Study on the Decline of Women Workers in the Textile Industry in Bangladesh

Preface

This study on the women workers in the ready-made garment (RMG) industry of Bangladesh, based on the data collected between August and October 2022, was conducted by Brac University, funded by the GIZ and ETI. The study attempts to determine whether the proportion of women garment workers has declined or not, the factors behind the changing proportion of women workers, and the implications of this change. The findings are based on a sample of 337 factories, 370 current women garment workers, 285 former women garment workers, 183 potential women workers, 16 KIIs, and 89 participants in 9 FGDs.

In response to the changing proportion of women garment workers, I hope this study will provide an opportunity for policymakers to better understand the reasons for the decline of the share of women labour participation in the RMG industry by identifying and highlighting explanatory factors. The findings can be used for further research and provide guidance to seek alternative and decent paths for empowering the women workforce. We know that working at a garment factory has broken down social barriers for women to participate in the labour market in a patriarchal society. To sustain this journey, it is also necessary to update worker skills to adapt to the changing nature of work and to produce a skilled workforce, which is one of the obstacles to the sustainability of the Bangladesh RMG industry. In this context, this project will identify challenges the women labour force is encountering inside and outside the factory. The declining share of women in factories may be interpreted as 'defeminization' in the RMG industry, but it may open up wider choices for women to work. Knowing this path is essential for policymakers to attain the SDGs and will be a significant contribution of this project.

Dr Shahidur Rahman
Professor
Department of Economics and Social Sciences
Brac University

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACD	Asian Centre for Development
ADB	Asian Development Bank
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BBW	Benefits for Business and Workers project
BCWS	Budgeted Cost of Work Scheduled
BEST	Better Work and Standards
BGIWF	Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation
BGMEA	Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association
BIGD	BRAC Institute of Governance and Development
BILS	Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies
BKMEA	Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association
BPJS	Badan Pelaksana Jaminan Sosial
B-SEP	Bangladesh Skills for Employment and Productivity
BSPP	Project on Promoting Building Safety
BTC	Bangladesh Textile Competitiveness
BURO	Basic Unit for Resources and Opportunities
BWTG	Better Works in Textiles and Garments
CBI	Centre for the Promotion of Imports
CED	Centre for Entrepreneurship and Development
CNC	Computer Numerical Control
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue
CPO	Chief Procurement Officer
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CTS	Computer to Screen
DFID	Department for International Development
DIFE	Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments
DIPECHO	Disaster Preparedness ECHO (European Community Humanitarian Aid Office)
DoL	Department of Labour
DSK	Dushtha Shasthya Kendra
EBA	Everything but Arms
ETI	Ethical Trading Initiative
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion

FLPR	Female Labour Participation Rate
FMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAR	Gender Equality and Returns
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GSWEE	Global Solutions for Women's Economic Empowerment
GWD	Garment Worker Diaries
GWEEI	Global Women Economic Empowerment Initiative
HALOW	Health Access and Linkage Opportunities for Workers
HH	Household
HHH	Household Head
HYV	High-yielding varieties
IBC	Industrial Bangladesh Council
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IIB	International Investment Bank
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMIHB	Improving Maternal and Infant Health in Bangladesh
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
ITCILO	International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KII	Key Informant Interview
KPI	Key Personnel Interview
LDC	Least Developed Country
LFPR	Labour Force Participation Rate
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MFA	Multi-fibre Arrangement
MiB	Mapped in Bangladesh
MoHP	Ministry of Health and Population
MoLE	Ministry of Labour and Employment
FNV	Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging
MOWCA	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
NCCWE	National Coordination Committee for Workers Education
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NTPA	National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire Safety and Structural Integrity
OECD	The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

PSES	Promotion of Social and Environmental Standards
RMG	Ready-made garment
RMGPP	Ready-made Garment Productivity Project
RPC	Rana Plaza Claims
SANEM	South Asian Network on Economic Modeling
SD	Standard Deviation
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEIP	Skills for Employment Investment Programme
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SMI	Survey of Manufacturing Industries
SQP	Supplier Qualification Programme
SRAMIC	Sustainable and Responsible Actions for Making Industries Care
STITCH	Sustainable Textile Initiative Together for Change
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNI	Union Network International
USAID	United States Agency for International Development.
WEARS	Worker Empowerment and Advocacy in the RMG Sector
WEP	Workers' Empowerment Programme
WFDSA	World Federation of Direct Selling Association
WIFI	Women in factories initiative

Executive Summary

The development of the ready-made garment industry (RMG) has triggered a social change in Bangladesh by generating considerable women employment outside the family unit. However, in recent years the proportion of women workers has been on the decline, as is evident in current studies which argue that women no longer comprise 80% of the labour force in the RMG sector. In this context, the objectives of this study are to determine the decline in the proportion of women workers in the RMG, understand the factors behind the declining proportion of women in the labour force, and explore the implications of this change in the industry and women labour market. In order to investigate these research objectives, quantitative data was collected by surveying 337 factories, 370 current women garment workers, 285 former women garment workers, and 183 potential women workers. The qualitative method included 9 focus group discussions (FGD) and 16 key informant interviews (KII).

The project found that the proportion of women garment workers continued to decline from 54.22% in 2015, falling slightly to 53.89% in 2018 and 53.65% in 2021. This is a significant decline compared to the 1980s when 80% of the workers were women. According to the factory survey, in 2021, the highest proportion of women workers was observed in Chattogram (71.47%), followed by Dhaka (57.06%), woven factories (60.64%) followed by knit factories (51.84%). A large share of women workers was also found in small factories (61.23%) and sewing process (64.57%).

To find out the factors behind the declining proportion of women garment workers, the factory survey examined whether more workers had been leaving the garment factory (Exit) or fewer were entering the factory (Entry). Which was the main reason for less share of women garment workers – entry, exit, or both?

Among the workers who left the RMG sector in 2021, 50.63% were women, which was 48.86% in 2015 – which shows an increased exit proportion. An overwhelming majority of the workers (89%) responded that their departure was voluntary. According to the survey of former women garment workers, caring for children (26.67%) was the main reason for leaving their jobs at the factories, followed by becoming pregnant (17.89%), workers' views of age appropriateness (11.93%), and difficulty in balancing between home and work (10.52%). The working condition was also identified as a reason for leaving, which included harassment and violence (4.56%), long working hours (3.51%), and low salary (3.16%). It means that family condition – referring to the traditional division of labour within the family primarily women's reproductive roles – was the main driving force that led the former women garment workers to leave their jobs. This finding was supported by the survey of the factory management, where 39.82% of factories identified the family condition as the key reason, followed by working conditions (15.04%).

The decision to leave was made possible because of the changing household conditions between joining the RMG and leaving the sector. When the former women garment workers left, their household income and savings significantly increased, and this financial security triggered them to decide to leave. The other

factors that influenced the decision to leave at the time of departure were as follows: the number of women members in the household decreased, time for household work rose, and the number of children increased. In context of working conditions, about 79% of the former workers felt psychologically insecure at the time of their leaving as they faced immense workload and stress.

To understand whether the current women garment workers will leave their jobs in the short run or long run, the respondents were asked, 'Do you have any plans to leave the RMG sector and move to a different sector after 1 year (short run) or after 5 years (long run)?' Overall, the survey found that 8% of all current women workers wanted to leave the RMG sector after 1 year and 27% after 5 years. Supporting the survey of the factory and former women garment workers, the current women workers also identified family condition (41%) as the prime reason for their consideration to leaving the job, followed by moving back to village (20%) and working condition (18%), moving to a different job (13%) and age appropriateness (8%). The survey also compared the financial and household condition of 'planning to leave workers' between the time they started working in the garment sector and the current time. A significant positive change in financial condition, such as monthly income, household income, savings and husband's monthly income has triggered the current workers to consider leaving the RMG sector after 1 or 5 years. It means that women workers often do not have a long-term career vision, which again is associated with cultural norms and values of patriarchal socialization. On the other hand, the economic burden on men may support/force them to continue. Other family conditions that influenced consideration of leave were reducing number of women members for taking care of household, rising number of children of workers, increasing age of the youngest child and growing number of school going children. It was observed that the workers are 15.43% more likely to leave garments in the long run if they experience any harassment. Leaving garments increases by 2.97% for fear of miscarriage and by 3.19% if needed to work on the weekends. Contrarily, workers are 7.22% less likely to leave if felt safe from accident, 13.94% less likely to leave if receive training for automation, 7.46% less likely to leave if good healthcare facilities are provided. It seems supportive environment and facilities contribute to the retention of women workers.

Apart from finding the reasons for leaving the garment sector, this study also examined the entry of women workers into this sector as a factor of the declining proportion of women garment workers. The factory survey of this research found that the share of women garment workers who entered into the RMG industry declined from 54.38% in 2015 to 52.67% in 2018. However, this proportion rose up to 53.87% in 2021. The declining trend from 2015 to 2018 is a major concern that needs to be explored by researching on the job preferences of the potential women workers in the low-income groups. The key question to investigate was what determines a potential women labourer's decision to select a job. In particular, it was an analysis of the entry decision of women labour to the export-oriented garment factories and non-garments job. According to the survey of potential women labourers, 54% preferred garment while 46% were eager to be employed in non-garment sectors. It means that the most preferred occupation was garment followed by working in a hospital as support staff, tailoring at home, teaching, and other sectors. A few things the participants in FGD mentioned as the reason for considering non-garment jobs were: flexible timings, easier

to commute, personal independence when it came to workload, more understanding supervisors in other professions than in garment factories, no verbal abuse. Also, potential women workers with higher level of education do not want to work in the garment sector. The participants believed that garments provide an opportunity for people with no education and no skills to work in other sectors.

According to them, they deserve to work in more respectable places such as in a hospital, superstore etc. based on their educational qualification. The survey of potential women workers explored that the determining factors of job preferences were education, location, marital status, children, family structure, household income and time for household work. 48% of the respondents who preferred to work in the RMG industry had education below class 6, whereas 16% who said 'No' to RMG had attained education below class 6. Only 2% with post-secondary education wanted to join the RMG against the 31% having post-secondary education who preferred to work in sectors other than the RMG. It means that the higher the level of education, the lower is the likelihood to be employed in the garment sector. It is interesting to find that if the level of education of father and household head of potential women worker is higher, they preferred to work in non-garment sector. Where one lives in, is another factor behind the decision of working in the RMG industry. The survey explored that 72% of the potential women labours in Gazipur wanted to work in the garment sector and 47% in Dhaka preferred a garment job, depending on the availability of the diverse job options. Since the nature of work in the garment sector did not allow workers to spend more time in family, get married, have a child, live in a single family lowered the probability of choosing garment work. The likelihood of choosing garment work became less when the household income increased.

The project also evaluated any changes in the recruitment policy of workers and gender perception of management. The study found that the skill sets preferred by the management in hiring policy match with men workers. For example, factory preferred to recruit workers in 2021 who could work for long hours, have less family engagement because of perceived social norms that men participate less on household responsibilities, work hard, handle automated machines, adapt to changing work patterns, and have required education and training. The management perception on gender manifest that women workers are less capable of meeting these requirements compared to men workers.

The third research question of this study was about the implication of the declining proportion of women garment workers. The implications have been analysed from four perspectives: (a) Former women garment workers (b) Factory management (c) Buyers and (d) Country. From the context of workers, the survey of former women garment workers showed that they are now involved in three types of activities: unpaid family labour (75.79%), unemployed (15.79%) and paid income in different sectors (8.42%). The widely acknowledged reason for unpaid family labour is the norm defining the gender division of labour which allocate main responsibility for domestic tasks to women within the family. What is quite clear in this project was that motherhood was the turning point for women participation in the labour market as being pregnant and taking care of children were the dominant factors behind leaving the garment sector.

It was assumed that formers workers left their jobs as they grew old and their age did not allow them to involve in physical work in the garment sector. However, the age distribution of former women workers indicated that about 38% of them were less than 25 years old. They could have continued their works but might not to do so for their voluntary or non-voluntary choice for other options.

The trade-off between motherhood and paid work was costly in terms of losing income. The study showed that the monthly income was reduced significantly from Tk 9189 to Tk.1500 because a majority of former workers had no earning as they had to concentrate on looking after children and conducting household works. Lack of income had negative effect on social network, agency and voice. There was no support in case the main income generator at home lost income. Most importantly, they became socially, politically and financially unpowered.

Those who chose to stay at home after leaving the RMG, were also asked – what would you do if you were not staying at home? In response, 9.72% wanted to work in tailoring, 13.89% in other paid work and 4.63% as housemaid – a total of 28.24% preferred to be employed but could not do so due to their family and household responsibility. In short, this group of workers was denied to do what they wanted to do.

The implication of the declining women workers on factory was explained in three ways – losing skilled workers which led to higher cost of recruitment and creating a negative perception on the industry which is renowned for the main driver for women empowerment in Bangladesh. There is no doubt that the leading buyers have launched different initiatives to attain women empowerment, such as women leadership, digital financial inclusion, reproductive health, maternal care, higher education for women workers etc. However, if the proportion of women garment workers continues to decline, it would be difficult for the buyers to deal with the common CSR goal of empowering women and promoting gender equality at workplace. In context of the implication on the country, there was a decline in the number of paid women workers in the formal sector, which would affect the country vision 2041 and National Women Development Policy 2011. It will also have a negative impact on SDG5, a global development agenda in which Bangladesh is committed to achieve.

Based on the findings of entry and exit dynamics, the study shed light on the ways forward. The first concern was how to retain women workers. As per the factory responses, the management should increase the salary, uphold good working environment including health and provide effective child day care centre. Although automation was not a major factor behind declining proportion of women garment workers, the share of women labour decreased in the cutting and sewing while the average number of machines increased. Despite the argument of the management that women workers were not positive toward automation, the survey of current and former workers disagreed with the views of factory management. To the workers, instead of aged workers, young workers were keener to embrace technological changes. One way to change negative perception was to offer automation training in their preferred time.

This study found a minimum impact of the COVID-19 on the reduction of the share of women workers. Only 2.46% of the former workers identified COVID-19 as the reason for leaving their jobs. Although the share of Bangladesh's RMG industry to the global export increased from 4.7% in 2011 to 6.7% in 2021, the McKinsey report argues that the country has not captured the full potential foreseen 10 years ago. One of the reasons for this failure is the lack of investment in training to upskill the workforce. Among 66 projects, 4 programmes driven by public/private agency targeted skill development of workers and out of these 4, one was for training of the midlevel management, one was closed which was designed for the workers. The majority of the training was offered on the area of safety from fire and workers' rights after the tragedy of the Rana Plaza. In an interview conducted by the lead researcher, an expert in training identified the reasons for the lack of investment in training of the workers for the development of their skills. The reasons included the shift of funding to Rohingya crisis, deficit in budget for the COVID-19 pandemic, fear of the management that the factory workers would leave after training, effect of attending training on production target and limited concern on the value of training by the government and trade bodies.

The suppliers are giving importance on the recruitment of educated workers in the sector as is evident in the factory survey but educated potential women workers are not attracted to this industry because not only of the established perception on education but also of the psychological stress in meeting the production target and less upward mobility in career.

When the current women garment workers were asked about their level of job satisfaction between when started working in the RMG and currently, 62.97% of workers were satisfied and 21.08% were very satisfied. One of the reasons for job satisfaction might be absence of wage. Other reasons for job satisfaction were manageable production targets over the time, an improvement in healthcare services in the factories and ability to manage health during their pregnancy. Their working hours were not as long as before and their production targets were better manageable. They were receiving salaries on time; however, they were not getting paid overtime properly. However, the current women workers who were considering to leave after one or five years identified low salary, misbehaviour of management, long working hours as reasons for their reasons for their decision to leave the RMG sector in the future.

The women proportion did not decline in those factories where a little bit better facilities were provided by the factories. In this type of factories, daycare facilities for children, hygiene support (proper bathroom facilities), transport for workers and nutritional support were largely available on an everyday basis.

The survey of former workers indicated that there has been very limited upward mobility for the women garment workers. About 86% of workers joined the factory as helper, 66% left as operator and only 1% as supervisor. Usually, they started off their career as helper and ended up as operator with no progression from the position of operator. Since the role of helper had been reduced immensely as a result of automation, those who began as operator remained in the same position in their career. Other reasons for lack of leadership role for women as identified by management were: (1) Men cannot accept the fact that a

women would be their supervisor, (2) the line chief cannot make peace working with a women supervisor as they cannot reprimand the women supervisor, (3) women workers need to go back home as their family and husbands aren't quite in favour of letting women work out of the home for such long hours, (4) women workers don't want to work under women supervisors, (5) supervisor's salary is fixed and operators can work overtime and earn more.

In alignment with the labour act, the survey factories have set up day care centres but the study found some problems in those centres. It seems women workers were not taking advantage of the day care centres in their factories. Either the resources of the factory day care centre were not enough to accommodate the children of workers or they preferred not to send their children to these centres. To investigate the reasons the study analysed the responses of the participants of FGDs and KIIs. When asked about the existence of day care centres in factories, the participants said that these centres were not functional and usually set up to appease potential buyers for the factory who visit to evaluate their working conditions. There were few centres outside the factory but they were expensive for them. There was also a trust issue as one of the buyers mentioned that workers preferred leaving their kids with their relatives and elders because they did not feel safe with factory day care centre. According to section 46 of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, working mothers are to be allotted 4 months of maternity leave of which 8 weeks of prenatal leave and 8 weeks of postnatal leave. The question was raised whether this period is sufficient.

It is not the case that women do not want to work. In fact, the survey of potential workers showed their aspiration to work. According to the survey, 91% of potential women workers expressed their determination and commitment to work so that they could earn money leading to the pathway of empowerment socially, politically and financially. Almost all of them also strongly stated that paid work rather than staying at home was more valuable to them.

The key findings of the study are as follows:

- The proportion of women garment workers continues to decline.
- Exit of women workers from the garment factory goes up continuously and entry of women labours into factory goes down sometimes.
- Family condition is the key factor behind leaving the RMG followed by working condition.
- Although women workers voluntarily left the RMG sector, it does not mean all of them did not want to work. In particular, motherhood is the turning point of women labour participation.
- They prefer to work if there has been a balance between home and work.
- For continuation of work, family support is essential regarding household chores and taking care of children.
- In order to take care of children so that they could work, it is crucial to get support from affordable child day care center.

- Worker hiring policy has been changed and the required skillsets match with factory perception to men workers. , factory preferred to recruit workers in 2021 who could work for long hours, have less family engagement because of perceived social norms that men participate less on household responsibilities, work hard, handle automated machines, adapt to changing work patterns, and have required education and training.
- To retain women workers, working conditions need to be improved in terms of salary, workload, overtime. More have to be done regarding management behavior, career progression, compliance with maternity law, training to adapt with changing production process such as automation and functional child day care center.
- Garment sector is still the most preferred occupation for potential women workers.
- Although potential women workers have more job options now compared to past which is a good sign, these opportunities are mainly concentrated in Dhaka and limited in Gazipur.
- Potential women educated workers (class 8+) are less interested working in the RMG due to the workload and the perception that garment is for less educated workers.

The key recommendations of the study are as follows:

Government

- Review and adopt supportive policy and legal provisions for a gender-friendly industry (laws are not aligned with international standards)
- Monitor implementation of the policies (maternity benefits, paternity leave, leave, day care, childcare support, child education, compliance mechanism, reproductive health, gender-based violence, harassment, working hours)
- Initiate skill development schemes to supply skilled women workforces considering the changing situation in the sector (automation, high value job).
- Take initiatives and lead on facilitating tripartite (Government, business and workers representatives) social dialogue mechanism

Brands

- Monitor implementation of the policies (maternity benefits, paternity leave, leave, day care, childcare support, child education, compliance mechanism, reproductive health, gender-based violence, harassment, working hours)
- Monitor recruitment policies and implementation
- Consider the challenges women workers face (inside workplace and outside workplace) and developed their CSR framework to support women workers.
- Consider mainstreaming gender aspects in the existing purchasing practices, especially the impact of automation

- Develop and implement gender-specific KPIs

Suppliers/ Suppliers Associations

- Implementation of the government laws and policies, and brands' code of conduct (maternity benefits, paternity leave, leave, day care, childcare support, child education, compliance mechanism, reproductive health, gender-based violence, harassment, working hours)
- Develop and implement their gender-sensitive recruitment policies
- Work with other stakeholders (especially government, private sector institutions, NGOs) for skill development schemes to supply skilled women workforces considering the changing situation in the sector
- Consider the challenges women workers face (inside workplace and outside workplace) and develop gender-sensitive recruitment and HR policies to attract and retain women workers through a visible career path
- Promote a culture of gender-sensitive workplace through continuous interventions (training, education, awareness, women leadership, support services, etc) and include both men and women workforces in training and BCC-related activities

Civil Societies/ Unions

- Work with government, brands and factories to ensure women rights, decent workplace, gender-sensitivity and vibrant work culture in the supply chains
- Advocacy for improved policy and legal framework that ensure women-friendly working conditions

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the emergence and evolution of the ready-made garments (RMG) sector in Bangladesh has been the single most important development affecting the lives and livelihoods of women in the country. The sector was the first to employ women in large numbers and provide a regular income which, in turn, conferred a degree of empowerment and autonomy hitherto absent in the social echelons from which the vast majority of the women workers were drawn. While the composition of the current RMG workforce still favours women, in percentage terms there has been a decline from around 80% in the 1980s to about 54% today. This study, conducted in order to explore the underlying reasons which led to the decline, identified several key factors. Support was found for the hypothesis that the process of production and the adoption of greater automation induced women to leave. Of greater significance, though, was the finding that the overarching reasons for exit were rooted in societal factors. The need to conform to traditional familial obligations, as daughters prior to marriage and as daughters-in-law post marriage, emerged as the single most important cause influencing the decision to leave the sector with motherhood being the crucial turning-point. This suggests that the RMG sector, while providing material upliftment in the form of increased income, has not been a vehicle for the kind of social transformation which some may have imagined it to be capable of. A recurring theme in the study was balance between work in the factory and work at home, with subjects stating a preference to remain in the industry as long

as the balance was met. In this instance it is important to note that the balance does not refer to a time allocation between work and leisure but to work within and outside of the domestic sphere. This would imply that the RMG sector has been unable to exert much influence on conventional notions of the gender division of labour or indeed societal norms regarding men and women roles. Social factors, more precisely family condition is the dominant reason for the declining proportion of women garment workers in the Bangladesh RMG industry. However, this factor is also associated with the working conditions. The patriarchal mind-set of management is demonstrated as the expected skillsets are more compatible with men workers. If factory could provide functional support services in the areas of child care, pregnancy and maternity, it might contribute to the retention. To sum up, women employed in the sector thus continue to remain vulnerable. Steps can and should be taken to improve working conditions and the skill-set of women RMG employees, measures which may stem or even reverse their departure from the sector, but the amelioration of their communal susceptibilities may require a different kind of effort.

Introduction

1.1   Background

In the 1970s, development economists were not optimistic about the future of Bangladesh. This pessimism originated from several predicaments. One of the primary reasons was the country's population – 70 million people living in an area of 144 thousand square kilometres, expanding at a rate of three percent each year. The other challenges include an agriculture-based rural population, a meagre per-capita income, and scarce natural resources. The demolition of the fundamental infrastructure, including roads and bridges after the nine months of war and the absence of indigenous entrepreneurs to promote economic growth led to pessimistic predictions regarding the development and growth of the country. However, all these predictions were proved wrong by the substantial progress since the early 1990s. Defying extreme odds, Bangladesh has advanced from least developed to a lower-middle income country. The GDP growth has increased from 0.8 percent in 1980 to 6.9 percent in 2021; the size of the economy has grown from US$37.94 billion in the mid-90s to US$416.26 billion in 2021, per capita income rose from US$200 in the 1970s to US$ 2570 in 2021; and foreign aid dependence declined from 8% of GDP in the 1980s to just about 2% by the end of 2018. (World Bank, 2022). The pillars of development of Bangladesh are population control, self-sufficiency in rice production, remittance of labour, NGOs' microfinance, and export earnings from the garments industry.

One of the pillars of the development of Bangladesh is the contribution from the export-oriented ready-made garment (RMG) industry. The share of garments in total exports was only 0.42% in 1980, but by the end of 2020, it rose to more than 79%. The RMG's contribution to GDP has increased from almost nothing in 1976-77 to 11.2 percent in 2020-21. Export earnings were less than one million initially, rising to US$42613.15 million in 2021-22 (BGMEA, 2022). Most importantly, the development of the garment industry has triggered a social change in Bangladesh by generating considerable women employment outside the family unit. This industry has made women visible in the labour market and empowered in society. Ever since the emergence of the garment industry as the major employer of the women labour force, women have challenged social restrictions in society. Nowadays, a typical scene in the early morning for the two major cities of Bangladesh – Dhaka and Chattogram – is of thousands of women going to garment factories (Rahman, 2014). This is a scene that could not have been imagined two decades ago. The advent of the garment industry has caused a noticeable social change in the life of women in Bangladesh and, therefore, society as a whole by offering jobs to 4 million workers, of which 80% are women.

However, in recent years the proportion of women workers has been on the decline, as is evident in several current studies (SANEM, 2019; Moazzam et al., 2019; Mastura and Teng, 2020; Shajahan et al., 2021). These studies argue that women no longer comprise 80% of the labour force in the RMG sector, and the share of women labour has fallen to less than 66%. In this context, this study examines two

questions. First, is a smaller proportion of women RMG workers in the factories in 2021 than before? Secondly, what does that mean? These questions lead to specific issues related to demand and supply in the labour market. Is there any particular group of women workers who leave factory work, and what are the reasons? Does factory management prefer men workers, and why? Do women workers opt for working in other sectors, and why? What is the factory management's and workers' perception of the entry and exit conditions in the RMG sector? For those who have left garment factories, why did they leave, and what are they doing now? What is the opinion of the potential women workforce about entry to the job market?

1.2   Objectives

The objectives of the survey are as follows:

1. Find out whether the proportion of women garment workers have declined or not.
2. Understand the factors behind the changing proportion of women in the labour force.
3. Explore the implications of this change in the industry and women labour market.

1.3   Rationale

Studying women labour force participation is important for various reasons. First of all, Klasen and Lamanna (2009) argue that higher gender equality at workplaces and in education leads to economic growth. According to Doepke and Tertilt (2011), the economic growth led by women's education and labour market participation occurs because of the increase in human capital. However, gender equality is lacking on both fronts in the South Asian regions (Klasen and Lamanna, 2009). The average macroeconomic losses stemming from gender inequality in the labour force in the South Asian regions are 25% of the GDP (Kochhar et al., 2017). This loss is not only observed in the aforementioned regions, but also in the Middle East and North Africa (38% of GDP) advanced OECD economies (15.4% of the GDP) and the developing countries (17.4% of the GDP) (Kochhar et al., 2017). The Gender parity score by the McKinsey Global Institute (2015) reveals that equality in labour participation, working hours, and representation in each sector of the economy has the potential to add $28 trillion to the yearly global GDP by 2025. This means that the global economic output will rise by 26%. Therefore, it can be stated that gender inequality induces adverse impact on the economies of any country, irrespective of the sie of the country.

Secondly, women's' paid employment significantly affect their negotiating power, which has important ramifications for both their own and their children's wellbeing (King, Klasen and Porter, 2009; Thomas, 1997; Majlesi, 2016). The earnings from women not only release the pressure of husband or household head but also ensure quality life by providing a better education for children, quality health care for family members, resources to deal with crisis and most importantly fulfilling own desires. Less economic participation by women will result in higher dependency rates, lower savings and investment rates, and slower economic growth (Aguirre et, al. 2012), (Bloom and Williamson, 1998). Limiting the tasks of women

within the domestic sphere is an exploitation of their talent which causes reduction to the quality of their lives (Kabeer et al. 2019).

