breakdown shows that a higher share of men than women remained employed in the industry for over a decade (see Annex 1, table A2).

An important criterion for choosing a factory was higher wages (81.2 per cent), which was similar for both men (82 per cent men) and women (80 per cent women). Both of these groups cited

it as a major reason for choosing a factory. Given that poverty alleviation is the prime reason for entering the job market in the first instance, higher wages naturally serve as a main determining factor. Better working environments were also cited as an important factor by 54 per cent of workers (51 per cent men and 57 per cent women). It was observed that women workers had a slightly higher concern for their working environment than men.

Reason	Total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Higher wage	81.2	82	80
Better working conditions	54	51	57
Location	29.62	29.95	29.42

Table 3.15 **Reasons for selecting this factory for work**

Retention

Regarding the retention aspect of the ready-made garment industry, it was observed that 44.55 per cent of workers expressed an interest in continuing working in the sector, followed by 20 per cent of workers that wanted to move to another sector and 35.67 per cent of workers that wanted to return home in the near future. According to FGDs, most workers want to return home after five years and start their own business.

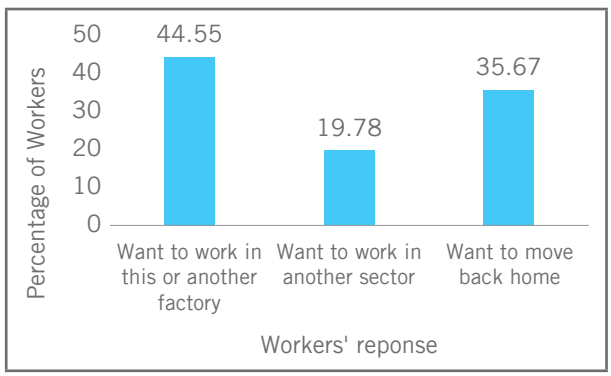


Figure 3.1 **Workers' opinion in regard to continuing working in the RMG sector**

Workers' opinion	Total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Want to work in this or another factory	44.55	42.92	45.58
Want to work in another sector	19.78	27	15.19
Want to move back home	35.67	30.07	39.22
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 3.16 **Workers' opinion in regard to continuing working in the RMG sector**

Possible reasons for wanting to leave the industry, as illustrated by the survey, FGDs and KIIs, include declining health as a result of long working hours, an excessive workload in light of workers' ages, and the expensive costs of living in a city coupled with concerns over low wages. When asked about their concerns, around 24 per cent of workers cited concerns over low wages, making it one of their main reasons for not remaining in the industry in the long-term. Interviews with KIIs explained the dynamics of low wages in a rather nuanced way. According to several KIIs although workers' concerns over low wages are valid, there are structural issues that contribute to the low wage dynamics in the industry. Firstly, workers who are prepared to work for a low wage are abundant in Bangladesh due to the huge labour supply; this is an important factor. Secondly, most Bangladeshi garment industries are involved in producing low-end products. Thirdly, factory owners substitute a less efficient labour force with an abundant labour supply, a dynamic that is at the very heart of low wages. Unless these issues are addressed, workers' concerns over low wages will persist.

The main reason for leaving a factory was low wages (55 per cent); 37 per cent of men and 26 per cent of women cited this as a reason for leaving a factory. A lack of a good working environment was cited as a reason for leaving a factory by 22 per cent of workers, while 16 per cent of men and 10 per cent of women did not see this as a good enough reason to leave a factory.

Reason	Total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Low wages	55	37	26
Lack of good working environment	22	16	10

Table 3.17 **Reasons for leaving the factory**

A potential perceived barrier to promotion by workers was a lack of educational qualifications (21.4 per cent). This opinion was shared by 18 per cent of men and 23 per cent of women. This belief can also be partially explained by a feeling of uncertainty and apprehension among workers with lower educational qualifications in general. As for supervisors, a lack of experience (22.5 per cent) was perceived as a potential barrier.

Type of factory	Education (percentage of total workers)
Knitwear	8.69
Knitwear/Woven	1.14
Sweater	2.88
Woven	8.05

Table 3.18 **Perceived reasons of workers that impede their career mobility**

Factory ownership

Almost all of the factories were owned by men. Only 4 out of 68 factories surveyed were owned by women. Ownership information was provided for 68 out of 111 factories, of which four were owned by women and three had shared ownership, both men and women owners.

Distribution of workers, supervisors, and managers in terms of gender disaggregation

In terms of gender share, men dominated overwhelmingly in both the manager and supervisor groups with a men representation of 96 per cent and 91 per cent, respectively. Women were in the majority in the share of workers. The share of women in the worker group stood at 61 per cent versus 39 per cent for men. Only 10 out of 111 supervisors were women and only 5 out of 111 managers were women.

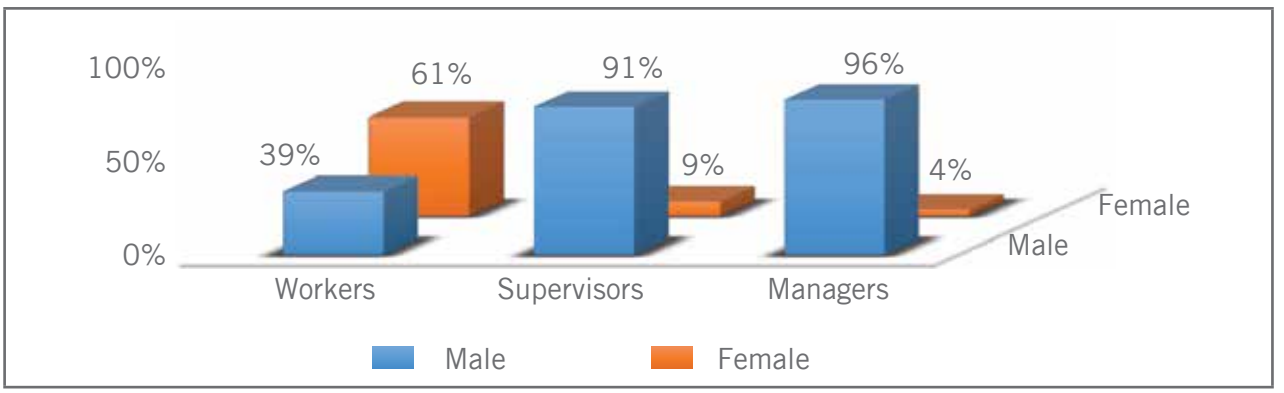


Figure 3.2 **Workers, supervisors and managers by gender**

This suggests that although there is a high level of women labour market participation in the RMG industry in Bangladesh, such participation is concentrated at the worker level, which is characterized by low skills and low pay. Participation of women at higher grade levels of the RMG industry such as in supervision and management, which require higher education, skills, and managerial capacity, is still very low. Factors such as the burden of care, being unable to stay at the factory after working hours, and the preconceived notion that women lack the authority to exert control over men workers, were reportedly the reasons behind a reluctance to recruit a women as a supervisor or manager.

Living Conditions

Family overview

Around 68 per cent of workers lived with their families. More women (75.4 per cent) lived with their families than their men counterparts (56 per cent). This provides a vivid picture of the social responsibility pattern among workers, where women often work hard at their place of employment, while simultaneously fulfilling their responsibility towards their families.

Workers' response	Total	Percentage men	Percentage women
Yes	67.9	56.13	75.37
No	32.1	43.87	24.63
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 3.19 **Workers that live with their family**

The average number of family members in the households of surveyed workers was four. Almost 25 per cent of workers belonged to families that consisted of three members. A further 25 per cent of workers belonged to families that consisted of four members. However, 1 per cent of workers lived alone.

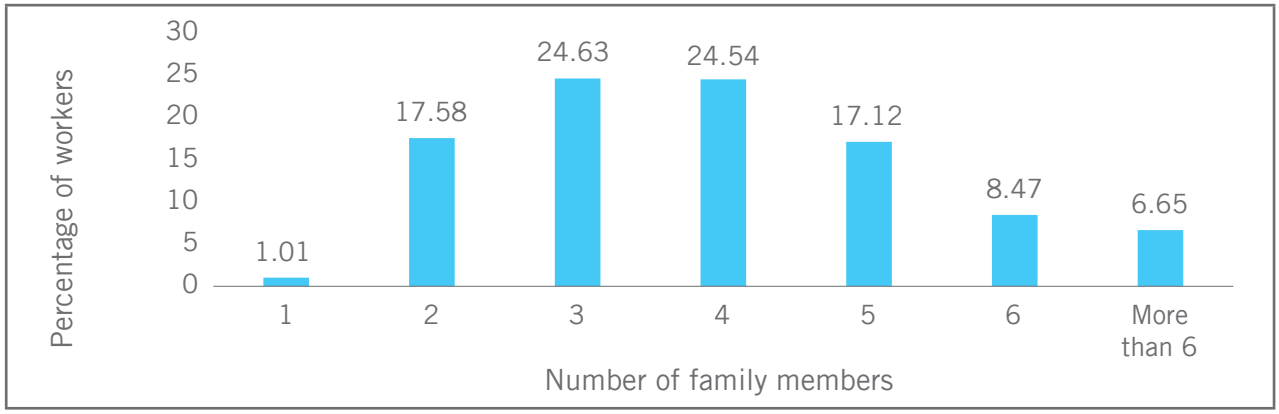


Figure 3.3 **Number of family members of workers**

Around 66 per cent of workers reported that they had one family member, not including themselves, who was also a wage earner. Fifteen per cent of workers were the sole earners in their family, while for 14 per cent of workers, two other family members also contributed to the family income (see annex A, table A3)

Among workers, 39 per cent reported that they were the primary earners in the family, 63 per cent of men and 23.28 per cent of women. This implies that while more men assume the role of primary earner, many women are also providing single-handedly for their respective families in the current demographic make-up of the ready-made garment industry of Bangladesh (see annex A, table A4).

It was observed that the average monthly household income was BDT 17,978. In terms of monthly household income, 13 per cent of workers' families had household incomes less than BDT 10,000. Most families earned between BDT 10,000 and 20,000 with 58 per cent of families reporting that their income fell within this bracket. Around 29 per cent of workers reported that their families earned between BDT 20,000 and 30,000, the highest income bracket.

Income range (BDT)	Total	Percentage men	Percentage women
Less than or equal to 10,000	12.67	18.24	9.18
10,001-20,000	57.83	58.8	57.22
More than 20,000	29.5	22.96	33.60
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 3.20 **Workers' monthly household income**

However, household expenditure is a better indicator of living standard compared to household income in the case of developing countries (Mailu et al., 2000). The average monthly expenditure by households was BDT 13,159. Among workers, 40 per cent reported that their monthly expenditure was less than or equal to BDT 10,000. For 52 per cent of workers, their monthly expenditure exceeded BDT 10,000 but remained within BDT 20,000. Around 8 per cent of workers reported that their monthly household expenditure exceeded BDT 20,000.

Monthly expenditure (BDT)	Total	Percentage men	Percentage women
Less than or equal to 10,000	40.02	45.64	36.45
10,001-20,000	51.65	46.34	55.01
More than 20,000	8.33	8.02	8.53
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 3.21 **Workers' monthly household expenditure**

Comparing the monthly income of workers in the RMG industry with data obtained from the Preliminary Report on HIES 2016 (BBS), the total income per household at the national level is BDT 15,945. In the garment industry the median monthly household income lies within this income bracket. In respect to monthly expenditure, the total expenditure per household from national level data is BDT 15,715. In the survey, the total expenditure per household for workers in the RMG industry is reported to be within the same expenditure range, aligning both levels of data well.

Dwelling house

Fifty-six per cent of workers lived in semi-pucca houses, while 4.85 per cent lived in katcha houses and 39 per cent of workers lived in pucca houses. Most workers (79 per cent) lived in

rented accommodation. The next group lived in sublet houses, which accounted for around 11 per cent of workers. Around 9 per cent of workers owned their house. Workers who migrated with their families found it feasible to rent houses in the cities and lone migrants, particularly men, chose to live in subleted accommodation.

Type of tenure	Total percentage	Percentage men	Percentage women
Owned house	9.34	10.26	8.76
Rent free house	1	2	1
Rented mess/ sublet	10.49	21.58	3.44
Rented house	78.98	66.04	87.2
Other (specify)	0.09	0.12	0.07
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 3.22 **Accommodation type by tenure**

Most workers (67 per cent) shared their accommodation with three or four roommates. Around 6 per cent of workers lived with five roommates. These figures are implied for workers renting a mess or subletting as these dwellings can usually accommodate a maximum of four people. Any number of occupants higher than this indicates a reduced comfort for workers living in such conditions (see annex A, table A5).

A large share of workers (37.24 per cent) paid rent in the range of BDT 2,600 to 4,500 per month, followed by 31 per cent of workers who paid from BDT 500 to 2,500 per month. One fourth of the workers paid varying amounts of rent ranging from a low of BDT 300 per month to a high of BDT 6,000 per month. The summation of these outside median ranges are captured in 'other' amount. This illustrates that rent makes up a large proportion of workers' monthly expenditure, leaving less income to allocate for other expenses (see annex A, table A6).

Sharing a kitchen, toilet and access to drinking water

Almost 56 per cent of workers shared a kitchen (see annex A, table A7). Most workers reported sharing a kitchen with two families (approximately 41 per cent of workers), followed by three families (18 per cent), one family (13 per cent) and four families (10 per cent) (see annex A, table A8). Eighty-eight per cent of workers had access to a supply of natural gas. Others used firewood, cylinder gas, leaves, dung and straw.

In terms of access to a toilet, 97 per cent of workers had access to a sanitary (non-flush/ non- water-sealed) toilet; 1.24 per cent of workers had access to a sanitary (flush/water-sealed) toilet; and 1.83 per cent of workers had access to an unsanitary or katcha toilet. Around 56 per cent of workers shared a toilet with other families (see annex A, table A9). If improved sanitation is taken into account, 43 per cent of workers had access to improved sanitation (santitary toilets not shared with other households). Contrasting data collected as part of the survey with national level data, it is observed that garment workers have better access to sanitary toilets as only 61 per cent of households have such access to sanitary facilities at the national level (HIES 2016, BBS). This is because national level data focuses more on rural areas where access to sanitary toilets is limited.

Similarly, in contrast to national level data where 85 per cent of the population of Bangladesh get their drinking water from a tube well (HIES 2016, BBS), most workers (93 per cent) accessed their drinking water from a tap, while the remainder (6 per cent) got their water from tube wells or deep tube wells (see annex A, table A10).

Access to entertainment and devices

The main source of entertainment for most workers was a TV, which was owned by 70 per cent of workers, (46 per cent women and 24 per cent men). The second most popular

sources of entertainment were a radio, tape recorder, or a DVD. These devices were reported to be owned by 8 per cent of workers. Only 0.69 per cent of workers (15 workers) reported that they had access to a broadband internet connection, whereas 97 per cent of workers owned a mobile phone. This indicates that most workers access the internet via their mobile phone. Only 2.38 per cent of workers did not have a mobile phone (see annex A, table A11).

Living conditions of workers' families who live in the village

Most families of workers lived in their own katcha (non-permanent) house (67 per cent), followed by semi pucca houses with one, two or three rooms. Households did not have access to natural gas for cooking, so 74 per cent of households used firewood and 24 per cent used dung, straw or leaves for cooking. Thirty per cent of toilets were katcha (unsanitary) although most households had access to a non-flush sanitary toilet. The primary source of drinking water was tube well or deep tube well.

Burden of care faced by women workers in the RMG industry

Even with the gruelling workload that comes with being employed in this industry and the discrimination endemic at each level, the prospering ready-made garment industry has contributed extraordinarily to women's self-empowerment in society. Many women have become productive and self-sufficient, actively participating in contributing to the country's economy while providing extensively for their own families. However, gender roles and norms embedded in society, along with traditional patterns of responsibilities assigned to women, mean that they are the primary caregivers who cater to their household's domestic needs above any other duties. In most cases, particularly in rural households, women are expected to look after family members as a priority, rather than being professionally employed. Women who seek to participate in the labour force must balance their work life with their domestic responsibilities without any conflict. ADB in its report (2015) explains that work that is unpaid or is not accorded any value such as housework and care work, is usually carried out by the women of the household. It also talks about how the burden of this work limits women's ability to participate in labour market activities and contribute to the economy of households, which, in turn, reinforces gender roles and norms.

Women workers employed in the RMG industry face this burden of care challenge daily, where they singlehandedly perform household chores, while concurrently looking after other members of the family such as parents, husband, in-laws, the elderly and children. In this survey most women workers were married (66 per cent), while the remaining women were unmarried/widowed/divorced/separated or single parents. Most women lived with their families (75.4 per cent). Therefore, this study sample provides the opportunity for a limited yet practical evaluation of the burden of care faced by these women.

Of women workers who lived with their families (75.4 per cent), almost 21 per cent reported that they were the main earners, contributing the majority proportion of the household's income. Moreover, 6.45 per cent were the sole earners of the family, while 74.4 per cent had just one other family member who also contributed to the household's income. As an estimate of the direct care required by family members from these women, it was observed that 51.5 per cent of women were living with a family of four members or more. Additionally, 9 per cent of women living with a family of four members or more were the main wage earner of the family. As a representation of household chores undertaken by women workers in the RMG industry, it was observed that 12 per cent of women with families spend 30 minutes or more waiting to cook in a shared kitchen.

	Percentage out of 1,007 women workers living with families	Percentage out of 882 married women workers living with families	Percentage out of 332 women workers (unmarried/ widowed/ divorced/ separated or single parents)
Live with family and are main earner	20.85	14.33	36.09
Live with family and are sole earner	6.45	1.13	18.21
Live with family and with 2 earning members including themselves	74.38	71.5	42.38
Live with family consisting of four or more members	51.44	34.35	71.19
Live with family consisting of four or more members and are main earner	9	4.76	16.23
Live with family and spend 30 minutes or more waiting to cook	12	10.54	9.27

Table 3.23 **Burden of care of women workers who live with their families**

Women workers who were married

The survey found that nearly 80 per cent of married women workers lived with their families. Among this group 14.3 per cent of women were the primary earners in their families. Some 71.5 per cent of married women living with their families had one other earning member in the family, while 34 per cent of married women had to care for families consisting of four or more members. About 10.5 per cent of married women living with families spent a lengthy 30 minutes or more waiting to cook in a shared kitchen.

Women workers who were not married

Among women workers who were not married, 66.5 per cent lived with their families, and within this group 36.1 per cent reported that they were the main earners of their families. Here, 71.2 per cent of these single women had to care for families consisting of four or more members on their own, while 9 per cent of them spent 30 minutes or more waiting to cook in a shared kitchen.

FINDINGS OF THE BASELINE SURVEY

4.1. Health status of the respondents

This section looks at the health status of workers and supervisors in the sample factories. Respondents were asked about their experiences of ten health symptoms including queries on sexual and reproductive health problems and 18 long-term illnesses. Four scales were used to identify the degree of a specific health symptom: 'every day', 'often', 'occasionally' and 'never'. 'Often' is defined as a timespan of two weeks, occurring intermittently, with or without symptoms present. 'Occasionally' is defined as a timespan of two months, occurring intermittently, with or without symptoms present.

The three most common health symptoms that workers and supervisors suffered from were thirst, hunger and headaches, respectively. They usually suffered from these three health symptoms 'occasionally'.

In regard to thirst (see table 4.1), 68.5 per cent of workers suffered from thirst to varying degrees implying a possible lack of availability of drinking water, work pressure meaning there was little time to drink, or a lack of effort on their part to quench their thirst.

When the data is disaggregated by gender it shows that more than half of men and women respondents (70 per cent and 67.6 per cent respectively) suffered from thirst (see table 4.1), indicating it is a common problem among both groups of workers. It was evident that a higher percentage of women workers suffered from thirst 'every day' and 'occasionally' (two-month timespan). In terms of the breakdown by age, the survey showed that 54.49 per cent of women reported experiencing thirst 'occasionally' and 'often' in the younger age groups of 18 to 30 years.

Health symptom (thirst)	Percentage of total workers	Percentage of men workers	Percentage of women workers
Every day	3.34	2.83	3.67
Often	21.02	25.47	18.19
Occasionally	44.14	41.63	45.73
Never	31.5	30.07	32.41
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.1 **Prevalence of thirst among workers**

Eleven per cent of supervisors reported experiencing thirst 'often', (see table 4.2). Being 'occasionally' thirsty was experienced by 53.15 per cent of supervisors, which is higher than the percentage of workers in the same category.

Health symptom (thirst)	Percentage of total supervisors	Percentage of men supervisors	Percentage of women supervisors
Often	10.81	10.89	10
Occasionally	53.15	53.47	50
Never	36.04	35.64	40
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.2 **Prevalence of thirst among supervisors**

Regarding hunger, 53.2 per cent of workers reported suffering from hunger to a varying degree (see table 4.3). A breakdown of data by gender reveals that being 'occasionally' hungry is common across both genders, although comparatively higher among men workers.

Health symptom (hunger)	Percentage total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Every day	0.18	0.24	0.15
Often	7.05	7.43	6.81
Occasionally	45.97	49.88	43.49
Never	46.79	42.45	49.55
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.3 **Prevalence of hunger among workers**

In respect of supervisors, a higher percentage of supervisors admitted suffering from hunger more 'often' than workers (12 per cent versus 7 per cent) (see table 4.4). In addition, they admitted being 'occasionally' hungry more often than workers (51 per cent versus 46 per cent).

Health symptom (hunger)	Percentage total supervisors	Percentage men supervisors	Percentage women supervisors
Often	11.71	9.9	30
Occasionally	51.35	52.48	40
Never	36.94	37.62	30
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.4 **Prevalence of hunger among supervisors**

Headaches were another issue of concern. A notable proportion (40.61 per cent) of workers experienced headaches 'occasionally' (see table 4.5). More women experienced headaches than men (46.63 per cent versus 39 per cent). In terms of a breakdown by age, workers in the age group 41 to 45 and workers below the age of 18 suffered more from headaches compared to other age groups, implying that comparatively younger and older age groups might find it difficult to cope with the workload.

Health symptom (headache)	Percentage total workers	Percentage men workers	Percentage women workers
Often	3.02	1.53	3.97
Occasionally	40.61	37.38	42.66
Never	56.36	61.08	53.37
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.5 **Prevalence of headaches among workers**

In regard to supervisors, 50.4 per cent of them 'occasionally' suffered from headaches..

Health symptom (headache)	Percentage total supervisors	Percentage men supervisors	Percentage women supervisors
Occasionally	50.45	49.5	60
Never	49.55	50.5	40
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.6 **Prevalence of headaches among supervisors**

Other main health symptoms found among the workforce other than hunger, thirst and headaches were occasional dizziness, fatigue, backache and muscle ache. Fatigue was the most dominant symptom among workers with 36.08 per cent of workers suffering from it 'occasionally' (see table 4.7). About 30.59 per cent of workers experienced dizziness 'occasionally (see table 4.8), while thirty-two per cent of workers suffered from backache and muscle ache to varying degrees (see table 4.9).

Backache and muscle ache may be related to ergonomic issues – the efficiency and comfort of the working environment. However, the root cause of backache, muscle ache, and headaches may be linked to long working hours without breaks, ergonomic conditions, overtime, and a lack of time to eat nutritious food. Although this survey did not ask direct questions on work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSD), FGDs with workers highlighted cases with a prevalence of these symptoms, for example stiffness in the neck and shoulders, and back pain and chest pain problems particularly among sewing machine operators.[11]

Health symptom (fatigue)	Percentage total workers	Percentage men workers	Percentage women workers
Often	3.07	2.48	3.44
Occasionally	36.08	32.19	38.55
Never	60.85	65.33	58.01
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.7 **Prevalence of fatigue among workers**

Health symptom (dizziness)	Percentage total workers	Percentage men workers	Percentage women workers
Often	2.52	1.42	3.22
Occasionally	30.59	28.89	31.66
Never	66.9	69.69	65.12
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.8 **Prevalence of dizziness among workers**

Health symptom (backache or muscle ache)	Percentage total workers	Percentage men workers	Percentage women workers
Often	3.48	2.24	4.27
Occasionally	27.88	29.95	26.57
Never	68.64	67.81	69.16
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.9 **Prevalence of backache or muscle ache among workers**

11 A study by JPGSPH determined that ergonomic factors such as the working space, a worker's sitting posture, and their seat and hand position during work were prime causes of WMSD among workers in nine parts of the body (Sarker, 2016). According to the study, the risk of experiencing WMSDs was high for 77.5 per cent of 218 RMG workers. A study by Mehta (2012) suggested musculoskeletal disorders were the most common occupational health risk, particularly for women workers, and emphasized the occurrence of increased fatigue from monotonous work, the constant lifting of heavy items, prolonged standing and repetitive movements.

A disaggregation by gender shows that 38.5 per cent and 31.6 per cent of women workers suffered from fatigue and dizziness 'occasionally'. This share is higher than that of men workers for the same categories (32.1 per cent and 28.9 per cent, respectively). However, backache and muscle ache were found to be more common among men than women workers, with nearly 30 per cent of men workers experiencing such symptoms 'occasionally'.

Other health symptoms that were 'occasionally' experienced by workers included abdominal pain during menstruation and stomach pain. Other main health issues that were found among supervisors other than hunger, thirst and headache were fatigue (33 per cent), stomach pain (36 per cent), dizziness (21 per cent), and backache or muscle ache (22 per cent).

In line with responses from workers and supervisors, managers also mentioned that workers were at risk of experiencing headaches (55 per cent) and stomach pain (48 per cent) due to working in a factory.

During the survey, workers were asked questions on sexual and reproductive health issues. Among women workers, 33.51 per cent experienced abdominal pain during menstruation 'occasionally', whereas 8.77 per cent of women workers 'often' experienced abdominal pain during menstruation (see table 4.10).

Abdominal pain during mentruation	Percentage women workers
Everyday	0.07
Often	8.77
Occasionally	33.51
Never	57.65
Total	**100**

Table 4.10 **Prevalence of abdominal pain during mentruation among women workers**

However, only 7.05 per cent of women workers reported taking leave during menstruation, while for 14 per cent of women workers this was one of the main reasons for absenteeism. This implies that women workers cannot take leave despite regular abdominal pain during menstruation. According to KIIs, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)[12] are still taboo in Bangladesh preventing women workers from discussing their problems with other workers let alone higher management. Among the 118 women workers who suffered from long-term illnesses, 9.32 per cent suffered from iron deficiency, anaemia and heavy blood loss due to menstruation or ulcers (see table 4.11).

The survey also looked at the presence of long-term illnesses[13] among workers and supervisors. It was expected that there would be no worker or supervisor suffering from a long-term illness as this type of job demands physical fitness to cope with a heavy workload. However, the survey found the presence of such health conditions. About 7.05 per cent of workers (see table 4.11) and 11.7 per cent of supervisors suffered from various types of long-term illnesses. These workers and supervisors had to work to earn a living despite these health conditions.

Among workers who reported a long-term illness, the most common types of illnesses were gastric problems/ulcers (24.7 per cent) and joint pain (13.6 per cent) (see table 4.11).

12 Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

13 A long-term illness or health condition is any condition lasting six months or longer.

Long-term illness	Percentage total workers	Percentage men workers	Percentage women workers
Fever	9.74	5.56	11.02
Injuries	6.49	11.11	5.08
Heart disease	5.84	8.33	5.08
Iron deficiency anaemia/heavy blood loss due to periods, ulcers etc.	7.14	-	9.32
RTI/infection of sinuses, throat, airways or lungs	4.55	5.56	4.24
UTI/urinary infection of kidneys, ureter, bladder etc.	5.84	2.78	6.78
Joint pain	13.64	2.78	16.95
Asthma/breathing issues	9.74	8.33	10.17
Gastric problems/ulcer	24.68	25	24.58
Blood pressure	5.19	2.78	5.93
Diabetes	2.6	5.56	1.69
Difficulty in seeing	9.09	5.56	10.17
Difficulty in hearing	1.3	5.56	0
Difficulty in walking or climbing	1.95	2.78	1.69
Difficulty in remembering or concentrating	1.3	0	1.69

Table 4.11 **Type of long-term illness among workers who reported that they have a long-term illness**

Long-term illnesses that were most common among women workers were gastric problems or ulcers that affected 24.58 per cent of the women workforce. The most common illnesses among men workers were gastric problems or ulcers affecting 25 per cent of men workers, followed by injuries (11.11 per cent).

The age dimenion of long-term illnesses shows that older age groups reportedly suffer from long-term illnesses more than younger age groups, except for the age group below 18 years of age (see table 4.12). The workload required by workers in the RMG industry is taxing for the age group 'below 18'. Of this age group, 7.14 per cent of workers reported that they suffered from long-term illnesses, which is higher compared to the next age group of 18-25 years.

Age category	Percentage of workers suffering from a long-term illness	Percentage of workers not suffering from a long-term illness	Total
Below 18	7.14	92.86	100
18-25	5.09	94.91	100
26-30	8.91	91.09	100
31-35	10.14	89.86	100
36-40	13.43	86.57	100
41-45	15.79	84.21	100
45+	50	50	100
Total	**7.05**	**92.95**	**100**

Table 4.12 **Age dimenion of long-term illnesses among workers who reported that they have a long-term illness**

This information is consistent with data that reveal the pattern of which age groups use healthcare facilities most often. The data show that 57.14 per cent of workers below 18 years of age used healthcare facilities (see table 4.13). Both in the age groups of 18 to 25 years and 26 to 30 years, 79 per cent of workers used healthcare facilities respectively. The percentage of workers using healthcare facilities in older age groups were 80.68 per cent, 83.58 per cent, 84.21 per cent and 100 per cent, respectively. This suggests that older age groups suffer more from long-term illnesses and use healthcare facilities most often.

Age category	Percentage of workers using healthcare facilities	Percentage of workers not using healthcare facilities	Total
Below 18	57.14	42.86	100
18-25	79.03	20.97	100
26-30	79.04	20.96	100
31-35	80.68	19.32	100
36-40	83.58	16.42	100
41-45	84.21	15.79	100
45+	100	0	100
Total	**79.17**	**20.83**	**100**

Table 4.13 **Age dimenion of workers using healthcare facilities available at the workplace**

One women and 12 men were among the 11.7 per cent of supervisors who suffered from various types of long-term illnesses (see table 4.14). Supervisors mostly suffered from gastric problems/ulcers (15.4 per cent) and injuries (15.4 per cent).

Long-term illnesses	Percentage of supervisors
Fever	7.69
Injuries	15.38
Heart disease	7.69
Gastric problems/ulcers	15.38
Blood pressure	7.69
Difficulty in walking or climbing	7.69

Table 4.14 **Type of long-term illnesses among supervisors who reported that they have a long-term illness**

The presence of gastric problems/ulcers and the initial symptoms[14] of hunger ('occasionally' and 'often') indicates there is a possibility that a proportion of workers and supervisors may be not be getting proper nutrition. The presence of thirst ('occasionally' and 'often') is an indication of dehydration. However, there is a need for a proper scientific assessment to determine whether workers and supervisors are not getting sufficient nutrition. If this is the case, there might be a direct link with the income of low-paid workers. Findings from FGDs highlighted that workers and supervisors from some factories regularly suffered from certain illnesses such as coughs, colds, fevers and tuberculosis. Working in dusty environments is the main cause of such illnesses. According to KIIs, sweater factories and especially the cutting section of garment factories are more prone to dust and air pollution. These factories, including specific working sections, should be examined and reassessed to improve working conditions. The temperature of the workplace should be controlled with an adequate number of fans, lights, and air coolers, which will also decrease industrial dust and air pollution. In addition, working hours should be reviewed to determine whether an excessive workload is contributing to the risk of long-term fevers, headaches, and stomach aches among some workers.

14 The uneasy sensation caused by the want of food, craving appetite (part of the definition of hunger according to, the World Hunger Education Service (WHES)).

Opportunities for action

Analysis of the data and information from the survey shows some patterns. More than two-thirds of workers experienced thirst to varying degrees. Almost one half of workers experienced hunger, and more than one-third suffered from headaches. These health symptoms have a wide array of implications in terms of the working conditions in the RMG industry, making further exploration necessary, as well as revising policies and workers' behavioural patterns. Apart from these three major health symptoms, almost one-third of workers reported suffering from dizziness, fatigue, and backache. The prevalence of such symptoms requires further research, an improvement of workplace conditions, better air circulation, and the implementation of ergonomic designs in the workplace. In terms of long-term illnesses, a range of 10 per cent to 25 per cent of women suffer predominantly from gastric problems, ulcers, joint pains, fever, and asthma. These illnesses need to be addressed as part of women's overall health. In addition, only 14 per cent of women take leave when they experience abdominal pain during menstruation. Women's ability to take leave needs to be carefully explored in terms of policies and other aspects.

For men, gastric problems and ulcers are most prevalent, followed by injuries (11 per cent). Issues of injuries among men need to be examined.

4.2. Working conditions

4.2.1. Welfare arrangements

Welfare arrangements provided to workers and supervisors are discussed in this report under the following headings: healthcare services, maternity protection and benefits, the availability of other welfare facilities and workers' satisfaction.

4.2.1.1. Healthcare services

This section discusses the availability of sickrooms and healthcare centres in factories; the provision of specific health services; their effectiveness in terms of workers' knowledge about their availability as well as the percentage of workers who use health facilities at the workplace; workers' experiences of healthcare facilities; and their ability to meet health expenses.

Under health-related welfare arrangements, factories mainly offer sickrooms or healthcare centres and first aid equipment in accordance with the Labour Rules of Bangladesh and depending on the number of workers in the respective factories.

Availability of sickroom: Eighty-three factories required a sickroom at their premises to fulfil the requirements of the Labour Law.[15] It was observed that sickroom facilities were unavailable in three knitwear factories located in Gazipur and Narayanganj, according to management.

Although managers of 80 factories (out of 83 factories), who participated in the survey,

15 As per the regulation of section 89(5), Chapter VIII of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, in every establishment wherein three hundred or more workers are ordinarily employed, there shall be provided and maintained a sick room with dispensary of the prescribed size, containing the prescribed equipment or similar facilities, in the charge of such medical and nursing staff as may be prescribed

reported that factories had sickrooms, workers' perceptions about the availability of sickrooms varied across these factories. For example, a total of 33 factories (out of 80 factories) had 5 per cent to as high as 75 per cent of workers mentioning the unavailability of sickrooms. Of these 33 factories, four factories had 40 per cent to 75 per cent of workers reporting the unavailability of a sickroom, while in the case of 15 factories, the figure ranged from 15 per cent to 25 per cent of workers. In contrast, very few workers (5 per cent to 10 per cent) in the remaining 14 factories that participated in the study disagreed with managers.

	Number of factories where this facility is a requirement	Number of factories where this facility is available (according to management)	Percentage of workers/ supervisors reporting unavailability
Sickroom in factories (if number of workers is more than or equal to 300)	83	80	5% to as high as 75% of workers in 33 factories
Healthcare facility (if number of workers is more than or equal to 5,000)	3	3	0
First aid box or cupboard or almirah with enough first aid equipment on each floor	111	111	0.74% of workers from 9 factories and 2% of supervisors from 2 factories

Table 4.15 **Availability of sickroom, healthcare facility, and first aid equipment**

This suggests that sickrooms, which are effective and have the necessary equipment, were not available in all of these 33 factories. There was also an inconsistency in awareness about the availability of sickrooms and a lack of information among workers.

If this high variation in workers' perception is taken into account, there were 36 factories in total where sickrooms were either unavailable, potentially ineffective or a proportion of workers were unaware of their existence.

	Number of factories	Percentage of factories
Unavailable	7	6.3
Potentially ineffective	15	13.51
Workers are unaware of it	14	12.61
Total	**36**	**32.43**

Table 4.16 **Number of factories where sickroom is unavailable, potentially ineffective or workers are unaware of it (estimated from workers' response)**

The types and location of these 36 factories are given at table 4.17.

	Knitwear	Woven	Knit/woven	Sweater	Total
Number of factories	15	10	6	5	36
	Gazipur	**Dhaka**	**Narayanganj**	**Chattogram**	
Number of factories	10	15	7	4	36

Table 4.17 **Distribution of factories where sickroom facility is either unavailable, potentially ineffective or a proportion of workers are unaware of it by type and location**

Analysis based on the number of workers reveals that factories with fewer workers tend not to provide sickroom facilities.

FGDs revealed that sickrooms were available, but that they could not accommodate demand. Sickrooms generally had one or two beds, according to the general rules, but this was not satisfactory given the total number of workers.[16]

Availability of health centre: In the baseline survey, of 111 factories, three factories employed more than or equal to 5,000 workers, and all of them had health centres on their factory premises as per the BLA.[17]

Skills and qualification of healthcare providers: According to information from KIIs, there is a practice of not appointing appropriate 'registered' medical or nursing staff. Instead, randomly selected employees with some hands-on experience provide care to patients. Similar findings have been referred to in a working paper on healthcare in the RMG by BSR HER (2014). The study observed ten factories and a total of 14 nurses and found that 60 per cent of nurses possessed a diploma degree and the remainder (40 per cent) only held a paramedic qualification, which did not state that the recipient had any formal training in diagnosing, treating, counselling, and referring skills. These were the services they were required to provide on a regular basis to a workforce of 390 workers. Again, according to an article of the BSR HER Project Bangladesh (2010), most factories failed to employ a full-time doctor even if this was a requirement.[18] Instead, they only appointed a nurse, located in a clinic room with some basic medicines. Sometimes part-time visiting doctors were available. The medical facilities depended on the buyers of the respective factories.

According to FGDs, the appointed medical practitioner visited factories twice or three times a week, when they should have visited five or six days a week.

Availability of first aid equipment: All factories are required to supply first aid equipment (a first-aid box or cupboard equipped with the necessary contents) for each floor.[19] According to management, this equipment was available in all factories including the 25 establishments with less than 300 workers. However, according to only 0.74 per cent of the surveyed workers from nine factories and supervisors from two factories, their respective floors at their workplace lacked any first aid equipment. This finding may be the result of a lack of awareness among some workers. However, workers in FGDs suggested that in some cases it was also possible that a proper first-aid box was not available. Minor injuries or cuts were often treated with a simple anti-bacterial cream, which was passed off as a first-aid box being available by some factories.

However, when management personnel were asked about health facilities during FGDs, they

16 As per section 77 (5d), Chapter VIII of the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015, the medical room shall be used for primary aid and the comforts of patients. It must have at least the following furniture and equipment: d) 2 beds for lying, 2 stretchers and 1-wheel chair.

17 As per the regulations of Section 89(6) of the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015, if minimum 5000 workers and employees work in the institute/s that is/are owned by the same Owner, the Owner of the institute shall establish a Health Centre

18 As per the regulation of section 89(5), Chapter VIII of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, in every establishment, where 300 (three hundred) or more workers are ordinarily employed, a sick room…. shall be in the charge of such medical practitioner and nursing staff as may be prescribed by rules. As per definition 2 (54), "registered medical practitioner" means any person registered as medical practitioner under the Medical and Dental Council Act, 1980 (Act No. XVI of 1980);

19 As per the regulation of section 89(1), Chapter VIII of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, there shall, in every establishment be provided and maintained, so as to be readily accessible during all working hours first-aid boxes or cupboards equipped with the contents prescribed by rules

responded that factories were providing health facilities as per the compliance requirements. They said that doctors and nurses were on site to provide treatment and that they provided general medicines for free, moved unwell workers to hospital if needed, and bore the cost of the treatment.

Knowledge on the availability of specific health services: It should be noted that the BLA states that a sickroom should be provided and first aid equipment should be available in factories with less than 5,000 workers. Where the number of workers exceeds 5,000, training and consultation about family welfare and reproductive health, and consultations for pregnant workers before and after childbirth are required.[20] Factories with less than 5,000 workers tend not to provide these health services as they are not mandatory. This is quite evident in this study where out of 111 factories, only three have 5,000 workers or more.

In some factories, 1.69 per cent of workers, 2.7 per cent of supervisors and 2.7 per cent of managers did not have any information about the health services available at their factories. In health centres and sickrooms, workers were mainly treated for workplace injuries (88 per cent), headaches or fatigue (96 per cent), general illnesses (86 per cent) and provided with free medicines (84.6 per cent). According to workers, there was a lack of check-ups for pregnant women/ANC (32 per cent), check-ups for women after giving birth/PNC (52 per cent), general health check-ups (36 per cent) and health education (81 per cent).

Broken down by gender, there is uniformity relating to the question as to whether workers face a lack of general health services.

Lack of health services	Percentage total workers	Percentage men workers	Percentage women workers
Lack of treatment for workplace injuries	11.81	11.20	12.20
Lack of treatment for headaches or fatigue	4.03	4.01	4.04
Lack of treatment for general illnesses	14.29	15.33	13.62
Lack of general health check-ups	36.22	38.09	35.03
Lack of check-ups for pregnant women (ANC)	31.91	34.55	30.24
Lack of check-ups for women after giving birth (PNC)	52.06	53.66	51.05
Lack of health education	80.63	78.89	81.74
Lack of healthcare for families	96.75	96.34	97.01
Lack of free medicines	15.38	14.74	15.79
No health services	1.69	1.89	1.57

Table 4.18 **Lack of specific health services at the workplace**

20 As per the regulations of Section 78(d) of the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015, the following facilities must remain in each Health Centre of the institute: viii) Arrangement for providing data, training and consultation regarding family welfare and reproduction health' ix) Arrangement for providing service and consultation to the pregnant workers before and after childbirth;

When information from workers, supervisors and managers about the availability of ANC, PNC[21], and health education are compared, the inherent inconsistencies in responses may allude to the unavailability and ineffectiveness of these facilities or a lack of knowledge about the existence of these facilities.

	Percentage of factories providing services according to workers	Percentage of factories providing services according to supervisors	Percentage of factories providing services according to managers
ANC	72	67	74
PNC	35	33	44
Health education	5.4	53	58

Table 4.19 **Knowledge of availability of specific health services in factories by different respondent groups**

For example, in the case of ANC, although workers and managers from 72 per cent and 74 per cent of factories reported the availability of ANC respectively, supervisors from only 67 per cent of factories reported the availability of this service.[22] As for PNC, managers from 44 per cent of factories reported that PNC services were provided, whereas workers and supervisors from only 35 per cent and 33 per cent of factories, respectively, reported that these services were available.

Disaggregation of data shows that women workers from 67.57 per cent of factories and women supervisors from six out of 10 factories[23] respectively, along with women managers from all five factories[24] responded positively regarding the availability of ANC services. On the contrary, women workers from 37 per cent of factories, followed by women managers from two out of five factories and women supervisors from just two out of ten factories reported the availability of PNC services. Therefore, both ANC and PNC services, especially PNC services, are not readily available.

	Percentage of factories providing services according to women workers	Percentage of factories providing services according to women supervisors	Percentage of factories providing services according to women managers
ANC	67.57	Six out of ten factories	Five out of five factories
PNC	37	Two out of ten factories	Two out of five factories

Table 4.20 **Knowledge on the availability of specific health services by different women respondent groups**

Additionally, in the case of health education, managers and supervisors from 58 per cent and 53 per cent of factories respectively, reported the provision of health education on the factory

21 ANC: Antenatal care (check-ups for pregnant women), PNC: Postnatal care (check-ups for women after giving birth)

22 Here in the case of workers, it is assumed that the factory provided a service (ANC/PNC/Health education/ maternity leave) if at least 60 per cent of workers agreed that this facility was provided.

23 Only ten surveyed factories had women supervisors.

24 Only five surveyed factories had women managers.

premises, while workers from only 5.4 per cent of factories reported that they had received health education. This discrepancy again suggests the ineffectiveness of the facility reported to be available by managers and supervisors. Other studies also suggest that the provision of health education services is not a common practice in factories. The BSR HER (2014) working paper mentioned that in their survey of ten factories, none had educational materials on reproductive health and family planning.

Furthermore, according to FGDs, factories usually provided some basic medicines. Health services were mainly provided for the treatment of fevers, coughs, and colds. However, factories generally did not provide any support in cases of severe health issues or emergency healthcare services. In cases of emergencies, patients were taken to nearby hospitals and the company bore the cost of the treatment. Some factories used referral programmes to send workers to nearby hospitals or clinics. In the case of certain health issues, workers were sent to these hospitals for better treatment.

In keeping with this finding, an article by the BSR HER Project Bangladesh (2010) states that a few factories have referral programmes, which is a contractual relationship between a local clinic and a factory for the treatment of workers in cases of emergencies. These referral programmes are a substitute measure, as most factories fail to appoint a full-time doctor even when required.

During FGDs, majority of supervisors provided positive feedback. However, there were cases where supervisors mentioned about lack of care on behalf of factory owners. According to them, factories discriminated against workers and supervisors who took sick leave. Staff did not get sick leave easily in comparison to workers. Supervisors mentioned that there should be a health fund so that people working in factories could get financial support in cases of medical emergencies.

KIIs provided information that the size of the factory plays a dominant role in the availability of healthcare services. Most large factories have arrangements for healthcare facilities and other health-related issues. However, the quality of services remains an issue and challenges still exist for medium and small factories.

Group insurance policy and accidental insurance: Thirty-two per cent of workers, in factories with at least 100 workers, reported that workers at their factories did not get insurance money in cases of death or permanent disability. It could be the case that these factories do not have a group insurance policy for the death of workers and their permanent disability as per the BLA[25]. Accidental insurance is recommended but not mandatory under the BLA. About 22.48 per cent of workers reported that accidental insurance was unavailable and about 18.59 per cent reported that they did not know that accidental insurance covered all workers as a group.[26]

In both cases, disaggregation by gender shows no knowledge gap between men and women workers.

25 As per the regulation of section 99(1), Chapter VIII of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, in an establishment where at least 100 (one hundred) permanent workers are employed, the employer shall introduce group insurance under the existing insurance laws.

26 As per the regulation of section 160(11), Chapter XII of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, where in any establishment at least 10 (ten) workers are working, the employer of such establishment may introduce and implement an insurance scheme against accident under group insurance programme for the workers, and the benefits or money received from such accident insurance scheme shall be spent for the treatment of the workers.

Group insurance	Percentage total workers	Percentage men workers	Percentage women workers
Group insurance is available	68.03	69.13	67.33
Group insurance is not available	31.97	30.87	32.67
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Accidental insurance			
Accidental insurance is available	58.93	59.32	58.68
Accidental insurance is not available	22.48	23.11	22.08
Workers do not know	18.59	17.57	19.24
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.21 **Group insurance and accidental insurance availability**

For group insurance, there were 63 factories where 25 per cent to as high as 95 per cent of workers reported the non-availability of group insurance. Out of 63 factories, 19 factories had 60 per cent to 95 per cent of workers reporting that group insurance was not available. This indicates a high probability that group insurance is not available in these 19 factories. In 25 factories 40 per cent to 58 per cent of workers provided a similar response as was the case in 19 factories where the figure ranged from 25 per cent to 35 per cent of workers. This indicates that in 25 factories the probability of non-availability is comparatively less than the first group and in 19 factories there is a lack of awareness among workers.

	Lack of group insurance policy (number of factories)	Lack of accidental insurance (number of factories)
Highest probability of non-availability	19	25
Comparatively less probability of non-availability	25	34
Workers are unaware	19	26
Total	63	85

Table 4.22 **Number of factories where group insurance and accidental insurance are not available, potentially not available or workers are unaware of their availability**

In the case of accidental insurance, there were 85 factories where 25 per cent to as high as 100 per cent of workers mentioned its unavailability. Out of 85 factories, 25 had the highest probability of it not being available as 60 per cent to 100 per cent of workers provided such a response. Similar responses were recorded in 34 factories by 40 per cent to 58 per cent of workers and in 26 factories by 25 per cent to 37 per cent of workers.

Analysis based on the number of workers reveals that factories with fewer workers lack group and accidental insurance. Among 19 factories with the highest probability of group insurance being unavailable, ten factories had less than 500 workers. Similarly, among 25 factories with the highest probability of accidental insurance being unavailable, 14 factories had less than 500 workers.

Using healthcare facilities: Among those surveyed, about 79 per cent, 82 per cent and 93 per cent of workers, managers and supervisors, respectively, reported that they had used healthcare facilities available at their workplace. Among workers, 78 per cent of men workers and 80 per cent

of women workers reported that they had used existing healthcare services. Therefore, a slightly higher percentage of women are accessing healthcare services, which may be an indication that women workers are more prone to illnesses than men workers.

	Percentage total workers	Percentage men workers	Percentage women workers
Accessing healthcare facilities	79.17	77.48	80.24
Not accessing healthcare facilities	20.83	22.52	19.76
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.23 **Workers who accessed healthcare facilities**

Use of healthcare facilities was highest at knitwear factories. Among workers who responded that they had used healthcare facilities, 44.5 per cent of workers worked at knitwear factories.

	Knitwear	Knitwear/ Woven	Sweater	Woven	Total
Workers who accessed healthcare facilities	44.5	9.55	13.02	32.93	100

Table 4.24 **Share of workers who accessed healthcare facilities by different type of factory**

The share is also higher for factories located in Gazipur and Dhaka with 28.24 per cent and 27.2 per cent of workers accessing healthcare. The share of workers that used healthcare facilities was lowest for factories in Savar (13.89 per cent). However, the share of workers that access healthcare facilities corresponds directly with the number of workers that are employed in the respective factory locations. For example, Gazipur area has the highest percentage of workers (28.46 per cent of the total workers), and Gazipur area is where the highest percentage of workers reported that they had used healthcare facilities (28.24 per cent of workers). This pattern is illustrated in table 4.25.

	Chattogram	Dhaka	Gazipur	Narayanganj	Savar	Total
Workers who used health care facilities	14.47	27.2	28.24	16.2	13.89	100
Percentage of workers surveyed in different factory locations	13.47	27.27	28.46	17.09	13.7	100

Table 4.25 **Share of workers who accessed healthcare facilities by different factory location**

Table 4.13, section 4.1, shows the age dimenion of workers using healthcare facilities available at the workplace. As was noted, older age groups (31 to 45 years and above) were more likely to access healthcare facilities compared to younger age groups (below 18 to 30 years).

The gender dimenion of each age group shows that starting at aged 15 through to 40 years, in each age group, more women workers access healthcare services compared to men workers. In contrast, in the age groups 41 to 45 and 45 years and above, more men workers access healthcare services.

Age group	Men	Women	Total
15 years	20	80	100
16-20	23.7	76.3	100
21-25	41.13	58.87	100
26-30	42.02	57.98	100
31-35	38.32	61.68	100
36-40	44.64	55.36	100
41-45	62.5	37.5	100
45+	75	25	100

Table 4.26 **Share of men and women workers accessing healthcare facilities by age group**

Age category	Men	Women	Total
15 years	0.06	0.23	0.29
16-20	4.74	15.27	20.01
21-25	16.77	24	40.78
26-30	10.35	14.29	24.64
31-35	3.70	5.96	9.66
36-40	1.45	1.79	3.24
41-45	0.58	0.35	0.93
45+	0.35	0.12	0.46
Total			**100**

Table 4.27 **Share of men and women workers accessing healthcare facilities by age group (out of total sample)**

For further analysis, the percentage of different age groups in the total study sample group has been divided into men and women workers. This disaggregation shows that for the age group 16 to 20 years, out of the 20 per cent of total workers who used healthcare facilities, the share of women workers was more than three times higher (15.3 per cent) compared to their men counterparts (4.8 per cent). Similarly, the share of women workers (24 per cent) surpassed the share of men workers (16.77 per cent) among the share of total workers (40.77 per cent) who reported using healthcare facilities in the age group 21 to 25 years. These observations might reflect the higher share of women participants in the survey (61.17 per cent of women out of the total workers). However, in the case of the age group 16 to 25 years, factors that might contribute to their higher usage of healthcare facilities, other than the skewed women demographic share of the sample, is that women workers are more vulnerable to health hazards compared to their men counterparts. This issue requires further exploration that is outside the scope of the study.

Experience of workers and supervisors: Despite the unavailability of several health services at factories, majority of workers (76.5 per cent) and supervisors (78.4 per cent) rated the quality of healthcare treatment they received at their factories as good.

	Percentage total workers	Percentage men workers	Percentage women workers
Very good	12.61	14.61	11.38
Good	76.52	74.89	77.52
Fair	10.82	10.35	11.10
Poor	0.06	0.15	0.00
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.28 **Workers' experiences of healthcare services at the workplace**

If the data is broken down by gender, uniformity is observed between the experiences of men and women workers as well as between men and women supervisors.

	Percentage total supervisors	Percentage men supervisors	Percentage women supervisors
Very good	0.98	1.08	0
Good	78.43	80.65	55.56
Fair	16.67	13.98	44.44
Poor	3.92	4.3	0
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.29 **Supervisors' experience of healthcare services at the workplace**

The reason behind this positive response could be that as most workers do not have access to quality health services, they often lack any knowledge about health facility standards, which results in low expectations about the

quality of care. A lack of education, a lack of awareness about the BLA, and poverty all act as barriers to workers accessing quality healthcare. Knowing this, factories tend to provide healthcare facilities that are not of a high standard for workers.[27]

Ability to meet health expenses: At the workplace, 8.42 per cent of workers had to pay to access healthcare services, and 0.55 per cent of workers had to pay for medicine. According to 91 per cent of workers, health services at the workplace were free. However, workers faced financial difficulties in meeting their overall health expenditure.

About 7.69 per cent of workers (8 per cent men and 7.5 per cent women) and 8.11 per cent of supervisors (three women and six men) said that they did not have sufficient income to cover the healthcare fees for their families. Alternative ways of paying medical fees were borrowing money (with and without interest) and selling assets. Among workers, about 21 per cent, 75 per cent and 7.14 per cent had used these methods to pay for their healthcare expenses. This again has a direct link with the wage levels of low-paid workers.

	Percentage total workers	Percentage men workers	Percentage women workers
Not enough income to cover healthcare expenses	7.69	8.02	7.49
Enough income to cover healthcare expenses	92.31	91.98	92.51
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.30 **Workers' experiences of having enough income to access healthcare services**

Opportunities for action: Raising awareness among workers about Labour Law provisions regarding health services and monitoring the extent of their awareness could contribute to the quality of health services being upgraded rather than factory authorities simply ensuring their availability. Changes to the BLA are recommended to ensure that ANC, PNC and health education is mandatory for factories with less than 5,000 workers.

The absence of insurance in the case of death or permanent disability should raise alarms among stakeholders. Although not mandatory under the BLA, the unavailability of accidental insurance is of concern in an industry that experienced the devastating Rana Plaza and Tazreen Factory fire incidents. Comprehensive accidental insurance policies that cover any case stemming from a workplace accident or hazard should be provided for workers as a priority as part of workers' rights issues. Due to staff turnover, providing permanent insurance is complicated in the case of small and medium sized businesses. There should be some system of central insurance. All workers, as well as factory owners, should contribute towards the insurance scheme.

27 A study by Huda et al (2011) on the garment industry regarding employee's views on job satisfaction also found that workers were satisfied with their healthcare facilities. The study conducted hypothesis testing on a sample of 200 workers in Dhaka city. According to the findings, the workers' satisfaction with their healthcare facilities did not imply actual satisfaction but rather illustrated their lack of awareness regarding their legal rights around health issues and the working environment.

4.2.1.2. Maternity protection and benefits

This section focuses on workers' awareness regarding maternity leave, the ability to take maternity leave at factories, and findings from women workers who conceived during their working life in their respective factories.

Awareness regarding maternity leave: It was evident from the survey that there was a potential lack of awareness among workers (both men and women) about the law regarding maternity leave. Women workers had less awareness compared to men workers. About 1.1 per cent of workers (11 men and 13 women workers) did not know that maternity leave was a right according to law, and 33 per cent of workers (37 per cent men and 31 per cent women) did not know what was stated in the law (i.e. the duration of leave and payment).[28] Similar to findings from the quantitative analysis, FGDs show that workers do not have a clear idea about the existing law regarding maternity leave and benefits.

	Total	Men	Women
Number of workers who did not know maternity leave is a right according to law	24	11	13
Percentage of workers who did not know what was stated in the law (duration of leave and payment)	33%	36.79%	31%

Table 4.31 **Workers' knowledge regarding maternity leave by sex**

Availability of maternity protection and benefits: Even though the sample size of workers was 2,184 and workers were randomly selected, the survey only found 86 women workers (4 per cent out of 2,184 workers, and 9 per cent out of 1,336 women workers)

28 As per the regulation of section 46, Chapter IV of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, every woman worker shall be entitled to maternity benefit from her employer for the period of 8 (eight) weeks preceding the expected day of her delivery and 8 (eight) weeks immediately following the day of her delivery, and her employer shall be bound to give her this benefit. According to section 48 (2) For the purpose of sub-section (1), the daily, weekly or monthly average wages shall be calculated by dividing the total wages earned by the concerned woman during 3 (three) months immediately preceding the date on which she gives notice under this Chapter by the number of days she actually worked during that period.

who had given birth to a child during their working life at their respective factories. This percentage is extremely low compared to the size of the sample, the proportion of women of the total sample (61 per cent), the proportion of married women workers of reproductive age (40 per cent of the total sample) and the length of time they had worked at their respective factories (53 per cent of women workers had been working for more than two years). Figure 4.1 provides a graphical representation of this comparison from its different dimenions.

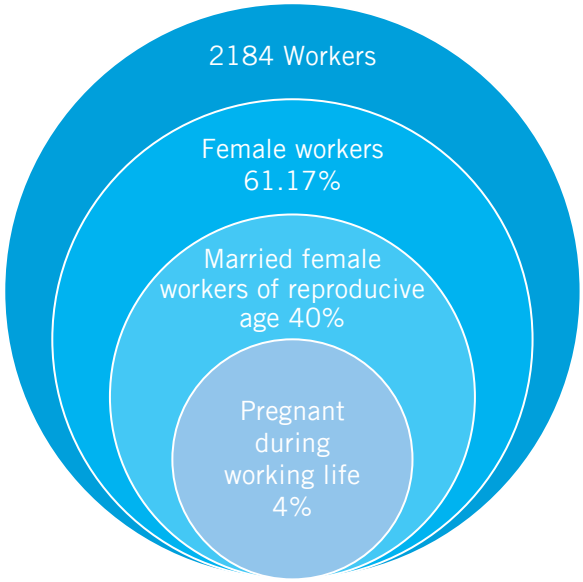


Figure 4.1 **Percentage of women workers who conceived during their working life at their respective factories: Comparison from different dimenions**[29]

If the number of factories surveyed is taken into account, 47 per cent of 111 factories had women workers who conceived during their working life at these factories. Fifty-nine factories (53 per cent of 111 factories) had no women workers who had ever conceived during their working life at these factories.

These findings suggest four possibilities. One is that factories might made women workers who are expecting a child to leave their job or might not recruit women workers who are planning to conceive. Another possibility is that women workers were on maternity leave during the time of the survey. Also, family planning campaign by the government can have some impact. However, findings from worker FGDs support the first scenario.

According to some workers in FGDs, factories do not follow the law. Some factories approved a few weeks of maternity leave with no additional benefits. A small number of factories provided maternity leave together with half of the basic wage payment. As derived from worker FGDs, there were factories where women workers had to resign from their jobs if they were pregnant. They could return to work at the factory after they had given birth. In this scenario, pregnant workers did not get any maternity benefits. There were exceptions as well. Women workers from a few factories received all of the maternity benefits. Findings from KIIs suggest that women workers are asked about their marital status and whether they are planning a pregnancy during the recruitment stage.

Similar experiences can be observed in other studies. A case study report released by the Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights (2013) illustrated a significant number of instances where women workers were denied maternity leave and benefits, alongside cases where they had to take resignation or their contracts were terminated illegally before they could claim paid maternity leave. The study focused on the labour rights' violation of a specific group that owned 26 factories and employed over 30,000 workers. The study gave an in-depth account of women workers facing exceedingly long working hours and bullying and abuse during pregnancy that was shown to have resulted in health complications and even terminations in some cases. Worker FGDs for this baseline study conformed, to a certain extent, with the findings from this case study where some workers reported that

29 All three percentages in this figure are out of the total sample size (2,184 workers).

they were told to resign from their job during pregnancy, with the assurance that they would be reinstated once they had given birth. They, therefore, had to leave their job and deal with the uncertainties of the future during their most vulnerable period.

If findings from worker FGDs and the aforementioned study are taken into account, there is a strong possibility that the 53 per cent of factories, where there were no workers who became pregnant, are among those factories that make such workers to leave and technically avoid maternity leave, which is a right according to law. These 59 factories must be monitored to detect and prevent such kind of practices.

	Frequency	Percentage
Factories where maternity leave is expected to be provided	52	47
Factories with a high probability that maternity leave is not provided	59	53

Table 4.32 **Availability of maternity benefits in factories**

It is also evident that if the two factories are compared: 52 factories with women workers who conceived and 59 factories with no such workers, 73 per cent of workers (both men and women) in the first factory knew about the law on maternity leave, which is high in comparison with the second factory (63 per cent of workers knew about the law). This lack of awareness about the law reemphasizes the possibility that maternity leave might not be available in these 59 factories.

Workers' knowledge on maternity leave	Factories with women workers who conceived	Factories with no women workers who conceived
Know the policy	63.01	72.82
Not sure about policy	36.99	27.19
Total	**100**	**100**

Table 4.33 **Workers' knowledge about maternity leave in two types of factories**

The experience of 86 women workers who conceived during their working life: Only 9 per cent of women workers reported that they had conceived during their working life and 3.5 per cent of these 86 women workers did not receive maternity leave from their respective factories. Only 83 per cent and 59 per cent of these women workers reported that ANC and PNC were available at their factories, respectively. This suggests that the number of women workers that ever conceived is significantly low, and the reason might include involuntary terminations.

As well as guaranteeing any maternity leave, full maternity leave is yet to be assured. Managers reported that six factories approved maternity leave for less than 16 weeks, and 14 to 22 per cent of 86 pregnant workers reportedly got less than 112 days (16 weeks) as maternity leave.

According to the BLA, pregnancy welfare benefits are not limited to maternity leave and the payment of wages. They also place certain responsibilities on owners and other workers regarding their behaviour and the facilities they must provide[30], for example, providing a congenial atmosphere for breastfeeding. Twenty-three per cent of women workers said that a specific space for breastfeeding was

30 As per the regulations of Section 37, Chapter IV of the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015, the owner and other workers should have the following responsibilities to a pregnant worker, such as: (a) Such behavior or comment should not be made so that she gets insulted or humiliated; (b) Not engage her in hazardous work declared by the government or any work hazardous for her health. (c) To transfer or post her to any work where there is no hazard. (d) To give priority to use the lift during the work. (e) After the delivery, to make opportunity for breastfeeding and ensure the congenial atmosphere for this.

absent at their factories which contravenes the BLA[31]. Among the 86 women workers who gave birth during their working life at their respective factories, 14 per cent (from eight factories) mentioned that they were not given the opportunity, congenial atmosphere or sufficient time to breastfeed. Although most workers denied this, 1.69 per cent of workers from 27 factories had complained about the behaviour[32] towards pregnant women.

According to managers, maternity leave is assured. Managers from around 98 per cent of factories reported that factories provide 16 weeks of maternity leave as per the Labour Law of Bangladesh.

Opportunities for action: Findings from this study point to a lack of coordinated efforts from management and workers' unions to educate workers about their rights. Therefore, efforts need to be made to ensure that workers are aware of their rights. Monthly meetings, consultations with workers and a workers' handbook on labour law could be effective interventions to increase awareness about the law regarding maternity benefits.
Of importance is that 59 factories had no women workers that had ever conceived during their working life. This raises the concern that factories might be discriminating against women workers that are expecting or planning to conceive by either not hiring them or forcing them to leave before birth, often with a false promise that they will get their jobs back once they have given birth. In a difficult and demanding work environment, such as the RMG industry of Bangladesh, such discriminatory practices are not unheard of. The same level of concern applies in respect to implementing maternity laws. A monitoring and reporting mechanism to track, report, and address such cases needs to be developed both at the policy and implementation levels to thwart such practices so that policies and laws are implemented that ensure the rights of workers.

4.2.1.3. Availability of other welfare facilities and workers' satisfaction

Apart from healthcare services and maternity benefits, factories must ensure the provision of welfare facilities under the BLA, such as a canteen, a dining room (lunchroom), a resting room, a children's' room and a welfare officer. To ensure health and hygiene there needs to be a proper provision of toilets, washing facilities, and drinking water facilities. Apart from the welfare facilities required under the BLA, some factories also provide additional facilities. In this section, welfare facilities are discussed in two parts: welfare facilities required under the BLA and additional workplace facilities provided that are not required under the BLA.

Welfare facilities required under the BLA

Canteen: According to the BLA, if the number of workers is more than or equal to 100, there must be a canteen at the factory.[33] However, 54.8 per cent of workers (57 per cent men and 53.4 per cent women) reported that there was no canteen facility.

There were 58 factories that required canteen facilities, however this facility was not available as reported by at least 50 per cent of workers working at these factories. Worker FGDs and supervisor FGDs also confirmed

31 As per the regulations of Section 94(2), Chapter VIII of Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015, a separate and screen covered area must be kept preserved for the breastfeeding mothers so that they can lactate their babies maintaining secrecy and modesty.

32 For example, harassing comments and behaviour by co-workers and supervisors, the lack of a flexible schedule or changes in job duties, and a lack of additional assistance such as not giving pregnant women priority in using lifts etc.

33 As per the regulations of Section 87(1), Chapter VIII of the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015, the owner of the institute where more than 100 (one hundred) workers are employed shall arrange a canteen for the workers, facilitating adequate space for a minimum of 10% of the total number of workers.

that generally factories did not have a canteen facility.

When workers were asked about their level of satisfaction with canteen facilities in the 50 factories where the facility was available, most workers (90.47 per cent) reported that they were satisfied with the facility.

Women representatives on canteen management committees: There is no specific law regarding women's representation on canteen management committees.[34] Among the 50 factories where canteen facilities were available, ten factories had no women representatives on their canteen management committee. Table 4.34 summarizes the representation of women on the committees as reported by management.

Women representation (percentage)	Number of factories	Percentage
0	10	20
<25	5	10
<=50	24	48
<=75	6	12
Missing value	5	10
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 4.34 **Women representatives on canteen management committees (reported by management)**

If the views of workers are taken into account, nearly 60 per cent of workers at factories with the available facility were unaware of the number of women representatives on canteen management committees. Moreover, in contrast to management, only 30 per cent of workers reported that there were women representatives on the committees. This indicates that either management provided misinformation or women representatives were not active enough, and, as a result, workers were less informed.

Women representation (percentage)	Frequency	Percentage
0	99	11.63
<=25	48	5.67
<=50	139	16.33
<=75	55	6.47
<=100	12	1.41
Don't know	498	58.52
Total	**851**	**100**

Table 4.35 **Women representatives on canteen management committees (reported by workers)**

Dining room and resting room: As per the BLA, there must be a dining room (lunch room) and resting rooms at factories with more than or equal to 50 workers.[35] In the baseline study, 52.8 per cent of workers (51.4 per cent men and 53.7 per cent women) reported that there was no resting room at their factory, followed

34 As per the regulations of Section 90(1), Chapter VIII of the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015, Canteen Management Committees shall be formed with the participation of the representatives nominated by the Owner Party and the representatives selected from the workers under the supervision of a Welfare Officer having the majority of opinions regarding them among the workers. The number of representatives shall be equal from both parties. As per the regulations of Section 90(2), the Worker Members cannot be less than two or more than five in the committee.

35 As per the regulation of section 93(1), Chapter VIII of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, in every establishment where more than 50 (fifty) workers are ordinarily employed, adequate and suitable numbers of rest rooms shall be provided and maintained for use by the workers, and a suitable lunch room with arrangements for drinking water, shall also be provided and maintained in that establishment so that the workers may eat their meals that they may have brought with them. As per the regulation of section 93(3), in the establishments where more than 25 (twenty-five) women workers are employed, separate rest room shall be provided for men and women workers and in establishments where less than 25 (twenty-five) women workers are employed, separate screened spaces shall be provided in the rest room for women workers. As per the regulation of section 92, Chapter VIII of the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015, part of the Dining Room and service counter thereof shall be kept separated for women workers with the use of curtain. To avoid conflicts of meaning, the report uses 'resting room' instead of 'restroom.'

by 10.9 per cent of workers (12.2 per cent men and nearly 10 per cent women) who reported the lack of a dining room (lunch room). The number of factories were 68 and seven respectively, where at least 50 per cent of workers (per factory) reported the non-availability of restroom and dining room (lunch room) facilities.

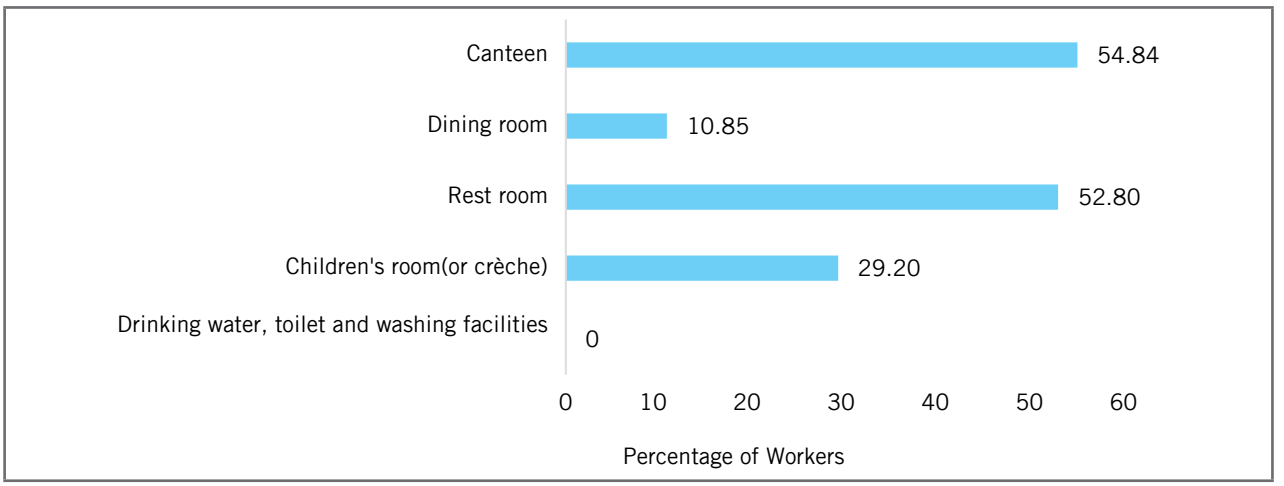


Figure 4.2 **Unavailability of facilities for workers at factories**

Although dining rooms (lunch rooms) were unavailable in only seven factories, information from supervisors suggest that there were 29 factories where dining rooms (lunch rooms) were not separated for men and women workers. Sixteen factories did not have a restroom separated for men and women workers.

	Percentage men	Percentage women
Lack of canteen	57.02	53.45
Lack of restroom	52.08	54.01
Lack of dining room	12.22	9.98
Lack of childcare room/nursery	32.69	26.99

Table 4.36 **Lack of other welfare facilities under the BLA by sex**

Children's room (or crèche): In the BLA it states that if the number of women workers is more than or equal to 40, there must be a children's room (or crèche) available at the factory.[36] However, around 29.2 per cent of workers (32.7 per cent men and 27 per cent women) at such factories reported that this facility was not available. Out of a total of 29 factories at least 50 per cent of workers reported the non-availability of this facility. The findings from worker FGDs show that factories did not have separate breastfeeding corners for mothers which is a violation of the BLA.[37] Again some workers commented that children's rooms were only there to show to buyers. Children's rooms (or crèches) should not be on the top floor for the convenience of women workers. However, this was the case according to 23.36 per cent of workers (23.8 per cent men and 22.8 per cent women) working in 12 out of 82 factories where a children's room (or crèche) was available.

36 As per the regulation of section 94(1), Chapter VIII of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, in every establishment, where 40 (forty) or more women workers are ordinarily employed, one or more suitable rooms shall be provided and maintained for the use of their children who are under the age of 6 (six) years.

37 As per the regulations of Section 94(2), Chapter VIII of the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015, a separate and screen covered area must be kept preserved for the breastfeeding mothers so that they can lactate their babies maintaining secrecy and modesty.

Location	Percentage total workers	Percentage men workers	Percentage women workers
On top floor	23.17	23.75	22.84
Not on top floor	76.83	76.25	77.16
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.37 **Location of children's room (or crèche)**

In this instance, the BLA needs to be more specific regarding the location of children's rooms. At present, the related statement of the BLA is as follows: According to regulation of section 94(3), Chapter VIII of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006: "The said rooms (rooms for children) shall be easily accessible to the mothers of the children, and, so far as is reasonably practicable, they shall not be situated adjacent to or near any part of the establishment where obnoxious fumes, dust or odours are given off, or where excessively noisy works are carried out." According to regulations of Section 94(1), Chapter VIII of the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015: "The layout, quality and position of the Children's Room or the separate Children's Building or the adapted building must be approved by the Inspector General or the Inspector authorized by him/her."

Table 4.38 summarizes the percentage of welfare facilities that were not available at the factories discussed above.

Welfare facilities under the BLA	Number of factories where the facility is available	Percentage of factories with required facility
Canteen	53	47.75
Dining room	104	93.69
Dining room (available but not separated for men and women)	82	73.87
Restroom	43	38.74
Restroom (available but not separated for men and women)	95	85.59
Children's room (or crèche)	82	73.87

Table 4.38 **Unavailability of welfare facilities at factories**

Drinking water, toilet and washing facilities: The share of women workers who replied that they were 'satisfied' (90.8 per cent) with drinking water facilities is higher than that of men (86.8 per cent). Nearly 2.4 per cent of workers (2.6 per cent men and 2.32 per cent women) responded that they were 'not sure' or 'dissatisfied' with the existing toilet and washing facilities.

	Drinking water			Toilet and washing facilities		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Very satisfied	9.43	11.56	8.08	6.78	7.55	6.29
Satisfied	89.24	86.79	90.79	90.8	89.86	91.39
Not sure	0.55	0.71	0.45	0.5	0.59	0.45
Dissatisfied	0.78	0.94	0.67	1.92	2	1.87
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.39 **Workers' satisfaction with drinking water, toilet and washing facilities**

Although, the survey findings depict overwhelmingly positive responses, FGDs demonstrated a mixed picture and highlighted some pitfalls. During the FGDs, some workers reported that they were provided with hygienic drinking water; the factories usually provided filtered water. Some workers reported that they had to drink tap water or supply water. However, when foreign buyers or factory owners visited the premises, factory authorities usually provided filtered water for them. One group reported that there were not enough water filters in relation to the number of workers at their factory, and the filters were placed some distance from their working stations. In some factories there were no water coolers to use during hot weather.

When workers were asked about toilet facilities during FGDs, some provided positive responses while others complained. In some factories, there were sufficient toilets for both men and women workers. However, in other factories the number of toilets was not sufficient and workers had to wait in line. According to some workers, the hygiene of the washrooms was usually maintained, while a few workers complained that in their factory the toilet was only cleaned once in the morning. There was a case where a worker reported that the toilet was cleaned once a week. In most factories a hand wash, soap and towels were not provided in the toilets. In some factories, soap and shoes were not regularly available in the toilets and were only on show when auditors came. The water supply was often interrupted.

Worker FGDs states there was no provision of sanitary pads for women workers except at one factory. Similar results were depicted in the BSR HER working paper (2014). In their survey of ten factories, only 20 per cent of factory clinics had sanitary pads.

According to worker FGDs of this study, all hygiene measures, however, were fully functional and available when buyers visited the factories. Before buyer visits to the factories, all supplies were increased. The Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights (2013) also presented a case in their report where the restrooms at a particular factory were normally filthy but management had them cleaned and sprayed whenever buyers came. A positive aspect that arose from KII discussions of this study was the influence of workers' unions to ensure the availability of basic facilities and their maintenance, along with the upgrading of existing facilities.

While findings from the survey about facilities were highly satisfactory, findings from FGDs were not. One possible reason is that when questions on satisfaction are asked, whether it is job satisfaction or satisfaction with available facilities, workers generally do not complain as they are unlikely to leave their job to find a new job with better facilities. Moreover, there might have always been problems with existing facilities and workers have got used to this. They, therefore, do not complain whenever they are asked about their level of satisfaction. However, they did admit existing problems when they were asked about these specifically. FGDs provided more scope to ask diverse questions on a few specific topics, and existing problems were more evident from these findings.

A study by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad on the job satisfaction of women garment workers found similarly high positive responses (*The Daily Star,* March 8, 2015). The study found that, on average, a women worker had to share a toilet with 22 others. Around 70 per cent could not afford nutritious food and suffered from health issues. In-spite of this, 84 per cent of women garment workers were satisfied with their job. The findings were based on the interviews of 1,013 women workers from RMG factories under the BGMEA located in Dhaka or a nearby area.

Workers might express satisfaction because the available toilet facilities or drinking facilities at work are better than those at home. These overwhelmingly positive responses make sense against a backdrop that most workers are migrants and most of them lack standard facilities at home. At their homes, 55.63 per cent of workers

share a toilet with two to as many as 12 other families. In most cases, these toilets are of a low hygiene standard. They, therefore, are satisfied with the quality of the toilet facilities provided to them at work even though they often lack basic components such as soap and washroom sandals. In short, workers have low expectations and a lack of awareness about the quality of facilities that they should be provided with. They are either unaware of their workplace rights or lack the conviction to speak openly about them.

Welfare officer: According to the Labour Law of Bangladesh, there should be a welfare officer at factories if the number of workers is more than or equal to 500.[38] However, 5.5 per cent of workers (4.8 per cent men and nearly 6 per cent women) working at such factories mentioned that there was no welfare officer at their factory.

	Percentage of workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Welfare officer is present	94.5	95.19	94.02
Welfare officer is not present	5.6	4.81	5.98
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.40 **Presence of welfare officers at factories**

Four factories (two knitwear, one sweater and one woven) from Chattogram, Dhaka, Gazipur and Savar had the highest probability of not having a welfare officer as 35 per cent to as high as 75 per cent of workers at these factories reported the absence of a welfare officer. There were 18 additional factories where 5 to 15 per cent of workers reported that there was no welfare officer at their factory indicating the ineffectiveness of the services provided.

	Number of factories	Percentage of workers who reported the absence of a welfare officer
Highest probability of non-availability of welfare officer	4	35-75
Presence of ineffectiveness of services and lack of information among workers	18	5-15

Table 4.41 **Factories with no welfare officer**

Women representatives among welfare officers: Although there is no specific law regarding the gender of a welfare officer, according to 43.7 per cent of workers, all welfare officers were women. There is no specific explanation for this phenomenon mentioned in the secondary literature. However, according to KIIs, one probable reason is that most workers are women. When women workers have a problem, especially in the cases of sexual harassment or a health issue, it is easier for them to communicate with a women rather than a men officer. For this reason, generally women welfare officers are preferred to men officers. In several factories, when the job advertisement for this particular position is circulated, there is often a requirement for the applicant to be women.

Percentage level	Frequency	Percentage
100	506	43.73
<100	24	2.07
<=75	50	4.32
<=50	108	9.33
<=25	200	18.77
Don't know	252	21.78
Total	**1140**	**100**

Table 4.42 **Representation of women among welfare officers**

38 As per the regulation of section 89(8), Chapter VIII of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, in every establishment where 500 (five hundred) or more workers are employed, the employer of such establishment shall appoint a welfare officer in the manner prescribed by the rules.

Additional workplace facilities apart from those required under the BLA

Apart from the facilities required under the BLA, many factories offer additional facilities for the welfare of their workers such as dormitories and bus services, among others.

Dormitories: Under the BLA, there is no requirement to provide a dormitory. In-spite of this, 1 per cent of workers mentioned that there were dormitory facilities available at their factory. Dormitory facilities would be very useful for those 8.24 per cent of workers who live 4km to as far as 18km away from their factory. Management FGDs also confirmed that a few factories provide free food and dormitory facilities.

Commuter buses: Free travel was mentioned by 33.8 per cent of workers (38.8 per cent men and 30.6 per cent women) and 25.4 per cent of workers (22.8 per cent men and 27.1 per cent women) were provided with a commuter bus. According to FGDs, only a few factories provide a bus service for workers. Similar comments were made by supervisors who responded that bus services were available for staff.

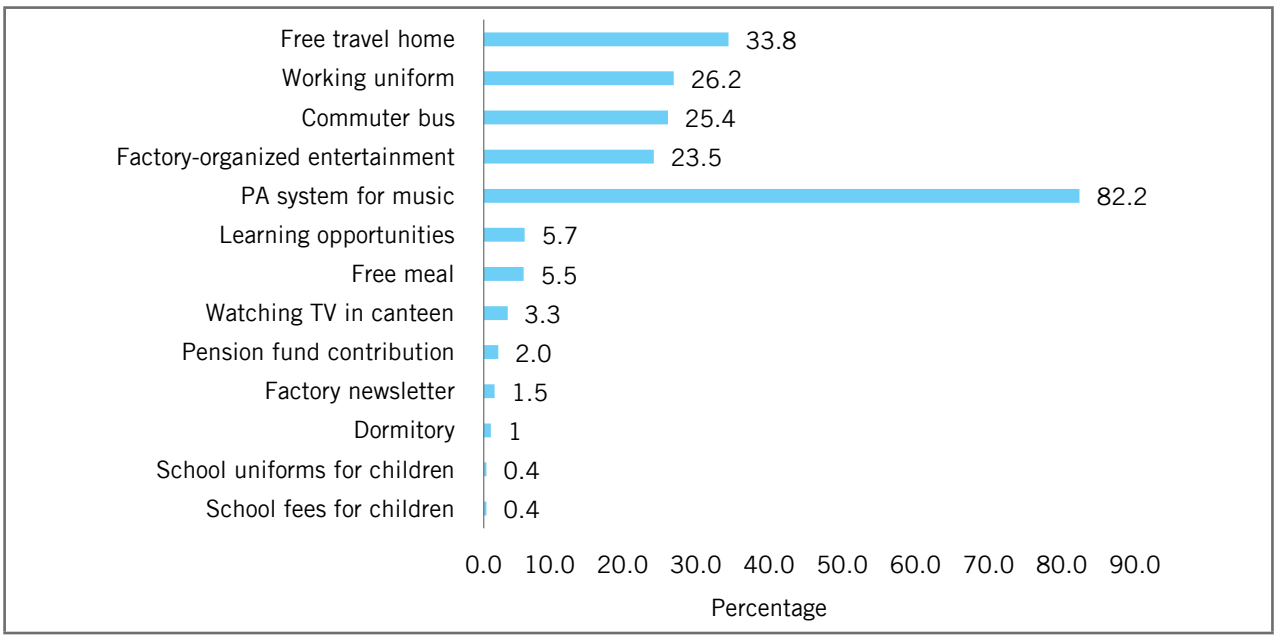


Figure 4.3 **Additional workplace facilities**

PA (public address) music system facility: A PA system is usually used for announcements. Most workers mentioned that during work, they could listen to music using the PA system, which reduced the monotony of long working hours. However, nearly 18 per cent of workers (19.5 per cent men and 16.8 per cent women) reported the lack of this facility. FGDs also reported that the PA music system facility was not available at some factories.

	Percentage total workers	Percentage men workers	Percentage women workers
Availability of free travel	33.79	38.8	30.61
Availability of commuter bus	25.41	22.76	27.1
Availability of PA music system facility	82.19	80.54	83.23

Table 4.43 **Availability of additional workplace facilities**

Other: Only 26.2 per cent of workers reported wearing a uniform at work. Some 23.5 per cent of workers were provided with factory-organized entertainment. Facilities such as free meals, learning opportunities, a factory newsletter, school fees or uniforms for children, and pension funds were provided by a few factories. A few workers (3.3 per cent) could watch television in the canteen. Management personnel mentioned that there were factories that provided financial support to workers so that they could afford the educational expenses for their children.

Opportunities for action: In terms of scope for improvement, specific needs are identified in this section. More dormitories are recommended to accommodate workers that have migrated to the city to find work in the RMG industry.

Although the law is specific about the availability of a childcare facility, deliverance on the law is unsatisfactory. The implementation of the law to follow through on the promise of childcare facilities is important. Concerns regarding a breastfeeding corner were raised, and they need to be addressed. Among other issues, the lack of sanitary pads along with the lack of other hygiene-related materials raises concerns that need to be resolved.

4.2.2. Hours of work and leave

Hours of work and leave related issues are discussed in two different parts in this section.

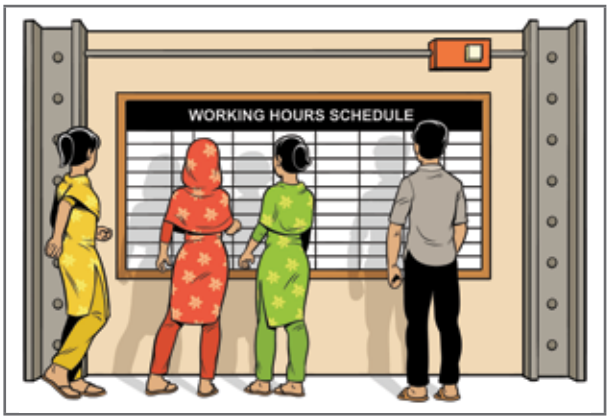
4.2.2.1. Hours of work, overtime and night shifts

This section focuses on the hours of work by analysing reported and estimated working hours, overtime, workers' opinions regarding excessive overtime, payment for overtime, night shifts and findings on the working hours of adolescent workers.

Average hours of work: Workers mainly worked for six days a week and an average working day was eight to ten hours. On Friday, 1.7 per cent of workers worked and they had alternative weekends off.

As workers might have a tendency to understate their average working hours, two types of working hours have been used in this analysis. One is the working hours estimated from the entry and exit time of the previous working day (the day preceding the survey), and the other is the average working hours reported by workers.

Estimated working hours showed that out of 111 factories, workers had worked for 13 to as many as 15 hours on the previous working day in 21 factories. In 19 factories, workers had worked for 11 to less than 12 hours, and in 51 factories for 10 to less than 11 hours. Working more than ten hours a day is a violation of the BLA.[39]



39 As per the regulation of Section 99, Chapter IX of the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015, 'Irrespective of whatever there is in other rules and regulations, the daily working hours of all adult workers shall be 8 (eight) hours, excluding the time for having meals and the break period. However, as per the regulation of Section 108, the workers can be made to work for a maximum of 10 hours on the condition of giving remuneration for overtime hours.'

Highest working hour	Number of factories
13 hours and above	21
12 to less than 13 hours	5
11 to less than 12 hours	19
10 to less than 11 hours	51
9 to less than 10 hours	4
8 to less than 9 hours	11
Total	**111**

Table 4.44 **Highest estimated working hours in factories on previous working day**

A comparison between the estimated working hours and the average working hours revealed that workers had understated their average working hours and overtime. On average 37.27 per cent of workers reportedly worked for more than eight hours, while 62.3 per cent of workers worked for eight hours a day. Estimated working hours show a comparatively higher percentage of workers (42.71 per cent) working for more than eight hours a day, and a consequently lower percentage of workers (50.27 per cent) working for eight to less than nine hours a day. There were 36.25 per cent of workers who had worked for more than or equal to ten hours a day during the previous working day.

Average hours of work				Hours of work on the previous working day			
Average hours of work	Percentage total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women	Hours of work on previous working day	Percentage total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Less than 8 hours	0.41	0.35	0.45	Less than 8 hours	7.01	5.19	8.17
8 hours	62.32	56.49	66.02	8-8.59 hours	50.27	48.11	51.65
9 hours	2.84	2.71	2.92	9-9.59 hours	6.46	5.54	7.05
10 hours	31.78	37.15	28.37	10-10.59 hours	30.06	33.96	27.59
11 hours	1.65	1.89	1.5	11-11.59 hours	3.99	4.6	3.6
12 hours	0.55	1.06	0.22	12-12.59 hours	0.41	0.47	0.37
13 hours and above	0.45	0.36	0.52	13 hours and above	1.79	2.12	1.57
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**Total**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.45 **Working hours: average hours of work and hours of work of workers during the previous working day**

Disaggregation of average hours of work by gender: Disaggregation by gender shows that about 28.4 per cent of women workers worked ten hours on average, while 2.24 per cent of them reported working more than ten hours. Men workers worked longer hours than women workers.