Thirdly, Bangladesh is committed to fulfil the targets of SDG5 as part of the country's international commitment in the global development agenda. The goal of SDG5 is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls which is integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development. The addressing of women labour participation is in align particularly with SDG5.1 (end discrimination against all women and girls), SDG5.4 (recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work), SDG5.5 (ensure women's participation and leadership in decision-making) and SDG8.5 (full and productive employment and decent work).

Finally, the participation of women in the paid labour market changes the social status of women in Bangladesh, a 'classic patriarchal society' as referred by Kandiyoti. The lives of Bangladeshi women have been dominated by a patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal social system (ADB, 2001). The general attitude of society is that men do all the productive work and women are entirely dependent on them (Khan 1988). Until the 1980s, women were physically confined to their homes and excluded from the public sphere of fields, markets, roads and towns (Chen, 1995). A sharp sexual division of labour is established through socio-economic inequality and this inequality permeates every aspect of women's lives. Westergaard (1983) notes that the most powerful ideological operator in Bangladesh is deeply related to the Muslim religion. In the context of women's behaviour, the religious norms emphasise that women observe *purdah*, which means curtain or veil. In other words, women are not supposed to be seen by mens outside the family. According to Chen (1995: 40): '*purdah* involves the seclusion of women within the boundaries of their homes and the veiling of women outside their homes.' The development of the garment industry has triggered a social change in Bangladesh by generating considerable women employment outside the family unit. Although NGOs' activities have promoted women's participation in the labour market significantly, Kabeer (2000) believes that despite the expansion of NGO efforts, the advent of the garment manufacturing industry has taken women to the labour market on a large scale with sufficient visibility after a decade of government and non-government efforts had failed. Women's share of total paid employment was only 5% in 1967 which increased to 36% in 2016 mainly because of their employment in the garment sector (World Bank, 2022). Jobs at garment factories have not only given workers present financial security but also a sense of security for the future (Paul-Majumder and Zohir, 1994).

2 Literature Review

2.1 Bangladesh: Pathway to Development

Rapid population growth was a significant barrier to development after independence in 1971. The child population was seen as an impediment to a better life due to the declining significance of farming and the availability of contemporary conveniences. The fertility rate began to decline due to the availability of

population planning tools and the government's vigorous population control programme. The population growth rate decreased from 2.47 percent in the 1980s to 0.97 percent in 2021, and the fertility rate fell from over six in the early 1980s to 2.05 percent in 2020. (Worldometer, 2022). The majority of the decline is attributable to a sharp decline in the mortality rate of children under the age of five, which has decreased from 150 per 10,000 women in the 1970s to approximately 29 deaths per thousand live births in 2020, as well as a decline in infant mortality from 132 in 1980 to only 26 in 2020. (World Bank, 2022). These statistics attest to Bangladesh's remarkable improvement in population management, which has significantly impacted the country's development. Another prominent achievement of Bangladesh has been in achieving self-sufficiency in rice production, which has increased from 17.6 million metric tons in 1975-76 to 54.9 million tons in 2020 (BBS, 2019). This achievement is the outcome of the 'green revolution,' a development programme enhanced by technologies to discover HYV (high-yielding varieties) of rice and to adopt these technologies to increase food grain output. Bangladesh's prosperity is also attributable to the creation of job opportunities for unskilled labourers in international markets. This workforce's remittances are a significant source of foreign money for the nation. The remittance from overseas migrants had a steep upward trend over the last decade, reaching almost US$1859.97 in March 2022 (Bangladesh Bank, 2022). The migrants' remittances improve the standard of life of their family members left behind by improving their living conditions, establishing trade and business in their hometown, upgrading their homes, and acquiring land. Bangladesh has also achieved more significant social development, particularly after the introduction of the microcredit programme of NGOs in the 1970s. When Amartya Sen was asked why India could not do several things that Bangladesh had done, Sen said: 'The spread of education among girls in Bangladesh is far higher than both in Bengal and India. They (girls in Bangladesh) have more access to health care. Their life expectancy is higher than that of girls in India. It is also true that they (in Bangladesh) have more educational opportunities in school.' (The Telegraph, 2020). The Nobel laureate argued that initiatives by NGOs like BRAC, Grameen Bank, and Gonoshasthaya Kendra contributed significantly to the country's progress, along with the government's well-thought-out action plan for the empowerment of women in Bangladesh.

Among all the contributors, the emergence of the Ready-made garment (RMG) industry is the crucial factor behind the rapid transformation of the economy of Bangladesh. Since independence, the economy of Bangladesh has been heavily dependent on the agriculture sector. However, the development of the RMG in the 1980s has come to be seen as an increasingly important pillar of the growth of the economy of Bangladesh. After the collapse of the jute regime, the government's attention turned to the role of the manufacturing sector, especially the garment industry, as the new engine for economic growth. The 1980s mark the beginning of the rapid integration of Bangladesh's small and often home-based garment industry into the global garment chain. The industry has had a profound economic impact on the country in terms of export earnings and employment. The combination of jute, cotton, textiles, paper, and tobacco – which had represented 60% of production in 1974 – dropped to 40% by 1985, while growth was more remarkable in

garment exports (Humphrey 1990). The garment industry now accounts for three-fourths of our export earnings and generates employment for over four million workers.

2.2 Bangladesh RMG Industry

One of the reasons for this success was the introduction of a global trade agreement known as MFA—the multi-fibre arrangement, which provided Bangladesh as an LDC an opportunity to operate as a quota-free country. The Desh-Daewoo partnership was another vital factor in the expansion and success of Bangladesh's entire garment export sector, supported by trade-friendly policies initiated by the government, such as the introduction of Back-to-Back Letters of Credit and the inception of bonded warehouse facilities. After the abolition of the MFA in 2005, Bangladesh has enjoyed more benefits under the EU's EBA (Everything but Arms) arrangement since 2010, providing duty-free access to the EU market (European Commission, 2015).

As a result of the export-led growth policy, the number of garment factories has risen from 384 in 1984 to more than 4843. Dhaka is the home of most factories, followed by Gazipur, Narayangonj, and Chattogram. About 4 million workers are employed directly, and another 5 million are engaged indirectly through forward and backward linkage businesses. Although the contribution of woven ($1240.48 million) was much higher than knit ($204.54 million) in 1992-93, the gap has narrowed down a lot in 2019-20; woven $14041.19 million and knit $13908 million. The major exporting garments are shirts, trousers, jackets, t-shirts, and sweaters. Among them, the largest export earnings are from trousers and t-shirts, $6389.38 million and $6292.25 million, respectively (BGMEA, 2020). The EU and the US are the two traditional and dominant markets of Bangladesh RMG's export. In 2019, 61.75% of Bangladesh RMG's total export reached the EU countries, 18.20% to the US, 3.37% to Canada, and 16.68% to non-traditional countries (BGMEA, 2020). The top importers in the EU are France, Italy, Germany, the UK, and Spain. Data on the direction of exports indicates a gradual shift from the traditional market (8.7% growth) to non-traditional markets (11% growth). Among the significant non-traditional destinations, exports to Australia, Japan, and India have recently grown.

Year	No. of factories	No. of workers (in mil.)	Export Earnings USD	Knit (in mil. USD)	Woven (in mil. USD)	% of RMG exports	Minimum Wage (BDT)
1983	47	0.12	31.57	-	-	3.89	560
1985	594	0.2	131.48	-	-	16.05	627
1990	834	0.4	866.82	-	-	50.47	627
1995	2353	1.29	2,488.58	1835.09	393.26	65.61	940
2000	3480	1.8	4,824.71	3364.32	1495.51	75.14	940
2005	4220	2.2	6,900.08	4083.82	3816.98	75.06	940

2009	5063	3.6	12,496.72	6013.43	6483.29	77.12	940
2010	5150	3.6	14,854.6	8432.40	9482.06	78.15	3000
2012	5400	4	21,515.73	11039.85	10475.88	79.61	3000
2015	4328	4	26,602.7	14738.74	13355.42	82.01	5300
2018	4560	4	34,133.27	17244.73	16888.54	84.21	8000
2020	3,485	4	27,949.19	14496.70	16960.03	81.16	8000
2021	3597	4.2	31,456.73	19398.84	23214.32	81.82	8000

Table 1: RMG Landscape of Bangladesh, Source: BGMEA (2022), Rahman (2021)

2.3 Overview of the Women Labour Market

In the last three decades, Bangladesh has achieved remarkable gains toward women empowerment. Despite significant advances in women education and microfinance, Bangladesh maintains a low women labour force participation rate. According to data from rural Bangladesh, boosting agro-processing may enhance women employment and production. The labour force participation rate is the proportion of the population aged 15 and above who is economically active; that is, all those who contribute labour to producing goods and services over a certain period. Productive employment is critical to translate the advantages of economic expansion into poverty reduction. In this aspect, women's employment can be vital in minimizing reliance and using the potential labour force. While labour is a significant production element, it is not homogenous; gender and skill disparities are prominent features of labour heterogeneity. The factors impacting women labour demand and supply may differ from those driving men labour demand. It is critical to pay special attention to gender disparities in this regard. Women's employment is crucial in developed economies, especially in countries where labour supply is constrained. Women play a significant
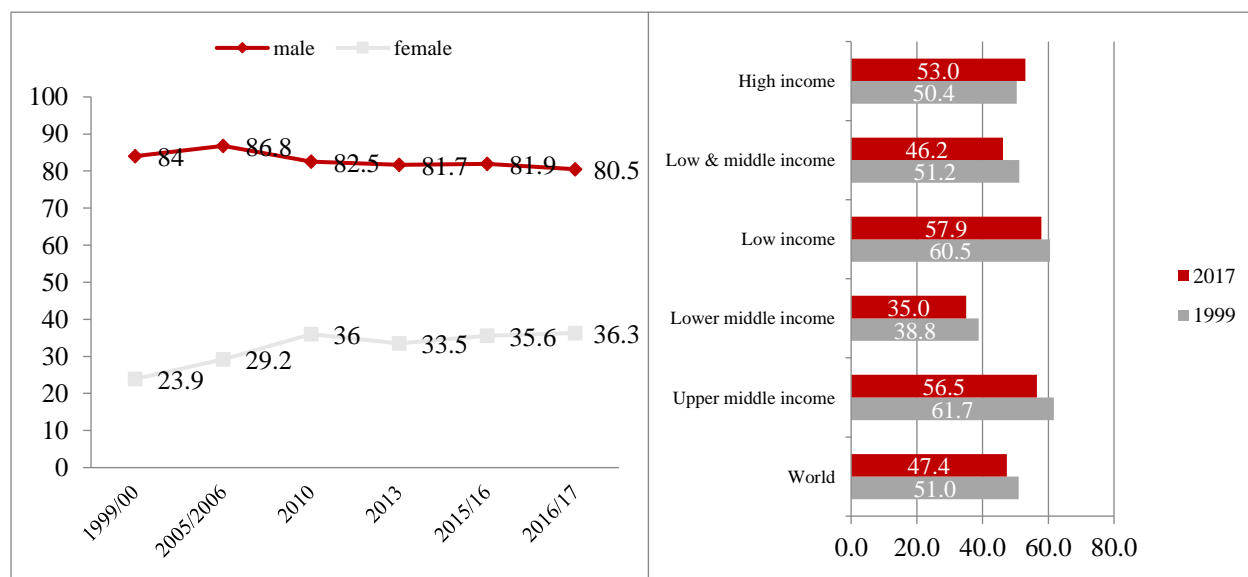
Figure 1: Women Labour Force Participation Rates, Source: World Bank (2022)

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role in developing economies by increasing household income, increasing labour supply for economic activities, and, most importantly, empowering women.

Bangladesh's average percentage of women labour participation throughout that period was 29.92%, with a low of 26.64% in 1990, a high of 36.31% in 2019, and in 2020, it was 34.54%. Despite the poor performance, women employment has increased significantly (World Bank, 2022). This has been chiefly owing to the fast rise of one export-oriented labour-intensive industry, readymade garments. Of course, women's participation in poultry and livestock, as well as a range of rural non-farm enterprises, has expanded, owing mostly to the development of microcredit. Despite this rise, Bangladesh's women labour force participation rate (36% between 2006 and 2010) has remained much lower than in other East Asian nations (67% in 2010). In 2020, the global average based on 181 nations was 49.61%. Changes in the sectoral distribution of men and women labour forces reflect distinct trends over the last one and a half decades. The reduction in men labour force participation in agriculture was substantially more significant from 2003 to 2010. As a result, the tendency conforms to the commonly anticipated structural shift. During those 15 years, the proportion of the women labour force in agriculture increased dramatically. In 1996, the percentage was 27.8%, rising to 46.9% in 2000 and 64.8% in 2010. The growing rate of agricultural employment defies expectations, particularly given agriculture's diminishing share of GDP output. The substantial growth in the women labour force in agriculture has been attributed to a change in definition and improved enumeration, which warrants additional examination. This was accomplished by delving deeper into more disaggregated data on women employment. Such disaggregation demonstrates that the livestock sub-sector employs a disproportionately significant proportion of women. This sub-sector employed 35% of the women labour force and less than 1% of the men labour force. Looking at the detailed sectoral distribution of the women labour force in Bangladesh, it can be observed that agriculture, manufacturing, community, and personal services are significant contributors to employment. Among major sectors, the women employment growth rate per annum from 2006 to 2010 was 8.4% in agriculture, 9.6% in manufacturing, 12.0% in community services, and 23.4% in wholesale and retail trade. The growth of the labour force in the manufacturing sector is higher for women than for men. The same is true for the agriculture and community services sectors.

According to the World Bank's collection of development indicators derived from officially recognised sources, Bangladesh's women labour force participation was recorded at 30.4% in 2021. As per the latest update of June 20, 2022, the World Bank provided estimates for Bangladesh's women labour force, which stood at 35% (World Bank, 2022). Although women labour force participation took a sharp fall from 36% in 2019 to 35% in 2020, it has again started to gain momentum (World Bank, 2022).

2.4 Factors for the Decline of Women Garment Workers

Based on primary data, several studies have focused on the ratio of women to men workers in the RMG sector. Shajahan et al. (2021) conducted a census of RMG workers and factories as part of a project known

as MiB and found that the women-to-men ratio of workers employed in this sector is 42 to 58. In addition, the women's share is higher in Chattogram, woven, and medium factories, and lower in Narayangonj, sweater and small factories. Based on a survey of 260 factories, in a study by ILO and UN Women, Mastura and Teng (2020) show a decline from 63.4 % in 2010 to 60.5% in 2018. The study also explores the very low participation of women in the leadership role due to gender-based stereotypes in the factory, such as men being able to work faster and their output being more. The interesting findings of this research are: men workers are attracted to the RMG sector, fewer societal obstacles for women to work compared to the past, women work longer hours combining home and work, and mens tend to change jobs more often than women. In a CPD project, Moazzem et al. (2019) also agree with the declining share of women as they show the ratio of women's has fallen from 58.4% in 2012 to 53.2% in 2016 based on 226 enterprises and 2123 workers. A baseline study of working conditions was published by SANEM (2018) as part of the ILO-RMG programme after surveying 111 factories and 2184 workers. This research also reports a lower proportion of women, i.e., 61.17%, compared to 80% of women claimed by BGMEA without concrete evidence and 65% to 70% stated by the SMI during 1994-2012. SANEM refers to the falling share of women as 'defeminization' in the RMG sector. Other studies that support the view of a falling share of women in the workforce - in comparison to BGMEA's claim of 80% - are BKMEA's website (cited in Shajahan et al. 2021), Jahan (Prothom Alo 2019), BBS (2012), BILS (Islam 2018), ACD (2021, 2015). To sum, all these studies find a smaller proportion of women in the workforce in the Bangladesh RMG sector. The following section reviews the literature on the determinants of women labour, in general, and reasons for declining share of women garment workers.

Demographics

The demographic characteristics of women play a crucial role in deciding the engagement of women labour participation. The researchers that studied the relationship between demography and the women labour market were mainly concerned with women's marital status, age and education. Young single women have greater rates of labour force involvement than married women (Bridges et al, 2011). Widowed, divorced, and separated women are more likely to be found working outside the home (Heintz et al. 2017). Women LFPR is negatively correlated with marital status as married women are more occupied with household responsibilities and caring for family members. They exercise less freedom than other women (Rahman and Islam, 2013). The authors further mention that the influence of age on women LFPR can be non-linear, i.e., declining first and then rising. The third demographic situation that affects FLPR is education. The probability of participation increases substantially with the increase in the levels of education (UNDP 1997). This argument is in line with Khandakar (1987) found that women education increased the likelihood of women participating in paid work. However, Bridges et al. disagree with UNDP (1997) and Khandakar (1987) as their study found higher participation rates among women with no education and those with post-secondary levels and lower levels among those with primary/secondary education. Heintz et al. (2017) have explored a similar finding in their research on cultural norms and women's labour market behaviour.

According to the study, the effect of education on the women labour market varies depending on the level of education: Women with primary education are more likely than those without it to work at home. In contrast, post-secondary education graduates are more likely to work outside the home and in paid employment.

In the context of the Bangladesh RMG industry, when we look into factors such as age and education, it has been seen that most women workers are young. 29.1% of women' were uneducated, and 58.6% received primary education. Nearly three-quarters of surveyed women workers were married (Mastura and Teng, 2020). The women workers are younger than men workers, and unmarried women between the ages of 18 and 20 constitute a highly vulnerable group who leave education to start earning a living at an early age (SANEM, 2019). Poverty, lack of skills, dire need for work, and their position in a society dominated by strong gender hierarchies make it easy for factories to employ them at a minimum wage. A greater number of young women workers indicates a higher probability of losing jobs when they get old. In addition, less educated women workers may not adapt to the changing technology of workplaces which may be another reason for reducing the proportion of women workers in the RMG industry.

Household Composition

Several studies find that the household composition, such as the size of the family, presence of young children and senior citizens at home, amount of household assets, and land ownership determines the likelihood of participation of women in labour market. Having children in the family limits women's access to outside activities and negatively impacts women labour force participation (LFPR) (Rahman and Islam, 2013). According to Heintz et al. (2017), having children makes it less likely that a woman will work outside the home or hold down a job that pays a salary. However, the consequences are even more pronounced for women who report having domestic and caring duties. Examining its effect on different types of work, Bridges et al. (2011) argue that the presence of young children positively affects self-employment and negatively affects wage employment. From an economic perspective, household wealth and land increase the likelihood of unpaid family labour while decreasing the likelihood of work outside the home and wage employment (Heintz et al., 2017). Rahman and Islam (2013) assert that while poor status may be endogenous, it is predicted that land and non-land assets will be exogenous to the system. Apart from the size of family and amount of wealth, another household composition linked to women's involvement in labour is the condition of household head as revealed by Heintz et al. (2017). The researchers found that if the head of the household has a higher level of education, women are less likely to work outside the home. If the head works in agriculture, women are more likely to work inside the home. If the head works for a wage or salary, women are more likely to work outside the home and for a wage. If the head works in business or has a skill, women are likelier to work inside the home but less likely to do unpaid family work.

The effect of household composition on the participation of women in labour is also evident in the RMG sector. The ILO and UN Women study on the gender composition of garment workers finds that nearly half

(47.3%) of married, separated, divorced, or widowed women workers have one child, 17% have two children, and 2.3% have more than two (Mastura and Teng, 2020). This indicates that two-thirds of married, separated, divorced, and widowed women workers have childcare responsibilities that they must balance with their employment in the RMG sector which is a factor behind the declining share of women workers. Although they are motivated to work for financial reasons - a desire to 'meet basic family needs', to 'be self-sufficient and independent by earning an income,' to 'financially support the family by working,' and to 'increase the number of earners in the family' - they face substantial barriers throughout the process. Women workers listed obstacles that were not highlighted by men, such as disapproval from their spouse or in-laws and the fact that they have young children. Roughly one in three women respondents experienced societal challenges, such as disapproval of working outside the home, others 'worry if they leave for work, and religious objections to working in the public sphere (Matsuara and Teng, 2020).

Physical Distance

Physical distance - distance from home to work - demarcates the market for women's labour. Using her home as the centre, a circle with a radius of 200–400 meters can be used to define the physical boundaries of the market for a given woman's labour (Cain et al., 1979). Such proximity gives the advantage of returning home quickly for domestic tasks and caring for family members. The physical boundary is influenced by the purdah norms that impact the distance a woman would be willing to travel to work, the distance a husband would permit his wife, and her desire to relocate for work (Cain et al., 1979).

Management Approach to Pregnancy

A clear sign of gender discrimination is seen in maternity protection. According to the ILO and UN Women study, women face different forms of abuse in the workplace, such as when RMG factory managers view pregnant workers as inefficient. They do not want to cut production targets and sometimes pressure pregnant women to quit their jobs (Matsuara and Teng 2020). One focus group respondent observed that if women become slower at completing tasks during pregnancy, supervisors intentionally subject them to verbal abuse to prompt them to quit. As a result, pregnant women suffer in silence – For example, one former RMG worker did not ask for leave when she felt weak during pregnancy, as she knew from experience that she might be fired or made to leave. Moreover, unfavourable working conditions like lack of maternity leave discourage women from conceiving in fear of terminating contracts. 53% of factories where no workers became pregnant are forcing such workers to leave and technically avoiding paying maternity leave (SANEM, 2019).

Automation

At an enterprise level, the decreasing proportion of women workers in the RMG sector indicates that men increasingly hold jobs that used to be held by women. Furthermore, production sections in which technology has been upgraded correspond to those in which women workers' share of employment has declined

(Matsuara and Teng, 2020). One of the underlying reasons behind the declining share of FLFP is the expansion of technology-intensive factories, especially knitwear factories, where production processes require skill and are capital-intensive (SANEM, 2019). Women are less able to operate machines than men due to a lack of education and technical expertise (Moazzem et al., 2019). Such variations in technological capacities between men and women workers may affect employment chances in a sector gradually updating its technological basis (although slowly) by adding more efficient machinery. Women workers may be less favoured in industries upgrading machines due to their lack of knowledge of various machines (Moazzem et al., 2019). This could suggest that the sector's evolution has not been sufficiently gender-responsive in a way that ensures equal opportunities and treatment for women and men. This 'defeminization' of labour 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 like many other countries. The emergence of knitwear and sweaters translates into an increasing share of men workers as the production process becomes more skilled and capital-intensive (SANEM, 2019). Shajahan et al. (2021) argues that the changing scenario of workers' gender composition in the RMG sector has a historical linkage with the growth of the knitwear industry because of the belief that it is 'men's work' who can work during the night if required. Sweater factories attract men workers because of the widespread use of piece work leading to higher earnings.

Working Conditions

As work in the RMG sector is extremely physically stressful, most women workers do not want to continue working in the sector until they reach the regular age of retirement. They generally expect shorter careers in the sector and to leave their jobs at a younger age than men. While most men and women workers feel satisfied with their current work, they are also subjected to verbal abuse and humiliation. Women workers report experiencing sexual harassment with little recourse to protection or justice (Matsuara and Teng, 2020). The social stigma attached to making complaints and the legitimate fear of losing a job acted as substantial disincentives to complaining (SANEM, 2019). Furthermore, women's working days are considerably longer when the time they spend at work in factories is considered alongside their work within the household.   Of the 40 women focus group participants in ILO and UN Women study, 8 quit their jobs in the RMG sector for fear of miscarriage, long work hours during pregnancy, and no reduction in workload. These lead to the reasons why women leave the workforce in the RMG sector.

Lack of Leadership Positions

There appears to be a link between low leadership representation and the decreasing share of women workers. SANEM (2019) findings indicate that the share of women supervisors was below 10% and approximately 4% for managers. It was claimed that due to the patriarchal societal structure, men workers get promoted earlier even if they join later. For this reason, the share of women workers is highest in Grade 7 at nearly 71%, dwindling to 54.3% in Grade 3 and 16% in Grade 1. SANEM's (2019) study also finds that

the wage differential between the mean wage of men and women workers is Tk. 1,012.5. The wage gap of the mean wage is highest in Grade 3 (Tk.967.81), followed by Grade 7 (557.37), Grade 4 (525.81), Grade 1 (342.86), Grade 5 (315.73), Grade 6 (298.88), and Grade 2 (Tk.17.16) respectively. The wage differences and the lack of promotion opportunities for women illustrate deeply ingrained discrimination at each level. Women 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 in the workplace. Women workers, in most cases, do not have information about women's 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.

2.5 Unexplored Research Area

The reasons for a lower share of women workers in the factories are missing from the studies mentioned above. The researchers in these projects have indicated several factors related to the falling share of women participation. CPD's study argues that women have less capability to handle modern machines after the introduction of automation (Moazzem et al., 2019). Rahman and Islam (2013) explain that machines are replacing manufacturing jobs that women perform, and the composition of factories has changed from woven garments to the production of knit items. Women workers were mainly employed for woven garments. However, when knit items started being produced, factories preferred to employ men workers; hence there has been a reduction, although women still occupy two-thirds of the manufacturing labour force (Rahman and Islam, 2013). The nature of work in the knit and sweater factories demands more physical labour, so the presence of men workers in these two sectors is more (Moazzem et al., 2019; Shajahan et al., 2021). Women lag behind men in secondary and higher secondary education; due to this deficiency, women are less skilled in their jobs and face problems adapting to changing technology (Mastura and Teng, 2020; Prothom Alo, 2019). Farole et al. (2017) reported that the share of women workers has been growing dramatically in other sub-sectors, such as in food processing, where the share of women workers is estimated to have increased from 17% to 28%. It increased from 14% to 56% in machinery and equipment, and in leather, it increased from 10% to 40%. The authors opine two reasons to explain this increase. Firstly, it could be a spill over effect as many women had joined the RMG sector and received training in manufacturing, so they spread out to other sub-sectors after retiring from the RMG sector. Secondly, a shift from RMG towards other labour-intensive industries might occur. Apart from that, the traditional patriarchal culture's socioeconomic elements, notably childcare-related, influence women's participation in the labour market. Solotaroff et al. (2019) find a relationship between labour force participation, the age of children, and the presence of elderly family members. In this context, Heintz et al. (2018) argue that not all women want to work in the garment sector because a garment factory job is considered less acceptable to society, involves hard work, and is highly geographically concentrated.

Although the studies mentioned earlier explain, to some extent, the reasons for the declining share of women, none of the studies has directly asked the factory management, workers and other key stakeholders why there is a smaller proportion of women workers in the sector. These projects have not aimed to investigate under what circumstances the men-to-women ratio changes. Instead, generating knowledge on the working conditions in the RMG sector was the main focus of these studies. There is no empirical and comprehensive study on the causes of the falling share of women in the RMG sector. These unexplored research areas were addressed in this study.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study was designed to provide an evidence-based perception of the changes in the proportion of women workers in the RMG industry and its implications on the sector using a mixed method approach – quantitative and qualitative. A combination of qualitative and quantitative data produces more complete analysis and are complementary to each other (Creswell, Fetters and Ivankova, 2004). Under the quantitative method, data was collected by conducting the survey. The qualitative method included focus group discussions (FGD) and key informant interviews (KII). The rationale behind the mixed method approach was each method complements another. Whereas the quantitative method through survey provides an opportunity for statistical analysis, qualitative study offers an in-depth analysis and a better understanding of the problems. The advantage of the mixed method is to find out whether the survey findings coincide or contrast with the findings of FGD and KII. Finding the similarity between the survey and FGD/KII assures the findings and disagreement adds a new dimension to the study that requires further analysis. The fieldwork was undertaken from August 20, 2022 to October 30, 2022.