Disaggregation by factory type shows that in woven factories, workers worked for longer hours compared to other factories, followed by knitwear, knitwear/woven and sweater factories. For knitwear, woven and knitwear/woven factories, the findings were similar with about 31.5 per cent to 35 per cent of workers working ten hours on average and 60 to 63 per cent of workers working eight hours on average across the three types of factories. In the case of sweater factories, 24.4 per cent of workers worked for ten hours, while 74 per cent of workers worked an average of eight hours.

Type	Less than 8 hours	8 hours	9 hours	10 hours	More than 10 hours	Total
Knitwear	0.41	61.09	2.87	31.52	4.11	100
Knitwear/Woven	0.5	63.32	4.02	32.16	0	100
Sweater	0	73.84	1.08	24.37	0.72	100
Woven	0.55	59.18	3.15	34.93	2.2	100
Total		62.28	2.84	31.81	2.56	100

Table 4.46 **Average hours of work by factory type**

Disaggregation by location shows, based on the mean value, that workers in Dhaka (Savar) and Chattogram worked for longer hours in comparison with other locations. However, the share of workers who worked for more than ten hours was highest for factories in Narayanganj, followed by Dhaka (see table 4.48).

	Chattogram	Dhaka	Gazipur	Narayanganj
Mean hours of work	9	8.84	8.67	8.70

Table 4.47 **Mean hours of work by factory type**

Location	Less than 8 hours	8 hours	9 hours	10 hours	More than 10 hours	Total
Chattogram	0.34	52.72	2.04	43.2	1.7	100
Dhaka	0.67	66.22	1.85	28.74	2.53	100
Gazipur	0.32	66.02	1.93	29.79	1.93	100
Narayanganj	0.27	66.76	2.41	26.01	4.56	100
Savar	0.33	50.5	8.03	38.13	3	100
Total	**0.41**	**62.28**	**2.84**	**31.81**	**2.65**	**100**

Table 4.48 **Average hours of work by factory location**

In Savar, 49 per cent of workers worked for nine hours or more. Similar results were found for workers at factories in Chattogram, where the average hours of work were nine hours or more for 47 per cent of workers.

In factories in Dhaka, Gazipur and Narayaganj, the share of workers working for ten hours stood at 26 per cent to 30 per cent, while about 66 per cent of workers employed in factories from each respective area were found to have worked eight hours on average.

It should be noted that workers have a tendency to understate their average hours of work as can be seen from comparing the reported average hours of work and the estimated hours of work. Therefore, the actual scenario might be much worse than the aforementioned statistics.

Average hours of work	Percentage of total supervisors	Percentage of men supervisors	Percentage of women supervisors	Hours of work on the previous working day	Percentage of total supervisors	Percentage of men supervisors	Percentage of women supervisors
Less than 8 hours	0	0	0	Less than 8 hours	4.5	3.96	10
8 hours	29.73	27.72	50	8-8.59 hours	44.14	41.58	70
9 hours	6.31	6.93	0	9-9.59 hours	10.81	11.88	0
10 hours	53.15	54.46	40	10-10.59 hours	33.33	35.64	10
11 hours	9.91	9.9	10	11-11.59 hours	3.6	2.97	10
12 hours	0.9	0.99	0	12-12.59 hours	0	0	0
13 hours and above	0	0	0	13 hours and above	3.6	3.96	0
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**Total**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.49 **Average hours of work and hours of work of supervisors during the previous working day**

In the case of supervisors, wages are usually fixed. However, their working hours are not limited to eight hours. Supervisors from 51.34 per cent of factories worked for nine hours or more during the previous working day (estimated from table 4.49). In 20 per cent of factories, supervisors worked for more than ten hours. Similar findings were illustrated by FGDs.

Overtime: In-spite of workers understating their working hours, 59.5 per cent of workers (61 per cent men and 59 per cent women) were reportedly working overtime. According to FGDs nearly all workers worked overtime. Factory-wise disaggregation provides clearer findings. If the highest estimated working hours are considered, data reveals that workers in 97.3 per cent of factories worked overtime.

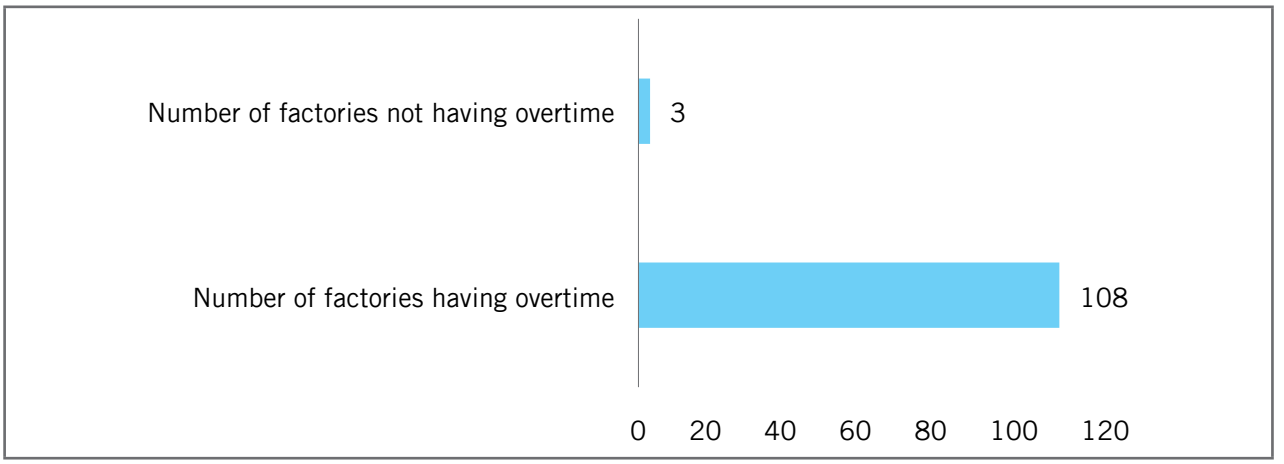


Figure 4.4 **Overtime practices at factories**

Table 4.50 has been estimated from table 4.44 to show the length of overtime in factories on the previous working day. According to workers, 21 factories had the highest overtime of five hours or more. Out of these 21 factories, in six factories 10 to 35 per cent of workers reported working at least five hours of overtime. In the remaining 15 factories, 5 per cent of workers provided a similar response. These are blatant violations of the BLA.

It is to be noted that the RMG industry is referred to as 'a product of a new international division of labour' (Mahtab, N. et al., 2016). Due to the production process, workers must work together to produce a complete product. Therefore, when 10 to 35 per cent of workers at a factory are working overtime for at least five hours, it suggests that other workers might also be working for the same time. If workers' tendencies to understate their working hours and the sample size of each factory are taken into account, then it is apparent that the actual percentage of workers working at least five hours of overtime is higher than has been estimated.

Length of overtime	Number of factories
5 hours and above	21
4 hours to less than 5 hours	5
3 hours to less than 4 hours	19
2 hours to less than 3 hours	51
1 hour to less than 2 hours	4
Less than 1 hour	8
Total	**108**

Table 4.50 **Overtime estimated from the highest working hours reported by workers at factories**

The analysis above suggests that 40.54 per cent of factories had the 'highest probability' of excessive overtime. There were an additional 30 per cent of factories with 'less probability' of excessive overtime. In 29 per cent of factories, overtime was two hours or less. These findings correspond with assessments by the Better Work Global (BWG) Programme in different countries. According to these assessments excessive overtime was found in all clothing factories assessed by the BWG (ILO, 2014) in Haiti, Indonesia, Jordan, Lesotho and Vietnam (ILO and IFC, 2013).

	Number of factories	Percentage of total sample
Highest probability of excessive overtime	45	40.54
Comparatively less probability of excessive overtime	33	29.73
Two hours of overtime or less	30	27.03
No overtime	3	2.70
Total	**111**	**100.00**

Table 4.51 **Presence of excessive overtime (more than two hours) at factories**

Table 4.51 indicates that the lower the number of workers, the higher the probability of excessive overtime.

For supervisors, there is usually no payment for overtime as their wages are fixed. According to survey findings, supervisors from 74 per cent of factories worked overtime (see table 4.52). In 20 per cent of factories they worked excessive overtime, and in 83 per cent of factories supervisors did not receive any payment for overtime (see table 4.49).

	Number of supervisors/ number of factories	Percentage
Worked overtime	82	73.87
Did not work overtime	29	26.13
Total	111	100

Table 4.52 **Overtime of supervisors**

Findings from FGDs vindicate the outcomes from the baseline survey regarding overtime. In worker FGDs, there were cases of factories where three to four hours of overtime were assigned after regular working hours. According to workers, the reduction of overtime from three to two hours would be more convenient for them. One worker reported that he worked, on average, five hours of overtime per day. Other workers reported that they worked from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. (four to seven hours overtime daily).

In some factories, most workers were obliged to work overtime and were admonished if they refused. In other factories workers willingly worked overtime to earn extra pay. Some workers said that previously factories had imposed overtime but this practice had now stopped. Workers had to work on Fridays and had to work night shifts whenever there was pressure to meet a deadline. Fridays have two kinds of work shifts; i) general, and ii) half day (7a.m. to 1p.m.). For general work on Friday, workers are paid double their daily wage and for half a day's work they are paid their daily wage. Some workers had to work without any weekend holiday which is a violation of the BLA.[40] In one case, a worker mentioned that he had worked on almost every weekly holiday. If workers did not work at weekends, they could possibly lose their job. Some factories deducted attendance bonuses if any workers refused to work overtime for more than one working day.

Workers' opinion regarding excessive overtime: In this study, an estimated 50 per cent of workers in the garment industry worked for more than 60 hours a week, and an estimated 80 per cent of workers regularly worked more than seven days in a row. Fifty per cent of workers reported that excessive working hours made them feel isolated as they did not get to spend quality time with their families. Only 20 per cent of workers felt satisfied with their job.

Several other studies have also analyzed the impact of overtime. In the United States, the impact of overtime and extended working hours was analyzed against the risk of occupational injuries and illnesses. After an evaluation of the job history of workers, working hours, and the occurrence of occupational injuries and illnesses between 1987 and 2000, the study found a 61 per cent higher injury hazard rate associated with jobs with overtime schedules compared to jobs without overtime. A 37 per cent increased hazard rate was associated with working at least 12 hours per day and a 23 per cent increased hazard rate was associated with working at least 60 hours per week. (Dembe et al, 2005). The Fair Labor Association's (FLA) research in China during 2010 to 2011 of 1,766 workers also confirmed that excessive working hours often result in physical and psychological stress for workers and an increased turnover in staff in the garment and electronics manufacturing industries. According to the study, workers who are working an excessive number of hours at work are eight times more likely to be unsatisfied with their job than workers with regular working hours. In addition, they are six times more likely to show signs of poor mental health. Sometimes it is argued that Chinese factory workers 'want' to work for more hours. Counter-arguments are that they do not work willingly but are compelled to work due to an insufficient income. In the study, 45 per cent of workers worked for more than 60 hours a week to compensate for their insufficient income. For 40 per cent of workers, salaries were not sufficient to cover their basic needs (FLA, 2011).

	Percentage total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
It is bad	53.05	50.3	54.79
It is good	46.95	49.7	45.21
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.53 **Workers' opinion regarding excessive overtime (more than 2 hours)**

In line with the above argument, this baseline study found that about 47 per cent of workers welcomed excessive overtime (above two hours) as it brought in extra income. However, most workers (53 per cent) had a negative view of excessive overtime. Women perspectives were more negative compared to men perspectives in the case of excessive overtime. In FGDs, workers also considered overtime as important since the salary they received was not enough to cover their living costs.

40 As per the regulation of section 101 (2), Chapter IX of the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015, 'No worker can be made to work for more than 10 (ten) days consecutively without giving him/her the weekly leave.'

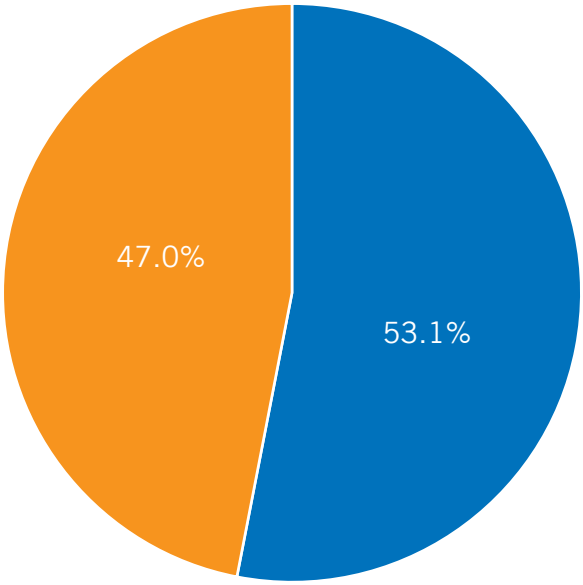


Figure 4.5 **Workers' opinion regarding excessive overtime**

By factory-wise disaggregation, in about 30.6 per cent of factories, 60 per cent to as high as 90 per cent of workers considered excessive overtime as good.

Percentage of workers saying overtime is good	Number of factories	Percentage
60-90	34	30.63
40-55	39	35.14
20-35	30	27.03
5-16	7	6.31
0	1	0.90
Total	**111**	**100**

Table 4.54 **Factory-wise distribution of workers' opinion regarding excessive overtime (more than two hours)**

Overtime payment: In regard to questions about overtime and night shifts, workers did not feel comfortable responding to these sensitive issues during the survey at factory premises. However, they were more expressive during FGDs.

	Frequency	Per cent
Workers get payment as per the rules	2,059	94.28
Workers do not get payment as per the rules	3	0.14
No overtime system	122	5.59
Total	**2,184**	**100**

Table 4.55 **Overtime payment for workers**

According to the data captured by the survey, about 94 per cent of workers said that they received overtime payment as per the rules. Findings from FGDs however points to some contrasting findings. Contrary to the overwhelmingly positive responses during the survey, participants at FGDs stated that in some factories, workers worked three hours overtime but were only paid for two. Other workers reported that if they did not work on a Friday then factories cancelled their overtime for Saturday. Thus, there is evidence of workers being underpaid and overworked. Moreover, a report by Human Rights Watch (2015) based on interviews with 160 workers from 44 factories explored at length the cases of prolonged working hours and reported that workers were often mandated to work long hours without extra pay, to reach specific production targets.

Findings from FGDs highlighted a crucial fact. In general, sweater factories do not have an overtime system[41]. In these factories salaries are usually based on a piece rate. In

41 As per the regulation of Section 108(1), Chapter IX of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, 'Where a worker works for more hours than the hours fixed under this Act in an establishment on any day or in a week he shall, for overtime work, be entitled to an allowance at the rate of twice his ordinary rate of basic wage and dearness allowance and ad-hoc or interim wage, if any. As per the regulation of Section 108 (2) Where any worker is paid on a piece rate basis in an establishment, the employer may, for requirement of this section, in consultation with the representatives of the workers, fix time rates as nearly as possible equivalent to the average rates of earnings of those workers, and the rates so fixed shall be deemed to be the ordinary rates of wages of those workers in this case, 1[but in such cases the provisions of sub-section (1) shall not apply.]'

some sweater factories, when workers worked overtime, they were given two bananas and one egg if they worked until 9 p.m., followed by one extra egg if they worked past 9 p.m. They were given BDT 35 with food if they worked until 12 a.m. (midnight). Some factories paid BDT 40 to workers who worked after 9 p.m. and BDT 105 to those who worked on a Friday. This payment is too low according to workers.

Review of literature shows that wage systems in sweater factories have always been a matter of debate. Garment workers who are paid for the number of pieces produced per day are not eligible for overtime payments as they are not employed on a contract basis. Workers on piece rates are mainly employed for seasonal products, as in sweater factories (*The Daily Star*, 2015). Labour leaders have always made allegations that workers at sweater factories are being deprived of their overtime allowances and festival bonuses, whereas many suggest that these are illogical demands, as depending on productivity, the wage of these workers can sometimes be higher than workers at woven factories during peak season (*New Age*, 2014). In addition to the provisions under the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, the government published a Gazette on the sweater factory minimum wage in 2014. However, an analysis by the Research Initiative for Social Equity (RISE) on the piece rate structure states that this Gazette does not provide any specifically tailored overtime payment solution for sweater factories, and in Bangladesh this is a crucial demand of workers at sweater factories (RISE, 2015). Findings from FGDs and the references cited above suggest that there is a need for specific rules for types of factories producing seasonal products.

Supervisors receive a fixed salary without any overtime provisions. There were a few factories where supervisors got an allowance for working extra hours. Their satisfaction regarding payment was mixed.

Satisfaction with overtime payment	Number of supervisors/ number of factories	Percentage
Satisfied	10	12.2
Not satisfied	4	4.88
No payment for overtime	68	82.93
Total	**82**	**100**

Table 4.56 **Overtime payment for supervisors**

Night shifts: As has been mentioned above, workers were relatively more comfortable discussing night shifts during FGDs rather than in the survey. During the survey, which took place at factory premises, most workers did not want to answer questions about night shifts. According to survey data, only 1.3 per cent of workers and supervisors from three factories stated that factories did not ask women for their consent to work night shifts. Findings from FGDs, however, show that workers were generally obliged to work night shifts if required. In many factories workers had to regularly work night shifts. In other factories, night shifts were previously commonplace but not at the time of the survey.

Some factories sought permission from workers to work night shifts, others did not. Some factories did not force workers to work night shifts, but if their entire production line was staying for the night shift then they had to stay. In some factories, workers who were sick at home were asked whether they would work night shifts as were women workers who had children at home. In other factories, workers were told to work night shifts. However, if any worker had a problem, then they were exempt from night shifts. This exemption was subject to the gravity of the problem, which was assessed by a supervisor or the factory management. Exemption from night shifts was only allowed for three days, beyond which workers were punished. Workers would not be allowed to enter the factory premises the next morning for two to three hours as a punishment. They were even threatened that they would lose their job.

Some workers mentioned that women workers do not have to work night shifts in most factories. In other factories, workers said that women workers had to work night shifts and the authorities did not ask their permission, which is a violation of the BLA.[42] If workers did not agree to work night shifts, authorities would consider them absent from work. Some respondents said that in this particular case they would face a punishment of three days' absence from work. Many factories admonished workers and made them work night shifts involuntarily.

Out of 160 workers who reported that there were night shifts, 5.84 per cent of workers reported that factories did not ensure adequate safety measures during the night shift for women workers. A similar response was given by a supervisor from one factory. Although workers were concerned about safety measures, when they were asked about the type of security provided they could not provide a clear answer. A few workers said that there was an accommodation system or transport system, that gates were kept locked and that management staff were present during night shifts. It was evident that most workers were not completely aware of the actual safety measures implemented by factories, which might be an indication that effective safety measures were absent.

Working hours for adolescent workers:
Although the Labour Law indicates that no adolescents are allowed to work in any establishment between 7p.m. and 7a.m.[43], three out of 28 adolescent workers surveyed said that they had worked during these hours. Supervisors from five factories also mentioned this practice. According to KIIs, the possibility of adolescent workers working during this time period is high as adolescent workers usually do not give their correct age and factories have a tendency to conceal the real age of adolescent workers to avoid the complexities of the Labour Act.

4.2.2.2. Leave

This section discusses the extent to which workers can take sick leave, casual leave, festival holidays, and earned leave - these four types of leave are supposed to be available at every ready-made garment factory.

Sick leave, casual leave and festival holidays are available at factories. When workers were asked about the availability of sick leave and paid leave, 93 per cent of workers mentioned the availability of sick leave. Paid leave was reported by 52 per cent of workers.

Types of leave	Percentage of workers
Sick leave	93
Paid leave	52.11

Table 4.57 Workers' knowledge about the availability of leave

However, survey results show that despite the availability of leave, workers can rarely take any type of leave due to work pressures. Figure 4.6 shows the percentage of workers who took less leave than the leave entitled by the BLA. These percentages imply that taking leave results in a deduction of wages, therefore, workers are compelled to work.

42 As per the regulation of section 109, Chapter IX of the Bangladesh Labour Law 2006, 'No woman worker shall, without her consent, be allowed to work in an establishment between 10 O'CLOCK at night and 6 O'CLOCK in the morning.

43 As per the regulation of section 41(3), Chapter III of the Bangladesh Labour Law 2006, 'No adolescent shall be allowed to work in any establishment between 7.00 O'CLOCK in the evening and 7.00 O'CLOCK in the morning.'

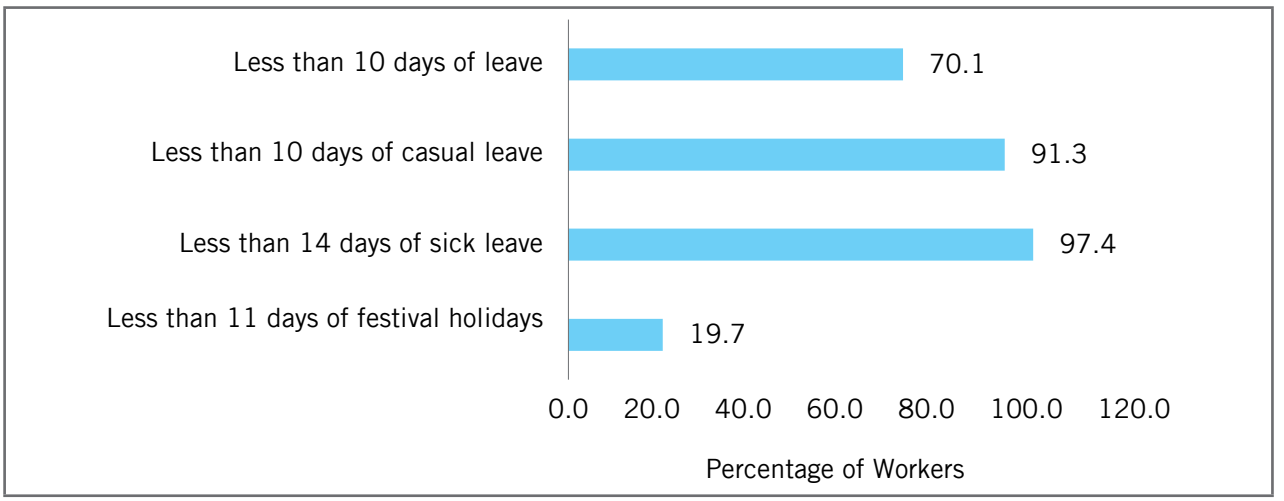


Figure 4.6 **Percentage of workers taking less leave than leave entitlement under the BLA**

A marked 19.3 per cent of workers (17.45 per cent men and 20.43 per cent women) did not take any leave during the previous year. Moreover, 70 per cent of workers took less than ten days leave a year (see table 4.58).

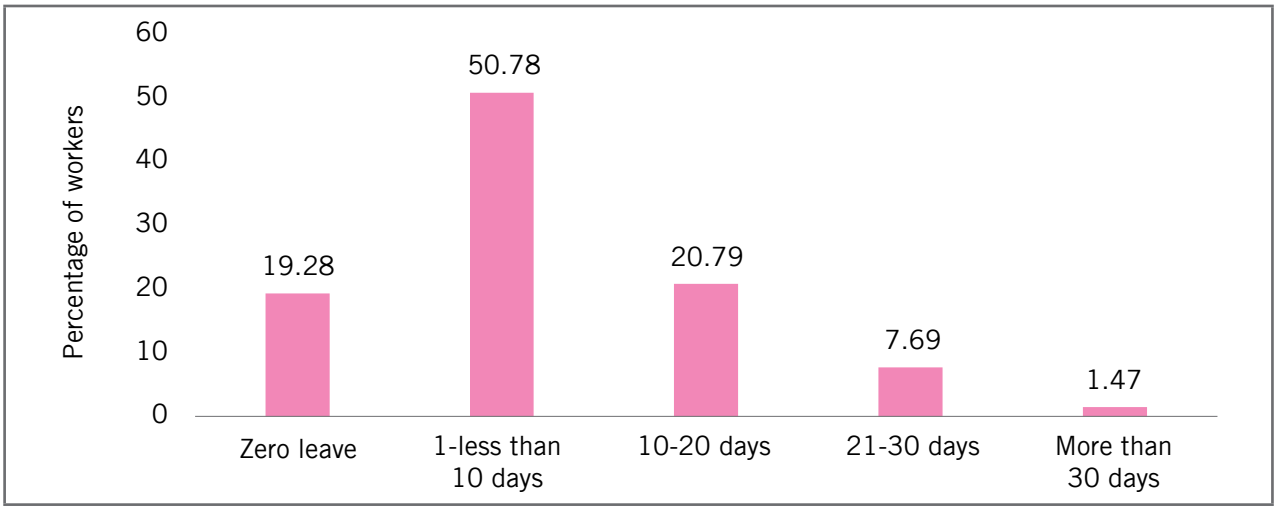


Figure 4.7 **Leave taken by workers during the previous year**

Leave taken in previous year	Percentage of workers	Percentage men	Percentage workers
No leave	19.28	17.45	20.43
1-less than 10 days	50.78	52.59	49.63
10-20 days	20.79	20.87	20.73
21-30 days	7.69	7.43	7.86
More than 30 days	1.47	1.65	1.35
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.58 **Leave taken in the previous year by gender**

The disaggregation of workers who did not take any leave in the previous year by type of factory shows that most of these workers were from knitwear or woven factories.

Percentage of workers	Knitwear	Knitwear/ woven	Sweater	Woven	Total
No leave in previous year	41.33	11.4	12.83	34.44	100

Table 4.59 **Distribution of workers who took no leave in the previous year by type of factory**

Sick leave: According to 7 per cent of workers (see table 4.57) sick leave was not available at their factories – this is a requirement under the BLA.[44] Although 93 per cent of workers reported the availability of sick leave at their factories, the percentage of workers who took sick leave was low as shown at table 4.60.

Sick leave taken	Percentage of workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
No sick leave	56.36	57.9	55.39
1-13 days	41	39.97	41.67
14 days and above	2.64	2.13	2.94
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.60 **Days of sick leave taken by gender**

About 56.4 per cent of the total workers surveyed and 61 per cent of supervisors had not taken any sick leave during the previous year. Workers who took less than the 14 days of entitled sick leave constituted 97.4 per cent. The average yearly sick leave was only 2.97 days.

The disaggregation of workers who did not take any sick leave by type of factory shows that most of these workers were from knitwear or woven factories.

	Knitwear	Knitwear /Woven	Sweater	Woven	Total
No sick leave	44.34	8.54	13.59	33.52	100

Table 4.61 **Distribution of workers who took no sick leave during the previous year by type of factory**

Findings from FGDs indicate that workers can hardly avail sick leave. There have been cases of a worker being injured and sent home after primary treatment. However, for the rest of the day, the worker is considered absent from work. Despite being injured there are cases where the injured worker has to come to work and sit idle somewhere in the workplace. Thus, it is hard for workers to avail sick leave.

Casual leave: No casual leave was taken by 34 per cent of workers (31 per cent men and 36.2 per cent women) in the year prior to the survey. Less than ten days of casual leave, as prescribed under the BLA, was taken by 91 per cent of workers.[45] The average casual leave taken yearly by workers was only 4.28 days. Women workers took less casual leave compared to men workers. According to FGDs, other than in the case of severe injury, workers were not given permission to take leave.

44 As per the regulation of section 116 (1), Chapter IX of the Bangladesh Labour Law 2006, 'Except a newspaper worker, every worker shall be entitled to sick leave with full wages for 14 (fourteen) days in a calendar year.'

45 As per the regulation of section 115, Chapter IX of the Bangladesh Labour Law 2006, 'Every worker shall be entitled to casual leave for 10 (ten) days with full wages in a calendar year, and if such leave is not availed for any reason, it shall not be accumulated and the leave of any year shall not be availed in the succeeding year.

Casual leave taken	Percentage of workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
No casual leave	34.22	31.09	36.21
1-9 days	57.11	59	55.92
10 days and above	8.67	9.91	7.87
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.62 **Days of casual leave taken by gender**

	Knitwear	Knitwear/Woven	Sweater	Woven	Total
No casual leave taken	41.42	10.99	12.87	34.72	100

Table 4.63 **Distribution of workers who took no casual leave in the previous year by type of factory**

A disaggregation by type of factory again shows that most workers who did not take any casual leave in the previous year worked in either knitwear factories or woven factories (see table 4.63).

Festival holidays: In contrast to sick leave and casual leave, most workers can take festival holidays. In-spite of this, 7.2 per cent of workers did not take any festival holidays and in total 19.7 per cent of workers did not take the 11 days of entitled festival holidays as prescribed by the BLA.[46] According to FGDs, some factories made workers work overtime before Eid (festival holidays) before allowing them to take leave during Eid.

Number of festival holidays	Percentage of workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
No festival holidays taken	7.19	6.84	7.41
1-10 days	12.53	12.95	12.29
11 days and above	80.28	80.21	80.3
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.64 **Number of festival holidays taken as leave by workers**

A disaggregation by type of factory again shows the same pattern as sick leave and casual leave.

	Knitwear	Knitwear/Woven	Sweater	Woven	Total
Less than 11 days of festival leave	42.56	11.4	7.67	38.37	100

Table 4.65 **Distribution of workers who took less than 11 days of festival leave in the previous year by type of factory**

Earned leave/annual leave with wages: Workers reported the absence of earned leave although managers said that earned leave was available in the factories as prescribed by the BLA.[47]

46 As per the regulation of section 118 (1), Chapter IX of the Bangladesh Labour Law 2006, 'every worker shall be allowed in a calendar year 11 (eleven) days of festival holiday with wages.'

47 As per the regulation of section 117 (1a), Chapter IX of Bangladesh Labour Law 2006, '(1) Every adult worker who has completed 1 (one) year of continuous service in an establishment shall be allowed during the following period of 12 (twelve) months' leave with wages for days calculated on the basis of the works of the preceding 12 (twelve) months at the following rate, namely (a) 1 (one) day for every 18 (eighteen) days of work, in the case of a shop or commercial or industrial establishment or factory or road transport establishment;

Earned leave taken	Percentage of workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
No earned leave	54.48	51.21	56.55
1-23 days	45.01	48.5	42.79
24 days	0.51	0.29	0.66
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.66 **Earned leave taken by workers**

Although survey results show that 45 per cent of workers received some earned leave, according to FGDs, workers did not get any earned leave. Some workers received payment for earned leave, but in many factories this was not the case, earned leave was only available to staff.

Opportunities for action: Based on the findings in this section, there is a noticeable dynamic in regard to working hours and wage-related issues. Workers tend to work long hours, including excessive overtime, when there are tight deadlines, however there is evidence of not being paid properly for those extra hours as reported during the FGDs.

Workers are subjected to excessive workloads. The issues of potential "overwork", exhaustion, and other complications emanating from working excessive overtime need to be taken into consideration to improve the general working conditions in the garment industry of Bangladesh. It will be important to revisit working hours since excessive work may have a negative impact on the health and consequently the productivity of workers.

Ensuring a suitable payment system for workers at sweater factories is necessary to ensure that they are properly paid for the hours that they work. Strict monitoring is needed for proper implementation of the BLA.

Workers cannot afford to take leave and they do not receive paid leave or earned leave as per the Labour Law. Taking any kind of leave results in less income. Proper implementation of the law relating to sick leave and casual leave, and the provision of paid leave and earned leave should be ensured.

4.2.3. Production targets

This section presents a brief discussion on production targets in factories and their impact on workers.

About 20.9 per cent of surveyed workers expressed their concerns about excessive production targets. About 6.6 per cent of workers mentioned that they could not meet their production targets due to pressure, a lack of time and that the target was not realistic. However, as presented in section 4.2.2, excessive working hours, overtime beyond the legal limit, involuntary nightshifts, and a huge percentage of workers not taking sick leave or casual leave as prescribed by the BLA suggests that excessive production targets are of concern. Worryingly a low percentage of workers admitted that production targets were excessive perhaps due to a lack of awareness or that they had got used to the excessive pressure.

	Percentage of workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Workers are concerned	20.91	21.29	20.7
Workers are not concerned	79.09	78.71	79.3
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.67 **Workers concerns regarding excessive production targets**

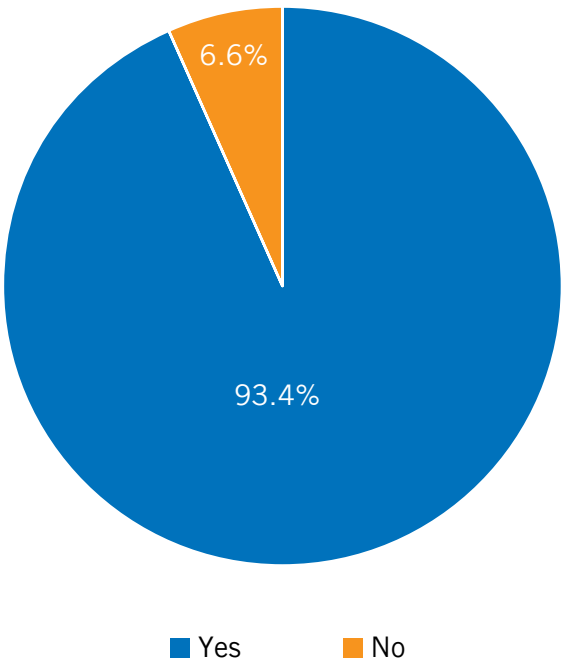


Figure 4.8 **Workers usually meet their production targets**

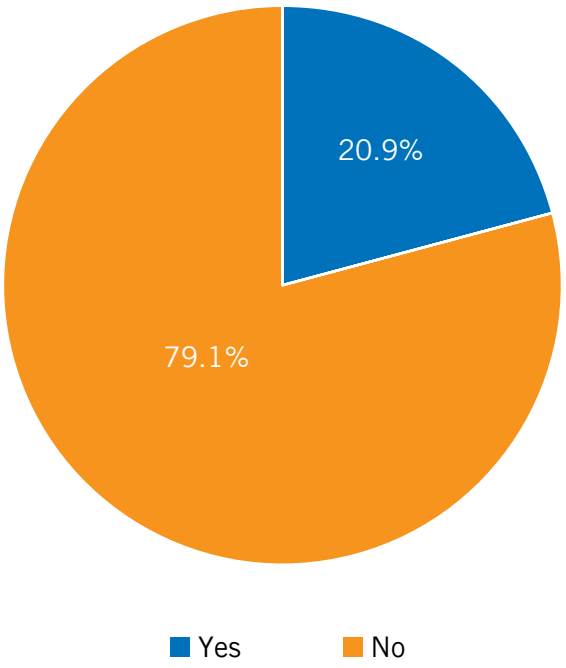


Figure 4.9 **Excessive production targets are a concern for workers**

During FGDs, workers were more comfortable sharing their experiences. Most workers replied that they worked to their limit and that their workload was too much; it was hard to handle sometimes. Supervisors agreed that workers needed to work overtime or night shifts if there was a deadline.

Working nightshifts for food; working on Fridays; working until 3 a.m.; working overtime before festivals; and being pressurized to meet production targets within working hours as reported by worker FGDs are a clear indication of the level of the workload in the RMG sector. According to a Human Rights Watch report (2015) sometimes workers reported working night shifts and holidays without any extra payment, especially when they were working to a tight schedule. The report shed light on unattainable targets being given to workers to deny them of their deserved overtime payments, and the abuse they faced at times when they could not attain the target.

The findings in this section emphasize the need to revisit the working hours of workers and to implement an effective monitoring system to prevent workers being pressurized to meet excessive production targets.

4.2.4. Wages, payments and other dues

This section details compensation-related issues with a focus on the distribution of workers across job grades, wage differentials among men and women workers, and ensuring the minimum wage. The section also focuses on the issues of awareness and concerns of workers regarding wage-related issues, bonuses and allowances and their ability to save. Lastly, the section also presents an argument regarding the feasibility of the living wage.

Job grade: The survey found that most workers belong to Grade 4 (34.48 per cent of total workers), followed by Grade 5 (16.71 per cent of total workers) and Grade 3 (15.84 per cent of total workers). Thus, most workers in the ready-made garment industry of Bangladesh possess mid-level skills as the hierarchy of grades corresponds to their respective skill levels.

Grade of workers	Percentage of workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Grade 1	1.14	2.48	0.3
Grade 2	2.11	4.36	0.67
Grade 3	15.84	18.63	14.07
Grade 4	34.48	35.5	33.83
Grade 5	16.71	16.04	17.14
Grade 6	15.2	12.15	17.14
Grade 7	14.51	10.85	16.84
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.68 **Distribution of workers by grade by gender**

The gender dimenions of the data reveal some patterns. Men represent a higher share of Grade 1 and Grade 2 workers who are at staff level and possess high-level skills and are paid the highest salary. In Grade 1, of the 25 respondents, only 4 (16 per cent) were women and 21 (84 per cent) were men. Similarly, in Grade 2, of the 46 respondents, only 9 (19.6 per cent) were women and 37 (80.4 per cent) were men (see figure 4.10).

The survey had a higher percentage of women respondents (61.17 per cent of the total respondents) than men. Among those surveyed who are compensated the most with the highest skills, women representation is low, despite their share of the survey sample being high. It might fuel the assumption that a systematic bias against women exists preventing them from assuming leadership positions or being promoted.

Differentials also prevail at the lower grades of the job scale. As table 4.68 illustrates, in the survey sample most men workers were working in Grades 4, 3 and 5 respectively, whereas the majority of women workers were working in Grades 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively. A higher percentage of women workers, out of the total women surveyed, were employed in the lower grades; Grade 7, Grade 6 and Grade 5. This contrasts with men where the percentage of men workers employed in these grades out of the total men surveyed was significantly lower.

In the consecutive higher grades, Grades 4 and 3, the share of men workers out of the total number of men workers (35.5 per cent and 18.63 per cent, respectively) are greater than the share of women workers (33.83 per cent and 14.07 per cent respectively).

Figure 4.10 shows that as the grades progress from lower to upper levels, the proportion of women workers in each grade gradually decreases, which is a clear reflection of men-women discrimination.

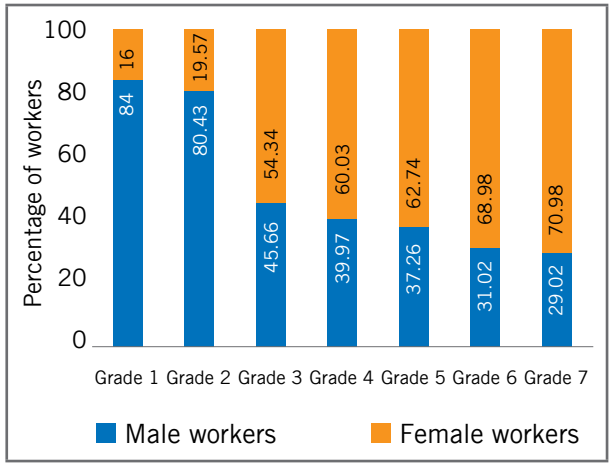


Figure 4.10 **Distribution of men and women workers by grade**

Wage slip: According to the Labour Law of Bangladesh, workers must receive a wage slip with each month's salary detailing their wage calculations including overtime, bonuses,

and deductions.[48] However, 18.6 per cent of workers either did not receive a wage slip or did not understand its contents. A group of workers were informed about their wage calculations but did not receive any written document.

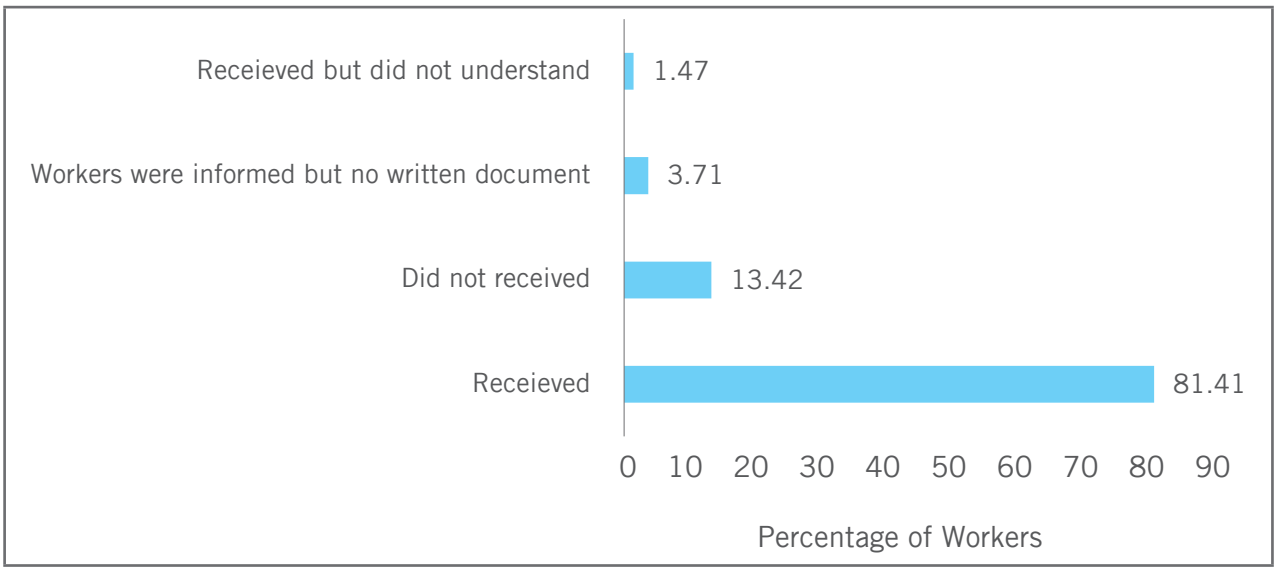


Figure 4.11 **Workers who received a wage slip**

Supervisors from 26.13 per cent of factories did not receive any wage slip and in 33 per cent of factories they received one but did not understand its contents. Supervisors from 40.5 per cent of factories received a wage slip and understood its contents. This indicates that wage slips are not provided as prescribed by the BLA in more than half of factories.

Many workers, as well as supervisors, have a low education and are unable to understand the contents of their wage slip. Training and assistance should be provided to them to rectify this.

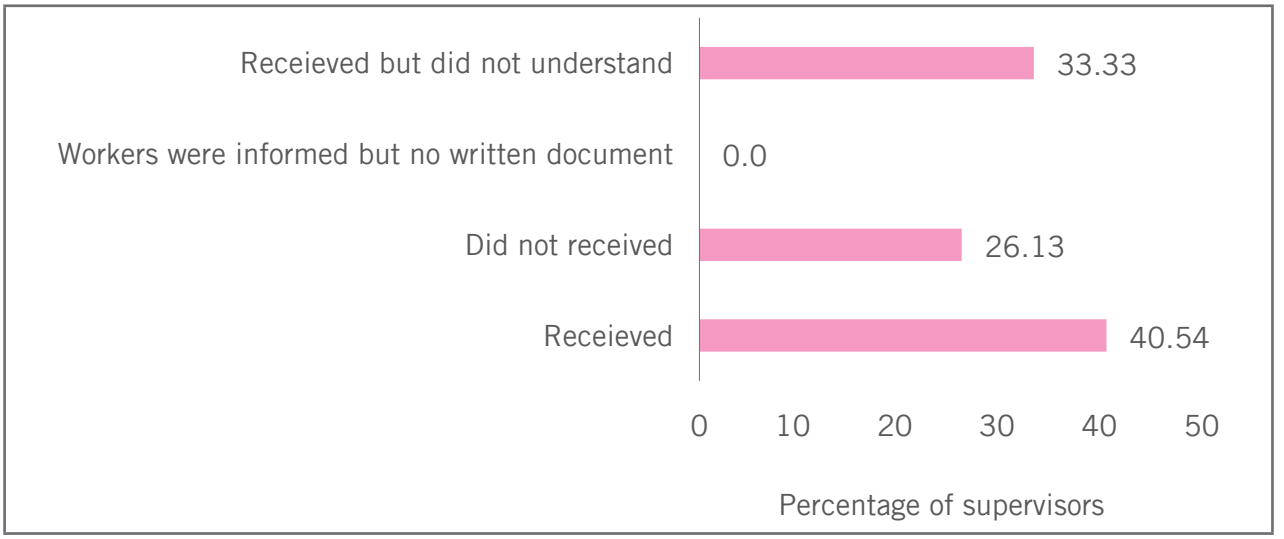


Figure 4.12 **Supervisors who received a wage slip**

48 As per the regulation of Section 111 (3), Chapter X of the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015, 'The Owner shall give Wage Slip to each worker at the time of paying wages as per Form-38, where payable amount of wages, overtime allowance, deduction (if any) and total payable amount of wages shall be mentioned.'