This study focused on three areas to address the key research objectives. These were: (a) entry into and exit from the RMG industry, (b) determinants of women labours' entry and exit to the RMG sector and (c) Implications of changes in women labour on the RMG sector. Each of these areas were developed after reviewing the existing literature. A detailed explanation of research design given below provides how these three areas reflect the goal of this study.

Focus 1: Entry and Exit to/from RMG Factories

In focus 1, the study examined the trend of women labour force participation by analysing the entry of women workers into and exit from the RMG sector by conducting a factory survey, and how they were affected by factors such as nature of work, types of factories, change in workload etc. Specifically, the research focused on the following concerns by analysing entry and exit data:

(i)   Whether the overall share of the women labour force was declining in the RMG sector of Bangladesh.
(ii) Whether entry or exit contributed more to the declining share of the women labour force.

(iii) How the nature of work such as automation, change in the share of different types of factories (knit, woven, and sweater), size of factories was contributing to the change in men-women work ratio in the industry, and

(iv) How the working conditions such as workload affected women labour force participation.

Focus 2: Determinants of Women Labours' Entry and Exit to/from the RMG Sector

In order to understand the factors that determine the entry into the factory and exit from the factory, the study conducted a survey with three groups of workers: (a) the potential women labour force (who are waiting to enter the workforce), (b) women workers who have switched from the RMG sector to others, and (c) existing women garment workers. Utilising the data of the surveys, the study analysed the following issues:

(i) What factors affected potential women labourers' decision to enter into the RMG and other sectors,

(ii) Why women labourers were leaving the RMG sector and what are the determinants of their decisions including the social, demographic factors and working conditions.

Focus 3: Implications of Declining Proportion of Women Garment Workers

The project also conducted FGD of workers to figure out the causes of a declining share of women labour in the RMG sector and the implications of this change on the women labour market. Three groups of workers – current women garment labours, former women garment workers and potential women workers – participated in the FGDs. In addition, KPIs were conducted where expert opinions were considered to understand the causes and consequences. Using the qualitative data of FGDs and KIIs, the study analysed:

(i) Context in which changes in women proportion took place

(ii) Consequences of declining women proportion on their lives through case study

(iii) Whether the key stakeholders shared similar or different insight of the problem

(iv) Implications on the RMG industry and women labour market

3.2 Sampling Procedure

3.2.1 Factory Survey

For this project, the MiB dataset was used to find the population of export-oriented garment factories and the Bangladesh RMG industry workers. Although many datasets are available that contain information on the RMG, MiB (Mapped in Bangladesh) is the most updated and reliable dataset produced by the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Development (CED) of Brac University. MiB's dataset has mapped the Bangladesh RMG industry widely through a process of primary data collection covering the basics of factories which follows continuous monitoring, updating, and maintaining transparency by ensuring publicly accessible data. Having BGMEA and BKMEA as strategic partners and support from the DIFE of MoLE have established the MiB dataset as an authentic data source. Since the consultant of this project is also

from the same university, Mapped in Bangladesh, MiB of Brac University has allowed us to use its dataset as the sampling frame of our project.

First, we removed irrelevant variables from the procured MiB dataset in data cleaning. The variables retained were factory name, type, district, number of men and women workers, the total number of workers, and factory size. Secondly, the study recorded the total number of workers into three categories and generated a 'Size' variable. We defined small factories as less than 500 workers in a factory, Medium as >500<2500 workers, and large factories referred to >2500 workers. This is the factory size definition used by most research institutions, such as CPD. Finally, this research excluded unnecessary factory types like accessories and washing etc. and merged all other factories into one 'Mixed' category while retaining pure Knit, Woven, and Sweater factories in their respective categories and named this new variable 'Type.'

Using the MiB dataset, the study found a list of 3,706 factories which we consider the size of the population. The sample size of factories was determined using the total number of 3,706 RMG factories under the MiB dataset. The study surveyed randomly selected RMG factories using a stratified random sampling method from this population by factory location and factory type. The information on the location and type of factory in the MiB's population was used to determine the number of strata. According to the dataset, the RMG factories are located in four areas - Dhaka, Gazipur, Narayangonj and Chottagram – and manufacture mainly four types of products - Knit, woven, sweater, and mixed (knit and woven). Therefore, the total number of strata was 16 (=4*4). The following table shows the distribution of factories by location and type of factory.

Location	Type				Total
	Knit	Woven	Sweater	Mixed	
Dhaka	454 (12.25%)	616 (16.62%)	216 (5.83%)	144 (3.89%)	1,430 (38.59%)
Gazipur	470 (12.68%)	326 (8.80%)	373 (10.06%)	82 (2.21%)	1,251 (33.76%)
Narayanganj	543 (14.65%)	30 (0.81%)	43 (1.16%)	21 (0.57%)	637 (17.19%)
Chattogram	104 (2.81%)	86 (2.32%)	39 (1.05%)	159 (4.29%)	388 (10.47%)
Total	1,571 (42.39%)	1058 (28.55%)	671 (18.11%)	406 (10.96%)	3,706 (100%)

Table 2: Distribution of factory by location and type of factory. *Figures outside parenthesis indicate population and inside parenthesis indicate proportions.*

The above table shows that 3706 factories were grouped into four districts, and each district was assigned four subgroups determined by the factory type. According to the table, 42.39% of factories were knit, 28.55% woven, 18.11% sweater, and 10.96% mixed. Dhaka and Gazipur had the most factories, 38.59%, and 33.76%, respectively.

The sample size was determined using the following formula (which is the formula for calculating minimum sample size for estimating proportions in a population):

$$n = \frac{z_{\frac{a}{2}}^2 * P * (1 - P)}{e_0^2 + z_{\frac{a}{2}}^2 * \frac{P(1-P)}{N}}$$

where,

n = sample size

N = population size = 3706

P = population proportion = 0.325 or 32.5%

e_0 = desired level of precision = 0.05

α = confidence interval = 95%

$\frac{z_\alpha}{2}$ = z-value corresponding to a level of significance in two-tailed test = 1.96

Districts	Type				Total
	Knit	Woven	Sweater	Mixed	
Dhaka	47 (41)	60 (56)	14 (19)	18 (14)	139
Gazipur	45 (43)	32 (30)	36 (34)	6 (7)	119
Narayangonj	41 (49)	3 (3)	3 (4)	1 (2)	48
Chattogram	14 (10)	6 (7)	2 (3)	9 (14)	31
Total	147	101	55	34	337

Table 3: Distribution of sample of factories. *Figures outside the parenthesis indicate surveyed factories, and figures inside the parenthesis indicate indicated target sample*

As mentioned above, the MiB dataset was used in this study. From this dataset, the factories were organised by location and product type following stratified random sampling. The total number of sampling frames was 16. For instance, under Dhaka, there were four sampling frames, and these were: Knit factories in Dhaka, Woven in Dhaka, Sweater in Dhaka, and Mixed factories in Dhaka. The 337 factory samples were selected randomly based on the proportion of factories in each category. For instance, 12.25% of produced knit in Dhaka. Therefore, the sample size from this stratum should be 41 (0.1225*337), but the study collected data from 47 knit factories in Dhaka. The enumerators tried their best to reach the expected sample size during the survey. In some cases, they succeeded and sometimes could not reach out because of the challenges they faced in accessing factories, which is quite common in this type of survey. The above table shows no significant difference between the target sample and the actual sample distribution.

3.2.2 Worker Survey

In the second stage, the sampling units were workers. Focus 1 of the study was the factory survey, and focus 2 was the survey of three groups of women workers – current women garment workers, former women garment workers, and potential women workers. The worker survey was comprised of 838 women workers from three groups (i) 370 current women garment workers, (ii) 285 women workers who left the RMG industry, and (iii) 183 potential women workers, i.e., who are going to enter into the labour market for the first time. The sampling procedure is explained below.

Sampling of Current Women Garment Workers

Using a 95% confidence interval with a 5% margin of error and a population proportion of 33%, the minimum number of workers required in the sample was 340 (given a total population of 1,559,893 workers of the whole data universe). The sample size of current women garment workers in this project is 370 which is greater than the minimum sample size.

Districts	Women Workers	%	Sample workers
Dhaka	537,902	34.48	110
Gazipur	688,908	44.16	173
Narayanganj	175,732	11.27	57
Chattogram	157,351	10.09	30
Total	1,559,893	100.00	370

Table 4: Population and sample of current women garment workers

To locate current women garment workers, the rationale was that the dense industrial areas would have the greatest number of working people living around them within commuting distance. Using the Mapped in Bangladesh database, we divided the factories' location by district. Then we noted the total number of factories and the number of factory clusters in the district. Then we ranked the clusters and pricked the top high-density clusters with the highest number of factories. Few literatures supported this rationale. According to the survey report by the Asian Centre for Development in 2020, it was found that 80% of the workers live within walking distance of the factories. We also used the sampling map from the Garments Worker Diaries project by SANEM to get even further estimates of where garment workers live and then used these resources together to make our estimations. Following this rationale, the study surveyed the following areas and randomly selected 370 women garment workers.

Districts	Areas
Dhaka	Mirpur: Milk-vita, Matikata, Tejgaon-Mohakhali: Doshtola slum, Korail slum, Uttara: South Chalabon and Uttarkhan
Gazipur	Auchpara, Board Bazar, Bason sarak, Choidana, Konabari
Narayangonj	Sashongaon BSCIC, Chanmari, Masdair
Chattogram	Shershah Colony and Chandranagar, North and South Kattali wards

Table 5: Target location of garment workers

Sampling of Former Women Garment Workers

The population of former women garment workers is unknown. The minimum sample for an unknown population should be 385, with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level (Cochran, 1997). Since the proportion of former women workers according to the location was also unknown, the project targeted more workers from Dhaka and Gazipur and less from Narayangons. The next step was identifying where these workers usually live in and conducting the survey. Using income data from the 2017 labour force survey conducted by the International Labour Organization and the 2016 Poverty Maps of Bangladesh conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, we can get a rough estimate of the location of lower-income people in various upazillas of our 3 study districts. We match the areas with the existing MiB database as well as the sampling map of GWD. The rationale behind this approach was that we are hypothesizing to finding former women garment workers to be settled in the low-income regions in our study area. The enumerators went to these areas and asked community leaders and current garment workers about the house of former women garment workers. By following this process, the survey team was able to find 285 respondents from Dhaka, Gazipur, and Narayangonj within the timeframe of the fieldwork.

Districts	Sample size
Dhaka	90
Gazipur	145
Narayangonj	50
Total	285

Table 6: Sample size of former women garment workers

Sampling of Potential Women Workers

According to the Labour Force Survey of 2016-2017 by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the potential labour force is defined as 'all persons of working age who, during the short reference period, were neither in employment nor in unemployment and: (a) carried out activities to 'seek employment,' were not 'currently available' but would become available within a short subsequent period (i.e., unavailable job seekers); or (b) did not carry out activities to 'seek employment,' but wanted employment and were 'currently available' (i.e., available potential jobseekers).'

Districts	Women Workers
Dhaka	133
Gazipur	50
Total	183

Table 7: Sample size of potential women workers

In this project, this definition was used to find out potential women workers. As per the LFS (2016-17), the total number of potential women workers was 1,587,000. The minimum sample size is 385. The logic in sampling former women garment workers was that a similar strategy was used to find potential women

workers in Dhaka and Gazipur – where most garment workers are. The enumerators went to the low-income areas of Dhaka and Gazipur and asked the community about the house of potential women workers. By following this process, the survey team was able to find 183 potential women workers within the timeframe of the survey.

3.3 Survey Preparation

The survey commenced in August 2022. The estimated completion date was September 2022 but it took more than a month to complete four surveys. The worker surveys were finished by the end of September, but the factory survey could not finish on time as it encountered challenges to get access to the factories. In addition, the randomly sampled factories did not have sufficient data that the study was asking for. Sometimes the enumerators had to visit a factory more than one time to get the desired data. Even few factories in the sample were found closed. For these reasons, additional factories were added with the initial sample. The following preparations were taken to conduct the surveys.

3.3.1 Recruitment and Training of Enumerators

We recruited and formed two separate teams for the RMG factory and workers' surveys. The factory survey team consisted of 10 senior enumerators with support from research assistants. The workers survey team had 10 enumerators and a supervisor. The project team organised two separate training sessions for the data collection team. The training was scheduled for late August.

3.3.2 Questionnaire Translation and Bench Testing

There were four sets of questionnaires: factory survey, current women garment workers, former women garment workers, and potential women workers. All these questionnaires were translated to Bangla and tested the questionnaire for a sequence of logic and flow of data checking after the completion of the pilot study. The number of the pilot study was 40 (15 factories, eight current workers, nine former workers, and eight potential workers).

3.3.3 Supervision and Monitoring

Three persons to supervise and monitor fieldwork worked as research manager, data manager and field manager. Besides, one was assigned as field supervisor for the workers' survey. These resources were mobilized to supervise physically in the field, make high-frequency checks over phone calls. Finally, we used STATA do file for inconsistency checking and the STATA correction file for cleaning the data. For inconsistent data, we used to conduct a partial resurvey for correcting the data The survey team conducted the fieldwork in consultation with the lead researcher. The survey team leader coordinated all project team activities and consulted with the lead researcher.

3.4 Qualitative Study: KII and FGD

The study conducted Key Informant Interviews (KII) of 16 people to understand the reasons for the declining proportion of women garment workers and the implications of this change on the RMG industry and women labour market. The stakeholders were: buyers, suppliers, experienced workers (men and women), midlevel management, supervisors, INGOs, buying houses, research organizations, trade unions, academics, development partners, business associations and government organisations etc. The details of KIIs are described in the following table. A combination of virtual and in-person interviews was arranged per the interviewees' interests. The interview time was, on average, 40 minutes.

KIIs	Participants	Nature of Interview	Justification of selection	Information sought
Academic	2	Virtual	Well renowned for research in RMG industry-leading reputed research institutions	Inputs from their research findings and experiences relevant to this project
Buyer	2	Virtual	Leading buyers in the world who address women's empowerment	Capacity-building programmes in the industry that are concerned with women labour issues and workload in the factory
Supplier	3	In-person	Prominent garment companies in Bangladesh	Any changes in the production and how it affects women garment workers
Worker	2	In-person	Working for a long time on the production floor	Nature of workload and how it affects women; why is the women proportion declining
Union leader	3	1 Virtual and 2 In person	Global and local trade union leaders working in collabouration with other stakeholders	Challenges women workers face in the factory and how unions respond to them
Business Association	2	In-person	Authority to shape policy for women workers	Observation on the declining proportion of women workers and what steps have been taken
INGO	1	Virtual	Involvement in projects on gender relations	Research findings relevant to this project and programmes launched to address the problem
Government	1	In Person	Key agency of policy formation	Regulation of compliance in factories
Total	16			

Table 8: Description of KIIs

As described in the table below, the study conducted 9 FGDs, of which five were with former workers, two with current workers, and two with potential workers. The total number of participants was 89, and the majority were former workers, as the sample size of this group of workers was below the expected sample

size in the survey. The FGDs took place in Dhaka, Gazipur, and Sherpur. The reason for selecting Sherpur was to find out why former women workers returned to the village instead of staying in the city. A neutral venue was selected for the meeting of the FGDs in consultation with the participants. On average, each session was held for ninety minutes. The lead researcher of this project moderated the sessions in cooperation with the research assistant.

Schedule	Nature of participants	Respondents	Location	Information sought
August 15, 2022	Former women garment workers	13	Korail Slum, Dhaka	Why left RMG, and what are they doing now
August 15, 2022	Potential women workers	12	Korail Slum, Dhaka	Where do they prefer to work, and why
August 30, 2022	Current women garment workers	9	Boat Bazar, Gazipur	Work experiences at RMG and future career plan
August 30, 2022	Former women garment workers	8	Boat Bazar, Gazipur	Why left RMG, and what are they doing now
September 6, 2022	Former women garment workers	10	Mirpur, Dhaka	Why left RMG, and what are they doing now
September 6, 2022	Current women garment workers	10	Mirpur, Dhaka	Work experiences at RMG and future career plan
September 14, 2022	Potential women workers	10	Mirpur, Dhaka	Where do they prefer to work, and why
September 30, 2022	Former women garment workers	9	Village: Poschim Beltul, Upazila: Jhenaigati, District: Sherpur	Why they left RMG, what are they doing now, and why did they return to the village
September 20, 2022	Former women garment workers	8	Village: Poschim Beltul, Upazila Jhenaigati, District: Sherpur	Why they left RMG, what are they doing now, and why did they return to the village
Total		89		

Table 9: Profile of FGDs

3.5 Analysis

The survey data were analysed by applying standard parametric and nonparametric statistical techniques. We have conducted the following five types of analysis throughout the report:

- First, we presented the summary statistics of the response and explanatory variables for the overall sample and by groups, such as types of factories,

- Secondly, we prepared histograms, bar charts, and time series graphs such as line plots for the visual presentation of the data,

- Thirdly, parametric and nonparametric inferential statistical tests were performed to see whether the differences in the response variables are independent of different groups and key explanatory variables,

- Fourthly, we conducted probit regression analyses based on the nature of the data and variable to examine the correlation between response and explanatory variables, and

- Finally, for study 3, qualitative analysis was applied to the FGDs and KIIS by using NVivo software. Several themes were formed to compare the data from different groups of people. With the consent of the participants, the conversations of FGDs and KIIs were recorded and later transcribed for analysis. The identity of the participants was protected by not disclosing their actual names and organisations in some cases.

4 Demography

4.1 Factory

Most respondents from the factory survey were at managerial levels (40.65%). Other respondents included Senior executives and Admin officers. The majority of our surveyed factories were established after the year 2000 and before 2011. The majority of the factories were medium-sized knit factories in Dhaka. 17% of the surveyed factories were composite factories. Most of the workers in the surveyed factories had an average education of 8th grade. Educated workers were primarily men, whereas less-educated workers were mostly women. Most factories reported that workers stay for 6-10 years on average.

Position	Respondents	%
Manager	137	40.65
Assistant Manager	51	15.13
HR Officer	35	10.39
Senior Executive	27	8.01
Admin officer	18	5.34
General Manager	15	4.45
Senior Manager	14	4.15
Deputy Manager	14	4.15
Compliance Officer	7	2.08
Senior Officer	4	1.19
Managing Director	4	1.19
Others	11	3.26
Total	337	100

Table 10: Designation of factory respondents

Type	Freq.	%
Knit	147	43.62
Woven	101	29.97
Sweater	55	16.32
Mixed	34	10.09
Total	337	100

Table 11: Types of factories

District	%
Dhaka	41.25
Gazipur	35.31
Narayangonj	14.24
Chattogram	9.20

Table 12: Factory location

4.2 Workers

Our survey covered three kinds of workers, as discussed previously. The potential workers were only surveyed in 2 districts, Dhaka and Gazipur, with a majority hailing from Dhaka (72.68%). Former workers were surveyed in Dhaka, Gazipur, and Narayanganj, with a majority from Gazipur (50.88%).
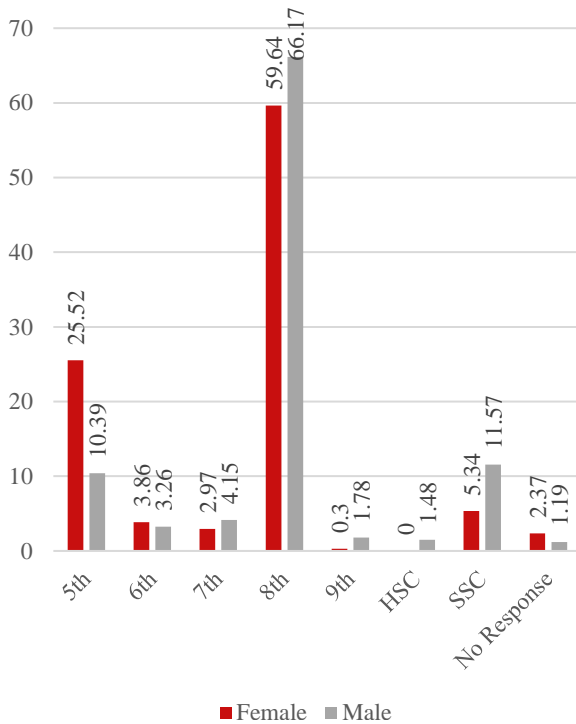
Figure 2: Average Education Qualification of Workers (%)
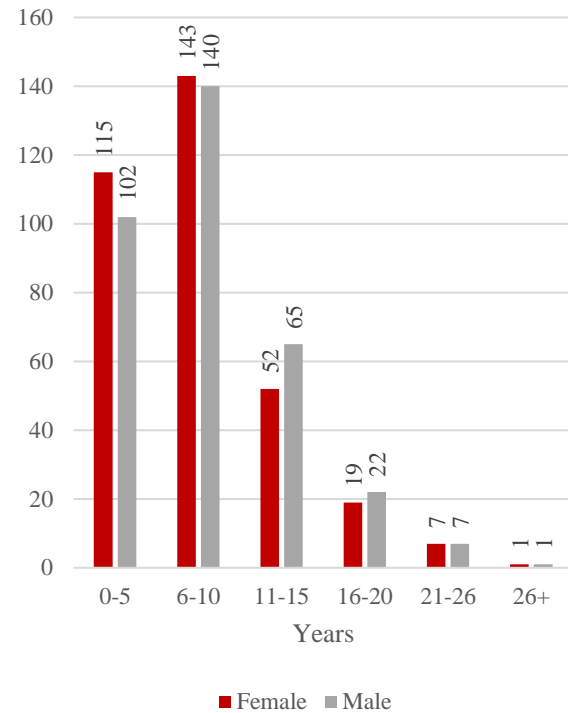
Figure 3: Average Tenure of Workers (%)

Current garment workers were surveyed from all four districts, and the majority were surveyed from Gazipur (46.76%).

Regarding age, most of current workers were in their late 20s (30.54%), followed by early 20s (21.62%). Most former workers were in their early 20s (30.52%), followed by late 20s (26.66%). This group also had a significant (35.07%) portion over 30. Finally, most potential workers were teenagers aged between 15 and 19 (38.80%), followed by women in their early 20s (35%). In terms of marital status, all of respondents were mainly married. Only potential workers had a higher percentage of unmarried respondents (27.32%). In terms of education, most of the current and former workers had primary-level education. In terms of Secondary and post-secondary education, potential workers were the majority. As most of the respondents were married, it can be seen that spouses are the majority of household heads for all three groups. The majority of respondents were living in a single family. Among those who were living in a joint family, potential workers were more.

Looking deeper into the survey's current workers, the majority (44%) worked in large factories, with 37% working in woven and 35% working in knit factories. Most of the workers were working as operators

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(74.58%). In terms of earnings, most of the workers had an average salary from 8,000 - 10,000 taka (36.75%) followed up by 10,000 - 12,000 taka (30.36%).

	Current workers	Former workers	Potential workers
Living District			
Dhaka	29.73	31.58	72.68
Gazipur	46.76	50.88	27.32
Narayanganj	15.41	17.54	-
Chattogram	8.11	-	-
Age			
15-19	14.33	7.71	38.8
20-24	21.62	30.52	34.97
25-29	30.54	26.66	26.23
30-34	14.86	11.92	-
35-39	13.78	12.28	-
40-44	3.51	5.61	-
45+	1.35	5.26	-
Marital status			
Married	72.97	86.67	70.49
Unmarried	16.22	5.61	27.32
Divorced	2.16	1.05	0.55
Seperated	4.86	2.81	1.64
Widowed	3.78	3.86	
Education level			
Uneducated	8.11	12.98	3.28
Class 1-5	41.62	43.86	30.6
Class 6-8	32.43	26.32	30.6
Class 9-10	10	8.42	20.22
Post Secondary	7.84	8.42	15.3
Head of household			
Spouse	63.78	83.16	61.2
Respondent	15.95	7.02	1.09
Father	13.24	4.91	18.03

Mother	4.05	2.11	9.84
Brother	1.35	1.4	2.19
Sister	0.54	-	1.64
In-Laws	0.54	1.4	4.37
Other	0.54	-	1.64

Family type			
Living alone	4.32	1.05	1.09
Joint Family	13.24	10.88	21.31
Single Family	82.43	88.07	77.6

Home ownership			
Own	1.35	3.51	3.28
Rent	98.65	96.49	96.72

Table 13: Worker demographics in %

Income Range		
		%
< 8,000	18	4.86
8,000	136	36.75
10,000	112	30.26
12,000	68	18.38
14,000	26	7.02
16,000	6	1.62
18,000 <	4	1.08

Factory Size		
		%
Large	163	44.05
Medium	160	43.24
Small	47	12.7

Factory Type		
		%
Knit	131	35.41
Woven	139	37.57
Sweater	36	9.73
Mixed	64	17.3

Current Designation		
		%
Operator	276	74.58
Helper	52	14.05
Quality Check	25	6.75
Poliman	9	2.43
Others	8	2.16

Table 14: Current workers factory type, size, current designation and income range

5 Proportion of Women Garment Workers

A survey was carried out in 337 garment factories in four districts, Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur, and Chattogram. Data was collected for the years 2015, 2018, and 2021. The survey aimed to acquire a sense of the entry and exit dynamics of the workers, their working conditions, the gender composition of the workforce, perceptions of management regarding the workers, and certain women worker-specific information (such as the number of women supervisors). The survey results and information obtained from focus-group discussions (FGD) allowed us to get a holistic sense of the conditions influencing women workers' decisions to enter, stay or leave the readymade garments (RMG) sector, which was the primary remit of the survey. The reported data and observations thus pertain to the women workforce.
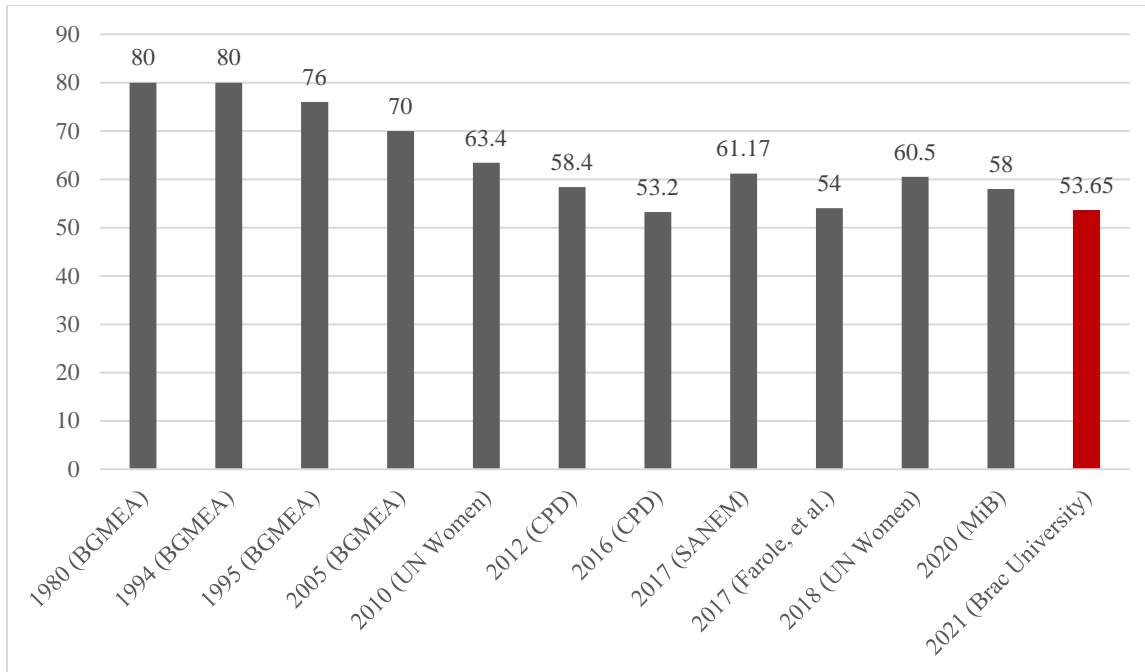
Figure 4: Women proportions in RMG

From the below bar chart, we can see the timeline of the proportion of women workers in the readymade garments sector in Bangladesh published by various credible sources. Here, we can see that BGMEA, consistently from 1980 to 1994, reported that the proportion of women labour had been 80%. However, in 1995 it fell to 76%. It further fell to 70% in 2005. According to a report by the UN Women, the proportion of women garment workers was 63.4% in 2010. There has been a consistent fall since 1994, which was no different for the coming half a decade. The CPD's study found that the proportion fell to 58.4% and 53.2 in 2012 and 2016, respectively. In 2017, however, SANEM reported that the proportion rose to 61.17%.

In contrast, the data published by Farole et al. show that the proportion rose by a smaller proportion to 54%. Ever since that, the proportion has been fluctuating. In 2018, UN Women reported that the proportion of women labour in the RMG sector was 60.5%. In 2020 according to MiB, it was 58%. This project finds that the proportion of women garment workers was 53.65% in 2021. Different studies used various methodologies to collect data, but there has been a different figure on the share of women workers in the RMG industry. However, profound evidence that these studies produce is a trend of declining women proportion in this sector, which ranges between 50 and 60% in the last ten years, a significant decline compared to the time of the inception of the RMG industry in Bangladesh.
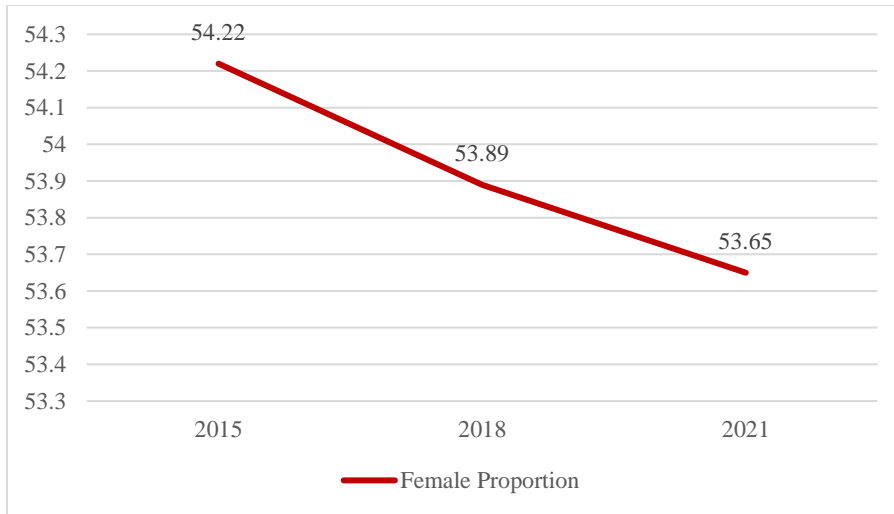
Figure 5: Women proportion from factory survey

According to the available data, 54.22% of the workforce in this project was women in 2015, falling slightly to 53.89% in 2018 and to 53.65% in 2021.

5.1 Proportion by Type, Size, Location and Production Process

Our factory survey covered 337 factories, and from the survey, we initially measured the proportion of women in 2021, disaggregated by factory location, type and size, and specific production processes. We measured the proportion of women in 2021 and found that Chittagong has the highest percentage of women workers (71.47%), followed up by Dhaka (57.06%) and Gazipur (50.80%). Woven factories had the highest proportion of women (60.64%), followed by Mixed factories (58.17%) and Knit factories (51.84%). Looking at this distribution by size, we saw that small factories had the highest proportion of women (61.23%), but large factories had the lowest proportion of women (52.05%).

		% Women
Location	Chattogram	71.47
	Dhaka	57.06
	Gazipur	50.80
	Narayanganj	48.44
Size	Large	52.05
	Medium	56.07
	Small	61.23
Type	Knit	51.84
	Mixed	58.17
	Sweater	43.90
	Woven	60.64
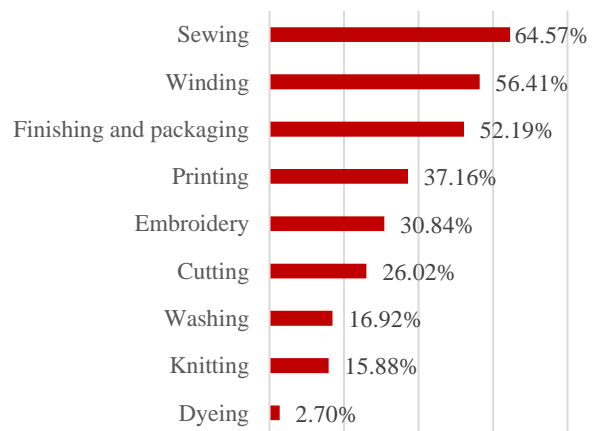
Table 105: Proportion of women disaggregated by district, type and siz   Figure 6: Women in various production processes

6 Entry vs Exit: Exit

In order to find out the factors behind the declining proportion of women garment workers, the factory survey examined whether more workers have been leaving the garment factory (Exit) or fewer workers have been entering the factory (Entry). Which is the main reason for less share of women garment workers – Entry, Exit, or both?
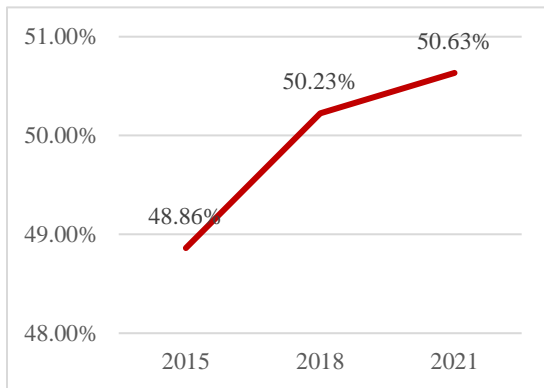
Figure 7: Proportion of women labour exit in RMG factories

From the factory survey, it was revealed that an increased proportion of exits from the RMG sector persistently. We saw that the proportion of women exits increased from 48.56% in 2015 to 50.63% in 2021, with an upward trend.

The following section analyses the reasons for leaving the garment sector from the survey of former women garment workers and the factory management survey complemented by FGDs and KIIs. The reason for reflecting on both surveys' findings is to explore any agreement or disagreement between the two stakeholders.

6.1 Reasons for Decline

We asked the former women garment workers whether their departure from their RMG factories was voluntary.

Reason	%
Caring of children	26.67
Became pregnant	17.89
Age appropriateness	11.93
Home and work imbalance	10.52
Increased Income of HH	6.32
Harassment and violence	4.56
Long working hours	3.51
Low salary	3.16
Don't have required education	3.16
Not allowed to re-join	2.46
Got married.	2.46
Negative effect to health.	2.45
Work stress.	2.11
Long distance from home to work	0.70
Divorce	0.70
Don't feel safe	0.35
Not finding home close to factory	0.35
Can't attend training	0.35
Lower social status	0.35

Table 16: Specific Reasons for exit cited by former workers

Figure 8: Former worker nature of exit
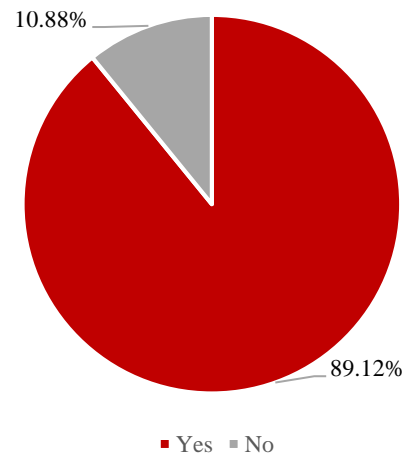
Figure 9: Reasons to leave by former women workers

An overwhelming majority of the workers (89%) responded positively to this end.

Table 16 explains the reasons for exit by former workers. Specifically, caring for children (26.67%) was the main reason for leaving, followed by becoming pregnant (17.89%), age appropriateness (11.93%), and difficulty in balancing between home and work (10.52%).

Type	Family	Work	Others	Total
Knit	35.09	6.67	1.40	43.16
Woven	26.66	9.47	0.70	36.83
Sweater	5.96	1.75	0.35	8.06
Mixed	9.13	1.40	1.40	11.93
Total	76.84	19.29	3.85	100

Table 17: Reasons to leave disaggregated by factory type
(Relative frequencies, in %)

We ran probit regressions (Appendix 0) to measure the probability of voluntary exit from the RMG factory based on various factors. From the survey of the factory and former women garment workers, family and working conditions played a significant role in influencing former workers decision to leave. Both were statistically significant in our regression estimates.

From our regression estimates, any inclusion of the variables related to family conditions increases the probability of leaving garments by 24.72% (Appendix 0). These include factors such as demographics (age, marriage, education level etc.), household responsibilities, and household dynamics (Household head occupation, children, # of women in the household etc.). We saw that 77% of reasons cited by the former workers were related to a family condition like caring for children (26.67%), pregnancy (17.89%), age appropriateness (11.93%) etc. On the other hand, 19.29% of the reasons cited by former workers were related to working conditions such as workload, long working hours, and low salaries. Negative working conditions increase the probability of leaving garment factories by 15.95% (Appendix 0).

Sometimes we argue that because of the nature of work in Knit and Sweater, the share of women in these two types of factories is low. There is no way to deny that, but even in these factories' family condition was the dominant factor behind the reason for leaving, as is evident in the above table. The other factors, like COVID-19, were not significant in terms of workers decision to leave. The views of the factory management are in line with the opinions of the former women garment workers, as these observations are backed up by information from the factory survey.

Reasons	%
Marriage	14.97
Childbirth	11.34
Heavy work	8.39
Family responsibilities	7.48
Low Salary	7.26
Automated machine use	5.44
Security concerns	5.44
Family barriers	4.99
Night duty	4.54
Other Job opportunities for women	4.54
Opposition from husband	4.08
Lack of skill compared to men	2.95
Job opportunities in villages	2.72
Moving back to home village	2.72

Reasons	%
Going abroad	2.49
Workplace Harassment	1.81
Lack of transport facilities	1.59
Others	7.26

Table 18: Factory management reasons for women decline

We saw that factory management cited family conditions as the major reason behind leaving (54%). Family conditions comprise a multitude of circumstances, including getting married (14.97%), household work obligations (7.48%), having children (11.34%), and other family barriers (5%) etc. This was followed by working conditions (39%) ranging from heavy workload (8.39%), lack of automation skill (5.44%) and as well as factors like workplace security concerns (5.44%) and night duties (37.87%) etc.

Both surveys – former women garment workers and factory management – have identified family conditions as the key reason for leaving the RMG sector, followed by working conditions. Explaining the dynamics of leaving the sector, a union leader said:

> 'Women were once employed heavily because they could be exploited for cheap labour. Now those women workers are more conscious of their rights and minimum wages; the owners do not share their older sentiments. They cannot exploit them for cheap. Another thing is the hike in wages. With the increase in wages, the owners also pushed up production target quotas for workers. Once upon a time, each worker had to output 100 units per hour when their wages were 5,000 TK, and now they are forced to output 150 units when their wages are 8,000 TK. Hence, they are still deprived. This forced them to quit their jobs and return to their hometown unemployed.'

Nasima: A former women garment worker

Nasima worked in a factory for about 4 years but was forced to retire early when she developed respiratory health complications. She wanted to take leave to get well however her request for some personal time off was denied. Now Nasima is not looking out for work and prefers to stay at home, take care of her family, children and household. Since her husband earns well, there is no pressure on her to engage in a paid work again. To her, family is more valuable than work. If it is required to earn money in situation like family crisis, Nasima might work. She prefers to do domestic farming instead of returning to garment factory. Although Nasima was satisfied with the overall working conditions compared to the past, she was unhappy of the intense mental pressure. Due to the increased wages, the production target per hour was increased to 200-250% per hour. To her, 100-150% was possible per hour. The verbal abuse of the supervisor to meet the target deteriorated her health condition.

Specific drivers of decline: Family and household composition

Although the family condition was the primary reason for leaving the RMG sector, followed by the working condition, this decision was made possible because of the presence of other factors which is the next scope of the analysis. The relationship between childcare and women's paid work (type, location, and amount) depends on a variety of factors, the influence of which varies. These factors are the household's overall financial situation, the available options for both men and women to choose other paid jobs, and the composition of the household in terms of how much help can be obtained for childcare from family and social networks (Folbre 2006). These other factors, according to the survey of former women workers, were household income, gender composition at home, time spent in household work and leisure, financial and psychological insecurity at job which were statistically significant factors in leaving decisions as is described in the appendix (Appendix 0). The paired t-test show that there was a significant difference in the mentioned variables between the time the former worker started their work in RMG and the time they left.

Variables	Entry		Exit		T-Test P value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Family income and financial conditions					
Household Income	15620.99	25329.24	20431.19	8329.20	0.001
Monthly saving	1741.58	3959.61	3437.00	4971.42	0.000
Women in the household	0.61	0.86	0.33	0.56	0.000
Time spent doing HH work	2.44	1.54	2.72	1.17	0.000
Time spent during leisure	1.39	1.08	1.55	1.15	0.006
Household expenditure	12457.06	6111.16	16986.82	6239.61	0.000
Maternity condition					
Number of children	.698	.062	1.09	.064	0.00

Table 19: T-tests of changing Household Conditions

Household Income and Savings

When it comes to the financial situation of women, it was observed that women from lower-income backgrounds had minimum scope to not participate in the job market, as the existence and well-being of the household depended on their income (Saha et al., 2020). This could be changed if there is an increase in household income. According to the survey, monthly household income increased from the start of their working lives in the RMG sector. For example, when they left their jobs, the average household income was Tk. 20,431, an increase of Tk. 4,811 from when they started working in the RMG sector. The regression result showed for each 1,000 Tk increase in household income, the probability of leaving garments increases by 1%. What was most important was an increase in their monthly savings. The regression results

indicate that for each 1000tk increase in monthly savings, the probability of leaving garments reduces by only .08% (Appendix 0).

Gender Composition in Household

From the context of gender composition at household, an increase in the number of women in a household would imply that family work responsibilities are more divided, thus enabling a worker to focus more on her job. There was a significant decline in the number of women members helping out in the household. From the time they started their RMG career (0.61) to the time they left their workplace (0.33), it might have played a role in their decision to leave work to focus on family responsibilities more. According to the regression, for each additional women member helping out in the household, the probability of leaving garments reduces by 2.6% (Appendix 0).

Allocation of Time for Household Work

The hours spent on household work per day increased from when they joined (2.44) the RMG sector to when they decided to leave (2.72). It is, therefore, possible to conclude that temporal commitments to household work played a role in the decision to quit the sector. For each hour of extra household work, the probability of leaving garments increases by 1.2% as per our regression estimates (Appendix 0). Again, the survey reported an increase in their time spent on leisure. This can be explained by the fact that most of the respondents aged during their tenure in garments and chose to spend more time on leisure which signalled their eventual retirement. As per the regression result, the probability of leaving garments reduces by 1.82% for each hour extra spent on leisure.

Allocation of Time for Children's Education

There was a significant difference in the number of children and hours spent on children's education. Exploring this further, we looked at the distribution of the hours spent on children's education by the former workers during three time periods, when they joined, when they left garments, and currently.

Hours	Entry		Exit		Currently	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
0	208	72.98	250	87.72	160	56.14
1	42	14.74	16	5.61	34	11.93
2	24	8.42	16	5.61	47	16.49
3	8	2.81	2	0.7	27	9.47
4	2	0.7	-	-	12	4.21
5	1	0.35	-	-	4	1.4
6	-	-	1	0.35	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	1	0.35
Total	285				100%	

Table 20: Hours spent on children's education by former workers

As per the table illustrated above, workers could spend time on children's education when they joined garments by declining significantly by the time they left. Again, after leaving garments, we see that many workers can now give more time to their children's education.

Working Conditions
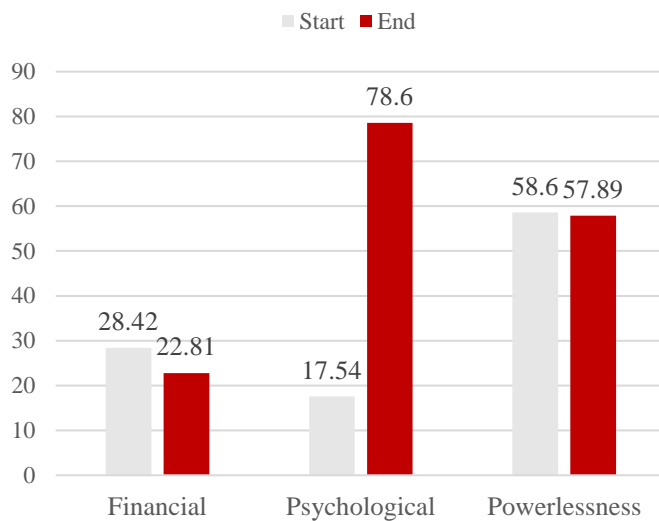
Figure 20: Job insecurity of former workers

We used three markers for measuring job insecurity: (a) Financial insecurity was referred to as having an uncertain income source, (b) Psychological insecurity meant too much stress at work, and (c) Powerlessness interpreted as being unfairly treated at work. Neither of the three variables captures the perception of job insecurity as a whole, but rather three distinct facets of it. When asked if the respondents felt financially insecure by the time they left garments, 77% of the respondents reported negatively. Since they were not feeling financially insecure, they had the leverage to leave their place of employment. Within the mentioned framework, the second component — an insurmountable number of responsibilities — can be identified as the threat. A worker who is overburdened with responsibilities may regard her inefficiency as a potential threat to his or her employment.

We saw that about 79% of the respondents experienced psychological insecurity when they left the garment factories. We asked them if they felt the workload was too much to bear by the time they left the factories. The majority reported positively, implying the role of workload in the workers decision to leave garment factories. The final factor, the perception of being unfairly treated at work, conveys a feeling of powerlessness. If there were no clear principles of justice in the workplace and supervisors were viewed as arbitrarily evaluating employees, the sense of powerlessness would be exacerbated. When asked if the workers felt they were treated unjustly at work, about 58% of the respondents reported that they did. This positive connotation towards powerlessness significantly influenced their decision to leave the garment factories voluntarily. Our estimates found that financial and psychological insecurities were significant factors influencing our samples decision to leave garments. Our estimates say that for any change in the financial insecurity of the workers, the probability of leaving garments reduces by 1.46%, and in the case of increased workload, which results in psychological insecurity, the probability of leaving garments increases by 10.16% (Appendix 0).

Harassment and Abuse

Misbehaviour by higher management   Physical violence
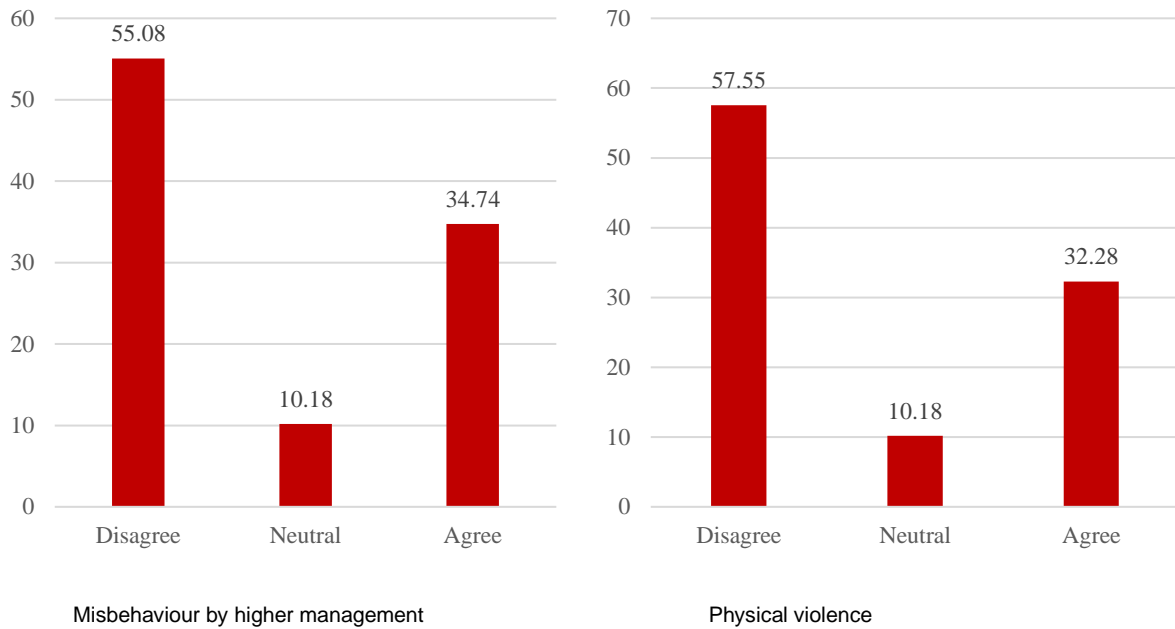
Figure 31: Experiences of harassment and abuse

According to the FGD participants, physical and verbal abuse have recently increased due to the increased workload and production pressure. This was also evident in the former worker survey, where 35% of our respondents agreed to experience verbal abuse from higher management. A few workers in the FGD cited being victims of physical violence in the factory, which forced them to quit. In the former worker survey, 32.28% of the respondents mentioned that they were physically harmed by management at work. The FGD participants mentioned being beaten with sticks and having their hair pulled when they could not meet production quotas or made mistakes. One of the participants said that she quit because of this mental pressure. Some supervisors humiliated workers by forcing them to stand on tables. One of our participants retaliated when she was subjected to physical abuse. She successfully got the supervisor fired but had to sacrifice her job in the process. However, they explicitly stated that this was back in the past, and things are much better now for current workers.

Overtime and Work Stress
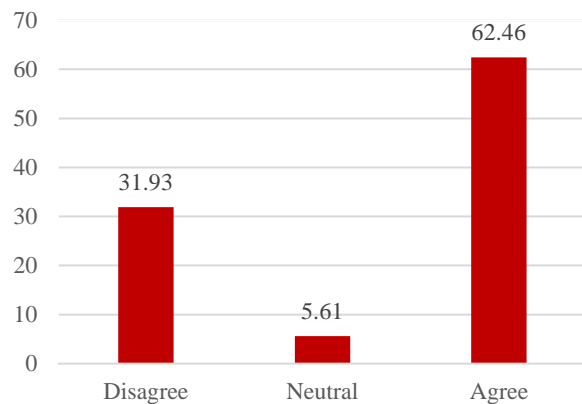
Figure 42: Long Working Hours

The FGD participants mentioned that their families were upset with the overtime work since it forced them to stay late into the night, preventing them from fulfilling family responsibilities at home. In our former worker survey, a majority, 63% of the workers, agreed that their work hours were long. The workers also mentioned that they were forced to work overtime and were not allowed to leave during that time. On the contrary, few workers noticed that the amount of mandatory overtime was seasonal and depended on the number of work orders. They were happy with the amount of overtime they had to do because this was the only way to increase their earnings, and in factories where there is no scope for overtime, they do not intend to work there. They said they were okay with the occasional excess pressure, which happened when shipments were urgent, or the order size was big.

Inside the factories, the participants mentioned having to put in excess overtime as a primary reason behind their departure. This overtime resulted in them having to work long shifts late into the night, creating more social barriers for them. On top of that, factories put excess pressure on workers by requiring them to produce an output of upwards of 180 - 200 units every hour. In contrast, the workers could only output 100 to 120 units. They were asked to double their output which was impossible to handle. Under all this pressure, the workers were not even granted leave in case of a family or medical emergency. One of the participants mentioned cases of repeated verbal abuse by their supervisors as being the reason behind her exit from the garment factory.

6.2 Consideration of Future Exit

The following analyses seek to find what determines garment workers' satisfaction with their current position and the decisions to leave in the short and long. Recall that in the factory survey, one of our primary focuses is the impact of exit decisions on women labour share in the RMG sector. This analysis analyses the determinants of the possibility of exit at the micro level.

In the survey of current women garment workers, the respondents were asked, 'Do you have any plans to leave the RMG sector and move to a different sector after one year or after five years?' Overall, the survey found that 8% of all current workers wanted to leave the RMG sector after 1 year and 27% after 5 years. The survey also shed some light on the reasons behind the desire to leave the RMG sector altogether. 'Family conditions' was cited by 41% of discussants, followed by 'Move back to hometown' at 20%, 'Working conditions' by 18%, 'Move to a different job' by 13%, and 'Age Appropriateness' by 8%.

Factors	Frequency	%
Family conditions	42	40.80%
Move to hometown	21	20.40%
Working Condition	19	18.40%
Move to a different job	13	12.60%
Age Appropriateness	8	7.80%

Table 21: Reasons cited by current workers behind their desire to leave
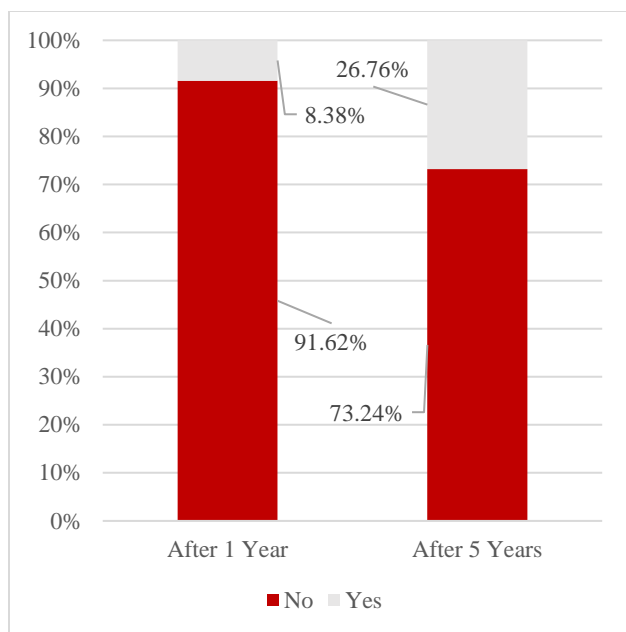
Figure 53: Consideration of exit by current workers

Explaining the reason for leaving, a union leader said:

> 'Those working in the lowest level, like helpers and cleaners, usually came from the most vulnerable areas in Bangladesh. After moving to the cities, their first source of empowerment was domestic work, paid or unpaid. Some used to work for 2 square meals a day. These are the people who then transitioned into the garment factories. There they got a fixed salary and other benefits. But when the price of commodities kept increasing due to inflation, life in the city became financially unsustainable for them with their fixed salaries at the garment factory. They then returned to their village homes from where they originally came from.'