Mean wage: On average, workers received BDT 8,827.66 as a monthly wage including overtime. Men workers received BDT 9,447.02 and women workers received BDT 8,434.53. The average monthly wage of men workers was higher than women workers.

Mean wage of workers (BDT)	Mean wage of men workers	Mean wage of women workers
8,827.66	9,447.02	8,434.53

Table 4.69 **Mean wage of workers**

The study found that men and women workers were not equally paid for the same work. In each of the grades, the mean wage of men workers was greater than that of women workers; gender wage differentials therefore exist. Worker FGDs also provided similar responses that women workers face bias in cases of both wages and promotion.

Job grade of workers	Mean wage including overtime	Mean wage including overtime for men workers	Mean wage including overtime for women workers	Wage gap
Grade 1	16,778.0	16,992.86	15,650	1,342.86
Grade 2	12,113.8	12,117.16	12,100	17.16
Grade 3	10,068.6	10,594.49	9,626.68	967.81
Grade 4	9,032.5	9,348.14	8,822.33	525.81
Grade 5	8,399.6	8,597.72	8,281.99	315.73
Grade 6	8,143.4	8,349.52	8,050.64	298.88
Grade 7	7,092.2	7,487.83	6,930.46	557.37

Table 4.70 **Mean wage by grade (BDT)**

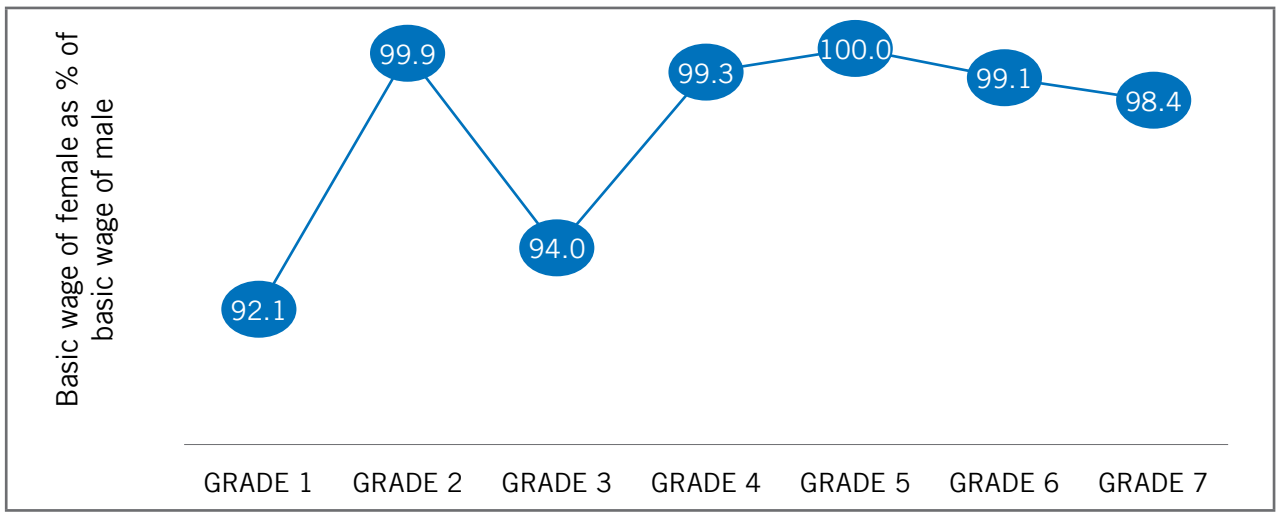


Figure 4.13 **Basic wage of women as a percentage of the basic wage of men**

As wage differentials can be a result of differences in overtime, for further analysis, figure 4.13 summarizes the basic wage of women as a percentage of the basic wage of men workers. In each of the grades some differentials exist except at Grade 5. Wage differentials are highest in Grade 1 (92 per cent), followed by Grade 3 (94 per cent).

Wages of supervisors: In 55.8 per cent of factories supervisors were usually paid a monthly wage of BDT 13,000 to 17,000. The mean wage of a supervisor was BDT 16,765. The estimated mean wage for a men supervisor was BDT 16,837 while for women supervisors it was BDT 16,032. Therefore, not only are women rarely chosen as supervisors, they receive less wages than their men counterparts.

Wage of supervisors (BDT)	Percentage of factories
8,000-12,000	15.30
13,000-17,000	55.83
18,000-22,000	16.20
23,000-27,000	8.17
Above 27,000	4.50
Total	**100**

Table 4.71 **Monthly wage of supervisors**

Mean wage of supervisors (BDT)	Mean wage of men supervisors	Mean wage of women supervisors
16,765	16,837	16,032

Table 4.72 **Estimated mean wage of supervisors**

The minimum wage of a supervisor was BDT 8,500 as reported by supervisors at two factories. In 22 factories the minimum wage of a supervisor was reportedly less than BDT 12,000. In 73 factories it was BDT 12,000 to 15,000 and in more than 16 factories it was higher.

In addition to estimating the separate mean wages received by men and women supervisors, supervisors were asked about the average wage of a men and women supervisor. In the case of a men supervisor, the reported average wage ranged between a minimum of BDT 9,000 and a maximum of BDT 30,000. Interestingly, supervisors from 34 factories did not provide any information for the average wage of a women supervisor as according to them, supervisors were always men. In the remaining 77 factories the average wage of a women supervisor ranged from a minimum of BDT 7,600 to a maximum of BDT 27,700.

Ensuring the minimum wage for workers: Table 4.73 illustrates the minimum wage for RMG workers in each of the seven grades according to the '*Gazette on minimum wages for RMG workers'* circulated by the Government of Bangladesh. Here the minimum wage is the sum of the basic wage, the annual increment of wages, rent allowances, medical allowances, transport allowances and food allowances.

Job grade of workers	Minimum wage (BDT)
Grade 1	13,000
Grade 2	10,900
Grade 3	6,805
Grade 4	6,420
Grade 5	6,042
Grade 6	5,678
Grade 7	5,300

Table 4.73 **Minimum wage of workers**

To analyse if workers were getting at least the minimum wage as per the law, the study used an estimated wage without overtime from the available information on wages including overtime to compare with the minimum wage at each grade. For estimating overtime payments, the minimum wage was used as the closest proxy for the monthly basic wage including allowances and ad hoc or interim wages[49]. As it underestimates the actual

49 As per the regulation of Section 102 (3), Chapter X of the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015, the method of calculating the general rate of overtime allowance: 1) As per Section 108, if there are not different agreements, the general rate of overtime allowance per hour shall be calculated in the following ways: c) 1/208 of monthly wage amount in case of the workers employed in terms of monthly wage; N.B: 52 ÷ 12 X 48 hours = 208 hours shall be calculated as one-month period. The rate of overtime allowance per hour = monthly basic wage and allowance and adhoc or interim wage (if any) X 2 X overtime hours/208 hours.

estimation used by the BLA, the percentage of people who do not receive the minimum wage is presumed to be greater than the findings of the study.

In total, there were 103 factories out of 111 factories where there were instances of workers being paid less than the minimum wage. On average, 23.58 per cent out of 2,184 workers were paid less than the minimum wage. If there are 4 million workers in the RMG sector, this finding implies that roughly 943,200 workers might be getting less than the minimum wage. It was evident that around 24 per cent to 27 per cent of workers from Grade 3 to Grade 7 did not receive the minimum wage as prescribed by law, although in Grade 1 and Grade 2 there was no such evidence. The percentage of workers getting less than the minimum wage was highest for Grade 5 and lowest for Grade 7 (see table 4.74). Discrimination existed more in mid-level grades (Grade 3, Grade 4 and Grade 5) compared to the lowest grade (Grade 7).

Job grade of workers	Percentage of workers
Grade 1	0.0
Grade 2	0.0
Grade 3	24
Grade 4	23.9
Grade 5	26.58
Grade 6	25
Grade 7	22.71

Table 4.74 **Percentage of workers getting less than the minimum wage by grade**

If workers receiving less than the minimum wage in each grade are disaggregated by gender then it is evident that at each grade the proportion of women workers is much higher than the proportion of men workers. This difference is highest in the lower grades, Grade 6 and Grade 7, followed by Grade 5 and Grade 4. In Grade 3 the share of men and women workers getting less than the minimum wage is somewhat similar. Therefore, in lower grades women workers face more discrimination compared to men workers (see table 4.75).

Job grade of workers	Percentage men	Percentage women	Percentage of total workers
Grade 1	0	0	0
Grade 2	0	0	0
Grade 3	49.4	50.6	100
Grade 4	36.67	63.33	100
Grade 5	36.08	63.92	100
Grade 6	24.1	75.9	100
Grade 7	25	75	100

Table 4.75 Workers getting less than the minimum wage by grade by gender[50]

The aforementioned findings correspond with the findings of Uddin (2015). According to Uddin (2015), in the RMG industry workers below Grade 7 and workers in the apprentice category are the lowest paid workers according to the wage structure. Workers below Grade 7 are on a probationary period and are not considered as a formal member of the workforce. As more young women workers tend to join as trainees, and graduates as helpers, they work harder than many of the older workers but are paid less in comparison. The dominant effect on the gender wage gaps is mainly due to occupational segregation.

50 In Grade 1 and Grade 2, workers did not receive less than minimum wage.

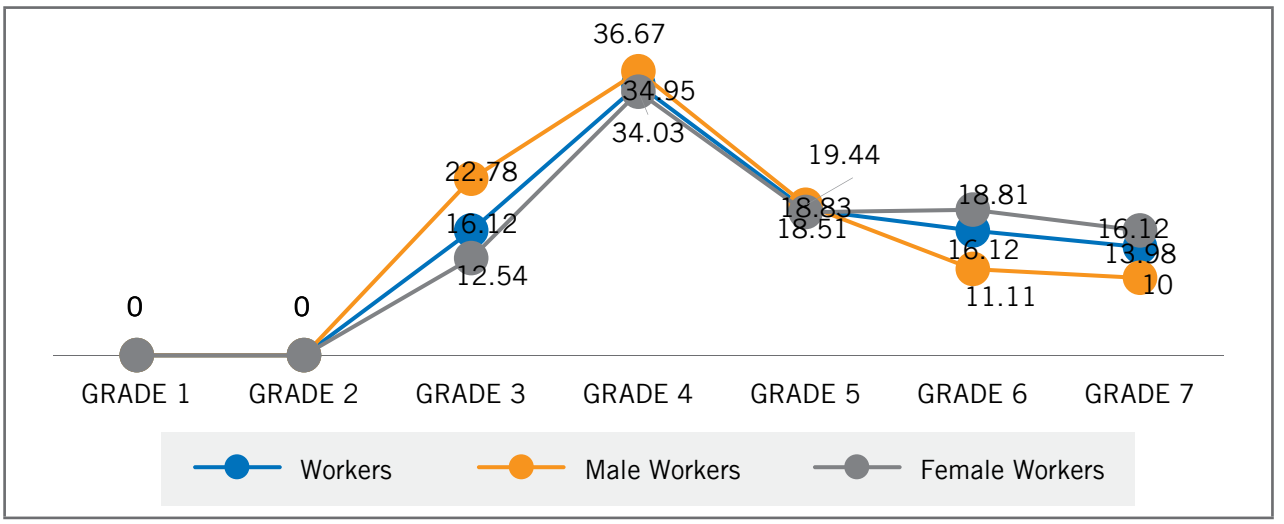


Figure 4.14 **Workers receiving less than the minimum wage**

Similar findings were found from a disaggregation of the data by gender. As a large percentage of workers in sample, work in Grade 4, the percentage of both men and women workers receiving less than the minimum wage is highest in this grade. In Grade 6 and Grade 7, the percentage of women workers getting less than the minimum wage is higher compared to men workers, which is indicative of the fact that the percentage of women workers working in these grades is higher compared to men workers. This again implies women workers are facing discrimination. The percentage of men workers getting less than the minimum wage in Grade 3 and Grade 4 is higher than women workers as the percentage of women workers working in these grades is much lower. In Grade 5 the percentage of men workers getting less than the minimum wage is slightly higher than women workers.

Disaggregation by type of factory suggests that among workers who are being paid less than the minimum wage, 43.7 per cent of workers belong to knitwear factories, followed by 39 per cent of workers who belong to woven factories (see table 4.77).

In knitwear factories and knitwear/woven factories most workers who are being paid less than the minimum wage are in Grade 4. In the case of sweater and woven factories, these workers are mainly in Grade 4 and Grade 5 (see table 4.76).

Job grade of workers	Knitwear	Knitwear/Woven	Sweater	Woven	Total
Grade 1	-	-	-	-	-
Grade 2	-	-	-	-	-
Grade 3	17.33	23.08	18	12.94	16.12
Grade 4	41.78	41.03	26	28.36	34.95
Grade 5	13.33	25.64	20	23.38	18.83
Grade 6	18.67	7.69	18	14.43	16.12
Grade 7	8.89	2.56	18	20.9	13.98
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.76 **Share of job grades by type of factory where workers receive less than the minimum wage**[51]

51 In Grade 1 and Grade 2, workers did not receive less than minimum wage.

To analyse the situation from a different perspective, if workers who receive less than the minimum wage in each grade are disaggregated by type of factory, then in Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 6, most workers work at knitwear factories. In Grade 5, and Grade 7, most workers work at woven factories (see table 4.77).

Job grade of workers	Knitwear	Knitwear/Woven	Sweater	Woven	Total
Grade 1	-	-	-	-	-
Grade 2	-	-	-	-	-
Grade 3	46.99	10.84	10.84	31.33	100
Grade 4	52.22	8.89	7.22	31.67	100
Grade 5	30.93	10.31	10.31	48.45	100
Grade 6	50.6	3.61	10.84	34.94	100
Grade 7	27.78	1.39	12.5	58.33	100
Total	**43.69**	**7.57**	**9.71**	**39.03**	**100**

Table 4.77 **Share of factory type by grade where workers receive less than the minimum wage**[52]

Apart from the above analysis, based on the estimated wage without overtime, workers were also asked about the minimum wage at their factories. Workers from 36 out of 111 factories reported that the minimum wage was less than BDT 5,300. In one factory, 75 per cent of surveyed workers reported this wage level, followed by 35 per cent to 45 per cent of workers reporting a similar figure in three factories (see table 4.78).

Percentage of workers in each factory reporting the existence of a wage less than BDT 5,300	Number of factories
75%	1
35%-45%	3
20%-30%	5
10%-15%	10
5%	17
Total	**36**

Table 4.78 **Factories where minimum wage is less than BDT 5,300 according to workers**

Worker FGDs also demonstrated similar findings. Also, there were cases, as reported by some workers during the FGDs that, when foreign buyers came to visit the factories, workers were told to say that their minimum wage was BDT 5,300 when it was below BDT 5,000.

According to FGDs, some sweater factories paid a minimum wage of BDT 4,500. Other factories where working hours were higher paid about BDT 5,500. According to workers, the bigger factories paid a minimum wage of BDT 5,300 and the smaller factories paid a minimum wage of BDT 4,000, 4,200 or 4,600. Some factories paid BDT 4,200 as a starting wage and increased the wage after a probationary period. There were cases where workers mentioned that their factories paid them BDT 3,000 as a minimum wage.

52 In Grade 1 and Grade 2, workers did not receive less than minimum wage.

Workers knowledge about the minimum and maximum wage: Workers were assessed about their knowledge regarding the minimum and maximum wage. Results show that a percentage of workers had no idea about the minimum and maximum wage. This indicates a lack of workers' knowledge about the BLA (see table 4.79).

When workers were asked about the minimum wage at their factories, 38.2 per cent of workers had no idea. Some 53.7 per cent of workers were able to state the actual minimum wage correctly.

	Percentage of workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
There is no such thing as a minimum wage	0.05	0	0.07
Less than 5,000	0.41	0.35	0.45
5,000 to 5,299	0.37	0.59	0.22
5,300	53.71	57.55	51.27
More than 5,300	7.23	8.73	6.29
I don't know	38.23	32.78	41.69
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.79 **Workers' knowledge about the minimum wage a garment worker must get according to law**

Similarly, in worker FGDs, many workers did not have a clear idea about the minimum wage. This lack of awareness results in an inadequate salary. All workers demanded that their minimum wage should be according to government law, or at least higher than their current wage payment.

Workers were comparatively less informed regarding the law relating to the maximum wage.[53] Some 66.7 per cent of workers did not know the maximum wage level. Moreover, only 0.5 per cent of workers were able to state the actual level of the maximum wage correctly.

	Percentage of workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
There is no such thing as a maximum wage	0.5	0.71	0.37
5,000 to 6,000	0.5	0.47	0.45
6,000 to 6,849	1.0	1.06	0.97
6,850	0.5	0.47	0.52
6,851 to 8,000	11.1	9.08	12.43
More than 8,000	19.7	21.46	18.64
I don't know	66.7	66.75	66.62
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.80 **Workers' knowledge about the maximum wage a garment worker can get according to law**

KIIs provided an assurance that factory management authorities are providing workers with graphics containing basic information on issues relating to wage laws to help increase their awareness. KII participants also suggested that these initiatives should take place more frequently with higher coverage. The interviewees also talked about how Bangladesh may be moving from wage-based competition to productivity-based competition by focusing more on technology improvement and the upgrading of workers' skills.

Concerns relating to wages: Workers were asked about wage deductions, their concerns about the late payment of wages, excessive deductions from wages, low wages and broken or inaccurate punch clocks.

53 The maximum wage level for workers is the minimum wage of Grade 3, which is BDT 6,850 (grade 1 and 2 workers are considered to be at staff level). Source: Gazette on minimum wages for RMG workers: http://www.bgmea.com.bd/site/circulardetail/389.

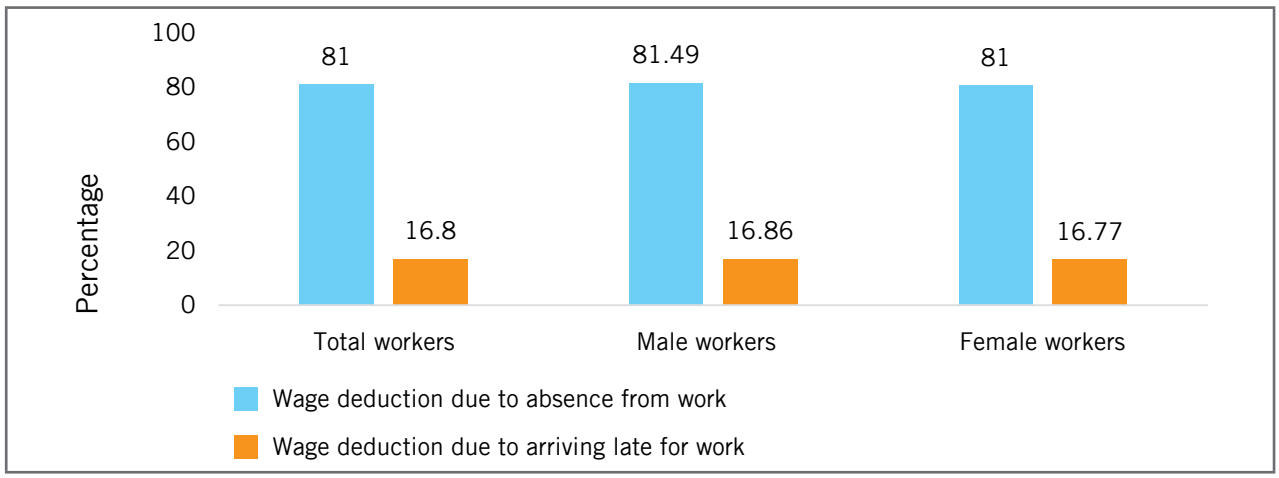


Figure 4.15 **Wage deductions**

According to the survey, about 80.9 per cent of total workers mentioned that workers faced wage deductions due to absences from work. Another 16.8 per cent of workers mentioned wage deductions for being late for work. Men and women workers faced wage deductions equally.

The major concern of workers regarding wage-related issues was low wages. About 24.2 per cent of workers were concerned about low wages. Men workers were more concerned about low wages than women workers. Women workers were more concerned about the late payment of wages compared to men workers.

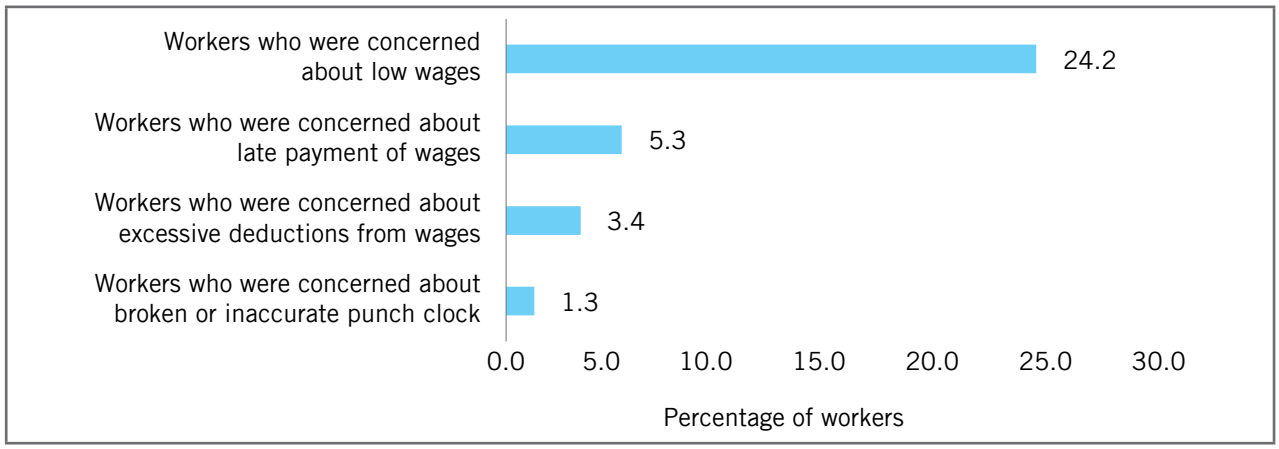


Figure 4.16 **Concerns relating to wages**

	Percentage of workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Workers who were concerned about low wages	24.18	28.54	21.41
Workers who were concerned about late payment of wages	5.27	4.6	5.69
Workers who were concerned about excessive deductions from wages	3.39	3.66	3.22
Workers who were concerned about broken or inaccurate punch clocks	1.28	1.65	1.05

Table 4.81 **Workers' concerns regarding wage-related issues by gender**

In contrast with findings from the survey, deductions from wages were a matter of concern among workers. According to worker FGDs, workers cannot afford to be late or absent from work. If workers are late for three days in a month then it is counted as one day's absence. In this case one day's salary is deducted or an attendance bonus is deducted. In some factories both a wage and attendance bonus are deducted. Some workers faced these deductions even if they were only one to five minutes late. Some factories deducted overtime for being late. Other factories did not allow workers to enter the factory premises resulting in further wage deductions. Wages were deducted if workers made any mistakes. Sometimes a wage and attendance bonus were both deducted for making mistakes. As the wage of workers is not high, every single absence or being slightly late for work has an impact on their livelihood. In section 4.2.2.2 the high percentage of workers not receiving their entitled sick leave or casual leave shows the extent to which wage deductions prevail at factories.

According to worker FGDs, workers were not satisfied with the payment structure at their factory. Payment was very low compared to their workload. Wages were not adjusted in line with inflation and living costs were high. According to workers it was hard to meet their living costs under the current payment structure. In addition, their standard of living was low. They were unable to meet their daily needs with their salary and had to work overtime to compensate for this.

Worker FGDs in sweater factories depict the problem of low wages more intensely. In sweater factories workers felt helpless. They could not earn a livelihood even after migrating and working at garment factories. Workers faced difficulties in coping with their living costs on their salaries. There were cases where workers mentioned that the factory laid them off for 18 days during the low season and did not pay them. Later, after protests from workers, factories agreed to pay them for six days. In the case of sweater factories, a low piece rate is a major issue. According to the 'Government Gazette for Sweater Factory Minimum Wage' the owner must make up any deficit in the minimum wage of workers (RISE, 2015), however, the problem still exists, and a proper solution is yet to be ensured. In this case, a complete implementation of the Gazette 2013 must be ensured and piece rates should be revised if necessary.

Bonuses and allowances: Workers were asked about the bonuses and allowances they received. Attendance bonuses and festival bonuses are the two most common bonuses received by workers. According to worker FGDs sometimes workers had to wait to receive these bonuses.

Around 87 per cent of workers received an attendance bonus for hours worked and overtime. However, as has been discussed above, the attendance bonus is frequently deducted if workers are late or absent for one day often for some invalid reason. In some factories the attendance bonus was BDT 200, 300, 350 or 500 per month. According to worker FGDs, some workers responded that their factory did not provide an attendance bonus. Findings from the survey confirm that there were eight factories where only 10 per cent to 56 per cent of workers reported that they received an attendance bonus.

Percentage	Number of factories
100%	43
90% to 95%	29
80% to 89%	13
65% to 75%	16
60% to 64%	2
55% to 56%	3
35% to 45%	3
10% to 15%	2
Total	**111**

Table 4.82 **Percentage of workers receiving an attendance bonus by factory**

Festival bonuses were provided to 86.2 per cent of workers. Table 4.83 shows the number of factories where workers received a festival bonus.

Percentage	Number of factories
100%	31
90% to 95%	30
80% to 89%	21
65% to 75%	19
60% to 64%	5
50% to 55%	4
46%	1
Total	**111**

Table 4.83 **Percentage of workers receiving festival bonuses by factory**

According to worker FGDs, workers received two festival bonuses. In some factories, if a worker had worked for more than six months, they received BDT 3,000 as a festival bonus. If the worker had worked for less than 6 months, they received BDT 300 or BDT 600 as a festival bonus. In other factories, BDT 1,500 or BDT 1,000 were paid as a festival bonus. In some factories, festival bonuses (proportionately 25 per cent of salaries) were paid as a fixed amount. In other factories, 50 per cent of salaries were paid as festival bonuses to workers after they had worked for one year, and this figure was 25 per cent of their salary if they had worked for six months. Operators had higher wages (BDT 6,000) and their bonuses were BDT 2,500 to 3,000.

Medical allowances were provided to 85.2 per cent of workers. Allowances for rent and food were provided to about 80 per cent to 81 per cent of workers respectively. Workers and supervisors did not usually get bonuses for productivity and skills. According to FGDs, only line chiefs in some factories got productivity bonuses. Apparently there is no incentive for workers to increase their productivity. According to FGDs, some workers were permitted seven days leave for their wedding but wages were not paid for these seven days.

Bonuses available at factories for supervisors included festival bonuses and attendance bonuses. According to management, workers were given salaries and bonuses as prescribed by law.

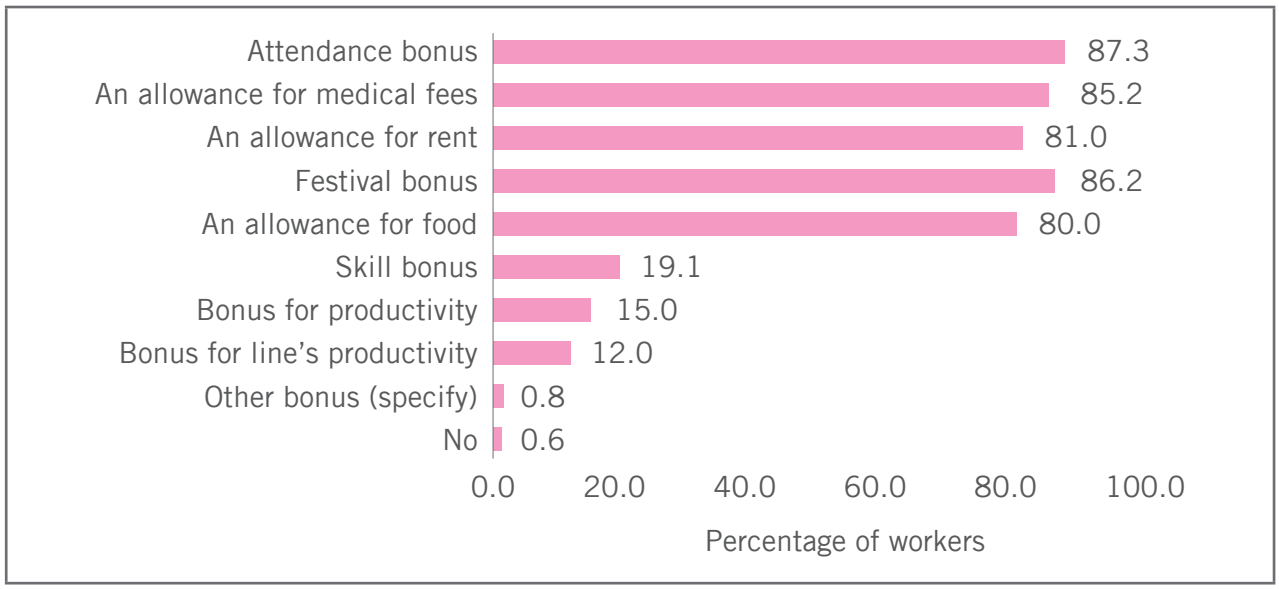


Figure 4.17 **Bonuses or allowances for workers**

Compensation in cases of accidents during worktime and occupational illnesses: Some 10 per cent of workers either did not know or said that the factory did not pay compensation in accordance with legal provisions in the cases of accidents during worktime and occupational illnesses. Not paying compensation for accidents during worktime is a violation of the BLA.[54]

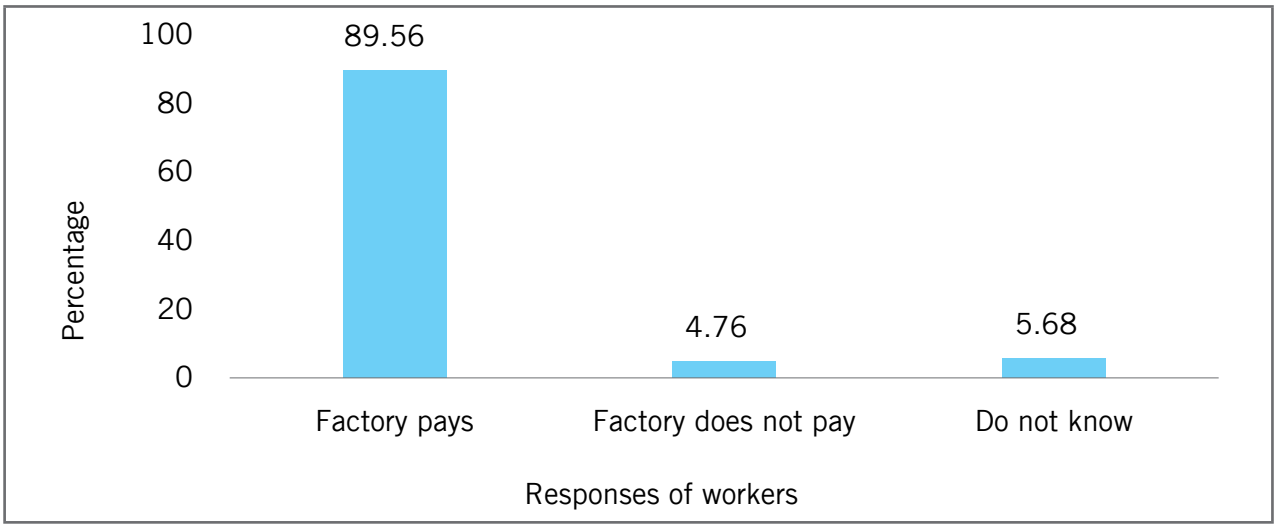


Figure 4.18 **Factory pays compensation to workers in cases of accidents during worktime and occupational illnesses**

Savings: Almost 35.2 per cent of workers, (40.68 per cent men and 31.6 per cent women) reported that they had not been able to increase their savings over the previous one year.

	Percentage workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Able to increase savings	64.84	59.32	68.34
Not able to increase savings	35.16	40.68	31.66
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.84 **Ability of workers to increase their savings during the previous one year**

The average increase of savings was approximately BDT 1600 per month. Table 4.85 shows the percentage distribution of workers by the size of savings over the past one year.

BDT in one year	Percentage of workers who were able to increase their savings	Percentage of men workers who were able to increase their savings	Percentage of women workers who were able to increase their savings
0	35.16	40.68	31.66
Less than or equal to 10,000	7.37	6.01	8.23
10,001-20,000	16.67	16.16	16.99
20,001-30,000	15.61	14.27	16.47

54 As per the regulation of Section 142(1), Chapter XII of the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015, 'The treatment of the worker injured in the workplace has to perform under the supervision of the Owner and the Owner is obliged to bear the expenses related therein.'

BDT in one year	Percentage of workers who were able to increase their savings	Percentage of men workers who were able to increase their savings	Percentage of women workers who were able to increase their savings
30,001-40,000	7.88	6.84	8.53
40,001-50,000	8.20	8.37	8.08
Above 50,000	9.11	7.67	10.03
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.85 **Increase in savings in the previous year**

According to worker FGDs, current savings were almost zero for many workers, which lead to frustration. After four to five years, workers did not want to continue to work in the RMG industry.

Feasibility of living wage: Workers want their minimum wage to increase. There have been recommendations in different studies to set a minimum wage that is equal to the living costs of workers (Moazzem et al2013). However, the theory of a living wage has many alternate interpretations based on the feasibility to pay this wage. According to KIIs, it would be beneficial for workers if they could earn more than their present wage but according to many, increasing the minimum wage is not always an option.

If the theory of supply and demand is considered, then in a free market wages come from marginal productivity. If this wage is not sufficient for workers, i.e. it is less than their reservation wage, they will not work at a particular place of employment. If they can get better wages with their existing skills, they will look for alternative employment. But the opportunities for workers are non-existent elsewhere in the market. Therefore, they are ready to work for the minimum wage, which is less than the living wage.

Moreover, KIIs reported that factories cannot be coerced into paying the living wage, which is different from the wage determined by supply and demand based on opportunities elsewhere in the market. Other sectors would also have to provide the living wage if the RMG sector paid it as it would create an imbalance with other sectors. In agriculture, the minimum wage is less than BDT 5,300.[55] Supply would increase and wages would decrease or there would be less increment if the minimum wage increased in the RMG sector and not in the agriculture sector.

Besides, determining a living wage is a difficult task, as it is not possible to include everything in the calculation. The concept of a living wage does not take into consideration house sharing and the income of other earners in the family. At the entry level of the RMG sector the wage is BDT 5,300, but this can increase if a worker gets promoted or moves to another factory.

As KIIs suggest, a more feasible way of providing a living wage is a regular wage, support from factories and job security, and opportunities for workers to progress up the professional ladder. There should be a minimum wage and the yearly increment should consider inflation.

55 The Ministry of Labour has agreed that agricultural workers should be recognized as labourers under the Labour Law, 2013. The minimum daily wage of an agricultural worker should be 3.27 kilogrammes of rice or an equivalent amount of money. www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2014/10/23/ministry-agrees-with-setting-minimum-wage-for-agri-labourers.

Opportunities for action: It is evident from the report that a specific percentage of workers do not receive the minimum wage according to the Labour Law. In addition, there are instances of workers not receiving the minimum wage despite working overtime.

Workers' expressed concern that even if they were paid the minimum wage, the remuneration would not be enough to cover their living expenses. Their concerns about wages extend to low wages, wage deductions, and the annulment of festival bonuses, among other issues. Attendance bonuses and festival bonuses are not paid for the slightest breach of the criteria.

Continuous monitoring of the implementation of the BLA and sanctions for any type of violation of the law is a must to prevent the above incidences. Ensuring equality among men and women workers regarding recruitment at higher grades and an equal wage for the same type of work is a necessity.

In addition, the findings suggest that there is a demonstrable lack of awareness among workers about the minimum wage, the maximum wage, and wage statements, among other issues. Therefore, a comprehensive review of these concerns and reforms to address them are essential to ensure workers' rights in regard to wages, payments, and other dues in the ready-made garment industry of Bangladesh.

4.2.5. Workplace training

This section focuses on introductory training and on-the-job training (OJT) in RMG factories.

Introductory training: In the survey, workers were asked about the introductory training they had received. Although most workers received training during the first six months of employment, about 24.9 per cent of workers did not receive any introductory training.

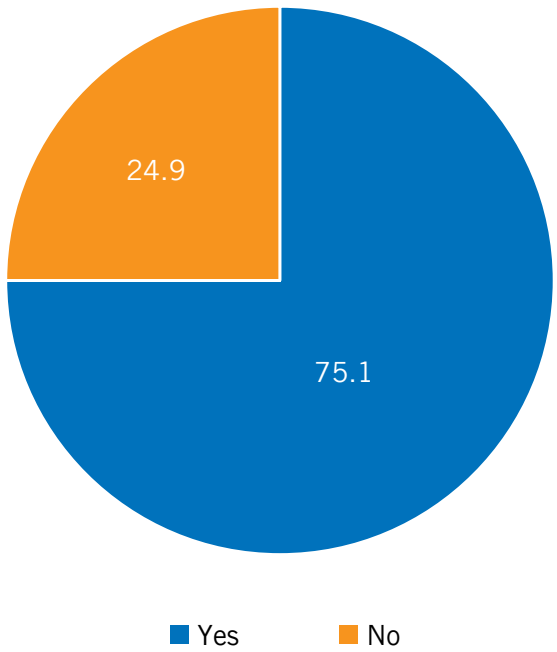


Figure 4.19 **Workers receiving any training during their first six months of employment**

Factory-wise disaggregation shows that out of 111 factories, there was one factory where no surveyed workers had received introductory training. In five factories, only 25 per cent to 37 per cent of workers had received introductory training. The factories where the percentage of workers receiving introductory training was low suggests that the training system is ineffective or not in full compliance with the law. There were 19 such factories with less than 60 per cent of workers receiving introductory training. In 18 factories, all surveyed workers had received introductory training. A disaggregation by gender shows that a higher percentage of women workers did not receive introductory training compared with men workers.

Status of introductory training	Percentage of workers receiving introductory training at each factory	Number of factories
Training is not available	0	1
Possibility training system is not fully compliant	25-37	5
Possibility training system is not fully compliant	40-45	4
Possibility training system is not fully compliant	50-56	9
Training system is available	60-68	15
Training system is available	70-75	28
Training system is available	80-85	14
Training system is available	90-95	17
Training system is available	100	18
Total		**111**

Table 4.86 **Percentage of workers receiving introductory training at factories**

Training not received	Percentage of workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
In first six months of joining	24.91	23.94	25.52
In past six months	18.50	17.69	19.01

Table 4.87 **Percentage of workers not receiving training**

By factory type the highest percentage of workers that did not receive any introductory training worked in woven factories (27.7 per cent).

Type	Received	Did not receive	Total
Knitwear	74.13	25.87	100
Knitwear/Woven	88.44	11.56	100
Sweater	76.34	23.66	100
Woven	72.33	27.67	100
Total	**75.11**	**24.89**	**100**

Table 4.88 **Percentage of workers receiving and not receiving introductory training by type of factory**

By location the highest percentage of workers that did not receive any introductory training worked in Narayanganj (30.6 per cent).

Area	Received	Did not receive	Total
Chattogram	85.71	14.29	100
Dhaka	70.25	29.75	100
Gazipur	75.68	24.32	100
Narayanganj	69.44	30.56	100
Savar	80.27	19.73	100
Total	**75.11**	**24.89**	**100**

Table 4.89 **Percentage of workers receiving and not receiving introductory training by factory location**

Types of introductory training: According to workers who received introductory training, the major components of training were health and safety training (76.5 per cent) and basic skills training (50 per cent). The survey found that factories did not facilitate adequate training on the grievance and complaints procedure, labour law, benefits, fines, upgrading skills, pay procedures, overtime regulations, working hours and workers' rights.

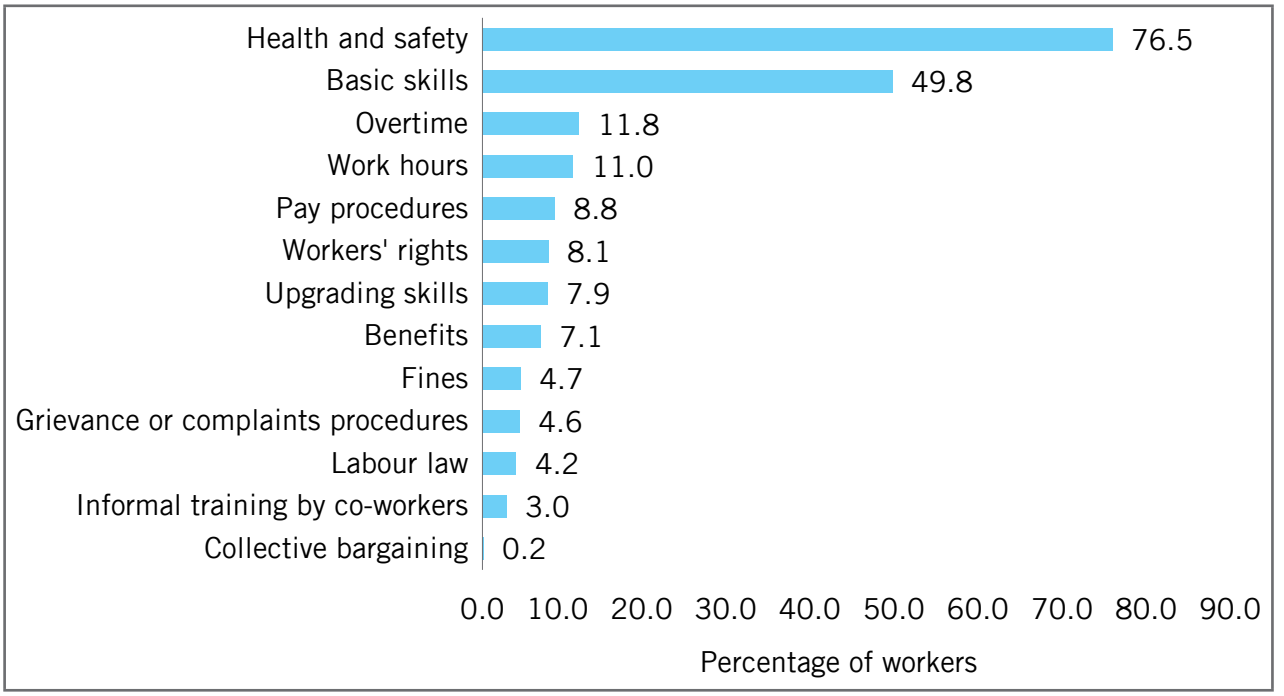


Figure 4.20 **Types of introductory training received by workers**

There were a total of 24 factories where less than 60 per cent of workers received training on health and safety within their first six months of joining. There is a probability that training on occupational safety and health (OSH) in these factories was ineffective or not fully compliant. There were 22 factories where 100 per cent of workers received training on OSH.

Status of training	Percentage of workers receiving introductory OSH training at each factory	Number of factories
Probability training system not in full compliance	18%	1
Probability training system not in full compliance	33%-43%	10
Probability training system not in full compliance	50%-59%	13
Training system available	60%-69%	13
Training system available	70%-78%	22
Training system available	80%-88%	18
Training system available	90%-95%	11
Training system available	100%	22
Total		**110**

Table 4.90 **Status of introductory health and safety training at factories**

Type of training received	Percentage of men workers	Percentage of women workers
Health and safety	78.76	75.08
Basic skills	51.16	48.94
Overtime regulations	12.87	11.06
Work hours	12.09	10.35
Pay procedures	9.92	8.14
Workers' rights	8.99	7.44
Upgrading skills	9.46	6.93
Benefits	7.91	6.63
Fines	6.05	3.82
Grievance or complaints procedures	3.72	5.13
Labour Law	5.12	3.52
Informal training by co-workers	3.57	2.61
Collective bargaining agreement	0	0.30

Table 4.91 **Training received by workers in first six months by gender**

Disaggregated data by gender shows that in addition to the lack of availability of different types of introductory training, women workers had slightly less access to training compared to men workers.

Worker FGDs also confirmed that usually there was no formal introductory training for skills development, but that there were informal training facilities at factories. New and inexperienced workers normally learned skills from their experienced colleagues. Workers from a few factories reported that formal training facilities were available, such as training centres. Workers were more familiar with fire safety training when they were asked about the types of training they had received.

From an analysis of the types of training provided it is clear that although 75 per cent of workers received introductory training, in most factories this only included training on OSH. Furthermore, findings from FGDs show that workers understand OSH training as fire safety training. It is apparent that after the Rana Plaza incident, factories have become more conscious about conducting fire safety training. However, most factories seriously lack other types of training.

On the job training (OJT): About 18.5 per cent of workers (17.69 per cent men and 19 per cent women) had not received any training in the past six months. Similar to introductory training, a higher percentage of women workers did not receive OJT compared to men workers.

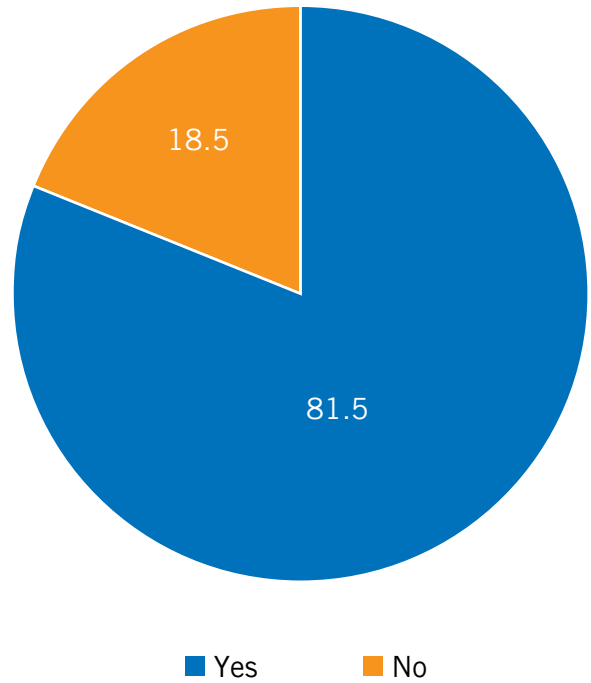


Figure 4.21 **Workers receiving any training in past six months**

Comparatively more workers received OJT than introductory training. Disaggregation by factory shows that out of 111 factories, in one factory workers had not received any type of OJT in the past six months. This was the same factory where there was no introductory training. There were 12 factories where less than 60 per cent of workers received OJT indicating that in these factories available OJT might not be effective or fully compliant with the law.

Status of OJT	Percentage of workers receiving OJT at each factory	Number of factories
Training is not available	0%	1
Possibility training system is not fully compliant	19%	1
Possibility training system is not fully compliant	30%	1
Possibility training system is not fully compliant	40%-45%	4
Probability training system is not fully compliant	50%-57%	5
Training system is available	60%-68%	10
Training system is available	70%-76%	20
Training system is available	80%-85%	15
Training system is available	90%-95%	25
Training system is available	100%	29
Total		**111**

Table 4.92 **Workers receiving OJT training in past six months**

If the percentage of workers not receiving OJT in each type of factory is analyzed, then in knitwear factories the highest percentage of workers (21.7 per cent) did not receive OJT,

Type	Percentage of workers who received OJT	Percentage of workers who did not receive OJT	Total percentage
Knitwear	78.34	21.66	100
Knitwear/Woven	92.96	7.04	100
Sweater	80.29	19.71	100
Woven	83.15	16.85	100
Total	**81.53**	**18.47**	**100**

Table 4.93 **Percentage of workers receiving and not receiving OJT by type of factory**

If the number of workers not receiving OJT in each factory type is analyzed by location, as in the case of introductory training, Narayanganj had the highest percentage of such workers (26 per cent).

Location of factory	Percentage of workers who received OJT	Percentage of workers who did not receive OJT	Total percentage
Chattogram	89.12	10.88	100
Dhaka	77.65	22.35	100
Gazipur	82.13	17.87	100
Narayanganj	73.99	26.01	100
Savar	89.97	10.03	100
Total	**81.53**	**18.47**	**100**

Table 4.94 **Percentage of workers receiving and not receiving OJT by factory location**

Types of OJT: OJT also focused on health and safety. Around 12 per cent and 22 per cent of workers received training on new skills and new equipment, respectively. Only 8 per cent to 9 per cent of workers received training on grievance procedures, workplace co-operation, and workers' rights. A few factories provided OJT on collective bargaining agreements, factory organizations, and new operations.

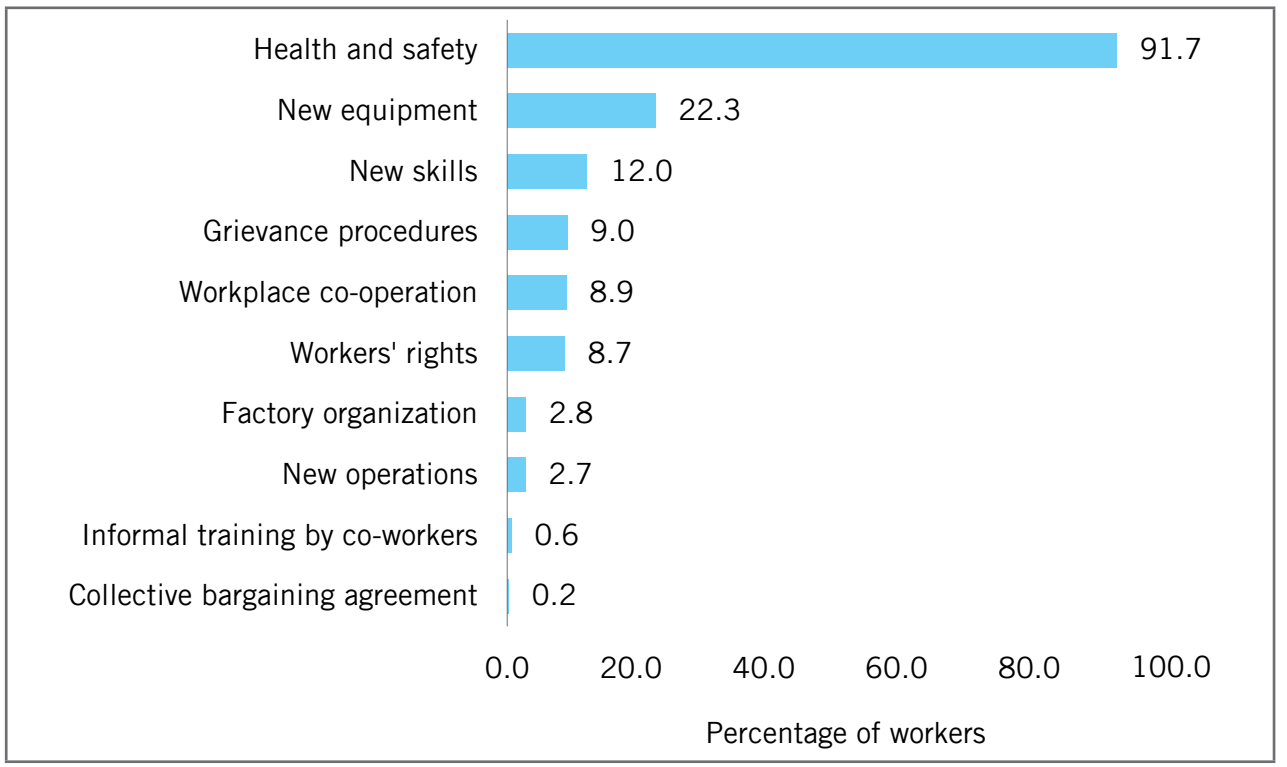


Figure 4.22 **Type of training received by workers who were provided with training in the past six months**

Data on OSH training shows that although during introductory training less than 60 per cent of workers at 24 factories received such training, in the case of on job training (OJT), over the past six months most factories had provided more than 60 per cent of workers with OSH training.

Status of training	Percentage of workers receiving OSH training at each factory	Number of factories
Training system available	58-67	5
Training system available	70-78	16
Training system available	80-89	7
Training system available	90-95	23
Training system available	100	59
Training system available	**Total**	**110**

Table 4.95 **Status of health and safety training at factories**

Disaggregation by gender shows not only the lack of available training but also that women workers received less training than their men counterparts in most training provided.

Type of training received	Percentage of men workers	Percentage of women workers
Health and safety	90.97	92.24
New equipment	23.5	21.53
New skills	12.6	11.65
Grievance procedures	9.31	8.78
Workplace co-operation	10.32	7.95
Workers' rights	8.17	8.96
Factory organization	2.44	2.96
New operations	2.87	2.59
Informal training by co-workers	0.72	0.55
Collective bargaining agreements	0.29	0.18

Table 4.96 **Training received by workers in past six months by gender**

Other studies regarding workplace training portray similar scenarios. Hasnin and Ahsan (2016) highlighted in a survey conducted in 15 factories that 68 per cent of workers stated that they received minimum or no training with regards to standard procedures in the event of a fire or earthquake, while 64 per cent were either neutral or believed that the training provided to them on joining was not adequate. Also, 44 per cent of respondents were not even aware of the concept of fire drills.

KIIs stressed the importance of maintaining the required safety standards and the need for factory authorities to continue safety and skill development training to ensure sustained productivity for workers.

Safety training that addresses the specific needs of women workers: According to this survey, of workers who received introductory training or training in the last six months, nearly 24 per cent (22.8 per cent men and 24.7 per cent women) reported that the safety training did not address the specific needs of women workers.

Safety training	Total	Men	Women
Addresses specific needs of women workers	76.09	77.24	75.35
Does not address specific needs of women workers	23.91	22.76	24.65
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.97 **Safety training addresses the specific needs of women workers**

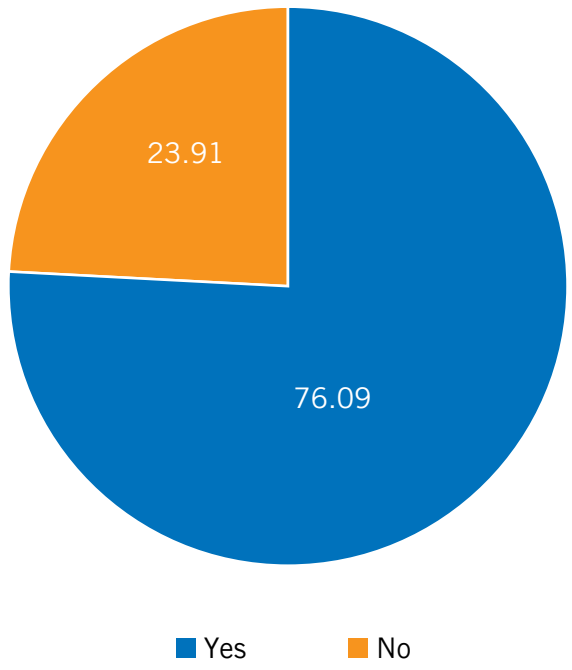


Figure 4.23 **Safety training addresses the specific needs of women workers**

Opportunities for action: In respect of training, data revealed a lack of training opportunities for both men and women in terms of new skills; the grievance procedure; workplace procedures; benefits of the Labour law; fines; upgrading skills; pay procedures; overtime regulations; work hours; and new equipment-handling training, among others. Only a basic health and safety training programme exists. A comprehensive outlook on training needs to be adopted and incorporated into the Labour Law and monitored to ensure that workers are aware of workplace processes and procedures and are prepared for the job. Safety training should also address the specific needs of women workers.

4.2.6. Social dialogue, workplace cooperation and workers' associations

Effective social dialogue and workplace cooperation help create better working conditions. In the context of the ready-made garment industry of Bangladesh, social dialogue, workplace cooperation, and workers' associations play a pivotal role in creating a safe, productive, and inclusive workplace. This section discusses issues concerning social dialogue and workplace cooperation, and the presence of workers' associations such as participation committees and safety committees, and trade unions, among other issues.

4.2.6.1. Social dialogue and workplace cooperation

Sharing grievances: According to the baseline survey, only 1 per cent of workers (12 men and 9 women) made a complaint at work during the previous year. Comparing this finding with worker FGDs depicts that workers do not have a suitable platform to share their grievances. According to FGDs, when a worker faces any kind of problem, the first step is to inform their supervisor, which coincides with the findings of the survey (see table 4.98). The outcome of the complaint depends on the relationship between the worker and the supervisor.

Workers were not comfortable sharing their problems with supervisors, as most of the time the supervisors were not helpful. Rather they were sometimes abusive and used vulgar language. According to a study on labour unrest, informal language used by supervisors to workers and the rude behaviour of supervisors might become one of the potential causes of labour unrest in the RMG sector (Ahmed et al, 2013). This illustrates the extent to which workers lack support from their supervisors. According to worker FGDs, they were afraid of their supervisors even when discussing work-related issues and felt uncomfortable sharing any existing grievance.

As found in FGDs, in the case of a problem with a co-worker, if a worker did lodge a complaint, there was a possibility that both the complainee and the complainant might lose their jobs. This meant that there was no scope for complaining about sexual harassment or other kinds of issues at most of the factories. Similar findings were reported in 'The Workers' Voice Report 2016' (Awaj Foundation & CSI). According to the report, out of 1,007 garment workers from 333 textile and garment factories who visited labour rights organizations, 91 per cent were working under abusive conditions. Eleven per cent had complained to their administrator (managers and supervisors), 8 per cent had protested about abusive behaviour, while 67 per cent remained silent, afraid of negative

reactions from the accused and the factory management. However, worker FGDs also provided instances of factories where the complainee had the scope to complain and could hope for a result in their favour as the authorities at these factories addressed and resolved any issues.

In the case of a problem with supervisors, workers were more helpless. Some workers reported that every morning an announcement was made over the PA system to inform them if there had been any complaints from workers. In some factories if workers had complained then supervisors took revenge on them. In many cases the management did not listen to worker's problems, rather they took the side of the supervisor. Similarly, when workers had complaints against managers, higher authorities did not pay attention. Sometimes, when workers went to the management to complain, the management listened but trusted the supervisors more. There was no opportunity to talk to the compliance officer about the supervisor. Some workers also stated that they had low expectations in the resolution of complaints. As they thought management would not take any steps, they did not even make a complaint. As has been reported in *The New Age* (4 August, 2010), according to buyers, mistrust and the rude behaviour of managers were the reasons for unrest in the RMG sector (as cited in Islam, 2015). However, some workers from FGDs also stated that management did listen and took steps accordingly.

According to FGDs, there were complaint boxes at factories that were opened on a weekly basis in compliance with the Labour Law. However, due to the facts mentioned above, complaints were not lodged. Some workers reported that the complaint box was regularly managed and action was taken. Others reported that they had never seen the box opened, nor were they sure if anyone put their complaints inside. In some factories complaint boxes were placed inside the toilet to maintain confidentiality.

Apart from the prevailing non-cooperation of supervisors and management, there is another possibility that workers do not recognize issues that need to be reported or relayed through the appropriate channels. When workers face non-cooperative behaviour or inapproriate language from supervisors on a regular basis, they might begin to believe that this is the norm and they must deal with it. For example, according to FGDs, touching women workers when providing instructions is a common practice in garment factories. Women workers might fail to determine whether the touching is appropriate or not. If this is the case, they might hesitate to complain. This might be a reason behind the negligible number of formal complaints from workers.

The case of 21 workers who had complaints about work: As has been mentioned above, according to worker FGDs despite the environment they work in, in the case of serious problems the first step is to inform the supervisor. Among the 21 workers who made complaints at work during the year preceding the study, the majority said they spoke to their supervisor, followed by the factory manager.

Most women workers who had complaints discussed their problems with their supervisors, while others shared them with either their co-workers or factory managers. Men workers mostly discussed their complaints with their supervisor, followed by their factory manager.

	Frequency out of 21 workers	Frequency out of 12 men workers	Frequency out of 9 women workers
Co-workers	6	2	4
Supervisor	17	11	6
Factory manager	7	5	2
Family/friend	1	0	1

Table 4.98 **Workers who had complaints and shared their grievances**

Workers, including men and women workers, who sought help from their supervisor usually felt 'somewhat comfortable' while sharing their problems.

	Frequency	Men workers	Women workers
Very comfortable	3	3	
Somewhat comfortable	13	8	5
Uncomfortable	1	0	1
Total	**17**	**11**	**6**

Table 4.99 **Experience of workers who had complaints and sought help from supervisors**

A negligible number of workers made complaints at work. Experiences from FGDs and a lack of training on grievance-related issues, as discussed in section 4.2.5, emphasize the necessity for an independent grievance-sharing platform for workers that will ensure confidentiality.

Factory management must rethink whether they should solely depend on supervisors in the case of grievance-related issues of workers. In the RMG sector, a common scenario is that workers are managed by a supervisor who primarily works on behalf of the factory owner but hardly has any training in leadership, law and legislation, human resources and health and safety policies (Ahamed, 2014).

Access to management by supervisors: Although workers had diverse opinions in FGDs, supervisors and managers mentioned that workers had a mechanism for sharing their concerns. According to the supervisor FGDs, they tried to settle any problems with workers themselves. However, any problems that could not be solved were taken to the management. This response was in accordance with findings from the survey.

	Percentage of factories
Consulted	74.77
Did not consult	25.23
Total	**100**

Table 4.100 **Supervisors consulting management representatives where they failed to resolve complaints**

According to the survey, supervisors in 74.7 per cent of factories consulted with management where they had failed to resolve a complaint. However, supervisors from 25.2 per cent of factories did not consult any management representative. This raises concerns about the co-operation of the management at these factories (see table 4.100).

Management was reported to be helpful by the supervisors who consulted them (table 4.101). However, survey results showed that in 5 per cent of factories, supervisors experienced problems while discussing workers' problems with managers (see table 4.102).

Supervisor's experience	Percentage of factories
Very helpful	26.51
Helpful	73.49
Total	**100**

Table 4.101 **Experience of supervisors who consulted management**

Supervisor's experience	Percentage of factories
Comfortable	94.59
Not comfortable	5.41

Table 4.102 **Supervisors who felt comfortable in discussing worker's problems with management**

Access to management by workers: According to management FGDs there was always an opportunity for workers to meet with them and talk about their concerns. There were

mechanisms, such as a complaint box, for workers to relay their concerns to management. However, as discussed in this section, the complaint box mechanism was not effective in most factories.

Although most workers met with managers occasionally, 22.6 per cent and 42 per cent of workers had never met with their managers to discuss collective or their own concerns respectively. Although most workers were 'satisfied' with the outcome after meeting their managers, there were 4 per cent and 5.3 per cent of workers who were 'somewhat satisfied' or 'somewhat unsatisfied' after discussing their own concerns and collective concerns with managers respectively.

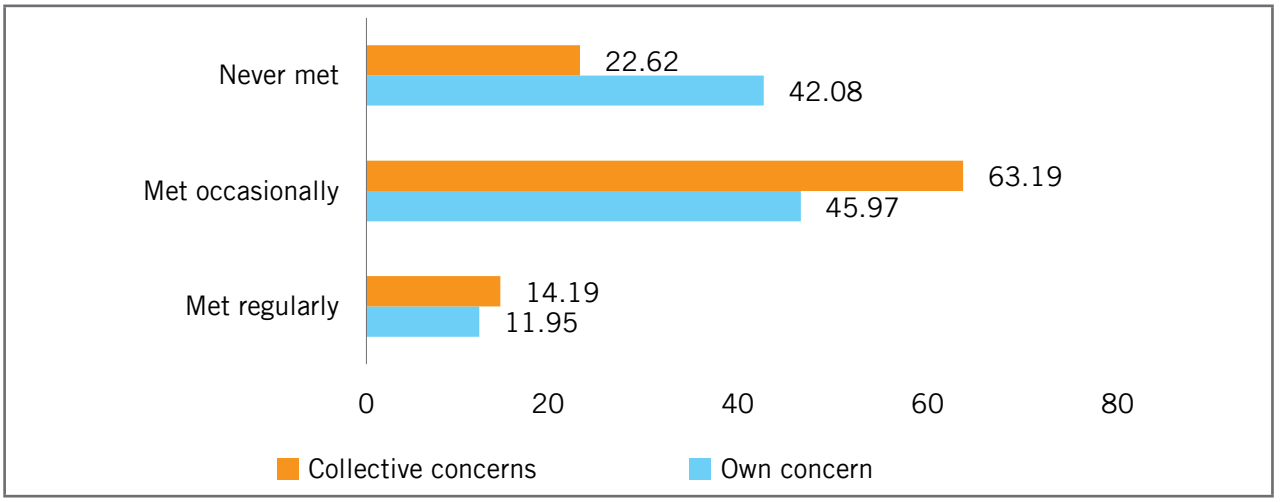


Figure 4.24 **Percentage of workers meeting with managers to discuss their concerns**

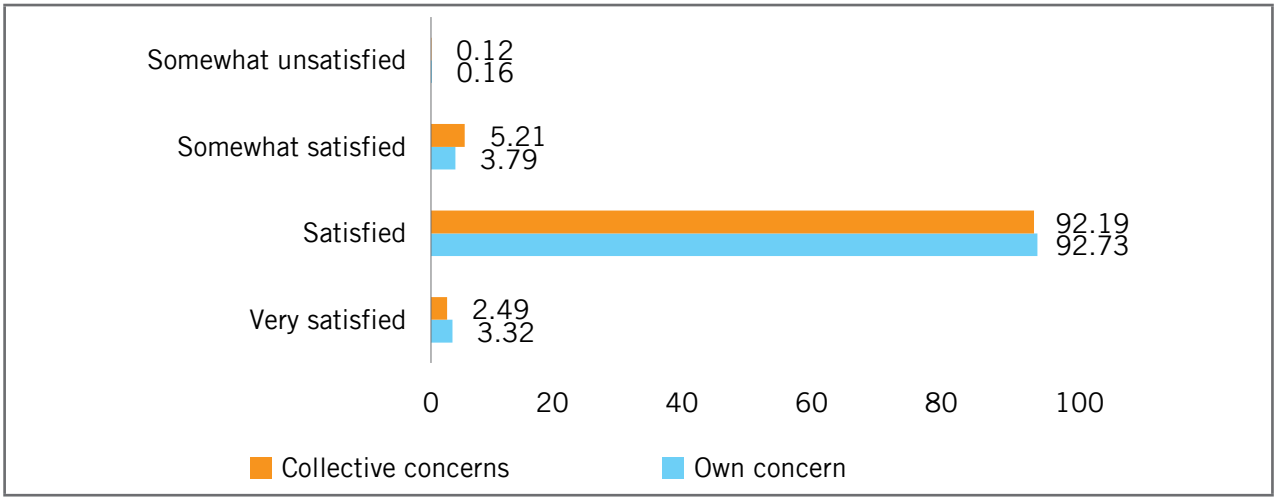


Figure 4.25 **Satisfaction of workers who met with managers**

Collective bargaining agents (CBA): According to 97 per cent of workers, factories do not have collective bargaining agents at their factories.[56] Only 3 per cent of workers in 21 factories

56 As per the regulation of section 2(52), Chapter I of Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, '"collective bargaining agent [CBA]" means a trade union or federation of trade unions of an establishment or group of establishments which is an agent of the workers [CBA] for collective bargaining in such establishment or group of establishments under Chapter XIII.'

mentioned the existence of a CBA. In these 21 factories only 5 per cent to 35 per cent of workers from each factory were aware of the CBA. Whereas according to managers, 33 per cent of factories had collective bargaining agents.

A CBA is an agent for workers. When workers themselves are not aware of a CBA, it is a clear indication that active CBAs do not exist at factories. According to the information site Export.gov, which is a collaboration between the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration and 19 U.S. Government agencies, out of 3,516 factories approximately 12 factories have collective bargainings (Export.gov, November 15, 2017). The reason behind the lack of CBAs can be attributed to the fact that in most of these factories, trade unions are not present (See 4.2.6.2. for more information on trade unions).

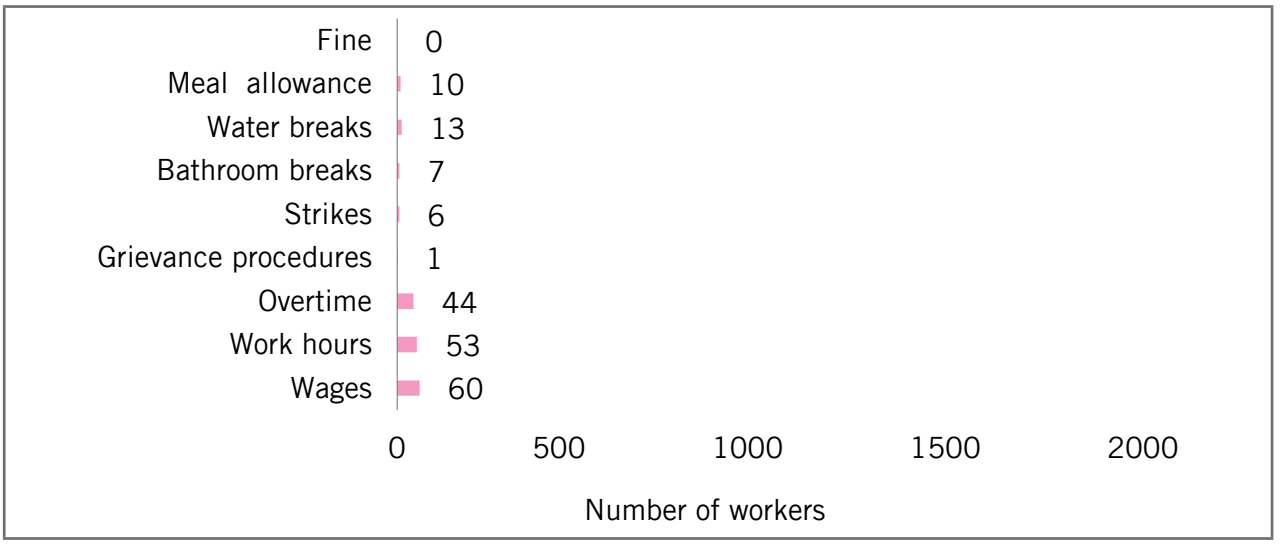


Figure 4.26 **Issues the collective bargaining covers**

The 67 workers who mentioned that there was a CBA at their factory reported that the CBA covered issues such as wages, work hours, and overtime. But they rarely covered issues such as grievance or complaints procedures, strikes, bathroom breaks, water breaks, meal allowances and fines.

Bangladesh made a commitment to develop industrial relations through enhanced social dialogue as part of the 'Sustainability Compact' with the EU and the ILO in 2013. This ensures freedom of associations and provides protection against anti-union actions. However, similar to the findings of this study, a thematic study on social dialogue in the RMG sector of Bangladesh by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) stated that the latest review of the 'Sustainability Compact' (July, 2016) had found limited progress in regard to workers' rights issues, despite progress in other areas (as cited in CPD, 2017).

4.2.6.2. Workers' associations

Presence of participation committee (PC), safety committee and trade union: The BLA states that factories must establish participation committees[57] and safety committees[58] if the number of workers is more than or equal to 50. There is no such mandatory rule regarding trade unions.[59]

Participation committees (PC) and safety committees were present in most factories. At least 60 per cent of workers in 89 factories mentioned the presence of a PC at their factory. In 92 factories at least 60 per cent of workers mentioned the presence of a safety committee. Trade unions were present at three factories, as reported by more than 80 per cent of workers.

Status of availability	Percentage of workers mentioning availability of PC	Number of factories (workers)
Available	60-100	89
Ineffective or unavailable	15-55	11
Unavailable	0-5	10
Not a requirement		1
Total		**111**

Table 4.103 **Presence of a participation committee according to workers**

Status of availability	Percentage of workers mentioning availability of safety committee	Number of factories (workers)
Available	60-100	92
Ineffective or unavailable	20-55	12
Unavailable	0-12	6
Not a requirement		1
Total		**111**

Table 4.104 **Presence of a safety committee according to workers**

57 As per the regulation of section 205(1), Chapter XIII of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, 'the employer of every establishment, in which at least 50 (fifty) workers are ordinarily employed, shall [through direct involvement of the workers working in that establishment,] constitute a participatory committee in his establishment in the manner prescribed by the rules.'

58 As per the regulation of section 90(A), Chapter VIII of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, 'In every factory where 50 (fifty) or more workers are employed, there shall be a safety committee to be formed and functioned in the manner prescribed by the rules.]'

59 As per the regulation of section 176(13), Chapter VIII of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, 'All workers shall, without distinction whatsoever, have the right to form trade unions primarily for the purpose of regulating the relations between workers and employers, or between workers and workers and, subject to the constitution of the union concerned, to join a trade union of their own choice.'

Status of availability	Percentage of workers mentioning availability of trade union	Number of factories (workers)
Available	80-100	3
Ineffective or unavailable	25-30	2
Unavailable	5-15	6
Unavailable	0	100
	Total	**111**

Table 4.105 **Presence of a trade union according to workers**

Table 4.106 presents comparative statistics about the presence of these three types of associations as reported by workers, supervisors and managers.

Number of factories with workers' association	Number of factories (Workers)	Number of factories (Supervisors)	Number of factories (Managers)
Participation committees	89	87	96
Safety committees	92	81	98
Trade Unions	3	2	4

Table 4.106 **Presence of workers' association**

It is evident that about 21 and 18 factories lacked participation and safety committees, respectively. These factories were mainly small factories where the number of workers was 100 to less than 500.

The reasons contributing to such an absence of participation and safety committees may be the non-compliance and indifference of management and a lack of initiative by workers to address the situation. In addition, monitoring to verify the existence of these committees, in part, by the buyer, government, and NGOs might have omitted these factories, thereby facilitating the absence of these committees.

Information gaps among workers and supervisors, and over reporting by managers regarding the presence of safety and participation committees indicates a lack of effectiveness of some committees and false claims by management (see table 4.106).

In contrast to the findings of the high presence of PC and safety committees, worker FGDs cited some cases where PC and safety committees were not effective. This is discussed in detail in the following section.

The presence of trade unions: Only 3 out of 111 factories (2.7 per cent) had a trade union according to workers. This finding coincides with the preliminary finding of a study by the Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD). According to that study, 3.3 per cent of the surveyed factories had trade unions (as cited in *The Daily Star*, March 2018). According to Export.gov, there are 507 trade unions in the garment sector of Bangladesh (Export.gov, 15 November, 2017), which implies that out of 3,516 factories, 14.4 per cent of factories are unionized.

The reason behind the low presence of trade unions in factories could be that in the context of Bangladesh, management fear that their presence might result in labour upheavals, such as factories being closed, which in turn encourages them to take measures to make it difficult for trade unions to have a presence at factories. An analytical news article by libcom on strikes, riots and fires in the garment sector in Bangladesh during 2006 pointed out the

low level of unionization among workers. The article stated that the involved unions often behaved like extortionists who 'took money from management to keep employees in line while at the same time collecting dues from their members with whom they virtually had no contact. Most of the trade unions appeared to be the tools of one or another of the political parties, strikes being used more as a vehicle for pursuing political goals against rival parties than improving workers' conditions' (Iibcom, 14 July, 2006). Management FGDs, as well as findings from section 4.7, also confirm that managers are against any sort of union activity. According to them, leaders of trade unions are mainly politicians whose rebellious activities could create chaos that could adversely affect production activities. Strike activities were identified as a serious problem by 70 per cent of managers. According to 80 per cent of managers, even a low level of union activity was not important for good business performance. For 32.4 per cent of managers, union activity was the major obstacle to business success.

In addition, another reason behind the lack of effective trade unions is that laws relating to trade unions make their creation difficult. According to a feature article by Human Rights Watch, there is a requirement to enrol 30 per cent of workers to establish a trade union at a factory; this is a huge requirement. The same article states that due to this burdensome policy, only 10 per cent of all garment factories have trade unions. During FGDs with workers, it was found that factories generally had participation committees, safety committees, and welfare committees, but not trade unions.

However, as of February, 2018, due to pressure from the international community, the Bangladesh Government is reducing the required percentage of workers' consent to create a trade union from 30 per cent to 25 per cent. A draft amendment has been made and will be finalized as law in the next session of Parliament (*The Daily Star*, 15 February, 2018).

According to KIIs, there is lack of unity among trade union leaders. Technically, there should be one trade union federation instead of several that ensure that there is one voice instead of many.

Electing representatives: Although most workers reported that workers' associations were elected, in 21, 20 and 27 factories, participation committees were not elected according to workers, supervisors, and management respectively. Sixty-three and 70 factories had safety committees which were not elected according to workers and supervisors, whereas according to management, there were no such factories.

Number of factories with workers' associations which are not elected	Workers	Supervisors	Managers
Participation Committee	21	20	27
Safety Committee	63	70	0
Trade Union	1	1	2

Table 4.107 **The formation of workers' associations**

Women representation on workers' associations: As collected from general comments in KIIs, women are generally wary of the possible backlashes of holding trade union leadership positions due to time commitments along with the confrontational nature of the job. However, they support the role of trade unions and participation committees and safety committees in ensuring minimum wages and improving working conditions, among other issues.

In the case of women representatives on PC and safety committees as reported by management, the share is significantly low with only 26.6 per cent and 12 per cent of managers reporting the figure to be above 50 per cent in each case, respectively.

Percentage intervals	Women representatives on PC	Women representatives on SC
0-10	19.27	21.09
11-20	4.59	4.59
21-30	10.09	10.09
31-40	13.76	15.6
41-50	25.69	34.86
51-60	16.51	8.26
61-70	6.42	4.59
71-80	2.75	0.92
81-90	0.92	0.00
91-100	0.00	0.00
Total	**100.00**	**100.00**

Table 4.108 **Women representatives on participation and safety committees (reported by management)**

The effectiveness of workers' associations: Workers and supervisors were asked about the effectiveness of workers' associations, participation committees, and trade unions. According to most workers, workers associations were effective. However, in the case of participation committees, 8 per cent of workers and 4 per cent of supervisors were 'not sure' about their effectiveness and 9 per cent of workers did not know as they had never asked for help from participation committees.

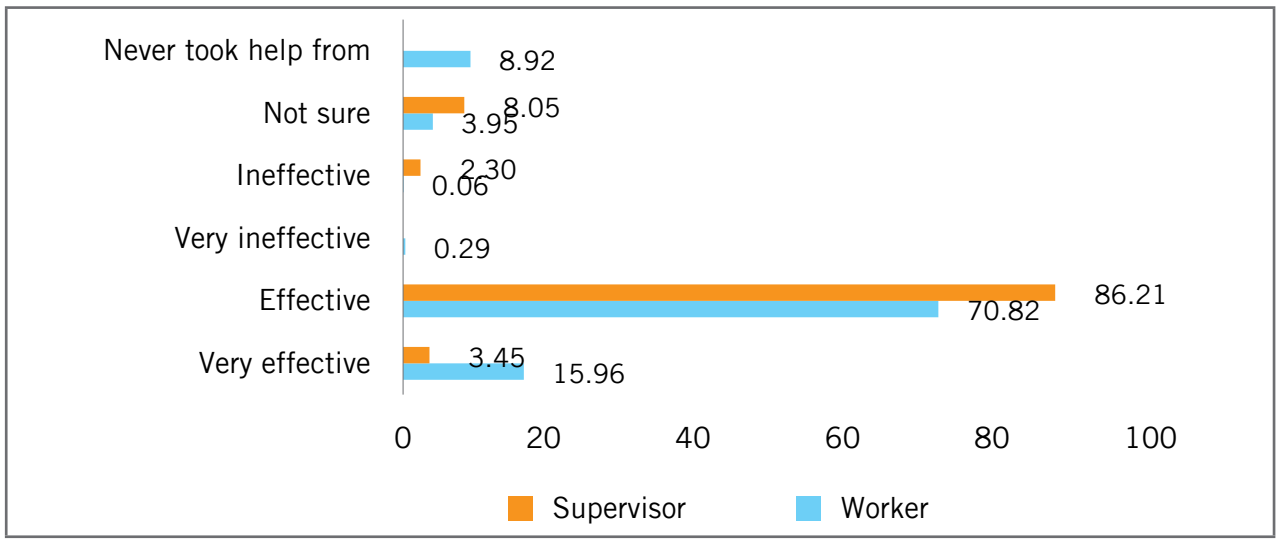


Figure 4.27 **Effectiveness of particpation committees in resolving problems of workers**

As only three factories had trade unions, their level of effectiveness is low compared to participation committees.

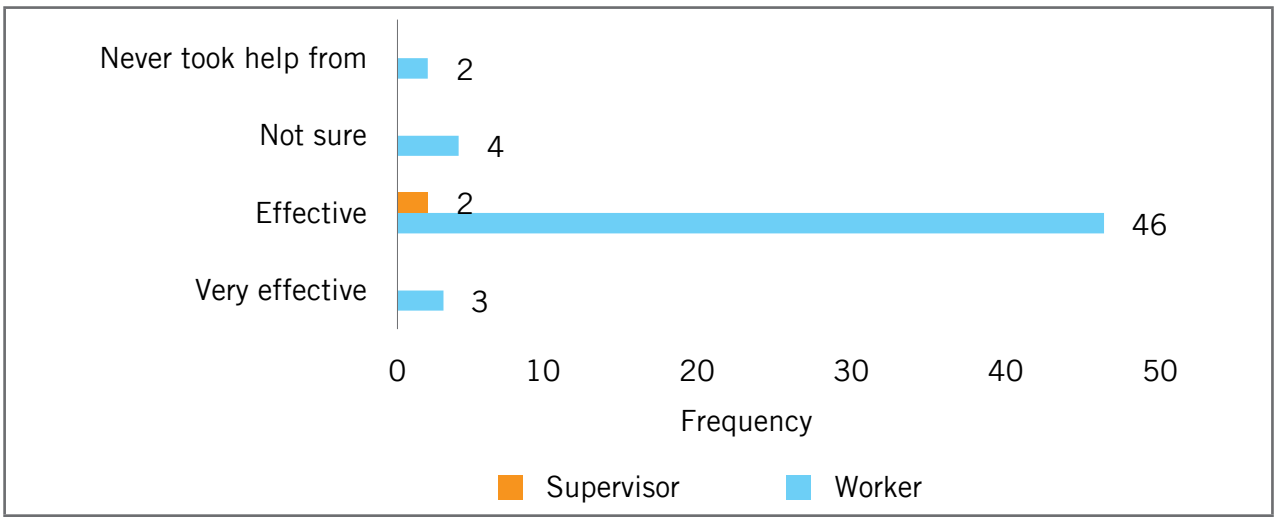


Figure 4.28 **Effectiveness of trade unions in resolving problems of workers**

In contrast, according to FGDs, the committees were not active enough in working to improve workers' status, with some exceptions. In most cases, workers were not aware of the existence of any such committees at their factories. The factories did not organize any elections for these committees. Some workers reported that there were participation committees and safety committees present at their factories but these were only to satisfy buyers. Some workers mentioned that participation committees existed previously but had ceased to function. According to some workers, factories had participation committees that had an elected president but due to the excessive workload they did not have sufficient time to manage the PC. In reality, if the president of the PC used their power, they would lose their job.

One group said that most of the time the PC was unable to help workers as they were obliged to represent the factory management rather than the workers. There were no trade unions and if a worker belonged to any trade union they would lose their job.

Types of issues workers' associations deal with: There were workers who did not know what types of issues these committees dealt with, although they knew about the presence of these committees. These committees mainly dealt with individual's rights and collective rights.

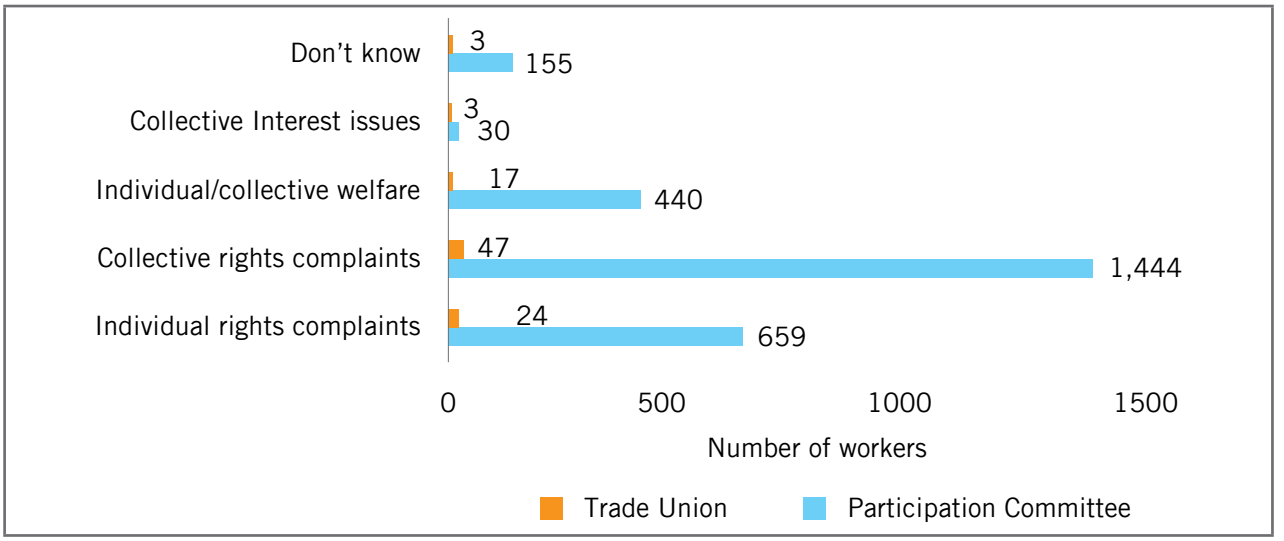


Figure 4.29 **Issues that workers' associations deal with**

Opportunities for action: The findings of this section suggest that there should be mechanisms in place in terms of human resources to allow workers to file complaints in regard to breaches of the law at the workplace, including the abuse of supervisors. Often, workers do not feel empowered to report abuse by their supervisors in case the supervisors retaliate against them; they might also be the person the worker reports to. Therefore, there should be a safe independent grievance-sharing platform within factories where workers can voice their concerns. Factory management must rethink whether they should entirely depend on supervisors in the case of grievance-related issues of workers, which does not ensure confidentiality. Also, active participation committees and safety committees have to be established. Furthermore, the presence of trade unions, with no political influence, which truly reflect workers' interests are needed to ensure workers' right without causing any harm to the production process. Without the presence of trade unions, the collective bargaining agreement with workers might not change, which might contribute to the suppression of workers' wages for a longer period than necessary.

4.2.7. Assessments and audits

This section looks at compliance with a focus on the regulatory adherence of factories. To illustrate these issues, the section covers audit and safety accords, the compliance dynamics, the maintenance of the code of conduct, waste management and effluent treatment plants (ETP), compliance records and the role of institutions.

CAP and DEA: The majority of factories (90.09 per cent) follow standard compliance in that factories had developed CAP (Corrective Action Plans) or DEA (Detailed Engineering Analysis) or were engaged in remedial work.

	Percentage of factories
Has developed/engaged in remedial work	90.09
Has not developed/not engaged in remedial work	9.91
Total	**100**

Table 4.109 **Development of a corrective action plan and detailed engineering analysis to engage in remedial work by factory**

Types of audit: Factory managers reported that different types of audits had taken place at their factories. The study showed that mainly regular compliance audits (97.29 per cent), financial audits (72.07 per cent), departmental reviews (57.66 per cent) and follow-up audits (48.65 per cent) had taken place at factories.