Variables	obs	When started	Currently	Difference	P-value
Short term					
Monthly income	31	4932	10496.77	-5564.77	0
Household's monthly income	31	13597.41	23338.71	-9741.29	0
Husband's monthly income (if married)	21	6400.95	13028.57	-6627.61	.001
Monthly household expenditure	31	11774.19	18967.74	-7193.54	0
Monthly savings	31	1506.45	4325.80	-2819.35	.034
Earning members working fulltime	31	3.097	1.742	1.355	0
Women members except you taking	31	.613	0.45	.161	.096

55

Variables	obs	When started	Currently	Difference	P-value
care of household					
Children of the respondent	31	.484	0.80	-.323	.016
Long term					
Monthly income	99	5470.677	10501.767	-5031.091	0
Household's monthly income	98	15865.174	22318.112	-6452.939	0
Husband's monthly income (if married)	75	6958.934	12597.334	-5638.4	0
Monthly household expenditure	99	13212.373	18034.343	-4821.97	0
Monthly savings	99	1784.849	3423.233	-1638.384	0
Earning members working fulltime	99	3.222	1.657	1.566	0
Women members except you taking care of household	99	.616	0.495	.121	.028
Children of the respondent	83	.795	1.205	-.41	0
Age of youngest child	40	4.5	8.950	-4.45	0
School-going children	40	.65	1.050	-.4	.003

Table 11: T-Tests of changes in household conditions if workers decided to leave

As we can see from the table, the variables mentioned significantly differed between the time our workers joined the garment factory and their current conditions. The findings from the current worker survey show that significant positive changes in financial condition in family such as monthly income, household income, savings, and husband's monthly income have triggered the current workers to consider leaving the RMG after 1 or 5 years. Other family conditions that influenced the consideration of leave were a reduction in the number of women members taking care of the household, a rising number of children of workers, an increasing age of the youngest child, and a growing number of school-going children. These findings support the former worker survey that changing family conditions led women workers to consider to leave their jobs.

We asked the current workers about their work experiences and then compared the two groups, those planning to leave in the short run vs those in the long run.

A higher portion of the group that is planning to leave in the short run agrees with the fact that their current working hours are long. 48% of the group that agree that their work hours are long are planning on leaving in the next 1 year. In our regressions, needing to work at the weekends increases the probability of leaving garments in the short run by 3.19%.

Salaries

An overwhelming 70.97% of the group planning on leaving in the short run agree that they are currently underpaid. We also find that a high percentage of people (45.5%) who agree to receive low wages also plan to leave in the next 5 years, even though the majority disagree in that group.

On the other hand, from our regression estimates (Appendix 0), we found that low salary was a significant factor influencing workers decision to leave garments. If the workers agree that they are underpaid, their probability of leaving garments increases by 02.97% in the short run.

Workplace Safety and Heath

Workplace safety was a significant variable, and the probability of leaving the workplace reduces by 4.97% in the short run. We also saw that if the workers felt safe from accidents in their workplace, then, in the long run, they were 7.22% less likely to leave garments (Appendix 0).

The fear of miscarriage was another significant variable. If the workers currently feel the fear of miscarriage during their tenure at the factory, their probability of leaving garments increases by 2.97% in the short run. The presence of good healthcare facilities was also a significant factor. If the workers feel their workplace is hygienic and has good health conditions, their probability of leaving garments reduces by 7.61% in the long run (Appendix 0).

Social Obstacles

One of the most robust variables in our estimation was experiences of harassment due to being a women garment worker. Facing social harassment due to their choice of profession (in this case, garments) increases the likelihood of leaving garments by 13.55%. We again see that harassment due to their profession choice is a significant variable in the long run. The workers are 15.43% more likely to leave garments if they experience any social harassment regarding the choice of their profession today.

Mistreatment of Management

Even though most of the workers denied being harassed by the management, we see that the group that did experience harassment is more likely to leave. 32.26% of those who are planning to leave experienced misbehaviour by the management. Again, we found that because of differences in experiencing harassment in the workplace, the probability of leaving in the short run increases by 3.67% (Appendix 4).

Training and Automation

In the long run, we found that the impact of both automation training and the number of trainings received is a significant factor in the workers decision to leave. In the long run, we see that if the workers receive automation training, they are 13.94% less likely to leave garments in the long run. Furthermore, for each additional training session, they receive the probability of leaving garments reduces by 2.97%. In the long

run, having a negative attitude towards automation today plays a role. We see that if the workers negatively perceive automation, the probability of leaving garments increases by 4.05% (Appendix 0).

The above findings also align with our findings from the former worker and the factory survey.

Ayna: A current worker

Ayna Begum is a garment worker. She has worked for a company for the last ten years. She is now living in Jogitola, which is situated near Dhaka. She has one daughter and one son. Her son is reading in class nine and her daughter got married four years ago. Her husband is a brick mason. With their income, they have led a perfect family life. Life was not that much easier before she joined the garment. Ayna Begum stated that before joining the garment industry, she lived in her native village in the Sherpur district. Life for the villagers was not that much better 15 years ago. When Ayna Begum was 15 years old, she was forced to get married to a rickshaw puller. On those days, her husband went to Dhaka and earned their livelihood. After many years, life had not become any more comfortable. In their family, they were having a food crisis, and many more problems were there. For this reason, there have been many issues created. When Ayna Begum told her husband to give her food for living, he could not pay for all her family's daily needs. As a result, they were quarrelling with each other. It is mentioned that Ayna Begum's father and mother had already shifted to Gazipur. At one point, when Ayna wanted food and other equipment for her livelihood, her husband was unable to give her those. These hard days became a bad experience for Ayna Begum. Ayna Begum explained that her husband beat her very often when Ayna Begum told her husband to do something for their livelihood. In this situation, Ayna Begum had one daughter, and her family became bigger daily. But the income was low day by day for her husband. Through this hard time, they were passing a single day with one- or two-times meals a day. After four years had passed, they had a son in their family. The situation was not favourable at the time for her to stay with his family. The hardest time for her family came from an impatient situation. Ayna Begum then decided to go to Gazipur to visit her parents' residence. In this, Ayna Begum left her husband's house and went to Gazipur. After that decision, Aynas husband became more problematic because they started quarrelling when he started staying in Gazipur.

After remaining for 5 - 6 months, Ayna Begum's husband decided to divorce her and he did that. Then Ayna Begum faced a real problem, and she struggled a lot. Because her parents' family were not wealthy, Ayna Begum's brother tried to look after them. However, Ayna Begum was not that happy, and she always thought about her future. She also thought of earning something and making money for the future because she had a daughter and a son to feed and educate them. After that, she noticed that her neighbour worked in a garment factory. At that time, she went to that factory and got a job as a helper. The salary was very small, and she could only continue her daily life with that money. After one year, she got a chance to work as an operator. She learnt how to maintain an automation machine. Then she got a new job and started getting good salaries. She changed factories after two years to get

a higher pay scale. After that struggle, her husband came back and they married again. Ayna Begum started leading her life, thinking her children would get a father. On the other hand, Ayna Begum was so confident that if her husband left her again in the future, she would be able to take care of her family.

It had been ten years since Ayna Begum worked in the same factory. She got a healthy amount of salary as a senior operator in sewing. With this money, she made lots of developments in her life. First, her daughter got married, and she had to give a healthy amount of dowry to her daughter's husband. Ayna Begum successfully managed to give her dowry. On the other hand, she was landless and her husband was also landless. By saving money, she bought a piece of land on which she decided to build a house. Another thing is that she gave education to her son so that he could do something for them.

When I asked Ayna Begum about her future, she replied that she would do this job for the next five years, and then she would go to her native town and she would start a business. She wanted to build a cow farm and also a chicken farm. Another important thing is that she wanted to educate her son so that he could earn money for her. One thing we asked is, what if there were no RMG sector, what would happen? She sorrowfully explained that she would have worked in the house as a servant.

7 Entry vs Exit: Entry

The factory survey of this research found that the share of women garment workers who entered the RMG industry declined from 54.38% in 2015 to 52.67% in 2018. However, this proportion rose up to 53.87% in 2021. The declining trend from 2015 to 2018 is a major concern that needs to be explored by researching on the job preferences of potential women workers in low-income groups.
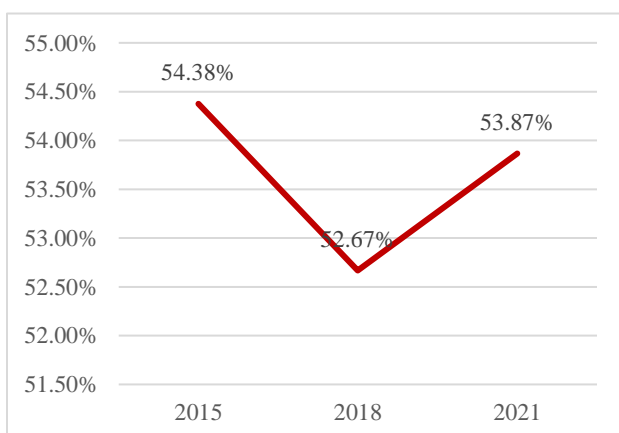
Figure 14: Entry of women into RMG

Two major factors explain the entry into RMG:

(a) Preferred occupation of potential women workers
(b) The worker recruitment policy of factories

7.1 Preferred Occupation

The key question to investigate is what determines a potential women labourer's decision to select a job. In particular, it analyses the entry decision of women labour to export-oriented garment factories and non-Garments jobs. This analysis shed light on the factors that led women labour to decide to work as a garment employee and in non-garment sectors. As mentioned earlier in the methodology, the survey on potential women workers was carried out in Dhaka

and Gazipur - 133 from the former area and 50 from the latter location. The analysis was organised according to the preference for garments work (Yes) and non-preference for garments (No).
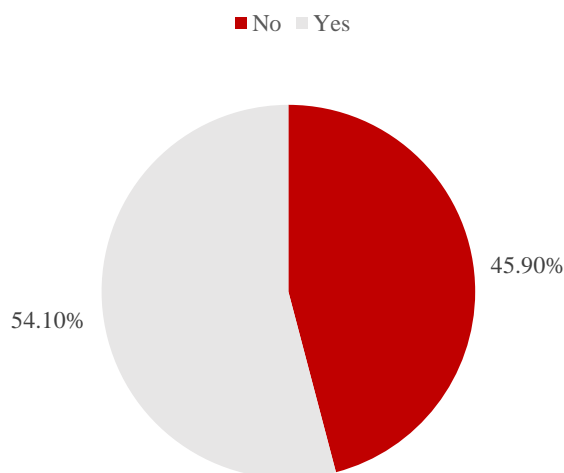
Figure 15: Potential workers garments preference

Preferred occupation	%
Garments Work	49.73
Hospital Job	10.93
Tailoring	8.74
Teacher	7.10
Private job	4.92
Salesperson	4.92
Office Assistant	3.28
Bank Job	2.19
Business	1.64
Handicraft	1.64
NGO Job	1.09
Others	3.85

Table 23: Preferred occupation

According to the survey of potential women labourers, 54% preferred garments, while 46% were eager to be employed in non-garment sectors. The most preferred occupation was garments, followed by working in a hospital as support staff, tailoring at home, being a teacher, and other sectors (see above table).

It is interesting to find a list of various occupations dominated by the service sector that requires at least a secondary level of education. When the RMG industry emerged in Bangladesh in the 1980s, job options were limited for women from lower-income groups who were constrained in the manufacturing sector as formal jobs. However, as the country's economy has been transforming, the service sector has opened up diversified opportunities for women, as is evident in this study. Although no single industry like RMG can accommodate work for millions of women from the lower income cluster, it is a positive sign to find the rise of non-garment jobs. According to a leading researcher,

> 'Now, the potential workers have even more options and opportunities. There are a lot of industries other than garments. For example, in the leather industry, a lot of new demand is being created for labour. A lot of online businesses are creating demand for work. Restaurants have increased in number and have increased in demand. Even small entrepreneurs need helping hands nowadays. Mobile financial services have opened many doors for women by allowing them to produce goods and services at home, sell them to other market players, and get paid digitally. This will enable them to do business with people from all over the country. A lot of big businesses now source from rural areas. Furthermore, many NGOs and development partners support women in this regard. It

is not like women are no longer interested in garments, but women with socioeconomic ability are now trying to be independent and looking into entrepreneurial opportunities.'

Preferred occupations	Reasons
Garments	Possible to earn more money with less education, and is easy to get
Tailor	Can work at home so that could perform family responsibility
Hospital service	Good environment with moderate salary and well respect
Teacher	A respectable job with less duty and good money
Small business	Independent

Table 24: Reasons for Preferred Occupations

A few things the participants in FGD mentioned that made them consider professions other than garment factory work are: flexible timings, easier to commute, personal independence when it came to workload, more understanding supervisors in other professions than in garment factories, no verbal abuse and most importantly higher level of education. The participants believed garments provide an opportunity for people with no education and no access to other forms of work. They believed that due to their educational background, they needed to work in more 'respectable' places such as in a hospital, superstore, etc. The survey of potential women workers explored that the determinant factors of job preferences were education, location, marital status, children, family structure, household income, and time for household work. The following section analyses these factors supported by the FGDs and KIIS.

7.2 Factors that Determine Preferred Occupation

The survey shows that education is one of the determinant factors of women labour to select garment as a potential employer. According to the following graph, 48% of the respondents who preferred to work in the RMG industry had education below class 6 whereas 16% who said 'No' to RMG had attained education below class 6. Only 2% with post-secondary education wanted to join the RMG, against 31% having post-secondary education preferred to work something else other than RMG.

	Non-Garments Preference	Garments Preference
Uneducated	1.19	5.05
Class 1-5	15.48	43.43
Class 6-8	26.19	34.34
Class 9-10	26.19	15.15
Post Secondary	30.95	2.02

Education Level of potential workers

	Non-Garments Preference	Garments Preference
Uneducated	16.87	40.82
Class 1-5	26.51	29.59
Class 6-8	15.66	12.24
Class 9-10	14.46	11.22
Post Secondary	26.51	6.12

Education level of their HH Heads

Figure 66: Education levels of potential workers and their household heads

Education level of household head is also a deciding factor of selecting a job for the women. As per the findings, those who prefer to work in garment factory, 41% of their household head was uneducated and 31% attained primary education and 6% passed post-secondary. On the contrary, among the potential women labour in non-garment jobs, the education level of their household heads of was uneducated (17%), primary education (27%) and post-secondary (27%).

The level of education of respondent's father plays a crucial role to influence daughter's employer. In this case, 62% of women labour's father was uneducated who wanted to work in the RMG which was 36% for not choosing the RMG sector.

	Non-Garments Preference	Garments Preference
Uneducated	35.71	61.62
Class 1-5	34.52	22.22
Class 6-8	9.52	7.07
Class 9-10	11.9	8.08
Post Secondary	8.33	1.01
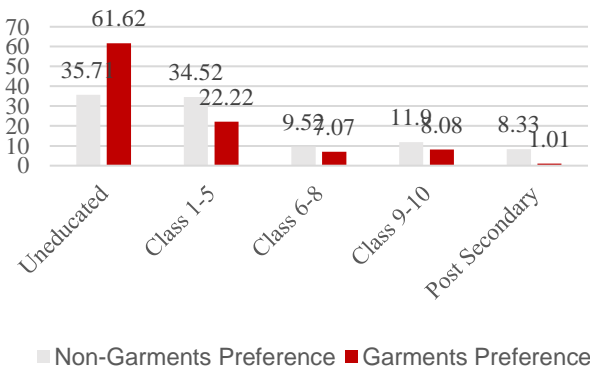
Figure 17: Education level of father

From these findings, it is evident that educated women workers do not prefer to work in the RMG industry. Since the inception of the RMG, it could be witnessed that illiterate and less educated workers have joined this industry which shows education as not an eligible criterion to get a job in factory. The nature of work has demanded a workforce with no emphasis on the level of education. Such perception has discouraged the educated workers with beyond primary and secondary education to work in the RMG industry. In one

FGD session, among the 10 participants, 4 mentioned that they only prefer garments work because they have no other options as other places require education. Another reason is the realisation of women workforce to be employed in other sectors where having a higher level of education would ensure flexibility, standard earning and respect at job. The availability of other options such as hospital, shopping mall, teacher etc. have pursued potential women labour to choose non-garment sectors. It means that the higher the level of education of household head of potential women labour, the lower the probability of working in the RMG industry. Educated household head also believes that garment is not a sector that value education and there are other jobs which can be capitalized by the virtue of education. This group of people play a crucial role in influencing the women labour to take decision on which job to do and not to do.

Location
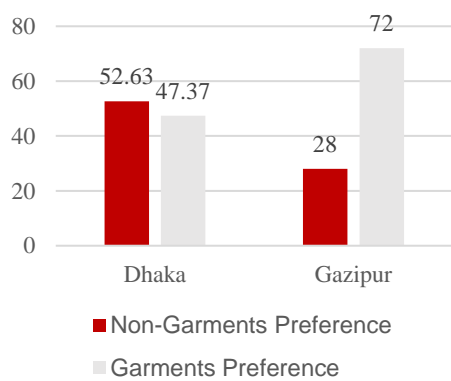
Figure 18: Garments preference by location (%)

The survey explores that 72% of the potential women workers in Gazipur wanted to work in the garment sector and 47% in Dhaka preferred a garment job. The majority of women labours living in Dhaka was targeting non-garment occupation. Between the two locations, there has been a major difference in terms of the availability and diversity of jobs. Dhaka is an urban metropolis with garment factories and other avenues of employment for women. Gazipur is a smaller urban conurbation located far away from Dhaka surrounded by rural settlements, where garment factories represent the main, if not only, avenue of women employment. Even if someone does not like to work in the RMG, he or she still has to work in a garment factory as very limited alternate jobs are available because of the poor infrastructure. The availability of different types of jobs in a location is a key determinant factor for the potential women labour in choosing their workplaces.

Marital Status
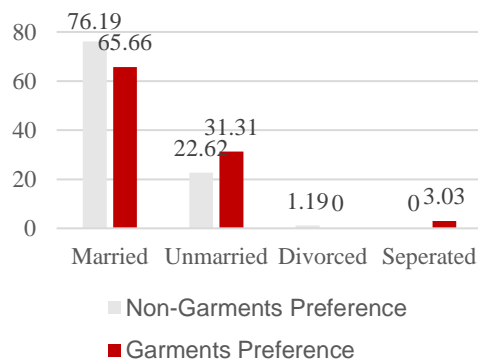
Figure 19: Garments preference by marital status (%)

Marital status is an important determining factor in choice of work. It can be seen that 76% of those who did not choose a garment job were married while 66% of those who would choose one were married. Amongst the unmarried, a slightly higher proportion (31%) of women reported garments as a preference.

63

Children

75% of those who declined garment work in Gazipur had a child aged between 0 and 1. In Dhaka it can be inferred that child age is not a major influence on job preferences. Whether or not a potential worker has school going children also influences the choice of employment. In this context, the study finds that out of the women who preferred to work in the garment sector, 87% had no school going children.
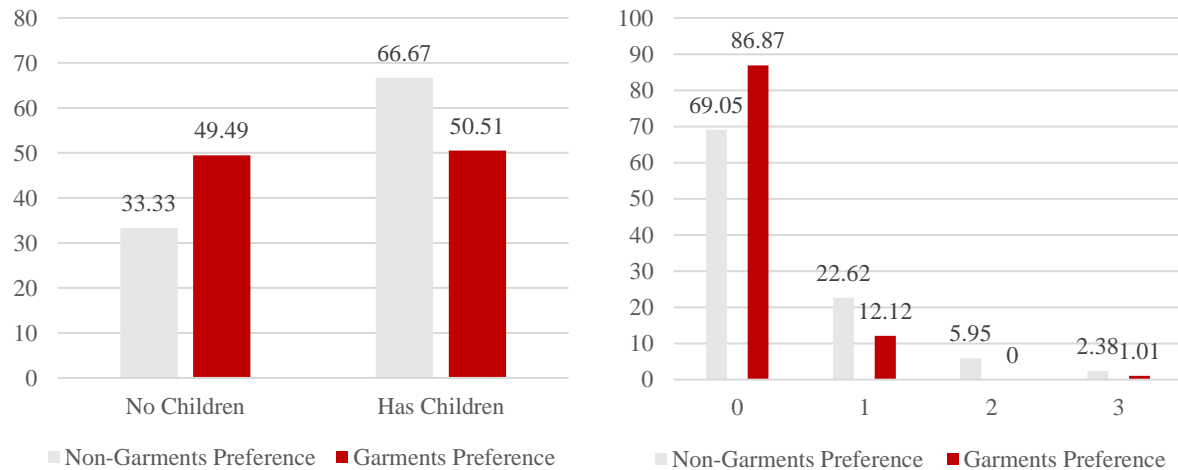
Figure 20: Children and garments preference

Getting married, having children and school going children are one the obstacles of being recruited as a garment employee which supports the already established norms that garment is for the unmarried women worker. The married women workers are not as available and flexible to work in factory as unmarried women labour. The similar rational is applicable to workers with children because of their commitment to family members, children and household chores. The FGD of potential women workers indicate that they mostly wanted jobs where they could earn enough to support their families as well have the freedom and time to give to their families and children. The participants said that they want to give appropriate time to their families and family responsibilities. One of the participants said: 'Money is important but not that important. If I give too much importance to money now and not give enough time to my children, when they grow up, they will run after money as well and give no attention to me when I'm old'.

Family Structure

We can infer that living in a joint family increases the likelihood of choosing garments whereas living in a nuclear family lowers the likelihood of considering garments work. The potential women labours who expressed to work in the RMG industry 26% of them lived in joint family and for not preferring garment 16% lived in joint family. How much time mother of potential women labour spend at work is another determinant factor of job selection.

Figure 21: Mother working and garments preference

According to the survey findings, 45.36% of the respondents have a preference for garments whose mother does not work. The importance of the presence of women family members at home was mentioned in the FGD. The participants said that if they had another women supporting them at home like their mothers or mother in laws, they would feel more comfortable looking and working other jobs. Since working in the RMG requires a difficult work routine, having a hand in a joint family and the availability of time from mother permit women garment workers to be employed so that family members could take care of their children and do household tasks. Such advantage may not be possible in single or nuclear family and for these reasons potential garment employees were from joint family. We also see a slightly higher percentage of respondents (8.74%) who have working mothers and are also interested in working in garments. We can infer that having a working women member acted as a positive role model for potential garment workers.

Household Head Occupation Type

The average monthly household income of garment seekers was Tk.16,101 and for the non-garment seekers it was Tk. 17,422 indicating a higher income of Tk. 1321 for those who did not prefer to work in the RMG industry.

When the main income generator of household of potential women labour was employed in a fixed occupation, they were not eager to engage in the garment sector as is evident in this study. Those who did not want to work in garment, 76% of women workers' main earning member had fixed job compared to 56% whose preferred job was garment.

The higher income group with a job security also had more educated members as the previous finding showed. Having a greater income holder and fixed job gives an opportunity for not being desperate to join the RMG industry and selective in job preference. Some potential labour in the FGD said that they wanted freedom and mentioned how garment factory work is like working in a prison whereas they can do business online and have full freedom. One of the participants said: *'We will go to work on our own but will be allowed to return when the company tells us to. They [garment employer] won't let us out until they are done with us for the day'*

Figure 22: Household income of potential workers

Availability of Time for Household

The study further illustrates that those who said No to garment, 90% of them expected to contribute to household work while it was 76% for those choosing garment job. Another finding that is related to household contribution after joining the labour market.
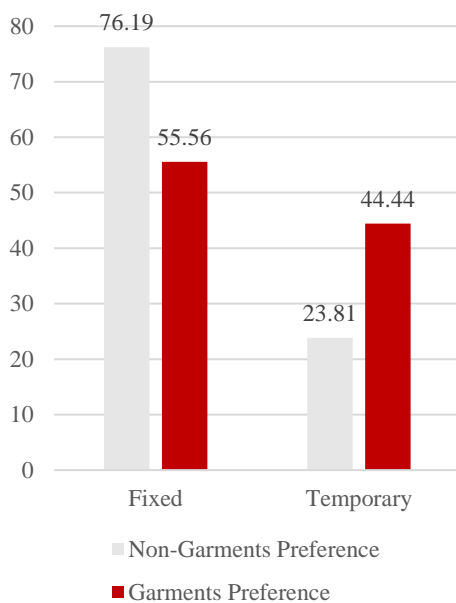
Figure 23: Potential worker household head occupation type
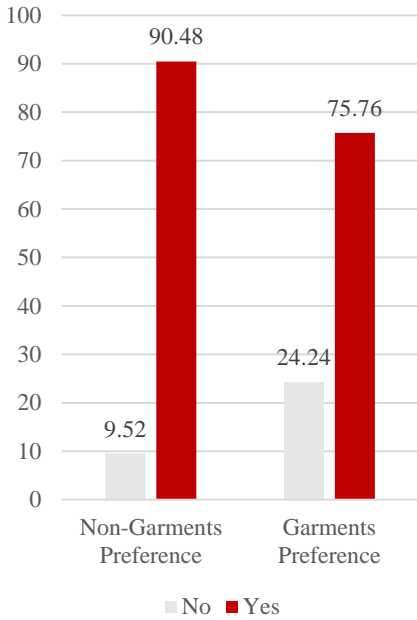
Figure 24: Potential worker household responsibilites after work

Monira: A potential café waitress

Monira was displaced from her home in Bhola due to river erosion and migrated to Dhaka. She mentioned that she prefers to work as a waitress in a café. For this kind of job, Monira has the required education. She wanted a job where she could earn enough money to support her family as well have the freedom and time to give to her family. In getting a job money is important but a shift of 8 hours during the daytime works for her. According to Monira, 'Money is important but not that important. If I give too much importance to money now and not give enough time to my children, when they grow up, they will run after money as well and give no attention to me when I'm old.' She took the decision of her preferred job out of her own accord and strongly emphasised that nobody influenced her. Although some of her neighbours prefer to be a housemaid, Monira had strong reservations about working as a housemaid because it is disrespectful and sometimes abusive. When asked how she perceive garments work, she shared a variety of reasons. The work in a garment factory gives opportunities to uneducated or less educated labour who might not be able to get other jobs and the income is really good but one has to do a lot of overtime to earn that much.

7.3 Worker Recruitment Policy and Gender Perception of Management

The factories were questioned regarding any change in the recruitment policy of the management between the past and present. Paired t–tests comparing worker traits across two different years, 2009 and 2021, show the following results.

Preferences	obs	2009 Avg	2021 Avg	diff	St Err	*t* value
Unskilled workers who accept relatively low wage	311	2.695	2.784	-0.09	0.051	-1.75
Unskilled women workers who accept relatively low wage	311	2.736	2.791	-0.06	0.049	-1.1

Preferences	obs	2009 Avg	2021 Avg	diff	St Err	t value
Unskilled men workers who accept relatively low wage	311	2.746	2.913	-0.17	0.051	-3.3***
Workers who can work long hours including overtime	311	3.823	4.067	-0.24	0.036	-6.9***
Workers who have less family engagement	311	3.736	3.865	-0.13	0.028	-4.7***
Physically strong workers	311	4.36	4.447	-0.09	0.033	-2.7**
Workers with the ability to adapt with the changing production system	311	4.399	4.527	-0.13	0.035	-3.65***
Skilled workers with a relatively higher salary	311	3.936	3.99	-0.06	0.043	-1.25
Workers with the skills of handling automated machinery	311	4.074	4.364	-0.29	0.052	-5.6***
Workers with education	311	3.775	3.923	-0.15	0.041	-3.65***
Workers with training	311	4.27	4.37	-0.1	0.04	-2.5*

Table 25: T-Test of Changing Hiring Preferences, * P ≤ 0.05 ** P ≤ 0.01 ***P ≤ 0.001

The table shows that factories preference for unskilled men workers has increased. They also prefer workers who can work long hours and have less family engagement.

Management Perceptions	Men Strongly Agree (%)	Women Strongly Agree (%)
Ensures efficiency	57	44
Can work at night if necessary	64	22
Pressurise Management to increase salary and allowance	36	13
Inclination towards family is low	40	22
Can work long hours with family retreats and overtime	61	32
Can work fast	62	38
Capable of being adaptive to change	60	37
Very hardworking	66	26
Automated/Capable of running heavy machinery	62	18
Capable of completing a task on time	60	44
Garments binned for workers mistakes	18	13
Multiple Machines / Multiple Skills	52	24
Accepts automation and tries to skill up through training	52	32
Have the requisite educational qualifications	49	31
Can understand training well and become more able	55	42
More money is spent on workers social compliance	21	47
More worried about security	25	44

Table 26: Gender perceptions of management

From the above two tables, it is clear that the skillsets preferred by the management in hiring policy match with men workers, as evident from their gender perception. For example, factory preferred to recruit workers in 2021 who could work for long hours, have less family engagement, work hard, handle automated machines, adapt to changing work patterns, and have required education and training. The management perception on gender manifest that women workers are less capable of meeting these requirements compared to men workers. A researcher in our KII explained the recruitment policy in this way:

> *'A changing pattern of the composition of men-women workers in the garment industry tells us that the Recruitment preference has changed, but we cannot say the industries are taking mens by default. A factory needs productivity and output, and they will hire whoever they can get that output from…What I believe is that changes in hiring preferences are not gender-based. Previously, wages were meagre; hence, women worked in garment factories. Men did not prefer garments because they had better employment opportunities with better wages. But women did not have many options; hence they chose this low-wage opportunity. Hence it was beneficial for the employer who got cheap labour and could assign work to her according to her capabilities. But now the employment scenario has changed because salaries are much higher now and attracts many men workers. Employers have met their demand for labour. And it can be seen that men usually come with better skillsets and education than men.'*

It is not the case that factory management does not prefer women workers. They want to hire them because skills in sewing and less participation in labour unrest. In a past study, Kabeer (2000) explored the reasons for employers' preference for women labour in the 1990s. Some garment employers at that time said (Kabeer 2000: 71-72):

> *'Why women? Because men smoke, drink tea and talk a lot, disturb everybody . . . they are very vociferous, demand holidays, they have tough friends, football fans . . . no discipline. We want as little talk as possible on the machines. That is something women are prepared to do. Women listen better and they don't talk back. Men won't take instructions or accept authority easily. And women are cheaper because they have fewer choices – in terms of physical location of work and in terms of their physical ability to do different kinds of work.'*

Because of these qualities apart from their sewing skills, the factory management wanted to hire women but they could not fulfil the demand of the current nature of work as argued by the management in the study. In this context, a senior member of BGMEA said: *'Our preference is women workers, but they have to give that output. The worker, who learns fast, can reach to a higher position fast. There are lots of opportunities, workers just need to avail them.'*

8 Implications of Declining Women Proportion

The third research question of this study was about the implication of the declining proportion of women garment workers. The implications have been analyses from four perspectives mainly based on the present conditions of former women garment workers compared to their lives as garment workers. The four areas of concerns are: (a) Former Women garment workers (b) Factory management (c) Buyers and (d) Country

8.1 Implications on Former Women Garment Workers

The survey of former women garment workers showed that they are now involved in three types of activities: staying at home for taking care of family members and doing household chores (75.79%), searching again for jobs categorised as unemployed (15.79%) and working in a different sector and earning money for living (8.42%). Some of them seemed to be satisfied with their current conditions compared to their lives before as garment labours and others struggled to find happiness. A group of workers chose to stay at home while others did not have a choice. In the following section, an effort was made to explore the implications of leaving the garment sector on these types of former women garment workers.

Occupation	Freq.	%
Staying at home	216	75.79
Unemployed (searching for jobs)	45	15.79
Paid work	24	8.42
Total	285	100

Table 27: Current Occupation of Former Workers

Unpaid Family Labour

A labour's involvement in the labour market can be of two major types: paid (wage and self) employment and unpaid family work. According to the definition of labour force survey of Bangladesh (2013), an unpaid family worker is defined as 'one who works at least one hour in the reference period (other than household work) without pay or profit in a family operated farm or in a business owned/operated by the head or other members of the household to whom he/she is related by kinship, marriage, adoption or dependency.' In addition, there is a hidden and unrecognized (and unpaid) component of work, which is not considered part of the labour market activities. These are domestic chores and taking care of family members performed mainly by women, and in this way, unpaid family labour was conceptualised in this project. When the former women garment workers were asked in the survey what they were doing now, 75.79% said they were engaged in unpaid family labour by taking care of their children, elderly parents, in-laws and engaging in domestic chores. Widely acknowledged as a major contributing cause to the lower rates of women labour force participation than men found in many parts of the world are the norms defining the gender division of labour, which allocate primary responsibility for unpaid domestic tasks to women within the family. Unpaid family labour has the benefit of being the type of employment that may be most readily reconciled with women socially assigned domestic tasks and conventions of women seclusion. It is one of the categories

the ILO defines as 'vulnerable work.' It can be a favoured choice but should not overshadow the reality that it does not provide them access to their own sources of income (Kabeer et al. 2019).

Motherhood Rather than Marriage Turning Point

Marriage usually appears to be the critical turning point where women leave the labour force because married women were expected to stay at home since they were responsible for all parts of domestic labour in addition to their care obligations. However, this project revealed that married women successfully overcame the many barriers to their employment as 73% of current workers and 87% of former workers were married. But it was not revealed in this project whether they were attracted to labour market out of 'preference' rather than 'need.' What is quite clear in this project was that motherhood was the turning point for women participation in the labour market as being pregnant and taking care of children were the dominant factors behind leaving the garment sector.

Losing Working Age Population

It was assumed that formers workers left their jobs as they grew old and their age did not allow them to involve in physical work in the garment sector. However, the age distribution of former women workers indicated that about 38% of them were less than 25 years old. They could have continued their work but might not to do so for their voluntary or non-voluntary choice for other options.

Age	Freq	%
15-19	22	7.72
20-24	87	30.53
25-29	76	26.67
30-34	34	11.93
35-39	35	12.28
40-44	16	5.61
45+	15	5.26

Table 28: Age Categories of former workers

Economic Vulnerability

A major reason for leaving their jobs in the garment sector, as was revealed in this project in factory and worker's survey, was looking after children. There is a relation between child care and labour force participation of women. In low-income households, childcare unquestionably affects the type of employment that women choose to undertake, how long they decide to work, and where they choose to work, given that the husband's contribution to childcare is still little (Saha et al., 2020; Whitehead, 1984). While the trade-off between paid work and childcare is a conundrum in severely low-income settings, it may present a two-way interaction between child care and paid work (Saha et al., 2020). An example is how paid labour proved advantageous for children in terms of financial stability, even though it gave the motherless time to look after the children. This was because the money made it possible for children to attend school, eat healthier, and have a shelter that are essential for their welfare and progress. Despite these benefits, women admitted

having guilt for not being able to give endless time and effort for their children, as they claimed that less attention and time have detrimental effects on the physical and mental well-being of the child (Saha et al, 2020).

The trade-off between motherhood and paid work was costly in terms of losing income. The following table showed that the monthly income was reduced significantly from Tk 9189 to Tk.1500 because a majority of former workers had no earning due to concentration of looking after children and household work. Losing of income could have effect on losing social network, no additional money to be invested for the wellbeing of children, no support in case of losing of income of the main income generator at home and most importantly socially, politically and financially unpowered. In this context, a government staff said,
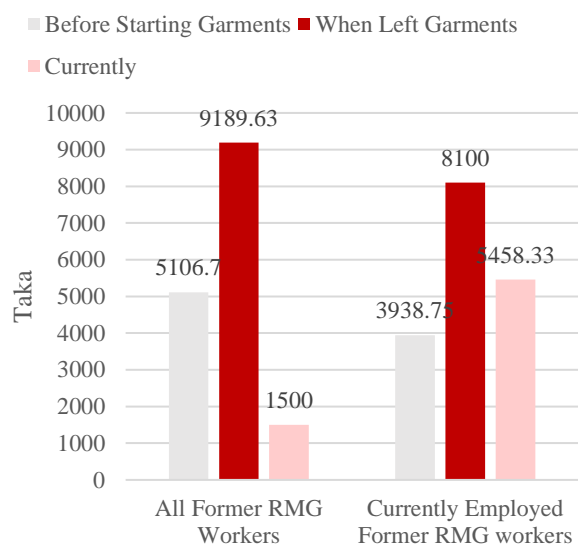
Figure 25: Earnings of former workers

'After completely leaving the job market, it becomes very difficult to come back to the job market again…it would be difficult to survive with losing their earnings, even schooling of children would be a huge problem. Therefore, job continuation must be maintained.'

Even those who moved to non-garment sectors, their income was Tk 2,642 less than their earnings as garment workers. The findings from the survey and FGDs illustrated that some worked independently in their own businesses like tailoring, owning their own mobile tea stalls, and running their own clothes businesses. A few worked in other occupations like working in a jute factory, working in a boutique shop, working as a housemaid, working in a parlour and working as cook. Some participants in FGDs mentioned that the work they do now is enough to sustain their families and themselves which they consider to be the most important thing. Some reported that they earned a lot less than they used to, which is problematic for them. But they were happy with their decreased pay because they enjoyed increased flexibility, independence, and greater peace of mind compared to their previous work.

Family's main income generator's occupation type	Freq.	%
Fixed	15	33.33
Temporary	30	66.67
Total	45	100

Table 26: Income type of household head of current unemployed workers

Another way to indicate economic vulnerability is to explore why a group of former garment workers was trying to enter into the labour market. Among the former workers, 17% reported being unemployed during the survey, which meant they were searching for jobs. What is interesting here is that the factor that triggered them to find a job was the economic vulnerability of their head of household. The above table

shows that their main income generator's occupation was temporary (66.67%), which was insufficient to bear the household expenditure and influenced the former workers to find a job. However, being employed would be difficult for them now. In this context, the participants in FGDs mentioned that their lack of education and their age was a barrier to better work opportunities. Some asserted that there was a lack of opportunities for women in their area, and they did not have options like their city counterparts.

Limited Social Network, Voice and Agency

A researcher in fieldwork argued that garment is an industry historically built on the backs of women, and women are thriving here but leaving jobs meant losing of economic power. As a result, it offers no opportunity for them to grow their social networks. Some participants face some problems after leaving the job of garments. Their husband would not take it in a good way. On the other hand, a participant explained that parents' average reaction was that of quitting a job. Another participant stated that her father-in-law was not pleased with her decision to leave her job because they were losing money. The following case study of a former women garment workers explained the consequences of leaving the garment sector on her social network, voice and agency.

A former worker in her golden days

Yeasmin Akter libes now in her native village, Jhenaigati. She was an operator in the sewing section and worked for her company for about eight years. In this large time period, she had very interesting and memorable memories. It is a matter of sorrow that when she passed five years of marriage, she lost her husband and had a three-year-old baby. At this time, she had to take any kind of job and started as a helper in a factory. After some years passed, she became an operator in this company, and she finished her job as an operator.

When Yeasmin worked in a factory, she had many friends who helped her in many ways. Sometimes Yasmin failed to maintain her target in the factory, but her friends were helping her get it. Sometimes Yasmin failed to give her target, so the supervisor and line cheap scolded her. Her friends protested that issue, and they tried to convince their AGM and GM. Her friends told the higher authority of the factory that Yeasmin's husband is no more and she has to look after her family by herself. So, the authority showed sympathy to her regarding her absence and sometimes being late. Yeasmin Akter was not that good at the critical work involved in making any kind of body. By seeing this, the supervisor and line chief always gave her a very simple process for making any kind of body. Also, if she missed food, her friends gave it to her during lunch.

When Yeasmin was a garment worker, she was taking loans from microfinance organizations like BRAC, ASHA. It was very easy to get these types of loans when the microfinance authorities heard that she worked in garment manufacturing. When she explained the present conditions of her no job in the garment sector, it was very difficult to get any kind of loan from microfinance organizations. These NGOs

wondered how she would complete the instalment because she had no valid job. Before she was getting any kind of loan from her neighbours when she needed it because she could afford to pay it back when she got her salary. On the other side, she could easily get her daily goods like rice, dal, potatoes, soap, onions, and many more things. The shopkeeper had a belief that Yeasmin would pay her dues from her salary. Yeasmin also paid her due on time. But now days, no one is ready to lend her any money, even if her close relatives deny lending her money. They think that Yeasmin had no jobs, and if she took money, she would not pay the money. The shopkeepers showed the same reaction, and they also did not give any groceries without money. Yeasmin explained that where she lived while living as a renter, the owner of the house was very flexible about rent as she worked. Yeasmin was sick for about 5 months, and during this time she was unable to pay her rent. When she wanted to go to her native village, the owner of the house did not allow her to leave her home without paying the due rent. It strikes her a lot because she spent more than 15 years in the same house and the owner of the house did not give any kind of consideration in this regard.

Yeasmin talked about the reaction of the relatives. When she worked in a factory, her relatives were happy because she could give them any kind of necessity. In those days, the relatives were coming forward to help with any kind of danger. For example, if she became sick, the relatives would come to see her with fruits, juice, and many other things. But when they saw that she left her job, her relatives stopped contacting her. When she was a worker, she could eat whatever she wanted. Every Friday, she cooked delicious foods for her family. But in these days, she could not eat whatever she wanted to. Where she stayed, there were also many garment workers, and every holiday they cooked many delicious foods to eat, and by seeing this, she also cooked foods. She explained that she now miss those days.

One very important thing she focused on was that she missed the city life. For family purposes, she had to stay in her native village. She explained that when she stayed in a city, everything was easy to get, for example, any kind of treatment, transportation, enjoyment, and especially markets. But in this village, all those things were comparatively hard to come by. She gave the example that when she lived in the city for work purposes and needed to take treatment from a doctor, it took her 30 minutes to get to the hospital, but now from her village it takes her 3 hours to reach Sadar hospital. To reach market she had to walk 40 minutes.

Denied Opportunity

In the survey, the former women garment workers were asked what you could do if you did not work in the RMG. 31.67% said they could stay at home which means that the inception of the RMG created an opportunity for them to join the paid and formal labour market, a way to be financially empowered. However, those who chose to stay at home after leaving the RMG, were asked another question – what would you do if you were not staying at home. In response, 9.72% wanted to work in tailoring, 13.89% in other paid work and 4.63% as housemaid – a total of 28.24% preferred to be employed but could not do so due to their family and household responsibility. This group of workers was denied to do what they wanted to do.

If not joined RMG what you would do?	Freq.	%
Stay at home	76	31.67
Tailoring	23	9.58
Paid Work	36	15.00
Housemaid	13	5.42
Don't know	92	38.33
Total	240	100.00

What would you do if you were not staying at home?	Freq.	%
Stay at home	69	31.94
Tailoring	21	9.72
Paid Work	30	13.89
Housemaid	10	4.63
Don't know	86	39.81
Total	216	100.00

Table 27: Former workers opportunities

8.2 Implications on Factory

Unfortunately, the second-largest garment exporter (World Trade Organization, 2019) is also the country with the lowest labour productivity. In 2018, Bangladesh's labour productivity per hour was priced at $3.4 while Vietnam, India, Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and China were priced at $4.7, $7.5, $7.7, $4.1, $15.9, and $11.1 respectively (*Asian Productivity Organization*, 2018). To overcome this problem, it is essential to retain workers who are skilled enough to produce more compared to unskilled workers. This study found that the decision to leave the RMG sector by skilled women workers might affect labour productivity. The factory management was also aware of the consequences of losing skilled workers. For instance, few former workers as FGD participants informed the researchers that their factory supervisors were chasing them to come back to factory even after quitting the job.

Cost of Recruitment

The leaving of workers requires the management to make an effort to advertise for jobs, search for the workers that match their expectations, recruit workers, organise orientation programmes, arrange different training levels and make the workers familiar with the working environment. This whole process costs money.

Negative Perception to the Industry

Several key stakeholders who participated in this project as KII, agreed that the RMG is a large sector where a considerable number of women have worked, which has helped boost the economy of Bangladesh to a great extent. Most of the illiterate people in our country came out of poverty because of the employment opportunities in this sector. The contribution of women in the garments sector is undeniable. However, if their representation continues to decline, it will affect a lot in women empowerment and there will be societal pressure.

8.3 Implications for Buyers

A common CSR goal of the buyers is women's empowerment and gender equality. There is no doubt that the leading buyers have launched different initiatives to attain this goal such as women leadership, digital financial inclusion, reproductive health, mother care, higher education for women workers etc. If the proportion of women labour continues to decline, the successes they have achieved so far, would be in jeopardy. It seems that not adequate attention has been paid on this issue as one of the leading buyers argued,

> *'Telling the truth, there is actually no specific policies for retaining more women labours. In case of an alarming situation, such policy might be created. However, in each and every single ethical policy that we have, we focused mainly on women. All of our initiatives include women priority, women progression, career progression, women empowerment, safe working place including their mental state. But for the declining issue, we still don't have any specific policies for this.'*

Addressing this challenge is crucial when the EU's Gender Action Plan (GAP) III states that at least 85% of all its development projects and programmes should have gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment as a principal objective by 2025. The two goals of GAP III are to accelerate progress on empowering women and girls and to safeguard the progress made on gender equality so far.

8.4 Implications for Country

Bangladesh has claimed to have seen considerable growth in the number of women participating in the job market in recent decades. Women labour force participation has increased from less than 10% in the mid-1980s to as high as 35.5% in 2015. In the last 10 years, there is no significant rise, in fact, the women participation rate declined as it was 36% in 2010. It is well known that most of these workers are engaged in the RMG sector. It is also argued that when workers crossed the age boundary of 30-35 years in the garment sector, they usually retire because they are not physically fit for the type of work required. However, the above age distribution showed 38% of them were less than 25 years old who mainly left jobs for getting married, being pregnant and bearing the responsibility of children. In this context, one of the leading buyers said, *'Since women employment, financial inclusion is a very important factors now, now that women are moving to the informal sectors their reduction in the formal sector is a concerning factor.'*

Policy Implications

The government of Bangladesh has set up a national strategic plan known as 'Vision 2041'. It aims to end extreme poverty and move toward becoming an Upper Middle-Income Country by 2030 and a High-Income Country by 2041. The Vision 2041 relies on four institutional pillars and these are: (i) governance; (ii) democratization; (iii) decentralization and (iv) capacity building. The goal of transforming the country into a developing nation would be impossible by increasing unpaid women labour. This project explored why and under what circumstances women workers left their jobs and what they are doing now. If this trend continues, the government's vision of 2041 will be difficult to achieve.

To ensure women's development and empowerment, the government of Bangladesh has formulated 'The National Women Development Policy 2011'. One of the goals of this development policy is to ensure complete and equal participation of women in mainstream socio-economic development. The policy aims to ensure increased participation of women in the labour market, equal opportunity at the workplace, and security and removal of disparities in employment. These goals would not be attainable when the proportion of women workers in the garment sector continually declines, as this project shows.

A Story of a Former Worker

The name of the former worker is Shefali Begum. She is now 40 years old. She has four daughters. She is now living in a small village near the border of India and Bangladesh, in Sherpur. Her husband is a van driver. Shefali joined a garment company. She was their first helper. After two and a half years, she became an operator of the company. Then she worked there for about 4 to 5 years. She explained that after 7 to 8 years, she became sick and had a minor surgery on her backbone. After her recovery from surgery, she started her in garment again. After seven months remaining, she had conceived twin babies in her womb when diagnosed by a doctor. When she realized the real conditions of her family and health is not that much, she was totally broken because she had some health-related problems such as diabetes, gastric pain, etc. Her husband's income was not sufficient to continue their family because it was not consistent. When Shefali worked in a factory, they had no problem with her continuing to raise her family. After realizing that they had been having great problems paying rent of house, managing their daily livelihood, etc., they decided to shift their family to their native village.

Shefali was happy with her job because she had a very miserable life before. Sometimes she had to starve in a day because her husband's income was so poor. After coming to Gazipur, she managed to get a job, and then they started to save money. As a result, whatever pressure she got in her job, it was not that much. When she first got the job, she was happy because she had no pressure to do anything. After becoming an operator, she felt some pressure because she had to meet the daily target. Sometimes the supervisor and line cheap gave her extra pressure to make their target, and

sometimes they used to use slang. Those things made her unhappy in many ways. On the other side, when she thought that she could support her family with her income, she felt good.

Shefali is now a housewife, and she takes care of her children. They now have four cows and some chickens. All these pet animals are taken care of by Shefali. She takes care of all of these animals because her pets give her extra money, such as when chickens lay eggs and cows give milk. By selling those things, she can earn money, but that little money is not sufficient to support her family. Also, she sews kathas with the help of the villagers, and they used to give her money after she finished the katha. On the other side, she has a vegetable garden and produces seasonal vegetables. With these vegetables, she can sell them and also use them for her own needs.

She wanted to return to garment job because life was better than this time. Shefali Begum now leads a depressed life as she has been affected by many diseases. Her husband is unable to provide her with enough food and medicines. As a result, her husband sends her for bringing money from her parents' house. Her husband's income as a van puller is so poor. She has now four daughters, of whom two are capable of marriage. This situation makes her more unhappy because if she wants to marry them off, she has to give a lot of dowry. As her husband cannot properly support her, she wants to support him. But she cannot do it because there is no garment industry or something like that where she can work. She has many regrets about the fact that life was so good in the time of the garments. She wants to go to Gazipur again because she wants to stabilize her life again. She also has another tension of adding another new member to her family. She saw that her husband was unable to support those four children and wondered how he would make life better for the upcoming baby. She is now sick and anxious about how she will have a baby in this situation. Her husband is not giving her that much nutrition, which she needs. Shefali had to go to the hospital four times last five months because she did not have enough good food and medicines. Another problem is that she has taken a loan from the microfinance programme. She and her husband want to do development work, but in the rainy season there is not much work available, and during this time they are having many problems giving the instalment of the microfinance programme. In this time, they borrowed money with extra benefits, which is making their lives more problematic. By taking a deep breath, she said, 'If I can go to Gazipur again and earn money!'

9 Way Forward

9.1 Factory Views on Retention of Women Workers

According to the responses we got from the factory management regarding how they believe they can retain workers better; we got a variety of open responses. We then coded those responses into several categories and found the following suggestions. As per the responses, we can see that salary and working environment are the most significant broad factors. The management of several factories agreed that it was necessary

to ensure the security of the women workers, and cause awareness among the men labourers to retain the women workers. According to the sets of management interviewed, another aspect of security was ensuring safe transport for the safe commute of the women workers and promoting a safe work culture. To ameliorate the working conditions, they suggested removing bad behaviour within the workplace, providing separate training regarding a healthy work culture and providing family counselling to remove and combat the impediments arising from the family members of the women workers. In terms of salary, the management of the factories admitted that the women labour force retention would not only require regular distribution of salary with bonus, but would also require an increase in the salary and the facility of pension along with the overtime payment. However, overtime must be less occasional, especially during the evenings if the factories are to preserve the women workers' proportion. According to them, promoting a healthy work culture also involves providing multiple benefits to the women workers such as maternity related facilities including increase in maternity leave, awareness regarding family planning with sanitary, providing maternity awareness and creating a breastfeeding zone for the new mothers. Since the new mothers are their newborns' primary caregivers, many have to leave their job to take on the new responsibility. Hence, it is necessary to support these mothers by providing day care facilities in the factories for the children so that the new mothers can continue their existing jobs. The management of the factories recognized further facilities related to health and hygiene which involve taking the sickness of the women workers more seriously and providing them with the necessary medical support. It seems quite clear that factory management knows what needs to be done to retain women workers and create conducive work environments.

Suggested areas	%
Work environment/Good behaviour/Facilities	24.54
Salary	21.07
Health/Hygiene	11.03
Child Care Facility	10.04
Transport facility	8.55
Workplace Security	6.69
Maternity benefits	6.07
Housing	4.34
Overtime payment	1.49
Automation Training	1.49
Others	4.71

Table 28: Factory Management suggestions on Women Labour retention

A union leader conveyed a strong message in the following way:

> *'In my view, all owners do not have to be just RMG factory, they have to be humane. They should not only care about money. Obviously, they will need profit but that should be used for the improvement of worker lives. But if only profit earning is the target, then there is no room for humanity. And where there is no humanity there are no rights, and where there are no rights it's basically a form of slavery. How long can a person be a slave? Hence, the owners need to change their mindsets. They need to acknowledge and respect workers' rights. They need to help establish worker rights. They need to play their role in regards to their Corporate Social Responsibility. If they do that, the society will prosper, their factories will prosper. I can guarantee that if they become more humane then their output will definitely increase. Happy employees will result in productive work. And this productivity will increase production and raise profits.'*

9.2 Automation

In the factory survey, 14.20% of the managements identified automation as a reason for the declining proportion of women garment workers. When the former workers were asked why they left, they did not mention automation as the cause of leaving. Rather they pointed out not having education to adjust with the changing pattern of work. Even this changing pattern was referred to automation, very few agreed to it (3.86%). In the survey of current workers, those who wanted to leave after a short or long time, did not mention automation as a reason for leaving. In order to explore the impact of automation on the declining share of women in the workforce, the project examined the relationship between number of machines in a production process and proportion of women workers in that process in the factory survey. The findings are presented below after describing the nature of machines introduced in the RMG industry.

Process	Machine
Cutting	Automatic CNC fabrics cutting machine
	Automatic spreading machine
	Automatic pattern cutting machine
Sewing	Direct drive servo motor
	Automatic pattern sewing machine
	Automatic pocket altering machine
	Automatic cycle sewing machine
	Automatic back moon attaching machine
	Automatic button holding machine
	Automatic button attaching machine
	Automatic waistband attaching machine
	Automated loop cutting and attaching machine
	Automatic pocket creasing machine
Finishing and packaging	Automated T Shirt / Polo Shirt folding machine
	Multi-head heat pressing machine

Process	Machine
Printing	Automated screen-printing oval machine
	CTS imaging system
Sweater	Sweater knitting
	Sweater linking

Table 32: Machines used in various production processes

Process	Women proportion in %		Quantity of machines	
	2015	2018	2015	2018
Cutting	26.65	25.95	64.85	67.80
Sewing	64.54	63.39	388.14	460.93
Finishing and packaging	52.29	52.85	11.41	25.84
Printing	38.60	38.71	15.43	16.67

Table 33: Number of machines and Women proportion in various production processes

Table 33 presents the values of the women proportion in various production processes as a proportion of the overall manufacturing process. The share of women labour decreased in the cutting and sewing while the average number of machines increased. The sewing is the main production process crowded by the largest proportion of women labour. Even after a significant rise in the number of machines in sewing, there has been a decline of the share of women in sewing. Almost no change in women's share in finishing and printing. We found a connection between automation and declining proportion of women in cutting and sewing but it was not a strong linkage and the reasons were described in the FGDs.