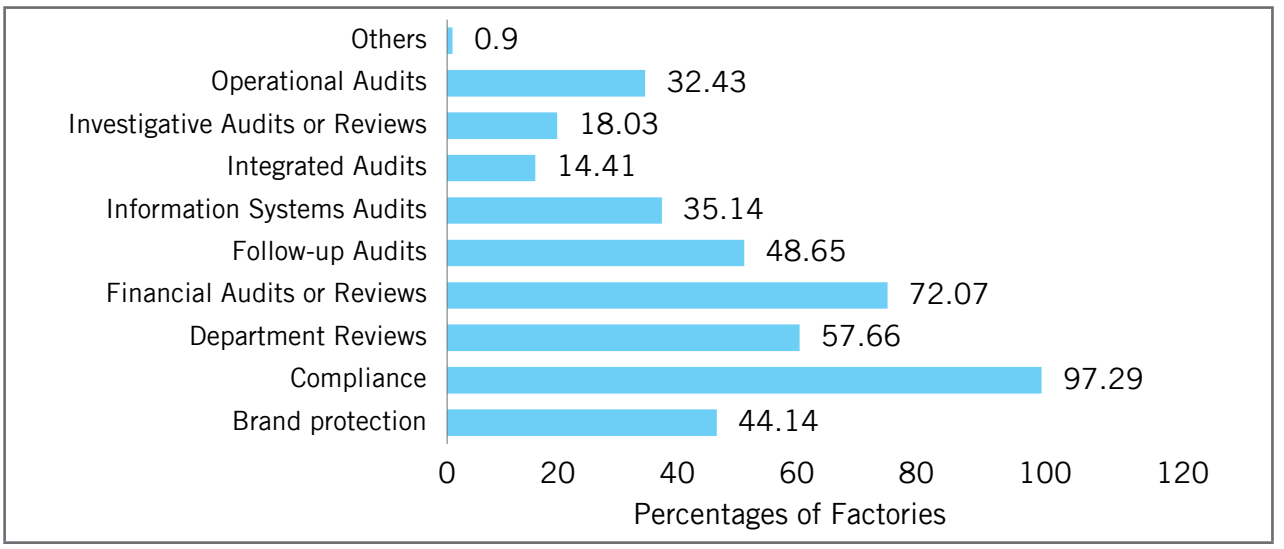


Figure 4.30 **Type of audits that have taken place by factory**

Audits by stakeholders: Buyers (94.59 per cent) were the main stakeholders to carry out audits, although audits undertaken by shareholders and the government were 30.63 per cent and 9 per cent respectively (see table 4.110).

Stakeholders who audited for social compliance	Percentage of factories
Buyers	94.59
Creditors	1.8
Government	9
NGOs	1.8
Others	10.81
Shareholders	30.63

Table 4.110 **Stakeholders who audited for social compliance**

Table 4.111 summarizes the number of audits that different stakeholders carried out at all of the factories at each location. It was observed that buyers were the main stakeholders who audited most factories regardless of their location, while the government was the main stakeholder in 20 per cent of the total factories in Narayanganj and in almost 10 per cent of the total factories in Gazipur. In 53 per cent of the factories in Savar, shareholders performed an audit.

Audits by stakeholder	Chattogram	Dhaka	Gazipur	Narayanganj	Savar
Buyers	86.67	93.33	93.55	100	100
Creditors	0	3.33	3.23	0	0
Government	6.67	6.67	9.68	20	0
NGOs	0	0	3.23	5	0
Others	6.67	20	6.45	15	0
Shareholders	26.67	13.33	41.94	25	53.33

Table 4.111 **Stakeholders who carried out an audit by factory location**

Factory assessment initiatives: The percentage of factories assessed by the Accord, the Alliance and National Initiatives were 80 per cent, 34.23 per cent and 10 per cent respectively.

Assessed by the following initiatives	Percentage of factories
The Accord	80.18
The Alliance	34.23
National Initiatives	10

Table 4.112 **Factory assessment initiatives**

Out of 111 factories, 86 per cent of factories were working for buyers who were either members of the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh (the Accord) or the Alliance. Less than half of these factories (45.83 per cent) were provided with adequate funding to maintain a safe building.

Funding adequate to maintain safe building	Percentage of factories
Provided with funding	45.83
Not provided with funding	54.17
Total	**100**

Table 4.113 **Factories provided with adequate funding to maintain a safe building**

Managers suggested that the Accord/Alliance should facilitate communications between brands and factory owners to provide support for fixing a standard price for each category of apparel. According to a manager, since the Accord and the Alliance have become active in the garment sector in Bangladesh, training for workers on health and safety issues has greatly improved. Workers have become more conscious about emergency drills and safety training due to frequent practice sessions.

Labour standards enforcement: The survey found that 63.1 per cent of buyers never asked about labour standards at factories. In 92.79 per cent of factories, labour standards were enforced by buyer audits. Government inspectors, NGO or third party audits and grievance procedures also influenced the enforcement of labour standards.

Labour standards enforcement by stakeholders	Percentage of factories
Buyers	92.79
Government inspectors	18.02
Grievance procedures	9.91
NGOs	16.22

Table 4.114 **Enforcement of labour standards by various stakeholders**

Code of conduct: All respondents agreed that buyers had individual codes of conduct and that each factory had to comply with their rules before entering into a contract with them and follow the code of conduct thereafter. The survey found that 94.59 per cent of factories had their own code of conduct. Almost 51 per cent of factories who had a code of conduct mentioned that their way of enforcement was according to the contract. However, about 49 per cent of surveyed factories who had their own code of conduct admitted "compromised enforcement" of the contract. In the manager FGDs, it was found that although the brands that came through the Accord/the Alliance were supposed to give a maximum of 50 per cent of the remedial money[60], they did not provide it. According to management FGDs, as prices decrease on a daily basis, factories are finding it hard to cope with the wage structure prescribed by government even if they want to adhere to it.

60 'Financial support will be available for factories meeting the eligibility criteria for a maximum of 50% of the estimated cost of uncompleted fire, electrical and structural remediation items in the CAP.' http://bangladeshaccord.org/about/faqs/

More than 25 per cent of factories had not had a technical evaluation/audit in the previous three months and in almost 3 per cent of factories this evaluation had never been conducted.

Technical evaluation/ audit performed	Percentage of factories
Last 3 months	73.87
Last 6 months	15.32
Last 9 months	1.8
Last 12 months	6.31
Technical evaluation not conducted	2.7
Total	**100**

Table 4.115 **Latest technical evaluation/ audit conducted**

Generally, buyers conducted evaluation/audits at factories. In some factories, the evaluation was done by the factory itself or 'others'.

Technical evaluation conducted	Percentage of factories
Buyers	92.79
Factory	9.01
Others	5.41
Total	**100**

Table 4.116 **Stakeholders conducting technical evaluations/audits at factories**

In almost all factories (98.2 per cent), buyers placed orders respecting the production capacity of the factory. Moreover, buyers also gave factories (91.89 per cent) sufficient lead time for production. Responses from about 84 per cent of factories highlighted that buyers or the factory took into account overtime premiums to be paid to workers based on the number of hours estimated to produce the order.

Waste management: There was a potential lack of waste management. Under the E.C.R. 1997[61], it is mandatory for the textile (Amin and Khan, 2016) and RMG sector to set up effluent treatment plants (ETP) to treat waste before it is released into the environment. However, 73 per cent of factories lack ETPs. Moreover, not all factories equipped with ETPs have been inspected by the government. There is a dire need for proper enforcement of the law in this regard.

Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP)	Percentage of factories
Have set up	27.03
Have not set up	72.97
Total	**100**

Table 4.117 **Availability of effluent treatment plants to treat waste**

Government inspection	Percentage of Factories
Inspection has taken place	93.33
Inspection has not taken place	6.66
Total	**100**

Table 4.118 **Government inspection of factories with effluent treatment plants**

Compliance records: Regarding compliance records, managers from 52.25 per cent of factories said that they had similar compliance records to their competitors, while 44.14 per cent said that they had better compliance records.

61 As per Rule 7(1), The Environmental Conservation Rules 1997, 'For the purpose of the issuance of Environmental Clearance Certificate, the industrial units and projects shall, in consideration of their site and impact on environment, be classified into the following four categories: a. Green, b. Orange-A, c. Orange-B (60. Garments and sweater production) and d. Red. As per Rule 6, The following documents shall be attached with an application made under sub rule (5): c (ii) For Orange-B category: report on Initial Environmental Examination of the industrial unit or project, and also the process flow diagram, Lay Out plan (showing location of Effluent Treatment Plant), design of the Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) of the unit or project (these are applicable only for a proposed industrial unit or project.)

Some 35 per cent of managers from different factories agreed that some factories were reluctant to make improvements in compliance issues. According to manager FGDs, buyers are not interested in the factory if the factory adds the amount of money spent on compliance to their cost of production. The net returns from the amount spent to conform to compliance requirements were therefore ambiguous.

As reported in FGDs with management, some factories were inconvenienced and experienced financial loss due to the lack of a well-planned compliance audit. Management from these factories complained that auditors initially insisted on the installation of particular equipment to ensure compliance. However, after installing it the auditors required new and different equipment, which resulted in financial loss for the factories in question. This confusion arose as a result of an unplanned and improper execution of the audit process and caused issues for factories who are eager to meet compliance standards.

KIIs relayed concerns over the balance between the cost of compliance and profit generation for factories, bearing in mind that the RMG market operates competitively where price and cost play a large role. The discussions raised questions about the implications of the increased costs incurred from ensuring compliance and its effect on prices and profits. However, studies on the cost-benefit viability of ensuring compliance have come up with positive results that predict increased exports, increased turnover rates compared to initial investments, and associated social benefits. Baral (2010) studied second-generation compliance and found that for the same investment by both compliant and non-compliant factories, the average annual turnover of compliant factories was US$ 0.2451 million higher than non-compliant factories. A report by the Copenhagen Consensus Center used the benefit-cost ratio (BCR) to evaluate the payoff of investments made under certain interventions (Shadat et al, 2016). The results showed positive returns from investments in the form of increased exports. It should be emphasized that the RMG industry is currently focused on ensuring compliance in the short to medium term. However, concerns remain for small and medium factories who are unable to meet compliance requirements through self-financing.

Opportunities for action: Although buyers conduct most audits, there should be an adequate number of audits by government, NGOs, and the grievance procedure should be given a greater role to maintain labour standards. The incentive mechanisms for factories to maintain labour standards should be improved. For instance, the costs incurred to maintain labour standards should be included in the price of the product. In regard to proper waste management, law enforcement agencies should focus on this issue.

4.3 Workplace harassment

This section discusses relevant issues regarding workplace-related harassment. The presence of physical abuse, verbal abuse and sexual harassment has already been discussed earlier in this report. How workers share their concerns about workplace harassment, the presence of sexual harassment policies, lodging complaints about harassment, and permission being refused to use the toilet are discussed below. This section also highlights the lack of relevant legal instruments.

Presence of abuse and harassment: Workers were asked about three types of workplace harassment: physical abuse, verbal abuse and sexual harassment. They were most concerned about verbal abuse, followed by physical abuse and sexual harassment.

Women workers were more concerned about verbal abuse and sexual harassment, while men workers were more concerned about physical abuse.

Workers' concerns	Percentage of workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Physical abuse such as hitting or shoving	2.56 (n=56)	2.71	2.47
Verbal abuse such as yelling or vulgar language	10.16 (n=222)	9.08	10.85
Sexual harassment or sexual touching	2.47 (n=54)	2.00	2.77

Table 4.119 **Workers' concerns about physical abuse, verbal abuse and sexual harassment**

According to FGDs with workers, men and women co-workers, in general, maintain a good relationship with each other. In many factories there are separate work stations for men and women workers, so that they have sufficient space to work comfortably. But instances of abuse, harassment and inappropriate behaviour were raised in nearly all worker FGDs, either by fellow workers or supervisors. When viewed collectively, these accounts give a more vivid picture of harassment in RMG factories.

A major reason behind the underreporting of harassment during the survey and a lack of complaints from workers is the fact that, as already discussed in section 4.2.6, if a victim of such harassment complains then there is a strong possibility that both the victim and the accused will lose their job. Workers expressed these concerns during FGDs. Some women workers revealed that the outcome has gone against victims in the past and afterwards women workers have been verbally abused, which is a violation of the BLA[62]. This has resulted in the likelihood that workplace harassment, endured by workers at RMG factories, is understated in this report.

Yunus and Yamagata (2012) gave similar explanations about women failing to complain about acts of harassment. The primary reason is that they fear they might lose their job. Moreover, as most women garment workers are non-unionized they cannot complain about the abuse through the workers' union. A study on the harassment of women garment workers in three garments factories in the Mirpur area, Dhaka, stated that sexual harassment was a primary source of mental stress for women workers. Women workers must endure harassment in the forms of insults directed at their gender, suggestive comments or language, demeaning remarks, unwelcome touching and grabbing, and physical assaults, among others. These instances were underreported since women workers were too shy to disclose such information and unmarried workers were afraid of the resulting impact it would have on their prospects of getting marriage. Speaking about sexual harassment is still a social taboo (CPD,

62 As per the regulation of Section 23, Chapter II of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, 'Notwithstanding anything contained as to lay-off, retrenchment, discharge and termination of service elsewhere in this Act, a worker may be dismissed without a notice or without wages in lieu of a notice if he is (a) convicted of any criminal offence; or (b) found guilty of misconduct under section 24'.

2004). Like the present study, the survey in the Mirpur area found that only 2 per cent of women workers had reported sexual harassment in their respective factories. However, case studies have shown a large prevalence among young garment workers (Begum et al, 2010).

Another explanation for underreporting is that workers who complained about any type of abuse might have had their contract terminated.

As has already been stated in section 4.2.6, according to 'The Workers' Voice Report 2016', out of 1,007 garment workers from 333 textile and garment factories who visited labour rights organizations', 91 per cent were working under abusive conditions. Of this 91 per cent, 67 per cent remained silent as they were afraid of negative reactions from the accused and the factory management (Awaj Foundation & CSI, 2016).

Moreover, it is challenging for workers to speak openly about these issues given the sensitive nature of the problems, and where reporting incidents of harassment may potentially jeopardize their job. According to worker FGDs, in most cases workers, irrespective of their gender, faced verbal and physical abuse from their supervisors. If workers made a mistake at work, they were often admonished harshly, which involved abusive language and, at times, physical abuse.

During FGDs, workers reported that it is common for supervisors to touch them when giving instructions, which is inappropriate. Touching or pulling women workers to undertake tasks that they are reluctant to do was also reported. Here workers were hesitant to complain as they are used to such touching and cannot clearly determine the intention behind such behaviour. In any situation which involved interaction with supervisors, workers avoided direct confrontation of any form as factory authorities and management usually took the side of the supervisor. Complaining about supervisors would make it difficult for workers to remain in their jobs.

Further accounts can be found in the literature that address this issue. Habib (2014) noted an incident in his study recounted by one of the respondents working at a garment factory where the respondent stated a worker was grabbed by the throat by a supervisor when he declined to bring the scissors he was asked to fetch because he was working. Similar cases were found in reports conducted by the Human Rights Watch, the ILO and other reputed organizations. KII discussions cited appalling accounts of how workers, irrespective of gender, faced abusive behaviour at the hands of their line supervisor, while being reprimanded for any errors at work. A participant described an incident where a supervisor beat the workers with the jean fabric when they made a stitching mistake.

The study on garment workers in the Mirpur area pointed out the harassment garment workers face travelling to work. A garment worker travels, on average, more than 5km a day on foot (Paul-Majumder, 2003). Besides being physically strenuous, this long-distance travel is mentally stressful since 74.4 per cent of workers worry about attacks by goons (mastans), 75.6 per cent of workers worry about attacks by touts in the street, and 6.7 per cent of workers worry about harassment by the police (Begum et al., 2010).

Sharing of concerns: When these types of workplace harassment arose workers, at best, discussed their problems with co-workers. A few workers discussed these issues with supervisors or managers. However, they usually preferred not to take any action. Though supervisors from 97 per cent of factories mentioned that workers shared their grievances[63] with them, the survey found that few workers discussed issues with their supervisors or managers.

63 Such as grievances about harassment, among others.

Person complaint discussed with	Physical abuse	Verbal abuse	Sexual harassment
Co-workers	80.36	54.5	70.37
Supervisor/manager	5.36	5.86	5.56
Participation Committee	0	0.9	0
Trade Union	0	0	0
Considered quitting	0	0	0
Threatened to strike	0	0	0
Caused a strike	1.79	0	0
Did nothing	19.64	45.05	35.19

Table 4.120 **How workers discuss their concerns regarding workplace harassment**

Sexual harassment policy: There is a need for a specific sexual harassment policy. Every worker must know about this policy so that both the victim and potential predators are aware of the consequences of such actions.

According to managers, 110 out of 111 factories had a sexual harassment policy. However, survey and worker FGDs responses give a somewhat opposing picture. In contrast to managers, almost 42 per cent of workers (14.7 per cent men and 27.1 per cent women) from 110 factories mentioned that there was no policy on sexual harassment at their workplace.

In addition, among workers who agreed that such a policy existed, nearly 41 per cent (19 per cent men and 22.5 per cent women) had no idea what the policy stated. Moreover, only 41 per cent of workers (16 per cent men and 25 per cent women) who reported that there was no sexual harassment policy, said there was a need for such a policy. Figure 27 illustrates a lack of initiative by factory management and a lack of awareness by workers.

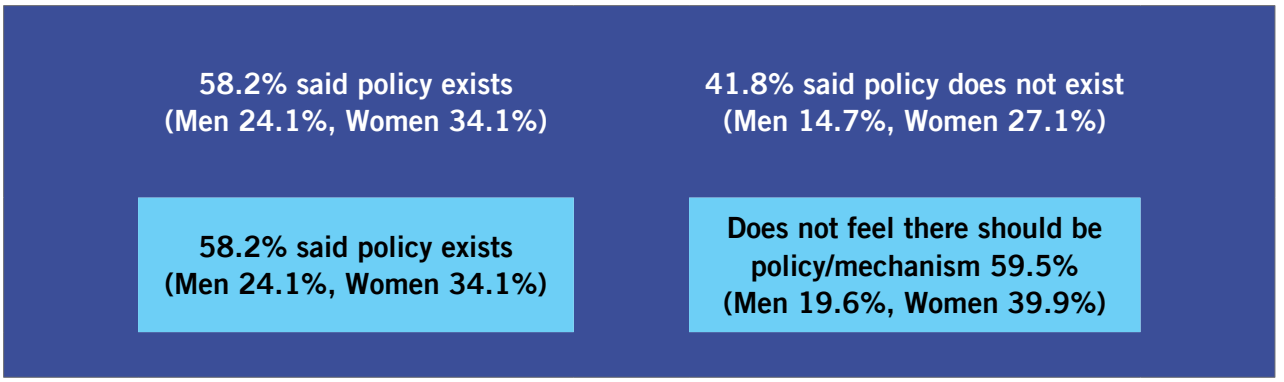


Figure 4.31 **Workers' perception about a sexual harassment policy at factories**

Table 4.121 summarizes workers' responses about a sexual harassment policy being in place at each factory. In about 64 factories, at least 50 per cent of workers mentioned that there was no sexual harassment policy, suggesting the probability that such a policy did not exist in 64 factories. In 32 factories, a sexual harassment policy supposedly existed, however as 25 per cent to 35 per cent of workers from each of these factories did not know about such a policy, it can be presumed that it was ineffective. In 15 factories, most workers said that there was a sexual harassment policy.

Probable status	Percentage of workers saying that there is no sexual policy	Number of factories
Sexual policy does not exist	Above 50%	28
Sexual policy does not exist	40%-50%	36
Sexual policy exists but ineffective or workers are unaware of it	25%-35%	32
Sexual policy exists	10%-20%	14
Sexual policy exists	0%	1
Total		**111**

Table 4.121 **Number of factories with a sexual harassment policy (estimated from workers' responses)**

According to FGDs, authorities always reacted appropriately regarding sexual harassment issues if workers informed them. If workers informed their welfare officer, production manager or supervisor, they took strong action against the alleged perpetrator if the allegation was proved to be true. However, according to worker FGDs, victims are also at risk of losing their job or being punished. According to the survey, in factories where policies exist as reported by workers, 41 per cent of workers did not know what the policy stated.

Sexual harassment policy	Percentage of workers who said policy exists
There's a policy, but I don't know what it says	41.15
Complaint box	11.01
Punishment	30.37
Lose job	14.71
Give warning/ensure justice/meeting	1.02
Inform welfare officer/production manager/ supervisor	0.94
Police	0.55
Arrange a marriage	0.24

Table 4.122 **Resolution of sexual harassment incidents by workers who mentioned that policies exist**

Supervisors mentioned during FGDs that if such types of complaints reached them, they tried to settle the issue first. If it they could not resolve the issue, the matter was taken to management and they decided how to resolve the issue. Management would try to verify the authenticity of the complaint and then take steps accordingly. Accused workers usually got punished and lost their job. In some cases, they were given warnings. Managers gave similar feedback on this issue.

However, as previously mentioned, workers prefer not to complain about harassment given the consequences victims have to face, especially if the accused is a supervisor. Cases where both the accused and the victim had lost their job also added to their fear and hesitancy. Additionally, as mentioned in section 4.2.6, some workers said during FGDs that they have never seen the complaint box opened and they were not sure if anyone put their complaints in it. Therefore, a number of assaults remain unreported or concealed.

It should be noted that, according to the High Court Division of the Supreme Court's landmark directive on sexual harassment in Bangladesh issued on May 14, 2009, concerned authorities, including the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), must form a five-member harassment complaint committee headed by a woman at every workplace, as well as institutions to investigate allegations of the harassment of women (CLC, n.d.). In response to this landmark judgement, the BGMEA has formed anti-sexual harassment committees centrally and instructed around 3,000 enlisted garment factories to act in accordance with the directives of the Supreme Court. The BKMEA also formed a complaint committee and notified their existing members to form a complaint committee at their respective work places (Advocate Salma Ali, 2015). Although respondents in the survey were not directly asked about the sexual harassment committees, the findings in table 4.122 reflect a lack of awareness among workers regarding these committees. The effectiveness of sexual harassment committees is questionable as no worker mentioned the existence of such a committee when they were asked about sexual harassment policies. According to a Bangladesh country study, 2015, by the Fair Wear Foundation, 'An anti-harassment committee was in place in 50 per cent of the audited factories. However, very few workers were aware of its existence and activities, or even knew the committee members. In some cases, even the committee members were unaware of the committee's activities' (Fair Wear Foundation, 2015).

The responses above imply that workers apparently do not have a clear idea about the existence of sexual harassment policies at their respective factories and workers are not sufficiently aware of the need for such policies. They have internalized their own mechanisms to deal with such issues, according to similar incidents that have taken place at the factory in the past. Such lack of awareness and knowledge might lead to a lack of implementation of such policies. This also indicates a lack of awareness-raising training on sexual harassment as mentioned in section 4.2.5 and other relevant policies at factories.

How to file complaints against discrimination and harassment: To ensure better working conditions, workers need to know the appropriate way to file complaints against discrimination and harassment. Although most workers knew how to complain, 14 per cent of workers (13.2 per cent men and 13.9 per cent women) had no idea about how to file a complaint against discrimination and harassment. Some 3.48 per cent of workers mentioned that women workers face problems when making a complaint.

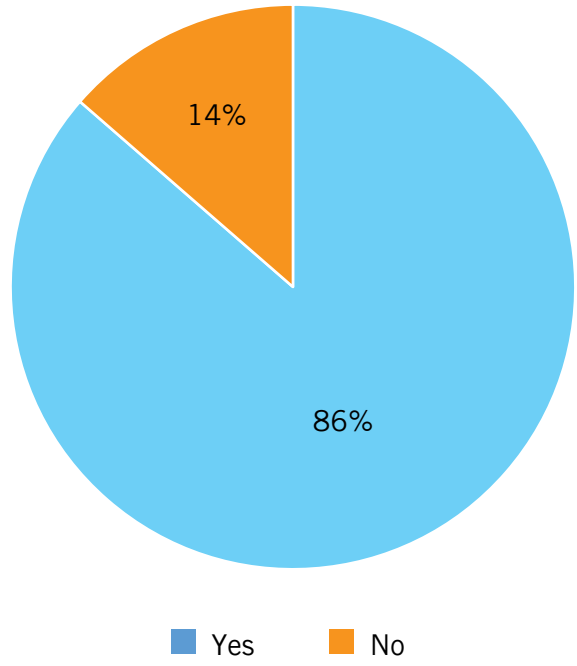


Figure 4.32 **Workers know how to file complaints against discrimination and harassment**

Denied permission to use toilet: Other forms of harassment also exist apart from physical, verbal and sexual harassment. There were instances where workers were denied permission to use the factory toilet during working hours. About 5.31 per cent of workers experienced this problem. Worker FGDs reported that if any worker went frequently to fetch water, there was a possibility of being reprimanded by the supervisor. There were

a few cases where workers reported that abusive language was used to workers for drinking water too often; workers were also reprimanded and threated with losing their job.

Lack of appropriate laws and ambiguity: There is a dire need for special laws regarding sexual harassment, physical abuse, verbal abuse and other related abuse at the workplace that are not explicitly sexual. Any law must contain the correct language which does not undermine the gravity of the offence. The Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 has rules on 'guilty of misconduct' and 'criminal offence' in sections 23 and 24, Chapter II. However, the definition of misconduct does not have any mention of the words 'sexual harassment', 'physical abuse' or 'verbal abuse'.[64] Complaints under 'criminal offence' do not fall under the BLA.[65]

Even if existing laws in Bangladesh are taken into account, there is a lack of an explicit nationwide law regarding sexual harassment and abuse at the workplace. As was reported in *The Independent* on 25 November, 2016, 'Special laws punishing sexual harassment having nationwide jurisdiction are yet to be passed' (Hussain, 2016). There is the 'Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance of 1976', but this has no jurisdiction outside its respective metropolitan area. There is also the 'Women and Children Act, 2000', amended in 2003, where sexual harassment is included in section 10, although it does not specifically mention harassment at the workplace according to the CPD dialogue report (2004) on the workplace environment for women. Besides, defining harassment as 'an outrage to a woman's modesty' has been described as antiquated and limiting in the CPD's report as it can be interpreted in various ways. There are people who do not consider that industrial workers possess modesty in the first instance. This social reality must be addressed by law.

The most significant achievement, in this regard, is the milestone judgment by the High Court in 2009. In 2008, the Bangladesh National Women Lawyer's Association (BNWLA) invoked a 'writ jurisdiction under Article 102 of the Constitution for the prevention, protection and redress against sexual harassment at educational institutions and workplaces' (Advocate Salma Ali, 2015). In response to this public interest litigation (PIL), the High Court division bench of the Supreme Court issued a set of guidelines on May 14, 2009, defining sexual delinquency to prevent harassment across the country and directed the government to make a law based on the guidelines, and concurrently ruled that the guidelines would be treated as law until the law came into force. This landmark directive defined sexual delinquency in the form of physical, mental or sexual harassment of women, girls and children at their workplaces, educational institutions and other public places, including roads. Concerned authorities, including the BGMEA and the BKMEA, were directed to form a harassment complaint committee of five members with most members being women, with committees headed by a women at every workplace to investigate allegations of the harassment of women. However, the law has not yet been passed eight years after the landmark directive.

Furthermore, according to the CPD dialogue report, in theory unions should provide access to justice for workers subjected to sexual harassment. There are no viable unions that are willing to negotiate on behalf of women victims. Workers themselves have minimal or no knowledge of labour laws or the law against sexual harassment.

A lack of an appropriate law and ambiguities in the existing law is another reason why harassment at the workplace takes place.

64 Section 24, Chapter II, Bangladesh Labour Act 2006.

65 As per the regulation of Section 33(8), Chapter II of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, No complaint under this section shall amount to a criminal prosecution under this Act.

Opportunities for action: As this section has illustrated, verbal abuse is rampant at the workplace, while physical abuse and sexual harassment are common. Of major concern is that only a tiny fraction of workers who face such problems report these issues to the appropriate authorities. Moreover, even if they report the incidents, there is a grim reality that they and the accused will lose their jobs.

Specific interventions need to be designed to help raise the issue of harassment in all its forms and ensure that incidents are reported to the appropriate authorities. The existence of appropriate policies on sexual harassment, the implementation of these policies and raising awareness among workers about sexual harassment and relevant policies are required to ensure a safe working environment.

Laws regarding sexual harassment, physical abuse and verbal abuse at the workplace are recommended.

4.4 Occupational safety

Over the years, issues of workplace safety and welfare have gained the attention of representatives at each associated level of the RMG industry. After consecutive catastrophic incidents struck the industry, occupational safety has become an immediate priority and the RMG sector has undergone various reforms in this regard. In this survey, workers were asked about their general safety concerns, followed by queries on fire safety and the structural safety of their workplace.

4.4.1 General safety concerns

Workers were asked about five specific topics related to occupational safety. These were factories being too hot or too cold; dangerous equipment or machinery; accidents or injuries; dusty or polluted air; and bad chemical smells.

Concerns about specific issues relating to occupational safety	Percentage of total workers	Percentage of men workers	Percentage of women workers	Percentage of supervisors
Factories being too hot or too cold	15.43	15.8	15.19	28.83
Dangerous equipment or machinery	8.88	8.96	8.83	15.31
Accidents or injuries at factories	12.45	12.26	12.57	15.32
Dusty or polluted air at factories	10.12	11.2	9.43	6.3
Bad chemical smells at factories	5.59	6.6	4.94	1.64

Table 4.123 **Workers' and supervisors' concerns regarding five specific issues relating to occupational safety**

From the survey results it can be implied that most workers expressed concern about the temperature and pollution of factories, along with potential accidents or injuries that might occur at factories.

The survey responses collected from supervisors show that a higher share of supervisors showed concern about factories being too hot or too cold. The results also exhibit an interesting perspective where a higher share of supervisors expressed concern about risky equipment or machinery, while simultaneously stating their concern over accidents or injuries that might occur when operating this equipment.

Analysing the information gathered further, it was observed that for each category of environmental or health concern expressed by workers, there were several factories where the share of workers with that concern was equal or more than 30 per cent. For instance, in 19 factories, 30 per cent or more of workers complained about the factory being too hot or too cold. In 11 factories workers were anxious about work-related accidents or injuries, and in three factories workers were concerned about dangerous equipment or machinery. In two factories, the share of workers concerned about accidents and injuries was 50 per cent or more. In one factory, 50 per cent or more of workers were concerned about the factory being too hot or too cold. In 9 factories, 30 per cent or more of workers were troubled by dusty or polluted air.

	Number of factories				
% of workers with concern	Too hot/too cold	Dangerous equipment or machinery	Accidents or injuries	Dusty or polluted air	Bad chemical smells
< 10%	13	14	16	16	24
>= 10%	23	18	18	21	14
>= 20%	29	25	27	20	2
>= 30%	14	1	5	6	1
>= 40%	4	2	4	3	
>= 50%	1		2		

Table 4.124 **Share of workers with concerns over safety issues by factory**

Table 4.124 shows that in a significant number of factories at least one out of every five workers surveyed was concerned about an occupational safety matter. This is particularly applicable for issues such as factories being too hot or too cold, the risks posed by dangerous equipment or machinery, and the consequent accidents or injuries.

4.4.2 Fire safety

Fire exits: Workers and supervisors answered questions regarding fire safety. According to their responses, there are a sufficient number of fire exits at factories and fire exits on each floor are properly marked.[66]

66 This data is recalled data received from workers.

Fire exits	Percentage of workers	Percentage of supervisors
Lack of sufficient number of fire exits at factories	0.73	0
Lack of properly marked fire exits on every floor at factories	1.92	0

Table 4.125 **Fire exits at the workplace**

According to FGDs, there were a sufficient number of fire exit doors and fire equipment at most factories. Overall the fire safety arrangements of factories were observed to have improved immenely following the collapse of the Rana Plaza. KIIs also consolidated the finding that factories have focused a greater amount of resources to establish precautionary measures in the event of fire.

According to a case study reported by the Better Work Bangladesh (BWB)-ILO programme (2014), in January 2013 the government, workers' associations and employers' associations agreed to a tripartite statement of commitment, which was estimated to affect more than 3.5 million workers and improve fire safety and structural integrity in approximately 3,500 factories. The partners recognized their individual and collective responsibility to ensure fire safety at every workplace in Bangladesh and committed to developing a National Plan of Action on Fire Safety. After the Rana Plaza collapse they extended the plan to include the structural integrity of buildings. As of April 2015, 77 per cent of the total RMG factories had been assessed for structural safety, as reported in the ILO-Bangladesh monthly newsletter (April, 2015).[67]

However, there were a few factories where workers did not feel safe as these factories did not have proper exit doors. Supervisors from 4.5 per cent of factories mentioned that existing fire exits could not be easily opened in an emergency, which might be a violation of the BLA.[68]

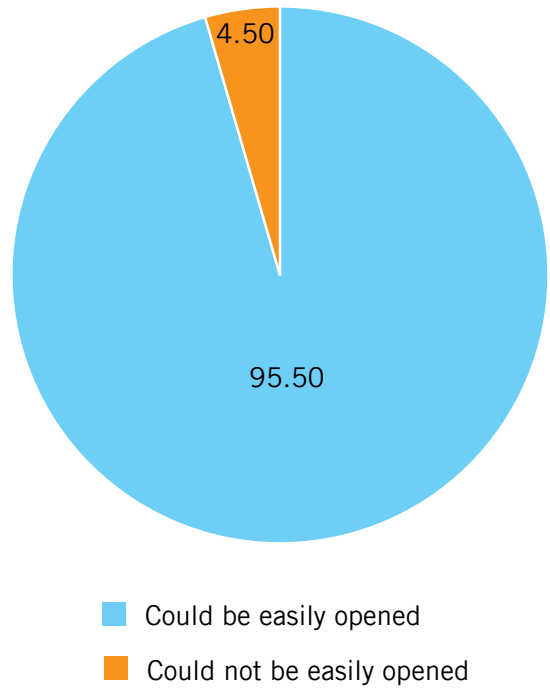


Figure 4.33 **Percentage of factories where existing fire exits could/could not be easily opened in an emergency**

Of these factories, two factories were knitwear, two were woven and one was a sweater factory located at Dhaka and Gazipur. Workers also revealed during FGDs that some factories have very high and secured gates that would prevent them from escaping the factory premises if an emergency arose. This made them feel unsafe.

Location of windows without grills and location of fire equipment: Almost 28 per cent of workers (24 per cent men and 30.3 per cent

67 ILO Country Office for Bangladesh newsletter (April, 2015).

68 As per the regulation of section 62(3), Chapter VI of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, 'In every establishment the door affording exit from any room shall not be locked or fastened so that the person working in the room may easily and immediately open it from inside and all such doors, unless they are of the sliding type, shall be constructed to open outwards, or where the door is between two rooms, in the direction of the nearest exit from the building and no such door shall be locked or obstructed while work is being carried on in the room.'

women) did not know the location of windows without grills to use during a fire.[69] Women workers were comparatively more unaware of this than men workers. Some 1.14 per cent of workers did not know the location of fire equipment in the room that they worked.

	Percentage of total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Know the location	72.12	75.94	69.69
Do not know the location	27.88	24.06	30.31
Total	100	100	100

Table 4.126 **Workers' knowledge regarding the location of windows without grills to use during a fire by gender**

KIIs also reported that even though progress has been made, some factories have complied with the obligations as they are imposed by law and not because of their own motivation. Without a change in perception and motivation, these developments will not be sustained in the long-term. Thus, monitoring the sustainability of these initiatives is necessary is to ensure that factory authorities maintain the required safety standards and continue training and fire drills.

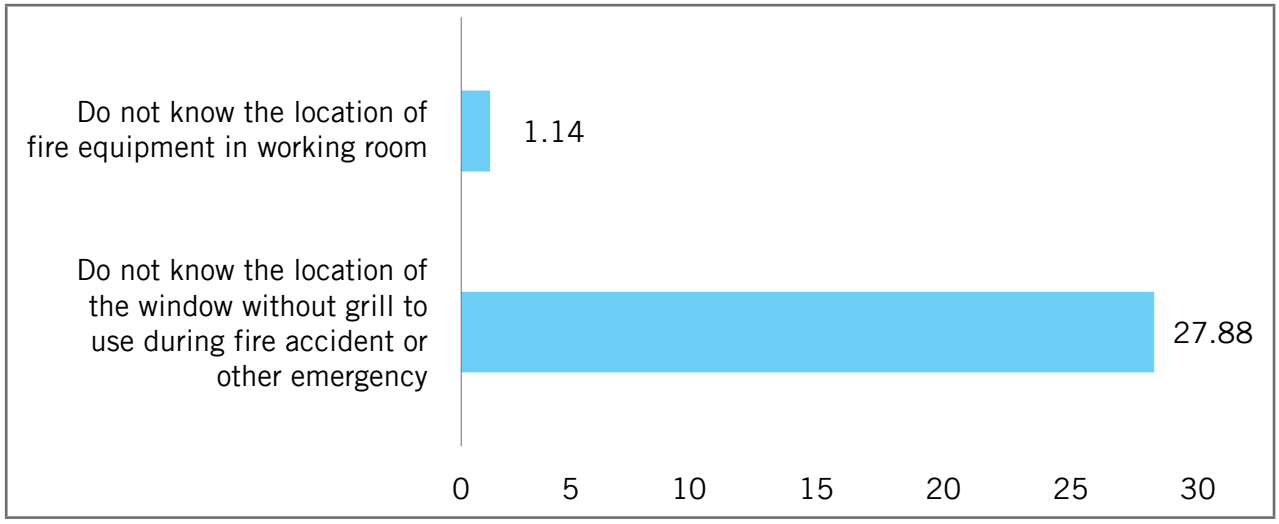


Figure 4.34 **Workers' lack of knowledge regarding the location of fire equipment and windows without grills**

Mock fire-fighting and the use of fire equipment: Mock fire-fighting sessions were reported to take place regularly with most factories holding such sessions every six months in accordance with the BLA.[70] Such fire drills assisted greatly in increasing workers' awareness and capability to deal with a fire, along with raising the awareness of factory authorities to maintain safety standards and mechanisms at all times.

69 As per the regulation of section 54 (10), Chapter VI of the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015, 'There will be at least one window without grill that will be hinged so that one can come down with ladder or rope after opening the hinge in emergency situation and there will be a net of strong rope on the ground floor so that one can land on the net through rope in an emergency situation during the fire incident.'

70 As per the regulation of section 62(8), Chapter VI of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, 'In factories and establishments wherein 50 (fifty) or more workers/employees are employed, at least once in every 2[6 (six) months] a mock firefighting shall be arranged and a book of records in this regards shall be maintained in the prescribed manner by the employer.'

Frequency of mock fire-fighting and fire drills	Percentage of total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
More than once every six months	94.73	93.43	95.57
Once every six months	4.68	6.06	3.78
Once every year	0.2	0.25	0.16
Other	0.4	0.25	0.49
Have never observed a fire drill	7.97	6.6	8.83
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.127 **Frequency of arranging mock fire-fighting/fire drills according to workers**

Of concern is that almost 8 per cent of workers (nearly 7 per cent men and 8 per cent women) reported that they had never observed a fire drill/mock fire-fighting session.

There were also 35 per cent of workers (44.5 per cent women) who did not know how to use fire equipment; women workers had less knowledge than men workers. Additionally, some workers reported in FGDs that they faced bias when receiving training on fire safety. In some cases men workers were instructed about emergency exits in the case of a fire but women workers were not. Workers were also reportedly selected on how 'brave' they were perceived to be to deal with fire equipment. In some factories, a few workers were selected for training on a rotational basis from different sections. Such practices create barriers in attaining absolute awareness among workers. However, the BLA does not require all workers to be trained in fire-fighting.[71]

	Percentage of total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Know	64.84	79.6	55.46
Do not know	35.16	20.4	44.54
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.128 **Workers' knowledge on the use of fire equipment by gender**

Similarly, 13 per cent of supervisors, including five out of ten women supervisors, reported that they did not know how to use fire equipment. Moreover, 8 per cent of workers and 23 per cent of supervisors had not seen a mock fire-fighting session at their factories, whereas all managers surveyed reported that their factory had arranged mock fire-fighting sessions for workers.

71 As per the regulation of section 55 (10), Chapter VI of the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015, If possible, all workers or at least 18% of the workers employed in each department have to be trained on fire-fighting, emergency rescue operation, first aid and the usage of portable fire-repellent instruments. And the security has to be ensured by dividing the trained workers into fire-fighting team, rescue team and first aid team (6% members in each team) and the records related herewith have to be preserved in accordance with Form- 22.

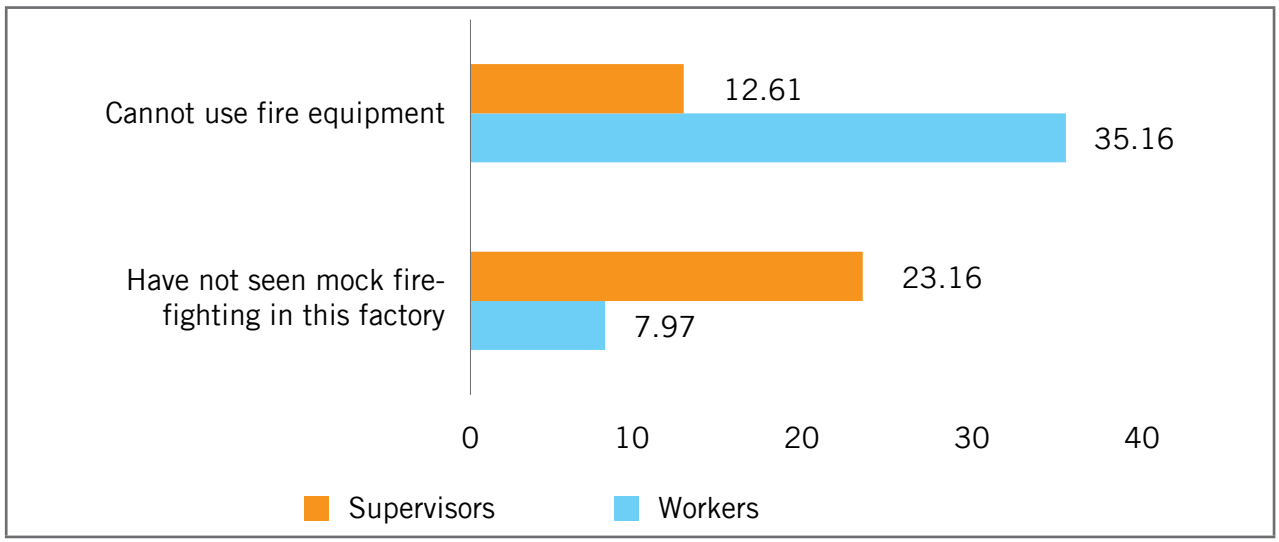


Figure 4.35 **Knowledge of fire safety**

The majority of the 95 per cent of workers who had seen mock fire-fighting sessions at their factories, reported that mock fire-fighting was arranged more than once every six months.[72] However, this information might be an overstatement because according to the BLA, mock fire-fighting should be arranged once every six months. Therefore, most workers probably did not know the exact number of mock fire-fighting sessions held. However, supervisors from 75 per cent of factories and all managers from factories where mock fire-fighting sessions were held reported that mock fire-fighting was arranged once every six months.

Frequency of mock fire-fighting/fire drills	Percentage of workers	Percentage of supervisors	Percentage of management
More than once every six months	94.73	0	-
Once every six months	4.68	74.74	100
Once every year	0.2	0	
Other	0.4	2.1	
Not arranged/never seen	7.97	23.16	
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.129 **Frequency of mock fire-fighting/fire drills**

Similarly, according to the FGDs of workers and supervisors, fire drills and training about safety were organized regularly. This helped to develop awareness and minimize the damage a fire could potentially cause. However, there were a few factories where the required training was not provided to workers.

The production type and factory location of 23 per cent of factories where mock fire-fighting was not arranged are shown at tables 4.130 and 4.131. The majority of these factories are knitwear and knitwear/woven and are in Dhaka.

72 Recalled data.

	Knitwear	Knitwear/Woven	Sweater	Woven	Total
Mock fire-fighting not arranged	54.55	18.18	13.64	13.64	100

Table 4.130 **Factories where mock fire-fighting is not arranged by production type of factory**

	Chattogram	Dhaka	Gazipur	Narayanganj	Savar	Total
Mock fire-fighting not arranged	18.18	27.27	18.18	18.18	18.18	100

Table 4.131 **Factories where mock fire-fighting is not arranged by factory location**

4.4.3 Structural safety

Structural safety concerns: Under the questions regarding structural safety, workers were asked about damp walls, cracks in the walls, electrical wiring, the safeguarding of dangerous equipment and locked exits.