Although management in the factory survey argued that women workers are not positive toward automation, the survey of current and former workers did not agree with the views of factory management as is evident in the following table.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think it is easy for me to adapt to new technology	2 (0.54)	18 (4.86)	9 (2.43)	275 (74.32)	66 (17.84)
I can handle multiple machines/ multiple skills	23 (6.22)	55 (14.86)	14 (3.78)	250 (67.57)	28 (7.57)
I willingly accept automation and upgrades themselves by training	2 (0.54)	12 (3.24)	14 (3.78)	284 (76.76)	58 (15.68)
I do not like automation at all and do not want to upgrade themselves	51 (13.78)	196 (52.97)	24 (6.49)	85 (22.97)	14 (3.78)
I accept automation only because it is imposed by the management	34 (9.19)	172 (46.49)	32 (8.65)	102 (27.57)	30 (8.11)
I think it is easy for me to adapt to new technology	7 (2.46)	26 (9.12)	10 (3.51)	208 (72.98)	34 (11.93)

	14	47	6	184	34
I can handle multiple machines/ multiple skills	(4.91)	(16.49)	(2.11)	(64.56)	(11.93)
I willingly accept automation and upgrades themselves by training	5 (1.75)	21 (7.37)	10 (3.51)	200 (70.18)	49 (17.19)
I do not like automation at all and do not want to upgrade themselves	34 (11.93)	183 (64.21)	18 (6.32)	45 (15.79)	5 (1.75)
I accept automation only because it is imposed by the management	22 (7.72)	141 (49.47)	22 (7.72)	69 (24.21)	31 (10.88)

Table 34: Automation Perception of Current & Former workers (brackets: in %)

However, there might be some explanation for this disagreement. Instead of aged workers, young workers were keener to embrace technological changes. According to a union leader, *'I believe negative perception to automation is more applicable to older, more experienced workers but the younger workers are more technically adept and can adopt these new technologies faster.'* Another explanation of not supportive to automation was the availability of training. The participants of FGDs of former and current workers argued that the lack of training on automation and the stereotype of women being more technologically uninterested might have played a role in their inability to cope with changes in production processes due to the introduction of new technologies.

	Categories	Current workers	Former workers
Automation training	No	286 (77.3%)	242 (84.91%)
	Yes	84 (22.7%)	43 (15.09%)

Table 35: Automation training by current and former workers

About the reasons for not offering for automation was explained by factory management and workers in the interview session and FGDs. To them, the machines that were introduced, the majority of them did not require extensive training. Most of the focus group discussions participants said they were not worried about it and said they had already worked on automatic sewing machines. When asked if it is a challenge for women to learn to work on such machines, the participants said that the work could be learned through practical experience and that education was not a barrier. They learned to work on these machines by observing others and through practical training. Some machines (Kancha) required physical effort, for which men workers were preferred. Some education was required for specific tasks like Quality Checking, but the workers said they could compensate for a lack of education with experience. Experience played a big role when it came to who got to operate such machines and usually senior operators got more preference in this regard. Even if training was offered outside the factory, sometimes women workers could not attend those training due to household responsibility. According to a researcher,

> *'The truth is women are falling behind despite technological advances not because they can't use those technologies but because they are denied the opportunity to learn the skills…due to dual responsibilities for women, opportunities to enhance skills are greater for mens than for women.*

Men workers can participate in skill-enhancing activities after work or at the weekends. Plus, due to their opportunities for social interaction, they are provided with information about how they can improve their skills and find better opportunities. But women are constrained by family responsibilities right after work.'

Other reasons for negative impressions could be the threat of unemployment. A significant impact of automation on employment was revealed in the FGDs. The participants in the FGDs mentioned that the work of helpers is becoming obsolete due to automated machines. Factories used to employ a lot of helpers but now that number has decreased. When asked if the number of helpers was majority women the participants said that it was a mix of men and women. The participants said that there used to be 30 helpers on a line back in the day but now there are only 10. Operators now perform tasks that were used to be done by helpers. Participants who worked in a sweater factory were also affected by automation. One of the statements of the participants was as follows: *'With the arrival of Jacquard Machines, we sweater factory workers have been forced into the streets. One of those machines can replace four workers, and four machines require only one operator to function.'* This implies that in sweater factories, due to the advent of automation, 16 workers can now be replaced by a single worker.

The workload might be another factor of not welcoming automation. Due to the introduction of automation and increased wages, the participants said their expected output requirements increased. They are now required to produce 200-250 pieces per hour, while 100-150 pieces are possible per hour according to the workers, with 100-120 pieces on the output end of the line where it takes more time to finish each unit. One of the participants said:

'Introduction of new machines caused some problems; one machine can perform three different processes done by three individuals previously. Hence, the person operating that machine must take three times the normal workload. However, our production targets have not decreased.'

9.3 COVID-19

It took some time for the Bangladesh garments industry to get back to business after the Rana Plaza tragedy, a wake-up call for the industry. The vulnerable conditions of workers have unfolded again during the current coronavirus pandemic when the livelihood of four million workers is at stake (Rahman 2022). The future of the industry has been threatened by Covid-19, a pandemic that has shattered the global economy at this moment. At the end of April 2020, orders for more than $3.17 billion had been cancelled, reported by 1,149 factories in Bangladesh (BGMEA 2020). Because of the cancellation of orders, the Bangladeshi garment exports have declined by 18.45%, the highest decrease in the history of Bangladesh's garment export sector (The Economist, 2020). It was assumed that the pandemic would be a crucial cause for the declining proportion of women workers in the RMG industry. However, this study found a minimum

impact of the COVID-19 on the reduction of the share of women workers. Only 2.46% of the former workers identified COVID-19 as the reason for leaving their jobs and 0% in factory survey.

In KII with a researcher it was revealed that some factories used the COVID-19 to replace aged and uneducated workers with young educated ones. According to this researcher, *'A lot of closed factories reopened and they laid off old workers and employed new ones because experienced workers were generally paid more for yearly increments in salaries. A lot of open factories refused to take back some of their uneducated employees.'* These findings echoed the recruitment policy of management as pointed out in the factory survey of this study.

9.4 Training and Skills Development

McKinsey & Company has conducted its flagship CPO (Chief Procurement Officer) survey in 2021 titled 'What's next for Bangladesh garment industry after a decade of growth.' According to the report, suppliers in Bangladesh will need to invest in upskilling, vertical integration, digitalisation and automation to unlock speed and transparency and this is the recipe to remain competitive in the global garment supply chain (McKinsey 2021). A stiff competition is ahead. Bangladesh is going to lose the preferential EBA trade agreement with the EU amidst to the graduation from LDC to a developing country while Vietnam, the main competitor of Bangladesh, has signed a new preferential trade agreement with the EU in 2020. Although the share of Bangladesh's RMG industry to the global export increased from 4.7% in 2011 to 6.7% in 2021, the McKinsey report argues that the country has not captured the full potential foreseen 10 years ago. One of the reasons for this failure is the lack of investment in upskilling the workforce. A particular focus should be on the training of women garment workers to adapt with the automation system as echoed by the BGMEA representative: *'World is moving very fast and we need to follow the global trend- we need to implement automation, we are thinking of artificial intelligence, robotic equipment and IR. In these cases, I think, they need more training.'* However, as pointed out in the table in the appendix (Appendix 0), there is very little productivity training for workers.

The appendix (Appendix 1) table listed the number of projects on training introduced by different stakeholders in the last ten years in the RMG industry. Among 66 projects, 4 programmes targeted skill development of workers and out of these 4, one is for training of the midlevel management, one was closed which was designed for the workers. The majority of the training was offered on the area of safety from fire and workers' rights after the tragedy of the Rana Plaza. An expert on training in an interview with the lead researcher identified the reasons for the lack of investment in training of the workers for the development of their skills and these were shift of funding to Rohingya crisis, budget deficiency for the COVID-19, fear of leaving the factory by workers after training, effect on production target due to attendance at training and limited concern on the value of training by the government and trade bodies. According to the trainer:

> *'The state of training was excellent until 2016, and later it was almost stopped by everyone. Garments owners and development partners used to work heavily in this area. But after the*

Rohingya issue, all budgetary allocations stopped…They (suppliers) think worker training is useless. Instead, they send their officers for training, mid-level management. They do various managerial courses and leadership training. As for worker-level training, the owners have a mindset that the workers will leave after training… The owners complained about the loss of production during training and were unwilling to sacrifice production for training workers who they felt were easily replaceable… Some training schools were forced to close down post covid due to insufficient funds and budget… The Government as well as BGMEA's contribution in this regard is negligible. They only talk about worker skill development but are yet to play a significant part… The workers mainly get training inside the factories.'

9.5 Educated Workforce

Bangladeshi garment workers have an average of 5.9 years of education, with just 16.9% completing grade 10 or higher (Kabeer et al., 2020). One way to produce a skilled workforce is to accommodate educated labour in the factory to absorb the learning from training, respond proactively to the changing production process including new technology and value the importance of following social compliance. Workers do not have the capacity to get the most out of the trainings provided by management to improve their skills due to a lack of basic education.   In this context, a senior member of the BGMEA said, *'We now recruit workers with some knowledge.'* On the contrary, educated potential women workers in this research were less likely to prefer the RMG sector.

Education Level	Potential		Current		Former	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Uneducated	6	3.28	30	8.11	37	12.98
Class 1-5	56	30.6	154	41.62	125	43.86
Class 6-8	56	30.6	120	32.43	75	26.32
Class 9-10	37	20.22	37	10	24	8.42
Post-Secondary	28	15.3	29	7.84	24	8.42
Total	183	100	370	100	285	100

Table 36: Education Level of Workers

This project found 35.52% of potential workers attained education above class 8 which was 17.84% for current workers and 16.84% for former workers, which means a higher education level in the upcoming labour group, an impact of the government programmes on women education in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, the survey of potential women workers illustrated that the educated (Class 8+) labours were less likely to join the RMG sector. A perception has been developed among the current, former and potential workers regarding the need of education in the garment sector. In the FGDs, the participants believed garment provides an opportunity for people with no education and no access to other forms of work. They believed that due their educational background they need to work in more 'respectable' places. The vast majority of the participants had negative impressions about garments factory work and was reluctant to consider it as their desired profession. The suppliers are giving importance on the recruitment of educated workers in the

sector as is evident in the factory survey but educated potential women workers are not attracted to this industry because not only of the established perception on education but also of the psychological stress in meeting the production target and less upward mobility in career. Perhaps it might be the case that the wages do not reflect the value of having a higher educational attainment.

9.6 Working Conditions

Looking at the overall picture, when the current women garment workers were asked about their level of job satisfaction between when started working in the RMG and currently, 62.97% of workers were satisfied and 21.08% were very satisfied. This higher level of satisfaction was also reflected in another study conducted by Kabeer et. al (2020).
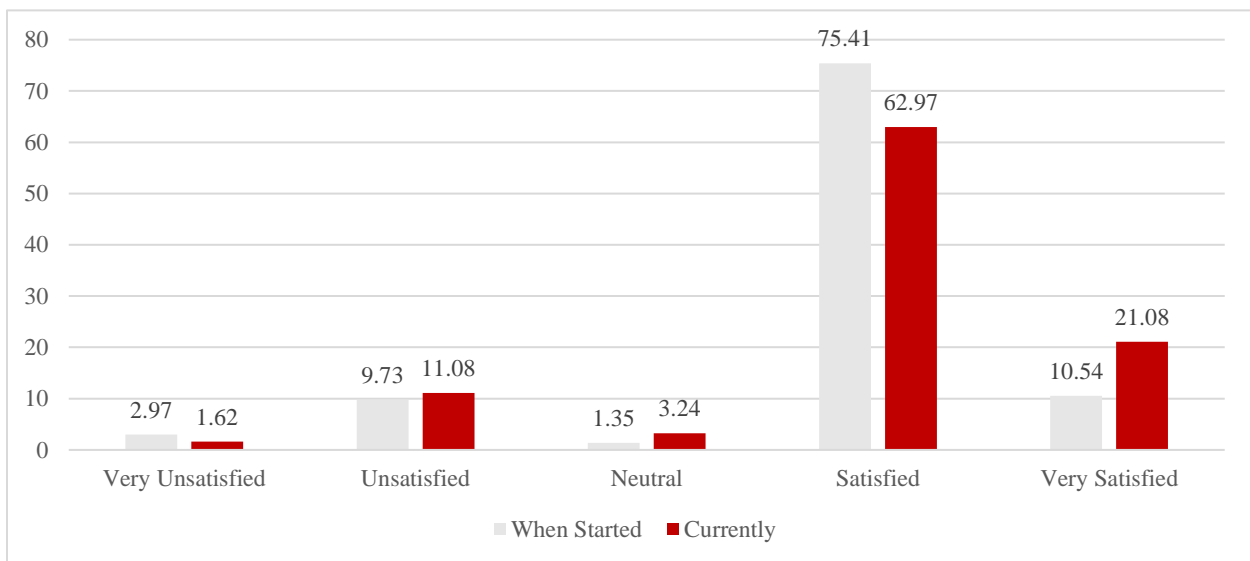
Figure 26: Job satisfaction of current workers

One of the reasons for job satisfaction might be absence of wage discrimination between men and women workers. The wage discrimination in various positions by gender was found statistically insignificant in the factory survey as stated in the following table. There may not be significant wage discrimination between genders across roles, but there is discrimination and prejudice in terms of the roles women can and should occupy.

Position Title	obs	Men Mean	Women Mean	dif	St Err	t value	p value
Associate (helper)	337	8273.324	8284.448	-11.124	49.485	-0.20	0.822
Driver(operator)	336	10417.434	10355.803	61.631	118.546	0.50	0.604
Quality controller	336	11974.229	11939.39	34.840	307.418	0.10	0.910
Finishing	336	9979.646	9935.456	44.191	133.542	0.35	0.741
Packer	336	9843.485	9907.947	-64.462	152.482	-0.40	0.672
Table 37: T-test for differences in salaries between men and women workers						0.10	0.923

Other reasons for job satisfaction were revealed in the survey of current workers which shows statistically significant difference in most areas of working conditions: on time salary, manageable production target, paid overtime, good health care, long working hours, low salary, intense work pressure and managing health well during pregnancy.

Perceptions	obs	Z value	p value
Paid overtime	370	11.974	0.0000
Long working hours	370	4.252	0.0000
Low salary	370	2.978	0.0029
Intense work pressure or stress	370	2.797	0.0052
Good health care services	370	-2.106	0.0352
Production target is manageable	370	-2.254	0.0242
Manage health well during pregnancy	370	-2.784	0.0054
On time salary	370	-3.062	0.0022

Table 38: Mann Whitney U tests of changing work perceptions

We asked the current workers regarding their perception about their work experience. We conducted Mann Whitney U tests and the above table shows the significant changes in the workers perception of the working conditions from the time they joined and their current experience. We saw a number of statistically significant work-related factors which indicates that there was a change in perception during the time the workers joined garments and currently. To check the direction of this change, we compared the means of the two time periods and represented them in the table below.

	obs	When started (mean)	Currently (mean)	dif
Paid overtime	370	3.779	2.673	1.105
Long working hours	370	3.265	2.881	.384
Low salary	370	3.148	2.889	.259
Intense work pressure or stress	370	2.667	2.433	.235
Good health care services	370	3.795	3.954	-.159
Production target is manageable	370	3.765	3.929	-.165
Manage health well during pregnancy	370	3.673	3.881	-.208
	370	3.952	4.162	-.211

Table 39: Differences in changing work perceptions

A negative difference indicates workers disagreed when started but currently agree whereas a positive difference indicates that workers agreed when they started but currently disagree. From this we saw that the workers believe that the production targets have become more manageable over the time, an improvement in healthcare services in the factories and better able to manage health during their pregnancy. Their working hours are not as long as before and their production targets are better manageable. They are receiving salaries on time; however, they are not getting paid overtime properly.

To sum up about the working conditions, both the survey of factory and workers highlighted the overall improved working conditions over the time complemented by the FGDs. The workers agreed that

considering their qualifications, they had a standard earning compared to the income from other sectors. Four former workers in the FGD responded positively when asked if they were willing to send their daughters to garment factories. They said, *'Garment factory work conditions are much better now, and the pay is excellent.'* The McKinsey report praised the installation of a transparent safety system in factory after the execution of the Accord on Fire and Building Safety and Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety. Statistically, the following table used data from the factory survey showed no difference in wages paid to different genders for the same work.

According to the FGD participants, physical and verbal abuse have recently increased due to the increased workload and production pressure. They did mention that their families were upset with the overtime work since it forced them to stay late into the night, preventing them from fulfilling family responsibilities at home. The workers also mentioned that they were forced to do overtime work and were not allowed to leave during that time. On the contrary, few workers noticed that the amount of mandatory overtime was seasonal and depended on the amount of work order. They were happy with the amount of overtime they had to do because this was the only way to increase their earning and in factories where there is no scope of overtime, they do not intend to work there. They said they were fine with the occasional excess pressure which happened when shipments were urgent or the order size was big.

9.7 Factory Facilities

The collected data permitted a disaggregation into factories where the proportion of women employment declined and did not decline over the time span of the survey. It was therefore, possible to look at the differences in the factories' facilities in the two groups. The following table summarizes this information. According to the following table, women proportion did not decline in those factories where the factories provided a little bit better facilities. In this type of factories, day-care facilities for children, hygiene support (proper bathroom facilities), transport for workers and nutritional support were largely available every day.

Facilities	Women proportion declined				Women proportion did not decline			
	Everyday	Never	Often	Sometimes	Everyday	Never	Often	Sometimes
Nutritional support	6.38	62.77	5.32	25.53	6.58	62.14	6.58	24.69
Hygiene support	81.91	6.38	4.26	7.45	85.19	4.53	4.12	6.17
Transport facilities	27.66	70.21	0.00	2.13	32.10	65.02	0.00	2.88
Day-care facilities	76.60	21.28	1.06	1.06	80.25	14.81	0.41	4.53

Table 40: Factories with different facilities (in %)

Lack of upward mobility

The survey of former workers indicated that there has been very limited upward mobility for the women garment workers. About 86% of workers joined the factory as helper, 66% left as operator and only 1% as supervisor. Usually, they started off their career as helper and ended up as operator and no progression from the position of operator. Since the role of helped had been reduced immensely as a result of automation, those who began as operator remained in the same position in their career.

Designation	Entry		Exit	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Helper	245	85.96	63	22.11
Operator	12	4.21	189	66.32
Quality Check	14	4.91	22	7.72
Supervisor	0	0.00	3	1.05
Others	14	4.91	8	2.81
Total	285	100.00	285	100

Table 41: Former workers starting and ending designations

But the concern here is not only why less women in leading positions such as supervisors and quality inspectors but also women labour's real desire for career upgradation because not a single former worker mentioned 'less scope of upward mobility' as a reason for leaving the sector. It seems they have accepted the norms that they will only work as helper or operator under men labourers' leadership. To investigate the reasons for less women supervisors we examined the FGDs of workers and KIIS of buyer, owner and union leader. From a long time experience, a senior factory management identified four factors and these were: (1) Men cannot accept the fact that a women would be their supervisor, (2) the line chief cannot make peace working with a women supervisor as they cannot reprimand the women supervisor, (3) women workers need to go back home as their family and husbands aren't quite in favour of letting women work out of the home for such long hours, (4) women workers don't want to work under women supervisors, (5) supervisor's salary is fixed and operators can work overtime and earn more. Though this factory found that women supervisor had a productivity level of 1.8% higher to men supervisor, the factors mentioned above work as obstacles to becoming a women supervisor. The union leader and other stakeholders agreed with some of these reasons in particular household responsibility, less assertive in nature and less earning as supervisor compared to operator. Different buyers and suppliers have introduced various initiatives to attract women labour to be supervisor such as GEAR by IFC and ILO, RMGPP of DBL.

9.9 Inadequate Initiatives for Child Day Care Centre

The Bangladesh Labour Act of 2006, sec. 94, states: '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 six years.' 'These rooms will provide adequate accommodation, must have adequate lighting, be ventilated and maintained in a clean and sanitary condition, and will be under the charge of women trained or experienced in childcare.' In align with the

labour act, the survey factories have set up day care centres but the study found some problems in these centres. According to the factory survey, the average number of women workers in 2021 was 1015, and the average number of children who were taking the service of day-care centres in a factory was 10. Though we did not have data on the number of married workers and the number of their children, it would be fair to say that very few children were coming to the day care centre established by the factory at workplaces. It seems women workers were not taking advantage of the day care centres in their factories. Either the factory day care centre's resources were insufficient to accommodate the children of workers who preferred not to send their children to these centres. To investigate the reasons behind this, we analysed the responses of the participants of FGDs and KIIs. When asked about the existence of day care centres in factories, the participants said that these centres were not functional and were usually set up to appease potential buyers for the factory who visit to evaluate their working conditions. There were few centres outside the factory but they were expensive for them. There was also a trust issue as one of the buyers mentioned referring to a research report of CPD that workers preferred leaving their kids with their relatives and elders because they did not feel safe with factory day care centre. In some cases, as pointed out by an INGO staff, at the absence of family members, workers had to leave their kids at their neighbours' place, who often were seen to abuse the kids. Therefore, they would rather leave their kids in paid day care centres in the city. Another problem was related to the transport facility. Since most workers usually walked to the factory and were under tremendous stress to get the *hajira* (attendance) bonus by reaching the workplace on time after organising the household chores including cooking for the family members, it was quite difficult to accompany their children with them.

Location	Number of centres
Dhaka	36
Gazipur	1
Narayangonj	8
Chattogram	17

Table 42: Number of day care centers by location

Description	Budget	Revised	Budget	Projection	
	2018-19		2019-20	2020-21	2021-2022
Day Care Centre	216,600	215,623	214,100	231,500	247,500

Table 43: Expenditure by Department / Agencies / Institutional Units (Source: MOCWA)

The lack of affordable and quality childcare options exacerbates this issue and frequently keeps women, typically the primary caregivers, out of official employment. In Bangladesh, it is frequently difficult to find formal childcare close by and compatible with parents' work schedules, values, and requirements. Currently, there are 94 childcare centres in operation or in the process of being set up by MOWCA. The number of child care centres governed by private organisations is also very few compared to the demand. In research by IFC (2019) on tackling childcare, all working parents surveyed indicated a high demand for

childcare services. The study found that 23% of the 306 businesses whose employees were surveyed for the study's survey offer some childcare options. In addition, 16% of the surveyed businesses intend to offer childcare in the future, as opposed to 61% with no such intentions. This study also revealed that the average cost for a standard day care centre for white collars is Tk. 5000, which is quite expensive. As a whole, stakeholders are not paying attention to the urgency of childcare centres, as shown by the low number of public and private childcare centres, the low government budget allocation, and the pessimistic employer intention to set up centres. Despite these drawbacks, day-care solution providers reported positive effects on organisational profitability and workplace culture, employee productivity, retention, morale, talent acquisition, position as an employer of choice, and women's career advancement (IFC 2019). A government official in our fieldwork suggested ensuring wider involvement of private organisations in day-care business instead of relying on the factory, which is unrealistic. According to the government staff,

> '*They (workers) probably don't feel comfortable with factory day care centre. Even in some factories you will see 60-70 kids are in the day care. Now what can be a solution to this? Opening day care centres at a commercial level would be more efficient. Women will also understand how to manage finances. How giving that 3000 - 4000 at the child care centre would allow them to earn, work and live life more smartly. Business community, the factory managers should also have some connection with these. They would recommend the women in the factory to opt for these too.*'

Ayesha using Madrasa for child day care center

Ayesha is a garment worker working in a renowned RMG factory in Gazipur, where she works as a senior operator. She has a daughter, and her husband is a driver. She has been in Gazipur for about 10 years. Her daughter is 7 years old. She cares for her child deeply and wants to educate her daughter with a religious education.

When her daughter was 4 years old, she wanted to put her in the daycare center of her factory. She could put her there for only one month because it was not well organised. When asked about the daycare center, she said that there was one daycare center in her factory and that the administrative officer of her factory controlled it. She mentioned that there was no caretaker to take care of the children. The day care exists only for show. The factories pretend they are following all the rules and regulations. She also explained that when the authority expected a visit from a buyer, they would assign a worker as the day care centre's caretaker, tidy up the centre, and bring children for a day to make the day care look active. This was to attract the buyer by pretending to comply with rules and regulations.

She and her husband thought there would be no security if they left their daughter alone in the rental house. On the other hand, her daughter could not make meals for herself, and her husband was busy with work, so he could not look after her daughter. After considering these things, Ayesha decided she would send her daughter to a women's madrasa as no one in Gazipur would take care of her daughter.

The madrasah teachers take care of them in terms of education and provide three meals daily. When Ayesha leaves home for her job, she drops her daughter off at the madrasa, and when she returns home from the factory, she picks up her daughter. Sometimes her husband picked up her daughter because, in the meantime, Ayesha had to work overtime for her factory. She explained that it was a little expensive and they had to give extra money, but they were happy thinking their daughter was safe and secure. Also, they did not know about the three times foods because her daughter's teacher would take care of them.

9.10 Maternity leave

According to section 46 of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, working mothers must be allotted four months of maternity leave, eight weeks of prenatal leave, and eight weeks of postnatal leave. The question is whether this period is sufficient. A government officer in our fieldwork argued, *'This period is not enough for a new mother to return to work. Therefore, the job continuity comes to question.'* The study also found inequality in maternity leave between public and private employees, as articulated here by a union leader,

> *'Nowadays, a question is being raised. There is Shorkari Maa and Besharkari Maa (Govt and non-govt mothers). This is regarding discrimination in maternity leave. Government employees enjoy full 6 months maternity leave with full benefits. Whereas the recent labour laws have reduced maternity benefits for non-governmental employees. The private sector employees have been reduced to 4 months. When there is state-level discrimination, I just cannot blame the owners' greed for profit. The government is creating these opportunities for exploitation. At the end of the day, they are all mothers. The government should be rational and beneficial for the workers. The government cannot pressure the factory owners; rather, the factory owners force the government to pass laws to exploit their workers. They managed to divide the law. Safe Maternity is a human right.'*

To calculate the amount of maternity benefit under Section 48 of the Labour Act, divide the total wages earned by a worker during the preceding three months from the date she gives notice of pregnancy by the number of actual work days during that period. As a result, all days of leave that a worker was entitled to under the Act during the three months would be excluded from the actual days of work, while the wages paid for those days of leave would be added to the total wage count. In addition, payment for overtime in the past three months would also be added to the total wages of the previous three months. The new Rules, however, provide that wages of only the month immediately preceding the maternity leave would be taken into account and that, too, would have to be divided by 26 days – not the actual days of work – to determine the average daily wage. Some factories were reluctant to bear the maternity leave cost as argued by a researcher,

> *'Some factories do not want to keep women because of the costs associated with maternity leave. Most women workers in garment factories are young and of reproductive age. Hence, we can see*

that most workers bear children during their tenure at garment factories. This introduces costs that could have been mitigated through low wages, but since that is not the case, they now prefer mens.'

Instead of forcing the workers to leave the factory indirectly, factory management should have realised the benefits of the costs related to maternity leave. A women union leader explained this benefit in our fieldwork, saying,

'Maternity leave is critical. What is more costly? Giving a woman a few months of paid maternity leave or letting her go and hiring a new replacement and then making them go through training to match the previous level of output? Maternity leave benefits both factories and their women workers, and factory management should realize that fact.'

The appendix describes some countries' maternity policies (Appendix 2). Vietnam, a competitor of Bangladesh RMG and other countries, has implemented a number of workplace provisions. Following a thorough review, some of these may be considered for Bangladeshi workers.