Structural safety	Percentage of total workers	Percentage of men workers	Percentage of women workers
Workers who observed any kind of damp wall in factory	3.34	4.25	2.77
Workers who observed cracks in the walls in factory	2.38	2.95	2.02
Workers reporting factory does not take necessary steps to ensure the safety of electrical wiring	4.26	5.42	3.52
Workers reporting all dangerous parts of machines or equipment are not securely enclosed by safeguards	7.05	7.19	6.96
Workers who noticed that the exits of any room are locked or fastened	0.91	0.71	1.04

Table 4.132 **Workers' responses to structural safety concerns**

Workers were most concerned about dangerous parts of machines or equipment that were not securely enclosed by safeguards. This was followed by a reluctance on the part of factories to take the necessary steps to ensure the safety of electrical wiring. According to 7.05 per cent of workers, all dangerous parts of machines or equipment were not securely enclosed by safeguards. Some 4.26 per cent of workers mentioned that their factories did not take the necessary steps to ensure the safety of electrical wiring. About 3.34 per cent of workers had observed damp walls in their factories. According to a maximum number of workers the exits of any room were never locked or fastened.

As has been mentioned in table 4.132, some 2.38 per cent of workers observed cracks in the walls in factories. Although 63 per cent of these 52 workers informed their management,

supervisors, the person in charge or the participation committee about the cracks 31 per cent did not know how to address this problem. (see table 4.133).

Steps taken by workers	Percentage of total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Don't know	26.92	24	29.63
Informing management/supervisor/person in charge/PC	63.46	60	66.67
Do nothing/work anyway	3.85	8	0
Repair	5.77	8	3.7

Table 4.133 **Steps taken by workers when they observed cracks in factory walls**

There is a need to raise awareness about these matters and workers must know whom to inform when such kind of issues arise. However, it can be observed from the responses that women workers are almost equally observant and active as their men counterparts when it comes to structural safety concerns. This implies that the increase in consciousness and information among workers are uniform, irrespective of gender. Future schemes for awareness-raising should sustain such consistency by including both men and women workers.

Adolescent workers and workers with physical disabilities: There are specific rules for adolescent workers and workers with physical disabilities. The percentage of adolescent workers (1.28 per cent) was found to be very low during the baseline survey. As for workers with physical disabilities, 2.84 per cent of workers mentioned that they were physically challenged and were involved in dangerous or hazardous work.

Fatal and non-fatal injuries: According to the survey results, 56.6 per cent of workers had experienced an injury/illness while working at the factory, and women workers experienced slightly more injuries/illnesses while working at the factory compared to their men counterparts see table 4.134.

Experienced an injury/illness	Percentage of total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Had	56.64	52.71	59.13
Had not	43.36	47.29	40.87
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.134 **Workers who had experienced an injury/illness while working at the factory**

For the proportion of fatal and non-fatal injuries among workers, Labour Inspection Data from the DIFE can be referenced. According to the findings from DIFE, 7 per cent of injuries were reported as fatal. Non-fatal injuries are of two types: non-fatal (minor) and non-fatal (major). Some 85 per cent were reported as non-fatal (minor) injuries and 8 per cent were non-fatal (major) injuries.

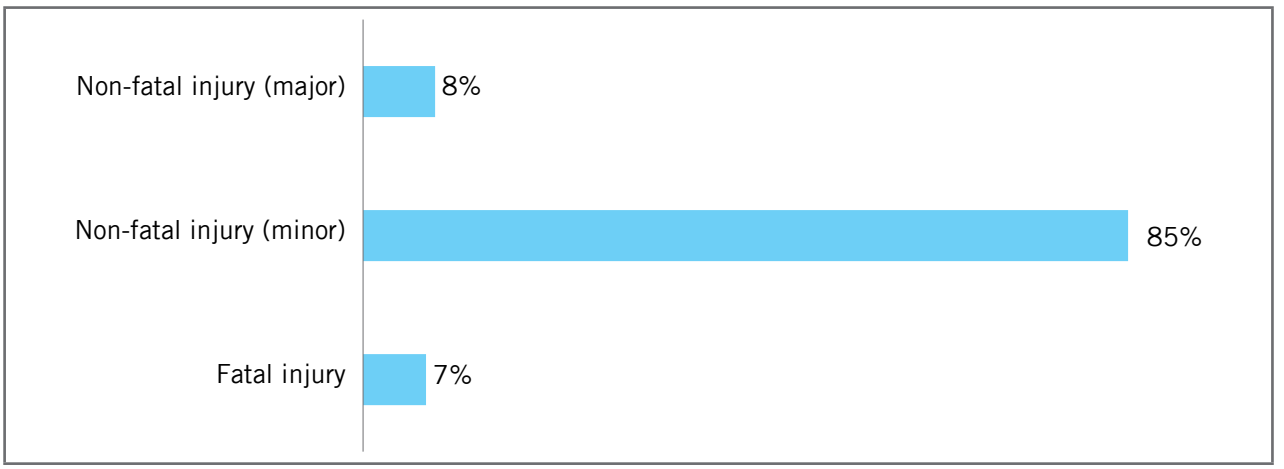


Figure 4.36 **Incidence of fatal and non-fatal injuries**

Opportunities for action: Findings from the survey indicate that there is considerable concern among workers relating to the high and low temperature of factories along with the potential for accidents. In a few factories these concerns were higher. Only by looking at the average can the level of concern be gauged, but this might be misleading as it may hide the concerns in some affiliated factories where the overall level of risk is high. Special scrutiny and the specific targeting of such factories by the appropriate authorities are essential to avoid catastrophe and colossal devastation as happened at the Rana Plaza and Tazreen factory.

In addition, a significant percentage of workers experienced a non-fatal major injury alongside fatal injuries. Though this represents less than 10 per cent of the workforce, this should raise a red flag among the appropriate authorities and stakeholders. The risk level and type of risk vary by factory. Therefore, a scrupulous categorization is needed to address such specific concerns in a targeted and effective manner to prevent future casualties.

4.5 Workers' feedback on post-Rana Plaza interventions

Workers were asked whether they were satisfied with the safety measures taken by respective factories after the Rana Plaza incident. About 72 per cent of workers were satisfied, whereas 16 per cent were not and satisfied and 12 per cent didn't provide any concrete answer.

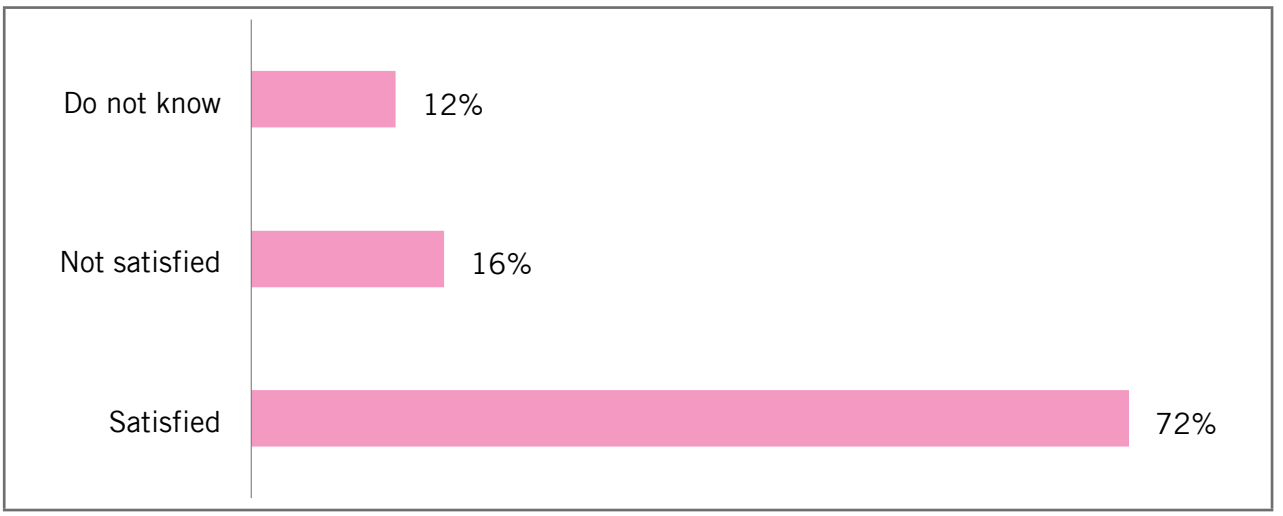


Figure 4.37 **Workers' satisfaction with the safety measures taken by factories post-Rana Plaza**

Findings from FGDs also reveal that since the fire at Tazreen Fashions and particularly the collapse of Rana Plaza, RMG factories have taken unprecedented measures to enhance fire safety and structural safety at the workplace as per the compliance requirements. Factory buildings/premises have been built in compliance with building codes, rules and regulations. Some workers said that their factory was tested by some authority and was regarded as safe. A few workers said that immediately after the Rana Plaza incident, the factory authority brought the generator down to the ground floor.

However, some workers reported that, in some cases, there were violations of building code rules and the factory authority did not take the necessary steps to correct them. Some workers reported that just after the Rana Plaza incident, cracks were discovered in the walls of a factory and the firm owner decided to shut down the factory. However, afterwards the cracks in the walls were repaired with cement. On a more positive note, if any natural disaster occurs, for example an earthquake, all workers are instructed to leave the factory premises as soon as possible.

Workers are now more aware of safety measures. Workers responded that to avoid such incidences in the future, building safety measures should be maintained and equipment should be located in a designated area that ensures safety. The generator should be kept on the ground floor away from the workers. Buildings that are not structurally safe should be vacated or improved. Almost all workers stated that there should be increased awareness from both workers and authorities to prevent this type of tragedy occurring in the future.

Based on the Bangladesh National Building Code and practices agreed upon internationally, an intensive and on-going inspection programme has been conducted through coordination and collaboration between the initiatives. Both the Accord and the Alliance have watched over the remediation work at factories their members source from. The recent focus on the safety of buildings and fire safety-related activities have helped to reinforce the capacity of workers, supervisors and managers in the sector to build awareness among everyone and improve the safety of their workplaces. The ILO identified the need for further improvements in environmental legislation, including promoting labour inspectorates and unions, alongside a proper employment injury insurance scheme that should be put in place in the immediate future (ILO, April 2015).

According to KIIs, the disbursement of compensation to injured workers after the Rana Plaza collapse was delayed due to logistical and collaborative challenges in acquiring the funds both locally and globally. As reported by the HRW (April 2015) survivors from the collapse said the compensation they received was not sufficient to pay their medical bills or cover their loss of livelihood, as many suffered from injuries and their medical costs increased continuously. Out of the 3,490 compensation claims received, 70 per cent of payments had been made in respect of each compensation award at the time of the report according to the ILO. The business skills session and counselling arranged by the ILO helped some of the survivors find alternative employment to earn a livelihood.

The KIIs reported that this illustrated that factories lack processing schemes in their compensation policies for injured workers. Business owners had taken steps according to their capacity to be compliant, but they needed further assistance from the compliance initiatives, and particularly the lead buyers, who should provide financial support under such circumstances. For sustained support to workers in the case of unfortunate incidents, an effective employment injury insurance scheme should be mandatory for factories operating in this industry.

4.6 Gender equality

Ownership orientation: The gender dimension of the survey began by exploring the ownership of the factories surveyed. Out of 111 factories, ownership information could be found for 68 factories, of which almost 90 per cent (61 out of 68) were owned by men. For the remainder, only 6 per cent (4 out of 68) were women-owned and 4 per cent (3 out of 68) had shared ownership – both men and women. However, even this slightly positive portrayal of women ownership is not completely dependable. Further investigation revealed that in many cases these factories are family enterprises where the men of the family remains the actual authority holder, while the women shareholder sits at a slightly lower rank, only to keep the factory under family management. According to Saxena, S. the barrier to both women's leadership of factories and unions is the historically determined dominance of men leadership. Society's hierarchy results in a systematic bias against women, with expectations for them to assume responsibility for the family and other domestic issues that prohibit them from rising to leadership positions naturally (Wallace, B., 2015). These factors align with the findings from the KIIs of workers. In the KIIs, it was claimed that due to the patriarchal societal structure, men workers get promoted earlier even if they join later. Several participants mentioned that men workers were promoted as line leaders, supervisors, managers or marketing chiefs.

Ownership	Number of factories	Percentage of factories
Women	4	5.88
Shared ownership (men and women)	3	4.41
Men	61	89.70
Total	**68**	**100**

Table 4.135 **Ownership of 68 out of 111 factories by gender**

Women participation

Decreasing share of women workers: The survey revealed that women made up 61.17 per cent of the share of workers in the sample factories. This contradicts the official data on the share of women workers from the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), the premier national trade organization of garment manufacturers in Bangladesh. According

to BGMEA statistics, out of a workforce of 4 million employed in BGMEA[73] member factories, 3.20 million were women (80 per cent)[74]. However, in line with this baseline study, a study conducted by the Asian Center for Development (ACD) in 2015 found that the share of women workers employed in the RMG industry was 65 per cent.

This creates a debate as to whether 'defeminization' is occurring in the RMG sector of Bangladesh. One view is that 'defeminization' is indeed in process. According to Farole and Cho (2017) a decreasing share of women workers in the RMG industry was also reported in the Labour Force Study 2013 and the Economic Census Report 2013 (2017). This is in line with global trends of a decreasing share of women workers in countries that have become more technology intensive within the RMG value chain (Tejani and Milberg 2010). Knitwear factories employ the largest proportion of workers (45 per cent, the highest in the RMG sector). The knitwear industry hires relatively more men than women workers compared to other factory types (BSR, 2017). According to Barrientos et al (2003), like many other countries, the emergence of knitwear and sweaters is translating into an increasing share of men workers, as the production process becomes more skilled and capital intensive (as cited in Miller, 2012). Similar views were also expressed in KIIs.

Type	Total	Men	Women
Knitwear	44.64	18.52	26.12
Knitwear/Woven	9.12	3.57	5.55
Sweater	12.79	5.13	7.65
Woven	33.46	11.59	21.86
Total	**100**	**38.82**	**61.18**

Table 4.136 **Share of workers by gender by different type of factory**

Alternate views from KIIs was that Bangladesh is not experiencing 'defeminization' in the RMG sector. The share of women employed in the RMG industry was approximately 80 per cent in the 1980s when ready-made garments first became popular, but this did not last

73 Around 40 per cent of BGMEA member factories are knitwear and sweater manufacturers, and the remaining 60 per cent are woven garment manufactures. BGMEA member factories account for 100 per cent of woven garment exports from the country.

74 Source: BGMEA http://www.bgmea.com.bd/home/pages/aboutus.

long. It was much higher initially, because at that time sewing was believed to be a woman's job. They could be easily trained and as first-time workers, they would work for a minimum wage. Gradually as the RMG sector started to flourish, it became a lucrative industry for men workers as well. According to KIIs, over the last 15 years the proportion of women workers has been approximately 60 per cent to 67 per cent.

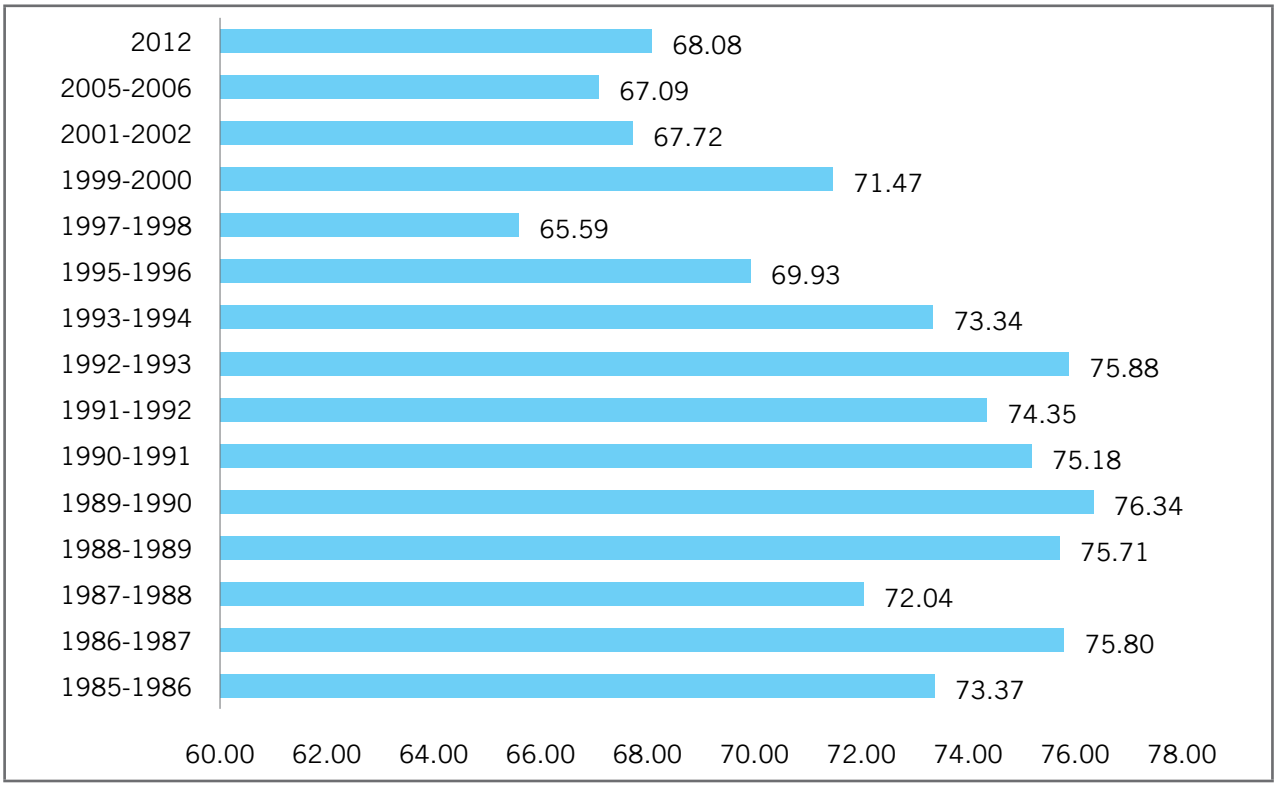


Figure 4.38 **Trends of women share of workers in production-related apparel wear work**

Source: Report on Bangladesh Survey of Manufacturing Industries (SMI)

In search of evidence to support this view, trends of the women share of workers in production-related apparel wear work from 1985 to 2012 were observed. It is evident that in 1985 the proportion of women was 73 per cent, which increased to as high as 76 per cent in the following years. From 1985 to 1994, the share ranged from 72 per cent to 76 per cent. After 1994 up to 2012, the share of women workers decreased, ranging from approximately 65 per cent to 70 per cent. An 80 per cent share of women workers over a timespan of 27 years was not evidenced by the data collected by the Bangladesh Survey of Manufacturing Industries (SMI).

Broad working categories: The survey explored the participation of women employees in the different categories of workers, supervisors and management, and found that while women dominated in the worker category in factories (61.2 per cent), the share of women supervisors and management were staggeringly minimal at 9 per cent and 4.5 per cent respectively.

Work category	Percentage of men participation	Percentage of women participation
Worker	38.83	61.17
Supervisor	90.99	9.01
Management	95.5	4.5

Table 4.137 **Participation of women employees in broad working categories**

Different job grades of workers: It was clear from the survey that women workers were rarely promoted and seldom secured positions in the higher ranks. Figure 4.10 shows that as the grades progress from lower to upper levels, the proportion of women workers in each grade gradually decreases, which is a clear reflection of men-women discrimination. Figure 4.1 shows how the proportion of women workers in each grade gradually decreases as the grades progress from the lowest (Grade 7) to the highest. The share of women workers is highest at Grade 7 at nearly 71 per cent and dwindles to 54.3 per cent at Grade 3 and 16 per cent at Grade 1.

Workers' associations: In terms of various workers' associations, women representatives were, in most cases, lower in number than their men counterparts, quite significantly at times. Participation in canteen management committees was less than 25 per cent for women workers in 30 per cent of factories, with 20 per cent of management reporting that women representation in canteen management committees was non-existent (see Table 4.34).

As only four factories had trade unions according to management, any inference about women participation in trade unions based on four factories is meaningless. However, of these four factories, two had 50 per cent and one had 40 per cent women representatives. According to the ILO (2009) report, the average women membership of 17 leading trade union federations was 14.42 per cent in 2009. Whereas, in executive bodies, women representation varied from zero to five out of every 30 executive members.

In recent years, women have been promoted as trade union leaders. A news article by Bruce Wallace posted on Public Radio International (PRI) in 2015 (Wallace, 2015), reported that according to the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) Solidarity Center in Dhaka, unions represent some 150,000 garment workers, out of the total of four million. Historically, although women represent a larger proportion of workers, they have been underrepresented in leadership. Wallace (2015) also cited Dr Sanchita Saxena, Director of the Chowdhury Center for Bangladesh Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, who noted that unions were usually very hierarchical and men-dominated; their members were professionals who never worked in the garment industry themselves. However, women leadership in unions was increasing. The two most high-profile garment worker leaders in the country are women (Nazma and Kalpona Akter). The AFL-CIO reported that two-thirds of factory-level leaders are women (Wallace, 2015).

TUC Aid has taken the initiative for promoting women leadership. TUC Aid is supporting the National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF), one of the largest trade union federations in the garments sector to run a women's leadership development programme. This federation has 42 registered factory unions, where 57 per cent of the total members are women (TUC, 2014). If women leadership increases in trade unions it would greatly contribute to decreasing sexual harassment and other discrimination faced by women as discussed in section 4.3. In an article, Dr. Sanchita Saxena in 2014 states, 'While changes taking place in the industry are slow and incremental, these changes have been initiated and sustained by labour groups, many of them led by women' (TUC, 2014)

However, this emerging leadership represents a samll proportion of the of total garment factories that have trade unions. [75] The study shows that in the case of women representatives in participation and safety committees as reported by management, the share is low with only 26.6 per cent and 12 per cent of managers reporting the figures to be above 50 per cent in each case, respectively (see section 4.2.6, table 4.108)

75 According to Grimshaw de Bustillo (2016), this figure was only 1.6%.

The reasons for preventing women from assuming leadership responsibilities and being represented in workers' associations are justified by management and supervisors by pointing out the various obstacles that women workers face to carry out these duties. FGDs with management and supervisors revealed that due to social and safety reasons, women workers are unable to stay after working hours, which would be required if they were a part of these associations. The issue of the burden of care on women workers also plays a large role in limiting their progress and participation, preventing them from engaging in leadership and organizational activities. A woman is socially compelled to care for her family, children and the elderly, in particular, single-handedly at the cost of her occupational growth. Additionally, representatives of these committees have to exert a certain authority on the rest of the workers and it is thought that women workers lack this ability.

Highest rank attainable by a women: The highest rank attained by a women was that of supervisor or line chief/in charge as mentioned by 35.16 per cent and 21.61 per cent of workers respectively. Also, 10.9 per cent of workers reported that women held the position of operator, while 7.97 per cent of workers mentioned that women reached the rank of production manager/assistant production manager. Around 13.3 per cent of workers reported other positions that were held by women including compliance manager/officer, welfare officer/manager, quality controller/manager, manager/assistant/auditor/executive manager and HR/admin officer. The opinions of men and women workers were somewhat similar.

Job rank	Percentage of workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Supervisor	35.16	33.25	36.38
Line chief/in charge	21.61	24.76	19.61
Operator	10.94	11.44	10.63
Production manager/assistant production manager	7.97	8.61	7.56
GM/AGM/DGM/Director	5.36	6.13	4.87
Other	13.28	10.97	14.75
Do not know	5.68	4.83	6.21
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.138 **The highest rank attainable by a women (according to workers)**

It was evident that the chances of women being promoted to such positions were quite low and it was even less likely that they would acquire a higher rank than those mentioned.

However, managers were more optimistic than workers. In contrast to the responses of workers, 25 per cent of factory managers argued that women could hold a rank as high as general manager (GM), assistant general manager (AGM), deputy general manager (DGM) and director. Additionally, 23.42 per cent and 22.52 per cent of managers surveyed responded that a women could be a supervisor or a line chief/in charge respectively.

Job rank	Percentage of managers	Percentage of men managers	Percentage of women managers
Supervisor	23.42	23.58	20
Line chief/in charge	22.52	22.64	20
Production manager/assistant production manager	18.02	17.92	20
Welfare officer/manager	20.72	21.7	0
GM/AGM/DGM/Director	25.23	22.64	80
Operator	8.11	8.49	0

Table 4.139 **The highest rank attainable by a women (according to managers)**

This difference in responses implies that employees in higher ranks are more optimistic regarding women's empowerment, compared to workers.

Highest rank attainable by a women worker: Supervisors were asked about the highest rank attainable by a women worker. Their view in this regard was the same as workers. The corresponding percentages of supervisors from the surveyed factories who thought that the highest rank for a women worker would be a supervisor or a line chief/in charge were 30.63 per cent and 24.32 per cent respectively.

Job rank	Percentage of supervisors	Percentage of men supervisors	Percentage of women supervisors
Supervisor	30.63	29.70	40.00
Line chief/in charge	24.32	23.76	30.00
Operator	9.91	10.89	0.00
Production manager/assistant production manager	18.02	17.82	20.00
GM/AGM/DGM/Director	16.22	15.84	20.00
Do not know	1.80	1.98	0.00

Table 4.140 **The highest rank attainable by a women worker (according to supervisors)**

Deprivation of maternity protection and benefits: Women workers were found to be deprived of their maternity benefits. As discussed in section 4.2.1.2, findings from the survey suggest that there is a strong possibility that 53 per cent of factories where no workers became pregnant are forcing such workers to leave and technically avoiding paying maternity leave, which is a right according to law. Worker FGDs, along with supporting literature reviews, suggest that in most cases women workers were denied their maternity leave entitlement and other associated benefits, with factories coercing them to leave after they became pregnant. They were told that they could re-join after giving birth so that factories could avoid providing any of the benefits.

Workers' responses regarding gender equality: Despite all of these social prejudices and workplace segmentation, when workers were asked whether they received equal treatment irrespective of gender, most workers mentioned that men and women workers were treated equally. Only 5.13 per cent of workers (4.6 per cent men and 5.5 per cent women) mentioned that discrimination existed.

	Percentage of workers	Percentage of men workers	Percentage of women workers
Treated indifferently	94.87	95.4	94.54
Treated differently	5.13	4.6	5.46
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table 4.141 **The equal treatment of men and women workers**

This result may be related to a lack of awareness of workers about gender equality. They accept social obstacles as a customary practice that uphold social norms. They are unaware of factors that specifically discriminate against women workers and often cannot determine how it impedes their progression at the workplace. Women workers, in most cases, do not have information about women representation at each level of the employment structure, such as ownership, factory management and workers' associations. The fact that factories ignore many gender-specific benefits and needs is also not perceived as unequal treatment by workers. These factors combined with wage differences and the lack of promotion opportunities for women illustrate deeply ingrained discrimination at each level that is not understood by workers.

Distribution of work: The survey explored the distribution of work between men and women workers. The sections in which most men were employed were cutting, ironing and finishing. The sections in which most women workers were working were sewing and finishing. Supervisors and managers gave similar responses. There is a possibility that women workers mainly worked in sections involving manual labour (like sewing) not in sections involving technical skills (like cutting).

Women-dominated sector	Workers' view	Supervisors' view	Managers' view
Sewing	76.10%	76.58%	78.38%
Finishing	15.61%	35.14%	38.74%
Men-dominated sector			
Cutting	74.77%	67.57%	53.75%
Ironing	28.83%	23.42%	0%
Knitting	16.22%	17.12%	10.12%
Finishing	0%	15.32%	28.07%

Table 4.142 **Gender issues and the views of workers, supervisors, and managers**

* Percentages denote the percentages of the views of workers/supervisors/managers.

The survey findings show that women workers dominate in the lowest paid jobs, for example helper or operator. Cutting, knitting and dying are dominated by men workers. However, the percentage of women quality controllers is higher than that of men.

	Men	Women	Total	Mean wage (BDT)
Cutter	76.56	23.44	100	8,941.36
Checker	24.49	75.51	100	8,122.29
Packer	63.29	36.71	100	8,703.54
Quality controller	41.8	58.2	100	8,847.15
Helper	22.59	77.41	100	6,945.06
Operator	32.13	67.87	100	9,232.48
Finishing	25.81	74.19	100	8,480.15
Knitting	91.67	8.33	100	10,941.67
Dying	100	0	100	10,452
Line ironman	100	0	100	9,495.8

Table 4.143 **Distribution of work among men and women workers**

Wage differentials

Reported wage: The survey of workers painted a picture of wage discrepancy between men and women workers. The difference between the men and women average wage is significant if it is considered as either the estimated wage or the wage that was reported by workers. The average wage for a men from the reported wage was BDT 8,249 while it was BDT 7,849 for women.

Most supervisors responded that the average wage, including overtime and the benefits received by men and women supervisors, was BDT 12,000 to 16,000. Some, 50 per cent of managers said that the average wage including overtime and benefits for a men manager ranged from BDT 30,001 to 50,000. Some 37 per cent of managers argued that women managers get a wage in this range. Moreover, managers from factories also discussed the average wage structure of workers and supervisors. From the managers' perspective, wage differences were not significant for men and women.

	Worker		Supervisor	
Average wage distribution	Men	Women	Men	Women
3,000-8,000	37.84%	41.44%	0.92%	1.23%
8,001-13,000	51.35%	50.45%	11.01%	11.30%
13,001-18,000	9.01%	7.21%	73.39%	72.84%
18,001-23,000	0.90%	0.90%	10.09%	8.63%

Table 4.144 **Manager's perspective on the average wage including overtime and benefits**

* Percentages denote the percentages of the views of managers.

Difference between mean wages: As has been discussed in section 4.2.4 the difference between the mean wage of men and women workers is BDT 1,012.5, with men workers' mean wage at BDT 9,447.02 and women workers' mean wage at BDT 8,434.53 (see section 4.2.4, table 4.70). Men supervisors are also paid a higher mean wage of BDT 805 than women supervisors.

Gender wage gaps prevail at every job grade. According to section 4.2.4, the wage gap of the mean wage is highest in Grade 3 (BDT 967.81), followed by Grade 7 (BDT 557.37), Grade 4 (BDT 525.81), Grade 1 (BDT 342.86), Grade 5 (BDT 315.73), Grade 6 (BDT 298.88) and Grade 2 (BDT 17.16) respectively. Worker FGDs also show that women workers faced discrepancies in cases of both wage and job promotion (section 4.2.4).

In every type of job at garment factories women workers face differentials in terms of the mean wage compared to their men counterparts.

	Men workers	Women workers
Helper	7,168.96	6,879.71
Operator	9,988.16	8,874.69
Quality controller	9,037.07	8,710.74
Finishing	9,122.98	8,256.56
Packer	9,283.2	7,704.14
Checker	8,325	8,056.54

Table 4.145 **Mean wage of men and women workers for different jobs in factory**

Discrimination regarding the minimum wage: As has been discussed in section 4.2.4, in each grade the proportion of women workers receiving less than the minimum wage is much higher than the proportion of men workers. This difference is highest in lower grades; Grade 6 (24.1 per cent men and 75.9 per cent women) and Grade 7 (25 per cent men and 75 per cent women), followed by Grade 5 (36 per cent men and 64 per cent women) and Grade 4 (37 per cent men and 63 per cent women). In lower grades, women workers face more discrimination compared to men workers.

The World Development Report (2012) discussed the gendered hierarchy of the occupational structure of the production line in RMG factories and how it was reflected in wage differentials (Hossain, 2012). It cited the CPD/GATE survey (2007) and found that wage differentials remained significant and had increased over time in the RMG industry, with women machinists or operators earning only 71 per cent of the earnings of men operators, and women helpers earning a mere 53 per cent of men helpers' earnings in 2005. The report also talked about the promotion prospects being low for most women workers in general and how there remained a persistence in explaining wage differentials solely on the skills gap between men and women workers. However, it highlighted the impact of women's employment in the RMG sector in breaking social stigmas and in forging a path to a more gender-equal environment in the future.

Opportunities for action: The section revealed that there is little or no factory ownership by women in the ready-made garment industry of Bangladesh, together with a lack of representation in workers' association and committees. This lack of women presence poses the question as to whether structural biases exist against women that prevent them from being entrepreneurs in this sector. The responses from both women and men in respect to how far women can progress up the hierarchy in factories paints a rather bleak picture. A lack of belief that women can hold higher positions is noticeable from workers, supervisors, managers, and management. The fact that a wage gap exists between men and women and that only 5 per cent of workers believe that men and women are not treated equally at their respective workplace indicates that there is not enough awareness in the industry in regard to gender equality.

To tackle such issues, there needs to be more women representatives in leadership committees to provide a fair representation in terms of gender. These issues need to be discussed to raise awareness, and to tackle the barriers that block the progression towards a more gender equitable ready-made garment workplace in Bangladesh.

4.7 Innovation, productivity, and good business performance

This section discusses several components of innovation, productivity, and good business performance relating to the ready-made garment industry. It covers new product categories, investment plans of factories, investments in technology, the productivity of factories, and the problems relating to business performance.

Investing in new product categories: Innovation was of little importance as factories had not invested in designing new product categories in the last two years, nor did they plan to invest. Only 30 per cent of factories had invested in designing new product categories in the last two years, and the percentage was even lower (23.42 per cent) if investment in the last one year was considered. Moreover, 77.48 per cent of factories did not have any plans to invest in designing new products in the next one year.

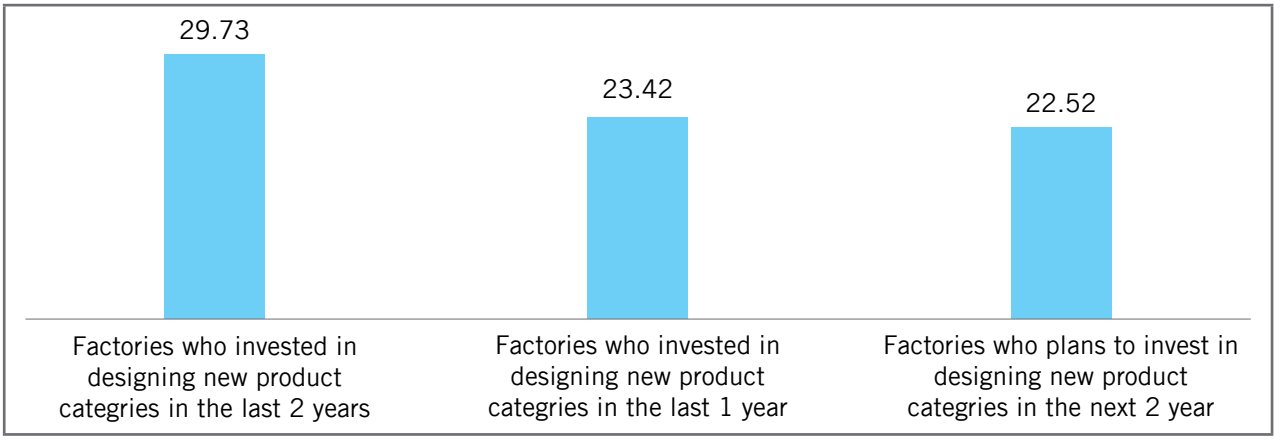


Figure 4.39 **Factories investing in new product categories**

Future investment plans: Asked about the future plans of factories, managers mainly highlighted investing in marketing, targeting new export destinations, and the promotion of exports. Producing higher-end products and a horizontal expansion of the factory were also on the radar. This type of expansion increases factory's product lines, reduces competition and helps factories to access potential new markets. However, these were not prioritized plans for new investment by factories, according to managers.

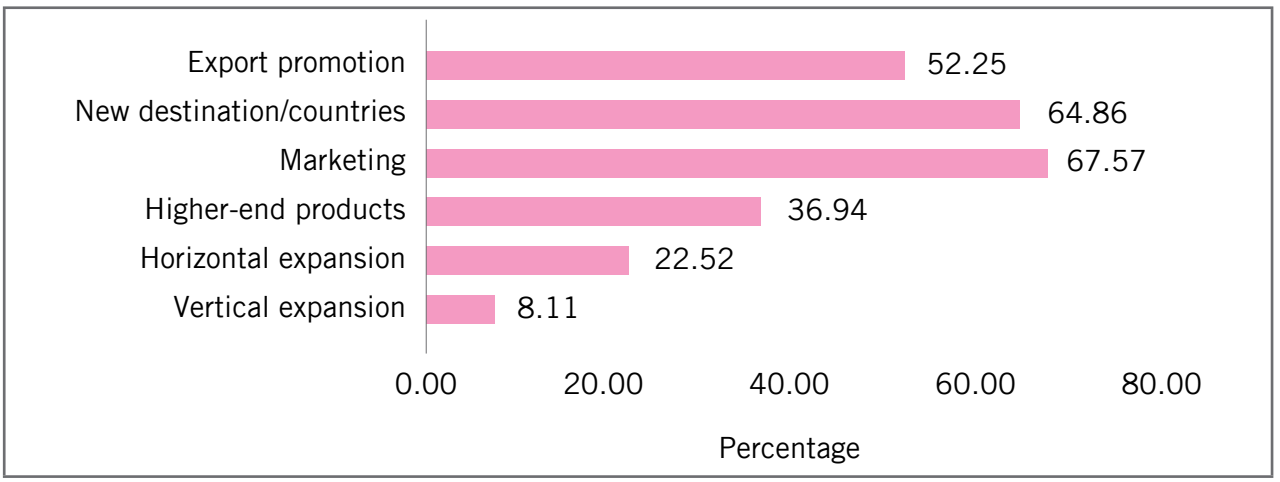


Figure 4.40 **Future investment plans of factories**

In regard to investing in new infrastructure, 44.14 per cent of factories had plans to invest in new plants or buildings, whereas 36 per cent of factories were not considering investing at the time of the survey. Only 8 per cent of factories were planning to invest in training centres.

Infrastructure	Percentage of factories
New plants/buildings	44.14
Design centre	3.60
Training centre	8.10
Own power generation system	3.60
Renewable energy	3.60
Storage facilities	4.50
Other	1.80
Not considering investment at the time of the survey	36.03

Table 4.146 **Factories with plans to invest in infrastructure**

Some 34.23 per cent of factories were not contemplating investing in new technology. Those factories who were considering investing in new technology were considering quality control, automation, a better working environment, and new products. The high initial costs (55 per cent of factories) and a lack of expertise (33.33 per cent of factories) were major obstacles to adopting new technology.

Focus area for investment	Percentage of factories
Automation	16.22
Quality control	18.01
New products	14.41
Waste management	5.41
Working environment	16.21
Factory not thinking about investing in new technology at the time of the survey	34.23
Other	10.81

Table 4.147 **Focus areas for new technology investment in factories**

Identified obstacles	Percentage of factories
High initial cost	54.95
Lack of experts	33.33
Viability	8.11
Other	5.4

Table 4.148 **Obstacles to adopting new technology**

Only 5.41 per cent of factories intended to invest in waste management, this is of concern as in section 4.2.7 only 27 per cent of factories had effluent treatment facilities. This raises the concern that factories do not give enough importance to minimizing environmental pollution. Law enforcing agencies should ensure proper implementation of the rules in this regard.

Factors affecting productivity: Major factors affecting the productivity of factories were access to utilities (gas, electricity, water etc.), law and order, corruption, and the business environment.

Potential factors	Percentage of Factories
Access to utilities (gas, electricity, water)	92.8
Law and order	64.9
Corruption	54.1
Business environment	31.5
Access to finance	29.7
Infrastructure i.e. building	27.0
Time delays or higher lead time	21.6
New technology	10.8
Skills training	9.0

Table 4.149 **Potential factors affecting the productivity of the factory**

Managers also mentioned access to finance, infrastructure, time delays or longer lead times, new technology and skills training as potential factors affecting the productivity of the factory. In the table, the green boxes represent the most important factors, the

orange boxes represent factors of comparatively less importance, and the yellow boxes represent the least important factors.

Identifying main issues affecting productivity: Table 4.150 summarizes managers' opinion about 15 specific issues affecting productivity. Each issue is identified by managers as 'serious', 'modest', 'minor' or 'not an issue ' depending on the gravity of its effect on production. For each issue, high percentages are highlighted in red in the table to illustrate that these are serious issues reported by the majority of managers. Blue shading represents modest issues, yellow represents minor issues, and green represents that there is no issue.

Issues	Serious issue	Modest issue	Minor issue	Not an issue	Total
Shortage of skilled and efficient workers	48.65	18.92	24.32	8.11	**100**
High workforce turnover	43.24	24.32	26.13	6.31	**100**
Technical skills of managers and supervisors	40.54	19.82	27.03	12.61	**100**
Labour management skills of managers and supervisors	43.24	12.62	31.53	12.61	**100**
Union activity	32.43	9.01	8.11	50.45	**100**
Conflict between workers and supervisors	27.92	21.62	35.14	15.32	**100**
Strike activity	69.37	19.82	9.01	1.8	**100**
Workers' complaints about working conditions	31.53	18.92	34.23	15.32	**100**
Workers' resistance to overtime	20.72	21.62	39.64	18.02	**100**
Discontent around the minimum wage	48.65	9.01	30.63	11.71	**100**
External stakeholders with additional compliance requirements	48.65	22.52	17.12	11.71	**100**
Lack of sufficient finance to meet compliance measures	51.35	18.92	15.32	14.41	**100**
Costs of ensuring fairer value chain and supply chain	37.84	21.62	27.93	12.61	**100**
Buyers' lack of knowledge of Bangladesh's International Labour Law	27.93	22.52	25.23	24.32	**100**
Each buyer has its own working conditions requirements	53.15	18.92	10.81	17.12	**100**

Table 4.150 **Main issues affecting productivity as identified by managers**

A further categorization of the 'serious issues' affecting productivity reported by most managers are also illustrated in this column where the highest percentages are highlighted in red, followed by intermediate percentages in brown and the lowest percentages in orange.

Strike activities were identified as a serious problem for factories by almost 70 per cent of managers surveyed. Maintaining different working condition requirements for buyers was also a serious problem reported by 53 per cent of managers, followed by a lack of finance to maintain compliance measures cited by 51.4 per cent of managers.

According to managers, a shortage of skilled and efficient workers; discontent around the minimum wage; external stakeholders with additional compliance requirements; a high workforce

turnover; the labour management and technical skills of managers and supervisors; and buyers' lack of knowledge about the Labour Law of Bangladesh or International Labour laws were also identified as serious issues affecting the productivity of factories although percentages were comparatively low.

Factors for good business performance: Factors that are most important for good business performance are a good relationship with buyers, receiving a good compliance report, workers' skills and job satisfaction, and a fair value and supply chain, respectively (highlighted in green). Punishing workers who are slow or who make mistakes and union activity are not considered important for good business performance in most factories. However, in 22.5 per cent of factories punishing workers who were slow or made mistakes was considered an important factor (highlighted in red) which raises concerns.

Factors important for good business performance	Not at all important	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Very important	Total
Punishing workers who are slow or make mistakes	66.67	8.11	22.52	2.7	**100**
Receiving a good compliance report	5.41	0	0	94.59	**100**
Low levels of union activity	80.18	5.41	10.81	3.6	**100**
Good relationship with buyers	0.9	0.9	0	98.2	**100**
Good worker skills	0.9	0.9	10.81	87.39	**100**
Workers' job satisfaction	0.9	0	13.51	85.59	**100**
Fair value chain and supply chain	1.8	1.8	18.92	77.48	**100**

Table 4.151 **Identifying factors for good business performance**

In the table, the highest percentages for each factor are highlighted in green and intermediate percentages in orange. Union activity, even at low levels, is not considered at all important.

Changes under consideration: More than 43 per cent of factories had either built or were building an additional factory (green highlighted box), while 31 per cent of factories had no such plans. Although according to section 4.2.5, there is a lack of training programmes, a new training programme for workers/supervisors was not being considered in 52 per cent of factories, although 37 per cent of factories had either implemented or were planning a new training programme for workers and supervisors (green highlighted box).

Around 50 per cent of factories did not have any plans to revise the payment plan or workers' pay package; around 34 per cent of factories had already implemented such changes. The percentage of factories that had established a grievance procedure for workers to resolve their complaints in the workplace and/or altered existing grievance procedures was 54 per cent and 50 per cent respectively. However, according to section 4.2.5 workers had not been trained about grievance mechanisms and as detailed in section 4.3 there was no proper grievance procedure.

In table 4.152, high percentages are highlighted for each category of change. Cells are highlighted in green for changes being implemented or already implemented. Red highlights show where there is a need for an intervention, such as considering more training programmes and developing effective grievance procedures. Yellow highlights represent the remaining high percentages.

Under consideration	Not considering a change	Planning a change	Implementing a change	Change implemented	Total
Additional factory building(s)	30.63	26.13	33.33	9.91	**100**
A new training programme for workers/supervisors	52.25	10.81	10.81	26.13	**100**
Altering the payment plan	51.35	9.91	5.41	33.33	**100**
Altering the worker's pay package	50.45	11.71	3.61	34.23	**100**
Establishing a grievance procedure for workers to resolve their complaints at the workplace	30.63	10.81	4.51	54.05	**100**
Altering existing grievance procedures	35.14	9.91	5.4	49.55	**100**

Table 4.152 **Changes under consideration by factory management**

Issues contributing to the unrest of workers: Managers have identified major issues that have led to workers' unrest in the past. Low pay and inappropriate behaviour by line leaders, chiefs, or supervisors, such as yelling or hitting, were identified by 47.75 per cent and 32.43 per cent of managers from different factories respectively.

In table 4.153, red highlights represent major issues contributing to labour unrest, followed by yellow highlights for modest issues and green highlights for issues which are not a contributing factor.

Issues leading to workers' unrest in the past	Percentage of Factories
Low pay	47.75
Inappropriate behaviour by line leaders, chiefs, or supervisors, such as yelling or hitting	32.43
Deductions from pay	27.03
Dangerous equipment	8.11
Poor treatment of a union leader or activist	5.41
Chemical smells	5.4
Excessive heat in the factory	4.5
Too much overtime	2.7
Too much work on Sundays	1.8
Polluted air	0

Table 4.153 **Major issues that have led to workers' unrest in the past**

Major challenges in the next five years: The major challenges for factories in the next five years were identified by managers. An increase in the cost of raw materials; fluctuating exchange rates; decreased demand/economic crisis in importing markets; changes in trade policies; and competition due to a decrease in wages in many countries have been ranked as the five major challenges, respectively (see table 4.154).

Challenges the factory will face in the next five years	Percentage of Factories
Increase in compliance costs	38.74
Competition due to a decrease in wages in many countries	48.65
Decreased demand/economic crisis in importing market	51.35
Fluctuating exchange rate	66.67
Labour unrest	22.52
Low skills	12.61
Increase in cost of raw materials	84.68
Changes in trade policies	49.55

Table 4.154 **Major challenges that factories will face in the next five years**

Findings from focus group discussions: From focus group discussions with managers, the study found that factories are demanding reduced electricity costs and generator facilities. They also mentioned the uncertainties regarding the supply of power and gas. They reported that factories were forced to close down due to not being in compliance or due to losses incurred from high compliance costs. Thousands of workers are losing their jobs. To ensure the livelihood of workers, the closing down of factories needs to stop. According to managers, advances in technology may eventually lead to further unemployment as there will be a reduced demand for workers. Managers argued that all factories can be compliant by 2020 with the support of government. Developing communications was also found to be important in the discussions, as well as investment opportunities that need to be created for interested foreign investors. Most managers argued that prices agreed by buyers need to be increased as production cost is rising. According to Daily Star (June, 2018) since Rana Plaza collapse per unit prices paid by the international brands to supplier factories has declined by 13%. Profit margins of garments factories in Bangladesh has decreased by 13.3% from 2011 to 2016. Newly revised minimum wage by government is going to be effective from the 1st December, 2018. Managers stated that when policies were considered regarding the ready-made garment sector, it should take these facts into account as they have a long-term impact on productivity and business performance. Buyers should ensure a fair price for product.

Opportunities for action: As demonstrated by the data and the FGDs, more efforts in terms of support for infrastructural improvements and cooperation between factory owners, government and other national and international stakeholders is required to address issues that have an impact on innovations in the ready-made garment industry of Bangladesh. Reducing electricity costs and providing support for compliance are essential to reduce the number of factories that could potentially close, leading to the loss of hundreds or thousands of jobs. The energy crisis could benefit greatly from the innovation initiatives. Moreover, there is not enough enthusiasm or plans for new training programmes, which should be designed to enhance the skills of workers and supervisors. The establishment of effective and environmentally-friendly waste management plants are critical to ensure the long-term growth of the industry.

4.8 Conditions of employment and service: Compliance with the Bangladesh Labour Act (BLA)

This section outlines the compliance breaches of the Bangladesh Labour Act. The section also outlines additional workplace facilities apart from those required under the BLA.

Compliance violations according to the BLA

Compliance category	The extent of the compliance breach
Appointment letter	About 6.4 per cent of workers did not receive an appointment letter.
Appointment letter contains all the necessary information for each worker	Missing information from the appointment letter for a proportion of workers: wage or pay scale (72.18 per cent), the rate of increase to annual salary (80.44 per cent), other payable financial benefits (70.02 per cent), type of work (37.80 per cent), date of joining (30.46 per cent), designation (29.93 per cent), address (20.24 per cent), father's name and spouse's name (18.97 per cent), and name of worker (14 per cent).
Mandatory identity cards	Some 5 per cent of workers did not receive identity cards
Sickrooms (factories with more than or equal to 300 workers)	Available health facilities were not satisfactory. For instance, a lack of check-ups for pregnant women/ANC (received by 33.3 per cent of women workers), no check-ups for women after giving birth/PNC (care received by 66.7 per cent of women following birth), general health check-ups (received by 36 per cent of workers), and health education (46.9 per cent of workers received such information).
Maternity leave	Some 53 per cent of factories with a high probability that maternity leave is not provided.
Wage statement	About 13.4 per cent of workers did not receive a wage statement.
Welfare officer (for factories with more than or equal to 500 workers)	Four factories did not have welfare officers although the law required them.
Canteen (for factories with more than or equal to 100 workers)	Some 54.8 per cent of workers at such factories reported the lack of a canteen facility.
Childcare room (factories with 40 or more women workers)	Some 29 per cent of workers at such factories reported that such a facility was non-existent.

Compliance category	The extent of the compliance breach
Restroom and lunch room (factories with 50 or more workers)	Some 46.7 per cent of workers reported that their respective factories lacked proper restrooms, followed by 10.9 per cent of workers who reported that there was no lunchroom. About 68 factories did not have restrooms, and 16 factories had restrooms which were not separated for men and women. In the case of dining rooms, 29 factories had dining rooms but they were not separated for men and women.
Mock fire-fighting – once in every six months	Supervisors reported that only 75 per cent of factories conducted mock fire-fighting every six months.
Participation and safety committees (for workers more than or equal to 50)	Workers said that 89 factories out of 111 factories had such committees. Supervisors reported that 87 out of 111 factories had such committees, and managers reported that 98 out of 111 factories had such committees.
Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) Environmental Conservation Rules (1997)	Some 73 per cent of factories lacked ETPs and released waste into the environment thereby violating the law.
Sexual harassment policy	Some 42 per cent of workers said that there was no sexual harassment policy in place at their respective factories.
Consultation regarding family welfare and reproductive health and consultation for pregnant workers before and after childbirth (for workers more than 5,000)	Factories tend to avoid crossing the threshold where workers exceed 5,000 so that they do not have to adhere to such BLA requirements. This is evident by the fact that only three out of 111 factories had 5,000 workers or more.
Group insurance	In 63 factories, 25 per cent to as high as 95 per cent of workers mentioned the non-availability of group insurance.
Accidental insurance	Accidental insurance is not mandatory although recommended in the BLA. In 85 factories, 25 per cent to as high as 100 per cent of workers mentioned the non-availability of such insurance.
Congenial atmosphere during pregnancy and after giving birth	About 23 per cent of women workers said that a specific place for breastfeeding was absent in their factories which violates the BLA.
Working more than ten hours a day	Out of 111 factories, workers worked for 13 to as high as 15 hours in 21 factories on the day prior to the survey. In 19 factories, workers worked for 11 to less than 12 hours and in 51 factories worked for 10 to less than 11 hours. Working more than 10 hours a day is a violation of the BLA.
Overtime	The analysis suggests that 40.5 per cent of factories had the highest probability of excessive overtime, which is more than two hours according to the BLA.
Consent of women workers in regard to overtime	Workers said that women workers had to work nightshifts and that authorities did not seek permission from women workers, which is a violation of the BLA.
Sick leave	Workers mentioned about the absence of sick leave because they could not take sick leave.

Compliance category	The extent of the compliance breach
Casual leave	Around 91 per cent of workers took less than the ten days of entitled casual leave as provided by the BLA.
Festival holidays	About 19.7 per cent of workers did not get the 11 days of entitled festival holidays as per the BLA.
Earned leave or annual leave with wages	Workers reported the absence of earned leave although managers said that earned leave was available in factories as per the BLA
Suitable payment system	For workers of sweater factories to be paid for the hours they work, a suitable payment system as per the BLA rules needs to be implemented.
Weekend holiday	Sometimes workers had to work without any weekend holiday, which is a violation of the BLA.
Not paying compensation for workt ime accidents	Either 10 per cent of workers did not know or they said that the factory did not pay compensation in accordance with the legal provisions in cases of accidents during worktime and occupational illnesses. Not paying compensation for worktime accidents is a violation of the BLA.
Participation committee and safety committee (for workers more than or equal to 50)	At least 60 per cent of workers in 89 factories mentioned the presence of a PC at their factories. In 92 factories, at least 60 per cent of workers mentioned the presence of a safety committee. The remaining factories did not have a PC or a SC as per the BLA.
Workers' receiving verbal abuse	Some women workers reported that decisions had gone against the victim in the past and afterwards women workers were abused verbally, which is a violation of the BLA.
Ease of opening fire exit doors	Supervisors from 4.5 per cent of factories mentioned that existing fire exits could not be easily opened in times of an emergency, which might be a violation of the BLA.
Additional workplace facilities apart from those required under the BLA	
Dormitory	Only 1 per cent of workers mentioned that dormitory facilities were available.
Commuter bus	About 33.8 per cent of workers mentioned free travel, and 25.4 per cent of workers were provided with a commuter bus.
Workers' knowledge on actual level of minimum wage as per the BLA	Around 53.7 per cent of workers were able to correctly state the level of the minimum wage.
Mock fire-fighting drill offered to selective workers	A few workers were selected for training on a rotational basis from different sections. Such practices create a barrier to total awareness among all workers. However, the BLA does not require all workers to be trained in fire-fighting.

Table 4.155 **Compliance violations**

ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS: DIFE, BGMEA, BKMEA, THE ACCORD AND THE ALLIANCE

The following discussion sums up the different perspectives of key informants interviewed as part of this study about the role of institutions in the context of the RMG industry of Bangladesh.

DIFE (the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments)

The government established DIFE to ensure a safer and compliant industry. The responsibilities of DIFE are to inspect factories and establishments, and to ensure a safer working environment by following the national initiative for assessment and remediation. Building the capacity of DIFE is a major factor for sustainability. In the aftermath of Rana Plaza, strengthening of the labour inspectorate i.e. DIFE was identified as a key step to enhance workplace safety. The Government of Bangladesh subsequently carried out a major upgrade of DIFE enhancing its status and boosting its capacity in terms of budget and staffing. The first phase of the ILO RMG programme supported this reform process that has helped significantly strengthen DIFE so that it can perform its regulatory role in a more efficient, credible and accountable manner. However, there are still areas that needs attention:

- **Inadequate staffing:** DIFE was supposed to operate with 575[76] inspectors; currently only 310 inspectors are employed. There is a lack of manpower and capacity as they have to monitor hundreds of factories, both within and outside the RMG sector. Due to the insufficient workforce compared to the large number of factories, inspections are done on a priority basis. The RMG sector is the top priority.

  Possible Solutions:

  - Internal monitoring authority and other new and sustainable approaches should be adopted to ensure effective implementation.
  - To ensure the inspection of all RMG factories, rather than inspections on a priority basis, there should be a special section working solely in the RMG sector.
  - Increasing the size of the workforce, at the same time as utilizing the existing workforce to its full capacity is required.

- **Structural inspection is beyond its capacity:** DIFE only inspects factories after they have been built. DIFE cannot take any measures if there are any structural faults in the construction of the factory.

  Possible Solutions:

  - There is a need for a national organization (i.e. RAJUK) to conduct proper inspections for structural safety when the building of a factory starts as well as regular inspections throughout the year.
  - Factory owners should ensure predefined safety requirements are certified by the inspectors before using any building as a factory premise unless it is a purpose-built building. Government should take the necessary steps in this regard.

- **Export Processing Zones (EPZ) are beyond its capacity:** DIFE does not have any access to factories situated in the EPZs. Measures are being taken to establish an effective monitoring mechanism for factories situated in the EPZs.

  - ***Possible Solutions:*** There is a need for an effective monitoring mechanism for the EPZs without any delay.

BGMEA and BKMEA

BGMEA and BKMEA have major roles to play as two influential associations of business owners. Both BGMEA and BKMEA have to take steps to promote well being of the workers in ensuring the sustainability of RMG sector; they have been playing a complementary role in policy

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recommendations, through a specialized cell, to relevant government ministries and agencies. In May 2017, the government established the Remediation Coordination Cell (RCC) for which the employers' organisations (BGMEA and BKMEA) and the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) signed Statement of Collaboration to support and apply appropriate sanctions and actions prescribed in the 'Escalation Protocol' for factory remediation. Recently the buyer led remediation initiatives have come to an end – the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety closed officially on December 31, 2018 and launched a new brand-led approach safety monitoring platform called NIRAPON; while Bangladesh Accord for Fire and Building Safety (Accord) has got an extension of 281 days on May 8, 2019 to finish the remaining remediation process when a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between Accord and BGMEA that envisages the establishment a RMG Sustainability Council (RSC).

During the interview, the BGMEA and BKMEA shared the following challenges that they face in ensuring compliance in the RMG industry:

- **Capability and interest:** According to KII still there are scopes for BGMEA and BKMEA to manage workers effectively and serve equally both the interest of business owners and workers.
- **Capacity:** BGMEA and BKMEA undertake an inspection during the initial start-up period of factories, but their real challenge remains a lack of capacity, and a deficiency in manpower and infrastructure. Many of the factories listed under these organizations are not well off in terms of finance or infrastructure. Many of them are smallenterprises with little capital and weak capacity. This demands extra efforts and monitoring, which again is restricted due to a lack of manpower.
- **Concentrating on specific issues and coordination:** Each organization is attempting, in its own way, to tackle overall problems rather than concentrating on specific issues. There is a lack of proper coordination between institutions. There should be a unified checklist that details building and fire safety measurements.
- **Designing an efficient compensation policy**: An efficient compensation policy is necessary. There should be an insurance scheme for workers as part of a national social security strategy.

The Accord and the Alliance

The Accord and the Alliance efforts to ensure safe building structures and address issues regarding fire safety and electrical safety have been laudable. Before the Alliance and the Accord were active in Bangladesh, there were several major workplace issues in the RMG sector such as building code violations, risky locations, inadequate safety precautions for fires and earthquakes, and unplanned, and in some cases the absence of, fire exit routes, among other issues. Electrical systems and aisle management also needed inspecting. Working conditions and internal facilities were other aspects contributing to occupational safety. After the Rana Plaza incident, to retain foreign buyers, the Accord and the Alliance were formed. They have mainly focused on ensuring compliance, and adherence to the building code and Labour Law. They have been active for five years and have undertaken inspections and audits. As the Accord and the Alliance are both international institutions of buyers, and they are a third party, interventions and reviews undertaken by them are internationally acknowledged by donors. The Ministry of Labour and Employment of Bangladesh alone did not have the capacity to address these issues at factories and would not have been able to convince donors about existing compliance after the collapses of the factories took place. Factory owners have been given clear guidance about where there is scope for improvement. Factories have been moved from unplanned locations and the number of incidents has visibly decreased.

Compensation policy: Regarding the compensation policy, one view is that retailers and buyers have not kept their earlier promises. The Accord and the Alliance should have been more forthcoming in terms of helping the families of the dead, the re-employment of workers who had lost their jobs, and supporting workers who had been injured. As the low-cost fund was not properly channelled on time, factory owners could not take the necessary steps needed. Business owners took steps according to their capacity but to fully implement the compliance issues, they needed further assistance. In contrast, another view is that it is not the Accord or the Alliance who are responsible for the provision of financial support, but it is the lead buyer who should provide financial help. Besides, the factories are also responsible. They should ask for financial assistance from their lead buyers to ensure compliance.

A detailed audit or inspection report: These should detail the assessment of factory conditions both before and after the Rana Plaza and Tazreen incidents. They should statistically demonstrate what improvement has taken place after their initiative.

Responsibility of government: Following the collapse of Rana Plaza in April 2013, three initiatives were established in Bangladesh to conduct building assessments, of which the National Initiative by the Government of Bangladesh (GOB), is supported by the ILO RMG programme. These initiatives together inspected more than 4,500 ready-made garment factories. This was followed by identification of remediation of issues, with the government establishing the RCC for overseeing the remediation of export oriented ready-made garment factories under the National Initiative. During the first year of operation, the RCC focused on capacity building of DIFE engineers and other regulatory bodies to ensure that they can follow up on the remediation process. Inspectors from DIFE and Bangladesh Fire Service & Civil Defence (BFSCD) being at the forefront of government's efforts to follow up on the progress of the remediation, have received necessary knowledge and skills from RCC to carry out their roles effectively. By June 2018, 109 engineers and inspectors from DIFE, BFSCD, BGMEA and BKMEA received this training. According to a press release (http://www.newagebd.net/article/59189/accord-hands-over-80-more-factories), ACCORD has transferred safety activities of 100 RMG factories to DIFE. The government needs to intervene and ensure that all categories of factories are constantly inspected, irrespective of their number of buyers. To this end, the government has hired sixty engineers to work for RCC and expedite its activities while the ILO is providing additional engineering support to the RCC.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The implementation of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 (and its subsequent amendments made in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2013 and 2018) and the Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015 must be ensured. For the impact of implementing these to be sustainable, regular monitoring and awareness of what is required to comply with these is essential. Rather than focusing entirely on the availability of a welfare facility, functionality and efficiency of those facilities should be emphasised and effectiveness of available facilities should be regularly observed.
2. For raising awareness among workers about their rights, there should be regular training regarding the Labour Law at the factories.
3. Violations of the BLA, as listed in section 4.9, should be considered when designing future development programmes for the RMG sector.
4. Monitoring and supervision for factories where workers number is 500 and less should be prioritized, and these factories should be provided with additional support in case of limited financial resources.
5. Due to the common occurrence of the turnover of workers in small and medium firms, it is difficult to provide permanent insurance. There should be some system of central insurance. All workers, as well as factory owners, should contribute to this insurance.
6. A monitoring and reporting mechanism to track, report, and address the cases of discrimination against women workers who are pregnant or planning to conceive, needs to be created both at the policy and implementation level to prevent any discriminatory practices and to pave the way for the implementation of the maternity law. Working conditions must be congenial for women to balance their work and family life. In addition, a change of attitudes about the social contribution women make is required.
7. The poor representation of women in ownership positions as well as in leadership positions such as supervisors and managers, members of committees (canteen management committees, participation committees, trade unions) also calls for interventions at the policy level.
8. There is a need for proper monitoring so that women do not face discrimination in any job grade and have the opportunity to be promoted to higher grades. There is a need to enhance the skills and increase training and education for women.
9. There is a need for the regular monitoring of rules regarding working hours, leave (sick leave, casual leave and earned leave) and attendance bonuses. This will ensure that rules are properly implemented at all factories and that workers can claim their rights without any restriction. It will be important to revisit working hours since excessive work may have a negative impact on the health and consequently, on the productivity of workers.
10. The minimum wage at each grade must be assured with special attention to workers in mid-level grades (Grades 3, 4 and 5) and women workers in Grade 6 and Grade 7.

11. Adequate and effective training on the grievance and complaints procedures, the Labour Law, benefits, fines, upgrading skills, payment systems, overtime regulations; work hours, and workplace co-operation, workers' rights and collective bargaining agreements needs to be facilitated. New training modules should be developed depending on the demands of the RMG sector.
12. There should be a mechanism to allow workers to file complaints anonymously when breaches occur at the workplace, such as abuse by supervisors. Specific interventions need to be designed that give a platform to workers so that harassment issues are reported to the appropriate authorities and the complainant is protected from retaliation. Factory management must rethink whether they should entirely depend on supervisors in the cases of grievance-related issues of workers where confidentiality is compromised.
13. The existence of appropriate policies on sexual harassment where victims are protected against any retaliation the establishment of an effective sexual harassment committee, and building awareness among workers about sexual harassment and relevant policies are required to ensure a safer working environment.
14. Active participation and safety committees need to be promoted. Furthermore, the presence of trade unions with no political affiliation and truly reflecting workers' interest are required to ensure workers' rights without causing any obstruction to the production process. Without the presence of trade unions, the collective bargaining agreement with workers might not change.
15. All factories must be equipped with Effluent Treatment Plants (ETPs) and those must be inspected by the government regularly.
16. To prevent multiple audits being conducted, the process should be systematic and linked, so that a factory does not have to go through similar types of evaluation multiple times, which results in a waste of resources and time.
17. Brands and buyers must be more forthcoming in terms of supporting workers who have been injured, helping families of the deceased, assisting workers who have lost their jobs to return to work, and in terms of implementing compliance issues.
18. For sustainable growth and business performance of the RMG sector, a fair price should be ensured by buyers taking the facts of increasing production cost, compliance cost and revised minimum wage.

Recommended modifications to the BLA

- The BLA focuses on the provision of sickrooms and the availability of first aid equipment for factories with less than 5,000 workers. Small and medium factories, therefore, do not provide training and consultations about family welfare and reproductive health. Nor do they provide consultations for pregnant workers before and after childbirth as it is not mandated by law. This calls for a necessary modification to the law for small and medium factories, which will ensure comprehensive healthcare is provided for workers and supervisors.
- Accidental insurance is recommended but not mandatory under the BLA. In a sector like the RMG industry, where workers are at risk of injury, it should be a requirement rather than a recommendation. Accidental insurance should be mandated by law for workers who are at risk of injury depending on the capacity of a factory.
- The BLA should be more specific regarding the position of children's rooms. Children's rooms (or crèches) should not be on the top floor for the convenience of women workers.
- The government must make a law based on the guidelines of the High Court provided in 2009 for the prevention of sexual harassment at educational institutions and workplaces without further delay.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This section discusses and outlines scope for future research, extrapolated from the baseline study in the context of rapidly changing global trade and the technology environment specific to this industry.

Research by specific factory type and specific segment

If research is undertaken on different factory types (knitwear, woven, etc.), then it highlights the specific patterns and dynamics of these factories. There is also scope for focused research on each specific segment. This could include further exploring gender perceptions, inequality and workplace harassment issues.

Collecting data on workplace harassment is often difficult, as workers do not want to divulge sensitive information during a survey for fear of losing their job. Many workers that experienced harassment may have left the industry. Therefore, research needs to be undertaken to capture data from workers who have previously worked in the RMG sector so that their inputs are reflected in research in this sector.

The baseline survey experienced difficulties in the operational definitions of hunger, thirst, headaches, and other factors. To analyse health aspects more precisely using quantitative methods, a research on the health of workers needs to be undertaken with a sample survey of more than 100 factories that incorporates more operational definitions. Although it may be more expensive, surveys should be conducted both inside and outside the factory premises to compare the findings.

The Gender ratio change

Given that there is a changing dynamic with respect to the men-women share of the industry, comprehensive new research should address the reasons that are contributing to this change. As surfaced in the KIIs, and evidenced by the findings of the survey, the higher share of knitwear industries compared to woven industries (45 per cent versus 34 per cent) are contributing to the changing gender dynamic where more men are joining the workforce because of the nature of the work in the knitwear industry. This factor has wide-ranging implications in terms of labour rights, trade unions, workplace harassment issues, men-women dynamics, and skills and communication aspects, among other issues.

Examining the cultural, psychological, and sociological aspects

Research examining the cultural, psychological, and sociological aspects needs to be undertaken considering the falling women labour force participation in the RMG industry of Bangladesh.

Technology

A more technology intensive industry and the implications this may have for labour absorption is an issue that needs to be examined. The impact of automation is a major threat to the existing labour force. Outlining how automation and technology will affect the labour market needs to be explored. The type of technologies in development and the technical skills required by workers should form the basis of a study to investigate the future dynamics of the labour force. The impact of technology, especially in women labour force participation, needs to be examined, as 61.18 per cent of workers in the RMG industry are currently women.

The scope for specialized training

China places an emphasis on specialized training, which makes their industry more productive than Bangladesh's industry. It was observed that buyers, under Bangladesh's current system can get huge quantities of products from one factory. However, when fast fashion orders arrive, Bangladesh will need to execute small orders in a short time, something which China already does well. Therefore, further studies should be undertaken that looks at the scope for specialized training.

The scope for action-oriented and focused general research

Several action-oriented studies could be undertaken to identify the skills needed by workers as well as the appropriate training needed given the changing dynamics of technology and global trade that will occur in the coming years. Regarding policy-oriented research (i.e. supportive policies for the industry), further research needs to address the current state of productivity in the manufacturing sector, and the impact that wages, workplace and living conditions have on this. Studies should look at the health issues of workers.

Role of the Accord and the Alliance

There needs to be a cost-benefit analysis in regard to the role of the Accord and the Alliance. The research should attempt to identify whether their presence brings benefits to workers and the RMG industry comparative to the costs of their social and business presence.

Role of trade union

In the present study, the sample was randomized by area and production type. To measure the impact of trade unions it is important to conduct a study where half of the sample factories have trade unions. This will enable researchers to compare the working conditions between unionized and non-unionized factories as well as to capture the net benefits to workers and factories of the presence of trade unions.

Self-monitoring and self-governance capacity

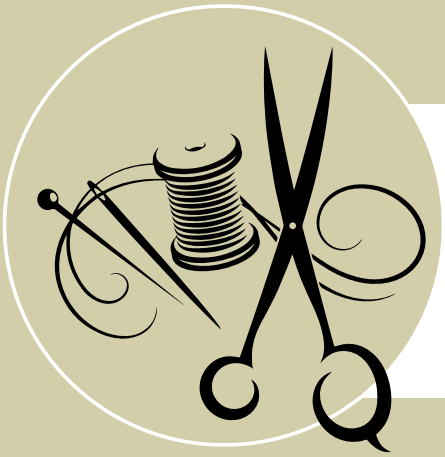
Research regarding the internal monitoring and self-governance capacity of the RMG industry of Bangladesh needs to be undertaken. This will provide important insights into what might happen post-Accord and post-Alliance. The study should investigate whether Bangladesh has the capacity to ensure its own compliance without the oversight of third-party watchdogs and transparency mechanisms.

Future opportunities

Identifying market dynamics, particularly competitive global trade should be explored. As surfaced in the KIIs, the forward linkages of the garment industry of Bangladesh are very weak. A large part of the value addition is absorbed outside of Bangladesh. The research should look at how Bangladesh can build its capacity to capture that part of the value addition, in particular how it can build forward linkages. These factors of competitive global trade in the apparel industry are areas that warrant new research initiatives.

Other broad categories of research

In general, other broad categories of future research may include studies on the sustainability of safety measures and the regular monitoring of these, policy formulations to continue current practices, and the scope for improvement in organizational capacity, leading and green factories (LEED certified factories) as well as the improving the productivity dynamics of the labour force, among other issues.



Conclusions

This baseline study provides a complete picture of the working conditions of factories as well as the demographic profile of workers in the RMG sector of Bangladesh. The study captures data from three major perspectives; workers, supervisors, and managers. It triangulates both results from the quantitative analysis (based on the baseline survey) and the qualitative analysis (based on FGDs and KIIs). This multidimenional methodology provides an opportunity to analyse to what extent the views of workers, supervisors, and managers are the same and to what extent they contradict each other. The combination of the baseline survey and FGDs/KIIs also show the limits of the impact of the location of the survey on the final data.

The study highlights that there has been a significant change in the overall working conditions of factories as well as continued compliance in RMG factories. However, there is still scope for improvement. Factories are maintaining the broader aspects of compliance but now they have to focus on the smaller details. For example, a sickroom is reported to be available in all factories whereas health facilities do not yet meet the requirements mandated by the BLA.

Rules and regulations should be made more formal. There should be an official appointment letter for all workers together with a written document of all rules and regulations. The contract should also be well defined. A lack of information is a major concern. Proper training should be arranged so that workers can remain up to date with all the rules and regulations pertaining to the RMG sector as well as the existing Labour Law.

Awareness has to come from both management and workers. If workers lack awareness of the provisions under the law, they cannot ensure that they have proper working conditions. They must be aware when there are breaches of their working conditions and know how to address these issues. A well-informed and trained workforce is a prerequisite for better working conditions in the RMG sector.

Annexure A.

Additional tables

Number of years	Percentage of total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Less than one year	11.63	12.03	11.38
1-2 years	33.47	35.61	32.11
3-5 years	35.81	34.55	36.6
6-10 years	16.44	14.74	17.51
More than 10 years	2.66	3.07	2.4
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table A1 **The number of years that workers have worked in the factory**

Number of years	Percentage of total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Less than one year	4.26	4.13	4.34
1-2 years	19.51	18.28	20.28
3-5 years	35.67	32.67	37.57
6-10 years	31.04	32.67	30.01
More than 10 years	9.52	12.26	7.78
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table A2 **The number of years that workers have worked in the ready-made garment industry**

Earning members in the family including worker	Percentage of total workers
1	15.02
2	66.12
3	14.38
4	3.75
5 or more	0.74

Table A3 **Number of earning members in family including workers**

Main earner	Percentage of total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Yes	38.87	63.44	23.28
No	61.13	36.56	76.72
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table A4 Main earner of the family by gender

Number of roommates	Percentage of total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
1	3.48	1.63	10.87
2	20	15.76	36.96
3	36.52	36.96	34.78
4	30	35.33	8.7
5	5.22	5.98	2.17
6 or more	4.77	4.35	6.51
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table A5 **The number of roommates in a workers' house**

Amount of rent	Percentage of total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
500 – 2,500	31	31.72	30.55
2,600 – 4,500	37.24	30.49	41.37
4,600 – 6,000	6.28	4.29	7.51
Above 6,000	25.48	33.5	20.57
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table A6 **Amount of rent paid by workers to live in rented house (BDT)**

Share kitchen with other family	Percentage of total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Yes	55.72	50.47	59.06
No	44.28	49.53	40.94
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table A7 **Sharing kitchen with other families by gender**

Number of workers with whom workers share kitchen	Percentage of workers that share kitchen
1	12.9
2	41.41
3	18.41
4	10.6
5	6.33
6	3.37
7 or more	6.98
Total	**100**

Table A8 **Number of families with whom workers share kitchen**

Share a toilet	Percentage of total workers	Percentage men	Percentage women
Share	55.63	54.36	56.44
Do not share	44.37	45.64	43.56
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table A9 **Workers that share toilets with other families**

Source of drinking water	Percentage of total workers	Men	Women
Tube well/Deep tube well	6.32	6.37	6.29
Canal/River/Pond	0.05	0.12	0
Supplied/Tap Water	93.36	93.28	93.41
Other (specify)	0.27	0.24	0.3
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Table A10 **Source of drinking water**

Entertainment source	Percentage of workers that own such entertainment sources
Cable TV	70
Radio	8
Internet broadband	0.69
Mobile Phone	97

Table A11 **Entertainment source by percentage of workers**

Annexure B.

Managers' perception of the role of workers

This section discusses managers' views on several workers' issues; productivity, skill-levels, their capacity to handle situations; and the dynamics of the manager and worker relationship at the workplace. The section attempts to provide insights into issues that managers are most concerned about in relation to the workforce.

Workers' skills

In general, managers' opinions on workers' abilities to think holistically, keeping various factors in mind when they are working, are split. The study found that 56.76 per cent of managers 'agree' that workers can think holistically, combining both 'strongly agree' and 'agree', and 39.64 per cent of managers disagree, combining both 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree'. This raises concerns over workers' abilities to think holistically, and manager's confidence in the workforce. However, most managers (93.69 per cent) think that that the workforce is skilled, while 5.41 per cent of managers think that the workforce is semi-skilled. This highlights the gap in manager's perception of workers capacity to think holistically as opposed to their skill level at the workplace.

Scale of agreement	Per cent
Managers' perception: workers can think holistically	
Strongly agree	10.81
agree	45.95
Neither agree nor disagree	3.6
Disagree	36.04
Strongly disagree	3.6
Total	**100**
Managers' perception: workers' skill levels	
Semi-skilled	5.41
Skilled	93.69
Multi-skilled	0.9
Total	**100**

Table B1 **Managers' perception on workers skills**

According to KIIs, if productivity is taken into account, the skill and efficiency of garment workers in Bangladesh is what is demanded of them by factory owners. From the demand side, there is a demand for low-wage workers in factories that can be hired and trained to produce low-end products and be sub-contracted. From the supply side, workers begin employment without any training. Some workers undertake training if it will mean that they will get a higher wage. Demand

for highly-skilled workers is low because production is concentrated on low-end products with less profit margin. A change in the product mix and upgrading skill levels in any economy is a simultaneous process. A higher percentage of workers will become more skilled when a higher percentage of production is high-end products. A process has begun where there is a higher demand for skilled workers and green factories, and existing workers are not able to fulfil this demand.

In these circumstances, there is a need for more training at a cheaper cost in remote areas organized by both the public and private sectors along with the existing Youth Development Programmes. The curriculum for training workers at the entry level should be revised in line with the new demand for denim products and Japanese products, among others. Both the private sector and big businesses know the actual demand for skills. They should invest in new training centres in addition to BIFT (the BGMEA Institute of Fashion and Technology). A National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is under development. The training centre under the BGMEA is in operation but is inadequate compared to the total number of workers working in the RMG sector.

Work culture

When asked if a culture exists that pushes workers to work hard, around 98.2 per cent of managers surveyed disagreed with this notion (combining both 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree'). Almost all managers (98.2 per cent, combining both 'strongly agree' and 'agree') stated that workers were more productive if they felt comfortable and safe at work. In addition, they said that working conditions do not have a negative impact on the performance of the factory. They also think that encouragement works well when interacting with workers rather than issuing a threat, coercement or punishment.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Workers will not work hard unless they are forced to	33.33	64.86	0	1.81	0	100
Workers are more productive if they feel comfortable and safe at work	0.9	0.9	0	77.48	20.72	100
When working conditions for workers improve, the performance of the factory decreases	34.23	63.96	0	0.9	0.91	**100**
Workers respond better to threats rather than encouragement	34.23	63.96	0	1.81	0	100

Table B2 **Manager's perception of the work culture at their factories**

Almost 94.59 per cent of managers expressed that workers can discuss any issue or concern with them, thereby providing workers with a platform to communicate their grievances or provide any other feedback. As has been discussed in sections 4.2.6 and 4.3, this finding contrasts with the experience of workers expressed during worker FGDs.

	Per cent of managers responding
No, they cannot	5.41
Yes, they can	94.59
Total	**100**

Table B3 **The ability of workers to discuss their issues with factory managers**

Managers' view on workers' productivity: In respect of what factors increase workers' productivity, 91 per cent of managers did not cite skills training as a factor that affects their productivity, expressing a fair degree of confidence in the quality of the training they receive and the workers' skill levels. As has been mentioned above, in the case of low-end products, skill is not a major issue. This finding aligns with responses from managers who reported that only 1.8 per cent of workers had to leave the workplace because they demonstrated low productivity at the workplace.

	Percentage of managers
It has an affect	90.99
It does not have an effect	9.01
Total	**100**

Table B4 **Skill training is a major factor affecting the productivity of workers**

	Percentage of workers
Not fired or left for low productivity	98.2
Fired or left for low productivity	1.8
Total	**100**

Table B5 **Workers who were fired or left due to low productivity**

Managers' views on unions: Managers mostly disapproved of the formation of unions. According to 96.4 per cent of managers, trade unions existed in their factories. Managers' opinions about whether trade unions caused problems for businesses were divided with 50.45 per cent stating that trade unions are not a big problem, while the remainder (49.55 per cent) thought that they caused serious (32.43 per cent) to modest (9.01 per cent) to minor (8.11 per cent) problems. In terms of the connection between the low level of union activity and business growth, 80.18 per cent of managers thought that these factors were not linked or important.

Existence of trade unions	Per cent
Exist	3.6
Do not exist	96.4
Total	**100**

Table B6 **Existence of trade unions at the factories (according to managers)**

Scale	Per cent
Serious problem	32.43
Modest problem	9.01
Minor problem	8.11
Not a problem	50.45
Total	100

Table B7 **The level of problems caused by trade unions to business**

Scale	Percentage
Not at all important	80.18
Somewhat unimportant	5.41
Somewhat important	10.81
Very important	3.6
Total	**100**

Table B8 **The contribution of low-level union activity towards business growth**

Opportunities for action

Managers' disapproval of unions is concerning, as is the fact that unions are not seen as a priority by managers. It needs to be further examined as to how unionization mechanisms can include managers to create a multi-stakeholder approach to problem-solving in the garment industry of Bangladesh.

Annexure C.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Adolescent Workers	An adolescent is a person who has reached 14 years of age but has not reached the age of 18 (according to Bangladeshi Law).
Antenatal Care (ANC)	Antenatal care is the routine health care (screening) of a presumed healthy pregnant woman without symptoms, to diagnose illnesses or obstetric conditions that may lead to complications and to provide information about lifestyle, pregnancy, and birth.
Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI)	Computer-assisted personal interviewing is an interviewing technique in which the interviewer or respondent uses a computer to ask/respond to questions. It is like computer-assisted telephone interviewing, except that the interview takes place in person instead of over the telephone.
Corrective Action Plan (CAP)	A corrective action plan is a step by step plan of action developed to achieve targeted outcomes for identified issues that need to be resolved. It aims to identify the most cost-effective actions that need to be implemented to correct these issues.
Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP)	An effluent treatment plant is the most cost effective and technically efficient system to remove unwanted, hazardous chemicals from waste water so that it meets statutory pollution control requirements, especially in the treatment of chemicals, pharmaceuticals, phosphating and electroplating waste water.
Export Processing Zone (EPZ)	Export processing zones are a type of free trade zone (FTZ) generally set up in developing countries by governments to promote industrial and commercial exports. In addition to providing the benefits of an FTZ, these zones offer other incentives such as exemptions from certain taxes and business regulations.
Fast fashion	Fast fashion is a term used by fashion retailers to describe inexpensive designs that move quickly from the catwalk to stores to meet new trends.
Fatal Injuries	The International Labour Organization (ILO) established international standards and defined the notions of fatality, permanent disablement and temporary disablement for statistical purposes. It suggested four classifications of accidents according to the type of accident, the physical agency, the nature of the injury and the bodily location of the injury (ILO, 1976, pp. 107-109). A Fatal occupational injury is an occupational injury leading to death within one year of the day of the occupational accident.

Term	Definition
Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	A focus group discussion is an effective way to bring together people from similar backgrounds or who share similar experiences to discuss a specific topic of interest.
Katcha, semi-pucca, pucca	Katcha refers to non-permanent materials. A semi-pucca structure is one where either the roof or the walls, but not both, are made of pucca materials like burnt bricks, stone, cement, concrete or timber. Pucca means solid and permanent. • Katcha toilets fall under unsanitary toilets. • Katcha house: a non-permanent structure, the floor, roof, and walls of which are made of mud, bamboo, jute sticks, grass, and leaves. • Semi-pucca house (semi-bricked): either the walls or floor are made of permanent materials. • Pucca (bricked/concrete) house: built from substantial materials such as stone, brick, cement, concrete, or timber.
Key Informant Interviews (KII)	Key informant interviews are qualitative in-depth interviews with individuals who know what is occurring in their community.
Labour Force Survey (LFS)	A labour force survey collects data from households and is designed to obtain information on the labour market and related issues through a series of personal interviews.
Lead time	Lead time includes the time required to ship the parts from the supplier; the time it takes a company to process and have the parts ready for manufacturing once they have been received; and the time it takes a company to unload a product from a truck, inspect it, and move it into storage.
Long-Term Illnesses	A long-term illness or health condition is any condition lasting six months or longer.
Non-Fatal Injuries	Based on the resolution adopted by the 13th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, the ILO included new definitions of work accidents and occupational injuries and set out broad guidelines for coverage and classification. It also contained recommendations for the calculation of incidence and frequency rates (ILO, 1983, pp. I/10-13).
Non-fatal major injuries	Non-fatal major injuries are defined as non-fatal injuries which are more severe in nature. They include injuries such as amputation, paralysis, fractures and burns with more than 20 days of medical leave.

Term	Definition
Non-fatal minor injuries	Non-fatal minor injuries are defined as all other reportable injuries that did not result in death or major injuries.
Occupational Injury	An occupational injury is defined as any personal injury, disease or death resulting from an occupational accident; An occupational accident is an unexpected and unplanned occurrence, including acts of violence, arising out of or in connection with work which results in one or more workers incurring a personal injury, disease or death. A case of occupational injury is the case of one worker incurring an occupational injury as a result of one occupational accident. An occupational injury could be fatal (as a result of occupational accidents and where death occurred within one year of the day of the accident) or non-fatal with lost work time. There are two types of injuries: fatal injuries and non-fatal injuries. There are two types of non-fatal injuries: non-fatal major and non-fatal minor.
Occupational Medicine (OM)	Occupational medicine is the branch of clinical medicine which is concerned with maintaining the health and general well-being of a workforce in addition to reducing the occurrence of potential hazards and ill-effects within the workplace. OM specialists work to ensure that the highest standards of occupational health and safety are achieved and maintained.
Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)	Occupational safety and health (OSH) encompasses the social, mental and physical well-being of workers.
Overtime	Overtime means working before or after regularly scheduled working hours; i.e., it is extra working time.
Participation Committee (PC)	According to Bangladesh's Labour Act of 2006, section 205 (1), each employer of every establishment in which at least 50 (fifty) workers are ordinarily employed, shall through the direct involvement of the workers working in that establishment, constitute a participatory committee in their establishment in the manner prescribed by the rules. Such committees will consist of representatives of the employer and the workers. The number of representatives of workers on such committees shall not be less than the number of representatives of the employer. The representatives of the workers will be appointed on a nomination basis by the trade unions in the establishment.
Postnatal Care (PNC)	Postnatal care (PNC) is care given to a mother and her newborn baby immediately after birth and during the first six weeks of the baby's life.

Term	Definition
Reproductive Age	Women of reproductive age are all women aged 15 to 49 years or those years of life between the menarche and menopause. In some estimates from censuses and surveys, the upper age is taken as 44 years and the last age group is 40 to 44 years. More recently, it has been recommended that total fertility rates should be shown both by the ages of 15 to 44 and 15 to 49 years, especially when survey data are used. It is common to add births to girls under 15 years of age to the 15 to 19-year age group and those to women over 49 years to the 45 to 49-year age group.
Reservation wage	In labor economics, the reservation wage is the lowest wage rate at which a worker would be willing to accept a particular type of job.
Respiratory Tract Infections (RTI)	A respiratory tract infection is any infectious disease of the upper or lower respiratory tract.
Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)	Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) encompass the rights of all individuals to make decisions concerning their sexual activity and reproduction free from discrimination, coercion, and violence. Specifically, access to SRHR ensures individuals are able to choose whether, when, and with whom to engage in sexual activity; to choose whether and when to have children; and to access the information and means to do so.
Stratified Random Sampling (SRS)	Stratified random sampling is a method of sampling that involves the division of a population into smaller groups known as 'strata'. In stratified random sampling, the strata are formed based on members' shared attributes or characteristics. These subsets of the strata are then pooled to form a random sample.
Trade Union (TU)	A trade union is an organization whose membership consists of workers and union leaders, united to protect and promote their common interests.
World Health Organization (WHO)	WHO's primary role is to direct international health within the United Nations' system and to lead partners in global health responses.
Work-related Musculoskeletal Disorders (WMSD)	Work-related musculoskeletal disorders are a group of painful disorders of the muscles, tendons, and nerves.
Youth	The National Youth Policy (2003) defines youth in Bangladesh as between the ages of 18 to 35 years.

Annexure D.

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