9.11 Aspiration to Work

It is not the case that women do not want to work. In fact, the survey of potential workers showed their aspiration to work. According to the following table, 91% of potential women workers expressed their determination and commitment to work to earn money, leading to social, political and financial empowerment. Almost all of them also firmly stated that paid work rather than staying at home was more valuable to them. A potential women worker demonstrated such aspiration in her voice in the FGD session: *'I did not get educated so that I can sit around doing nothing.'* This statement shows how eager potential women workers are to be employed, which would be possible by addressing the challenges they face at home and workplace.

Stay at home or engage in paid work	Freq.	%
Stay at home	16	8.74
Work for Salary	167	91.26
Total	183	100.00

Which is more valuable?	Freq.	%
Working at home for 1hr	3	1.64
Working for Salary for 1hr	180	98.36
Total	183	100.00

Table 44: Potential workers desire to work

Conclusion

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the emergence and evolution of the ready-made garments (RMG) sector in Bangladesh has been the single most important development affecting the lives and livelihoods of women in the country. The sector was the first to employ women in large numbers and provide a regular income which, in turn, conferred a degree of empowerment and autonomy hitherto absent in the social echelons from which the vast majority of the women workers were drawn. While the composition of the current RMG workforce still favours women, in percentage terms there has been a decline from around 80% in the 1980s to about 54% today. This study, conducted in order to explore the underlying reasons which led to the decline, identified several key factors. Support was found for the hypothesis that the process of production and the adoption of greater automation induced women to leave. Of greater significance, though, was the finding that the overarching reasons for exit were rooted in societal factors. The need to conform to traditional familial obligations, as daughters prior to marriage and as daughters-in-law post marriage, emerged as the single most important cause influencing the decision to leave the sector with motherhood being the crucial turning-point. This suggests that the RMG sector, while providing material upliftment in the form of increased income, has not been a vehicle for the kind of social transformation which some may have imagined it to be capable of. A recurring theme in the study was balance between work in the factory and work at home, with subjects stating a preference to remain in the industry as long as the balance was met. In this instance it is important to note that the balance does not refer to a time allocation between work and leisure but to work within and outside of the domestic sphere. This would imply that the RMG sector has been unable to exert much influence on conventional notions of the gender division of labour or indeed societal norms regarding men and women roles. Social factors, more precisely family condition is the dominant reason for the declining proportion of women garment workers in the Bangladesh RMG industry. However, this factor is also associated with the working conditions. The patriarchal mind-set of management is demonstrated as the expected skillsets are more compatible with men workers. If factory could provide functional support services in the areas of child care, pregnancy and maternity, it might contribute to the retention. To sum up, women employed in the sector thus continue to remain vulnerable. Steps can and should be taken to improve working conditions and the skill-set of women RMG employees, measures which may stem or even reverse their departure from the sector, but the amelioration of their communal susceptibilities may require a different kind of effort.

The key findings are as follows:

- The proportion of women garment workers continues to decline.
- Exit from factory goes up continuously, and entry into factory goes down sometimes.
- Family conditions are the crucial factor behind leaving the RMG, followed by working conditions.
- Although women workers voluntarily left the RMG sector, it does not mean all of them did not want to work. In particular, motherhood is the turning point of women labour participation.
- They prefer to work if there is a balance between home and work.

- Family support is essential for the continuation of work regarding household chores and taking care of children.
- In order to take care of children so they can work, it is crucial to get support from affordable child day-care centres.
- The worker hiring policy has been changed, and the required skillsets match the factory's perception of men workers.
- To retain women workers, working conditions needs to be improved in salary, workload, overtime, management behaviour, career progression, compliance with maternity law, training to adapt to changing production processes such as automation and functional child day-care centre.
- The garment sector is still the most preferred occupation for potential women workers
- Although potential women workers have more job options now than in the past, which is a good sign, these opportunities are mainly concentrated in Dhaka and limited in Gazipur.
- Potential women educated workers (class 8+) are less interested in working in the RMG due to the workload and the perception that garment is for less educated workers.

Recommendations

Intending to achieve inclusive development, sustainability of the global supply chain and gender equality in Bangladesh, the study makes recommendations based on its findings.

Suppliers/ supplier associations

- Implementation of the government laws and policies, and brands' code of conduct (maternity benefits, paternity leave, leave, day care, childcare support, child education, compliance mechanism, reproductive health, gender-based violence, harassment, working hour)
- Develop and implement their gender-sensitive recruitment policies
- Work with other stakeholders (especially government, private sector institutions, NGOs) for skill development schemes to supply skilled women workforces considering the changing situation in the sector
- Consider the challenges women workers face (inside workplace and outside workplace) and develop gender-sensitive recruitment and HR policies to attract and retain women workers through a visible career path
- Promote a culture of gender-sensitive workplace through continuous interventions (training, education, awareness, women leadership, support services, etc).
- Include both men and women workforces in training and BCC-related activities
- Set a realistic production target for workers
- Prevent forced overtime
- Protect workers from verbal and physical abuse

- Organise training for women workers to adapt with advance automated machines at a suitable time
- Design a salary package not only to retain current workers but also to attract educated potential women workers
- Ensure a functional child care centre
- Find out why day-care centres are not adequately utilised
- Comply with the maternity law
- Arrange safe transport
- Set up a breastfeeding zone for new mothers
- Take family emergencies of workers seriously
- Encourage women workers in a leadership position
- Offer a part-time job in special cases
- Take realistic orders from buyers to avoid an immense workload
- Change the mind-set that abusive behaviour accelerates the pace of work to fulfil the target
- Install light work provision for pregnant workers before childbirth
- Initiate retention programmes, particularly for skilled women workers
- Change gender stereotypes to ensure gender inclusive workplace
- Increase investment in training of women workers where they lack efficiency
- Monitor the functionality of childcare centres at factories
- Arrange dialogue with different stakeholders for health insurance that includes the costs of pregnancy
- Ensure stricter measures for any abuse at workplaces and prevent forced overtime
- Organise brainstorming sessions with stakeholders to find a way to attract educated future workers

Brands

- Monitor implementation of the policies (maternity benefits, paternity leave, leave, day care, childcare support, child education, compliance mechanism, reproductive health, gender-based violence, harassment, working hour)
- Monitor recruitment policies and implementation
- Consider the challenges women workers face (inside workplace and outside workplace) and developed their CSR framework to support women workers.
- Consider mainstreaming gender aspects in the existing purchasing practices, especially the impact of automation.
- Develop and implement gender-specific KPIs
- Offer realistic orders to suppliers to prevent immense workload on workers
- Support suppliers for the women leadership programme
- Provide support for a functional child care centre

- Share lessons with suppliers about how developed countries address childcare issue
- Offer fair prices to suppliers so that they could invest in skill development programmes for women workers and child day-care centre
- Incentivize suppliers to ensure gender-inclusive factory

Unions

- Aware workers of their maternity rights
- Ensure adequate child care centre facility at the workplace and have a social dialogue with workers to find out their comfort and discomfort of using this resource
- Encourage workers to raise their voices against unrealistic targets, workload, overtime, and abuse and work together with management to uphold a healthy and safe working environment
- Aware workers of the consequences of discontinuation of work
- Engage Participation Committee to address the factors behind the declining women proportion identified in this project
- Increase women members in unions and PC as women understand well gender-related issues

Civil societies

- Organise counselling for workers to manage mental stress
- Establish affordable child care centre
- Access to credit to former workers to do business or self-employed
- Create jobs in areas where there are sparse job options for women workers
- Engage the community as a support centre to reduce time spent on household chores
- Organise training for women workers on multi-tasking, adapting to advancing technology, handling challenging tasks, adapt to new production processes
- Aware workers of the consequences of discontinuation of work
- Increase investment in training on soft skills such as leadership, professionalism, and multi-tasking as well as technical skills such as quality control, new machines, and target set-up of workers in alignment with the current and future production process after assessing the needs.
- Arrange counselling sessions for women workers to build up their self-confidence to adapt to changing nature of work
- Raise awareness on career progression
- Work with government, brands and factories to ensure women rights, decent workplace, gender-sensitivity and vibrant work culture in the supply chains.
- Advocacy for improved policy and legal framework that ensure women-friendly working conditions

Government

- Review and adopt supportive policy and legal provisions for a gender-friendly industry
- Monitor implementation of the policies (maternity benefits, paternity leave, leave, day care, childcare support, child education, compliance mechanism, reproductive health, gender-based violence, harassment, working hour)
- Initiate skill development schemes to supply skilled women workforces considering the changing situation in the sector
- Take initiatives and lead on facilitating tripartite (Government, business and workers representatives) social dialogue mechanism to address the issues
- Increase budget for child care centres
- Simplified Day Care Centre Act so that less trouble to establish child care centres commercially
- Increase investment in training workers to align with the current and future production process
- Revise the training module of the existing training c-entre involving buyer and supplier to make it practical and relevant.
- Assess the need for training.
- Organise a dialogue with other stakeholders to revise some provisions of maternity law such as miscarriage, pregnancy termination, the extension of paid maternity leave in special circumstances, unpaid maternity leave programme.
- Monitor and evaluate the existing training centres
- Facilitate women-only public transport in factory concentrated zone mainly during the peak time and invest in quality early childhood development

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Appendices

1 Skill Development Trainings

Programme or Project	Focus	Run by	Sources
Better Work Bangladesh	Working conditions and labour rights	United Nation's International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC)	https://betterwork.org/where-we-work/bangladesh/
Strategic Sector Cooperation-Improving the Health and Safety of Workers in Bangladesh through Strengthening of Labour Authorities	Working conditions and the quality of inspections	The Bangladesh Department for Inspection of Factories (DIFE)	https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_240343/lang--en/index.htm
Better Work and Standards (BEST) Programme, Component: Better Works in Textiles and Garments (BWTG)	Trade performance for inclusive growth and employment		https://betterwork.org/where-we-work/bangladesh/bwb-our-programme/
DIPECHO V and VI projects. (Funded by DIPECHO – ECHO Disaster Risk Reduction programme)	Disaster resilience	Action Aid, Concern Universal, Concern Worldwide, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Oxfam GB and Plan Bangladesh	https://www.preventionweb.net/files/submissions/25870_finalreportofdipechovi.pdf
Promotion of Social and Environmental Standards in Industries (PSES)	Sustainable economic growth	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Ministry of Commerce, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh	https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/14900.html
Support to the Health Sector Programme II	Aid effectiveness in the health sector	Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) Government of Nepal	http://dohs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/chd/NHSP/Consolidated_NHSP2_IP.pdf
Project on Promoting Buidling Safety (BSPP)	Safety of buildings	Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and Government of Bangladesh	https://www.bspp-bd.net/
Bangladesh Textile Competitiveness (BTC)	Strengthen the sustainability	IFC	https://disclosures.ifc.org/project-detail/AS/599982/btc-project
Supplier Qualification Programme (SQP)	Working conditions, social	SwissContact project	https://www.swisscontact.org/en/projects/sqp

Programme or Project	Focus	Run by	Sources
	standards and local law		
Trainings for factory trade unions on collective bargaining and social dialogue			
Labour rights in the domestic RMG sector	Rights of workers	OXFAM Great Britain	http://odhikar.org/bangladesh-rmg-sector-labour-rights/
CBI Best Practise	Application security	CBI	https://cbisecure.com/insights/best-practices-for-web-application-security/
NICHE			
Global Labour Program	Capacity of worker organizations	USAID's	https://www.usaid.gov/democracy/global-labour-program
Workers' Empowerment Program (WEP)	Improving labour conditions	Awaj foundation	http://awajfoundation.org/project/workers-empowerment-program/
HER Project	Health, financial inclusion		https://herproject.org/
Improving Working Conditions in the RMG Sector Programme	Safety in factory	ILO, GoB	https://www.itcilo.org/projects/ilo-programme-improving-working-conditions-rmg https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects/safer-garment-industry-in-bangladesh/WCMS_226530/lang--en/index.htm
Centre of Excellence for the RMG sector	Training and support services	ILO, Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and Hennes & Mauritz AB (H&M)	https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_308882/lang--en/index.htm
Improving Fire and General Building Safety in Bangladesh	Fire and building safety	United States Department of Labour, ILO	https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_341914/lang--en/index.htm
US DOL Safer Factories	Reinstatement of GSP benefits	United States Department of Labour, European Union (EU)-Bangladesh-International Labour Organization (ILO) Sustainability Compact	https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/trade/preference-programs/bangladesh-gsp

Programme or Project	Focus	Run by	Sources
		for continuous improvements in labour rights and factory safety in the ready-made garment and knitwear industry in Bangladesh (Compact)	
Promotion of Social and Environmental Standards in the Industry (PSES)	Sustainable economic growth	Ministry of Commerce, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, GIZ	https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/14900.html
Sustainable and Responsible Actions for Making Industries Care (SRAMIC)	Inclusive and sustainable economic growth	Safety and rights	https://safetyandrights.org/sramic/
Improving Working Conditions in the Ready-Made Garment Sector– RMGP - Phase 2			https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_735980.pdf https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-dhaka/documents/publication/wcms_735614.pdf
Improving the Health and Safety of Workers in Bangladesh through the Strengthening of Labour Authorities			
Industrial Police and Bangladesh Ready Made Garment Sector Community Engagement			
Skills for Employment Investment Program (SEIP)	Skill development	ADB, Bangladesh government, SDC	https://seip-fd.gov.bd/
Sudokkho	Skill development	SwissContact, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC Department for International Development (DFID)	https://sudokkho.com.bd/
Building Skills for Unemployed and	Fundamental labour rights	Swiss Agency for Development and	https://www.swisscontact.org/en/projects/

Programme or Project	Focus	Run by	Sources
Underemployed Labour (B-SkillFUL)		Cooperation SDC, SwissContact	b-skillful#:~:text=Building%20Skills%20for%20Unemployed%20and%20Underemployed%20Labour%20(B%2DSkillFUL),safeguarding%20their%20fundamental%20labour%20rights.
Promoting Workers' Rights and Labour Relations in Export Oriented Industries in Bangladesh (FRLR)	Promotion of labour rights	ILO, The Royal Norwegian Government	https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_240033/lang--en/index.htm
Bangladesh Skills for Employment and Productivity (B-SEP)	Nationally recognized skills	Government of Canada, ILO, Government of Bangladesh (GoB)	https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_243174/lang--en/index.htm#:~:text=The%20Bangladesh%20Skills%20for%20Employment,with%20support%20from%20the%20GoB.
Improving Working Conditions in the Ready-Made Garment Sector in Bangladesh (RMGP Programme)	Working conditions and safety	ILO	https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects/safer-garment-industry-in-bangladesh/lang--en/index.htm
Gender Equality and Returns (GEAR)	Capacity building on soft skills and technical skills	IFC, ILO	https://betterwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/GEAR-Brochure_Sept_2021.pdf https://betterwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/GEAR-Bangladesh-Brochure.pdf
Global Solutions for Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative (GSWEE)	Trainings on basic business skills	World Federation of Direct Selling Associations, Direct Selling Associations and IIB in various APEC member economies. Governments, women's	https://www.usaid.gov/kenya/documents/womens-economic-empowerment-initiative

Programme or Project	Focus	Run by	Sources
		organizations, academia and other stakeholders are working closely with WFDSA, APEC economies and business	
Empowering marginalised women garment workers and women financial services agents in Bangladesh	Financial literacy and services.	Care	https://www.carebangladesh.org/care_current_project.php
United for translating rights into action now (OIKKO)	Implementation of labour rights	Care	https://www.care.org/our-work/education-and-work/dignified-work/oikko/
Women in factories initiative (WIFI)			
Global Women Economic Empowerment Initiative (GWEEI) Phase II	Capacity building workshops	WFDSA, Asia-Pacific Economic Coperation	http://mddb.apec.org/documents/2010/SMEWG/SMEWG31/10_smewg31_019.pdf
Improving Maternal and Infant Health in Bangladesh (IMIHB)	Maternal and child health	Care, Australia Aid, IUB	https://www.careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/Improving-Maternal-and-Infant-Health-in-Bangladesh-.pdf
Health Access and Linkage Opportunities for Workers (HALOW)	Workers' health	Care, GSK, M&S, Sheva Nari O Shishu Kallyan Kendro	https://halowplus.com/
Bangladesh Skills for Employment and Productivity (B-SEP)	Nationally recognized skills	ILO, Government of Canada	https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_243174/lang--en/index.htm
Nirapon	Workplace Safety	Elevate, Brac. Amader Kotha	https://www.nirapon.org/
NTPA	Prevent tragedies and fire safety	Ministry of Labour and Employment	https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Informationresources/WCMS_221543/lang--en/index.htm
Amplify Workers' Voice	Trainings on leadership development and negotiation process	BCWS, Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation (BGIWF)	https://www.bcwsbd.org/page/amplify-workers-voice/
Know Your Rights Program	Educating workers' rights	Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation (BGIWF), BCWS	https://www.bcwsbd.org/page/know-your-rights-program/

Programme or Project	Focus	Run by	Sources
Academy of Work	Education program	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Bangladesh, Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS), BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD)	https://bigd.bracu.ac.bd/academics/academy-of-work-aow/
Improving the capacity of the workers to ensure decent work in the RMG for local market in Bangladesh	Occupational health and safety	Bangladesh labour foundation	https://www.blfbd.com/improving-the-capacity-of-the-workers-to-ensure-decent-work-in-rmg/
UP	Express agency over own lives	Beyond Aid	https://united-purpose.org/bangladesh
Improving Industrial relations and workplace cooperation through capacity building and social dialogue	Improve wages	Mondiaal FNV	http://awajfoundation.org/project/improving-industrial-relations-and-workplace-cooperation-through-capacity-building-and-social-dialogue/
ALDI Factory Advancement Project	Human rights	https://cr.aldisouthgroup.com/en/responsibility/simply-responsible/memberships-partnerships	https://cr.aldisouthgroup.com/en/responsibility/our-work-action/textiles/aldi-factory-advancement-project
Sustainable and Responsible Actions for Making Industries Care (SRAMIC)	Inclusive and sustainable growth	ActionAid Bangladesh	http://awajfoundation.org/project/sramic/
Strengthening industrial relations through leadership	Training on the Bangladesh Labour Law, trade unionism and industrial relations	Awaj Foundation	http://awajfoundation.org/project/strengthening-industrial-relations-through-leadership/
Pre-Counselling Claims and Completion of Claims-Forms under the Rana Plaza Claims' Administration (RPC)	Claimants of rights	Blast	https://www.blast.org.bd/whatwedo/544
Worker Empowerment and Advocacy in the RMG Sector (WEARS)	Workers' rights and safety	Blast	https://www.blast.org.bd/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=588
Personal Advancement & Career Enhancement	Improve labour standards and benefit workers	Gap Inc.	https://www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/-/project/1100001648
Shobola: Empowerment for Better Business	Empower women working	CSR Centre and DBL Group	https://www.amfori.org/sites/default/files/Women%20empowe

Programme or Project	Focus	Run by	Sources
			rment%20project%20Bangladesh_amfori.pdf
Gonoshasthaya Vocational & Technical Training	Dress Making and Tailoring	Gonoshasthaya	https://gonoshasthayakendra.com/
Support to the workers & Trade Unions in Chittagong area through a 'Labour Rights & Resource Center	Labour-related grievance	National Coordination Committee for Workers Education (NCCWE), Industrial Bangladesh Council (IBC)	https://wrcbd.org/
SDIR Promoting Social Dialogue and Harmonious Industrial Relations	Management-workers relationship		
Benefits for Business and Workers project (BBW)	Training to midlevel managements in factory	DFID, UK	https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/benefits-for-business-and-workers-programme/about/
Reducing Extreme Poor by Skill Development on Garment	Skill development	Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK), Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA)	https://g2lm-lic.iza.org/projects/ta5/238/ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---safework/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_228220.pdf
Pathways for Promise	Secondary education	Asian University for Women	https://atlasofthefuture.org/project/pathways-for-promise/#:~:text=Bangladesh%20(Chittagong),among%20Bangladeshi%20garment%20factory%20workers.
Improving the capacity of the workers to ensure decent work in the RMG for local market in Bangladesh	Safety, inspection and compliance	ILO collabourated with GIZ and Action Aid Bangladesh	https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_240343/lang--en/index.htm https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-dhaka/documents/publication/wcms_735614.pdf

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Programme or Project	Focus	Run by	Sources
Social Dialogue Programme	Labour problems	ILO	https://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/download/brochure.pdf
Accord on Fire and Building Safety	Safe and healthy industries	global brands & retailers and IndustriALL & UNI Global Union	https://bangladeshaccord.org/
Alliance for Bangladesh worker safety	Safety in factories	National Fire Protection Association, IFC	https://www.bangladeshworkersafety.org/
SDIR Project	Workplace rights and industrial relations	BGMEA, BKMEA, MOLE, DoL, ITC-ILO	https://g2lm-lic.iza.org/projects/ta5/238/ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---safework/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_228220.pdf

2 Maternity Policies

Country	Steps taken
Vietnam	1. Vietnamese labour legislation requires firms to ensure that pregnant women and women raising children aged under one year are able to leave the workplace one hour earlier without any reduction to their wages (Article 155, 2012 Labour Code). 2. A worker can take up to 20 days off per year to take care of their sick children aged under three years (Article 27, 2014 Social Insurance Law). 3. workers are required to work overtime and shifts, except pregnant women and women with children under 12 months.
Cambodia	1. The government has supported 330,722 pregnant garment workers with more than 32 million in aid since 2018, and this year alone 42,608 have benefited from it 2. The government has been supporting with incentives of $300, $200 and $100 to workers who give birth to triplets, twins and one baby respectively. 3. The distribution of bonus starts before delivery, and workers get four times of their bonus before giving birth, and 10 times after giving birth to improve the child's health https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501172879/32mn-in-aid-spent-on-330722-pregnant-garment-workers-since-2018/
Indonesia	1. Wages obtained during maternity leave from basic wages plus fixed allowances 2. CHILDBIRTH COSTS OF AN EMPLOYEE BORNE BY THE COMPANY - This responsibility is fulfilled by an employer by registering its workers as members of Badan Pelaksana Jaminan Sosial (BPJS) kesehatan and paying its premiums. This matter is further regulated in Presidential Regulation Number 82 of 2018 on Health Security. In this regulation, it is regulated that membership of Health Security is mandatory and covers all Indonesian Citizens including workers.
Malaysia	1. The Employment Act Amendment recently passed in the Dewan Rakyat is commendable for finally being aligned with international best practices in terms of the postnatal care. The seven-day paternity leave is also a milestone achievement for nurturing a norm of men sharing greater family caregiving responsibility. 2. Every women worker, irrespective of work and salary, shall be entitled to the leave extension. 3. An additional US$100 is provided as an incentive to raise awareness about the importance of postnatal care.
Philippine	1. Maternity leave shall be granted to women workers in every instance of pregnancy, miscarriage or emergency termination of pregnancy, regardless of frequency: Provided, that for cases of miscarriage or emergency termination of pregnancy, sixty (60) days maternity leave with full pay shall be granted

2. qualifies as a solo parent under Republic Act No. 8972, or the 'Solo Parents' Welfare Act,' the employee shall be paid an additional maternity benefit of fifteen (15) days. An additional maternity leave of thirty (30) days, without pay, can be availed of, at the option of the women worker: Provided, further, That, the head of the agency shall be given due notice, in writing, at least forty-five (45) days before the end of her maternity leave: Provided, finally, that no prior notice shall be necessary in the event of a medical emergency but subsequent notice shall be given to the head of the agency.

3. Maternity leave of sixty (60) days, with full pay, shall be granted for miscarriage or emergency termination of pregnancy

3 Regression Tables [Former Workers]

Voluntarily Left garments	Probit regressions						Delta-method (Margins)					
	Coeff	St. Err	z	P>z	[95% conf. interval]		dy/dx	St. Err	z	P>z	[95% conf. interval]	
Change in HH and Financial Conditions												
Household Expenditure	0.007	0.028	0.24	0.807	-0.048	0.062	**0.09%**	0.004	0.24	0.807	-0.006	0.008
Difference in Monthly Saving	-0.063	0.037	-1.69	0.091	-0.137	0.01	**-0.80%**	0.005	-1.7	0.089	-0.017	0.001
Household Income	0.08	0.027	2.93	0.003	0.026	0.133	**1.01%**	0.003	2.98	0.003	0.003	0.017
Time Spent doing HH work	0.1	0.076	1.32	0.187	-0.048	0.249	**1.27%**	0.01	1.33	0.184	-0.006	0.031
Time Spent during Leisure	-0.144	0.125	-1.15	0.249	-0.388	0.101	**-1.83%**	0.016	-1.16	0.247	-0.049	0.013
# Women in the household	-0.207	0.213	-0.97	0.331	-0.626	0.211	**-2.63%**	0.027	-0.98	0.328	-0.079	0.026
Automation												
Automation Training	0.435	0.457	0.95	0.34	-0.459	1.33	**5.53%**	0.058	0.95	0.34	-0.058	0.169
Negative Attitude	0.053	0.075	0.71	0.478	-0.094	0.2	**0.68%**	0.01	0.71	0.48	-0.012	0.026
Influencing Factors												
Family Condition	1.947	0.439	4.44	0	1.087	2.807	**24.72%**	0.051	4.87	0	0.148	0.347
Work Condition	1.257	0.462	2.72	0.007	0.35	2.163	**15.96%**	0.057	2.82	0.005	0.049	0.271
Job Insecurity Variables												
Financial	-0.115	0.302	-0.38	0.702	-0.706	0.476	**-1.46%**	0.038	-0.38	0.702	-0.09	0.06
Psychological	0.8	0.344	2.33	0.02	0.126	1.474	**10.16%**	0.044	2.33	0.02	0.016	0.187
Powerlessness	-0.479	0.307	-1.56	0.119	-1.081	0.123	**-6.08%**	0.039	-1.56	0.118	-0.137	0.015
Controls												
Age	0.036	0.021	1.72	0.086	-0.005	0.077	**0.46%**	0.003	1.73	0.084	-0.001	0.01

Education Level	0.03	0.134	0.23	0.821	-0.232	0.293	0.38%	0.017	0.23	0.821	-0.029	0.037
Education Level of Father	0.091	0.178	0.51	0.607	-0.257	0.439	1.16%	0.023	0.51	0.607	-0.033	0.056
Education Level of Mother	-0.137	0.215	-0.64	0.523	-0.559	0.284	-1.74%	0.027	-0.64	0.522	-0.071	0.036
Marital Status	-0.169	0.374	-0.45	0.652	-0.902	0.565	-2.14%	0.047	-0.45	0.652	-0.114	0.072
Geography Dummy												
Dhaka	-0.004	0.406	-0.01	0.992	-0.799	0.791	-0.05%	0.052	-0.01	0.992	-0.101	0.1
Gazipur	-0.363	0.374	-0.97	0.332	-1.096	0.371	-4.61%	0.048	-0.97	0.332	-0.139	0.047
Constant	-2.991	1.151	-2.6	0.009	-5.248	-0.734						

4 Regression Tables [Current Workers]

				Short Run								
	Probit regressions						**Delta-method (Margins)**					
	Coeff	St. Err	z	P>z	[95% conf. interval]		dy/dx	St. Err	z	P>z	[95% conf. interval]	
HH Condition												
HH monthly income	0.000	0.000	2.230	0.026	0.000	0.000	**0.00%**	0.000	2.210	0.027	0.000	0.000
# of women taking care of household	-0.006	0.229	-0.020	0.980	-0.455	0.444	**-0.10%**	0.024	-0.020	0.980	-0.047	0.046
# of children	-0.102	0.167	-0.610	0.542	-0.429	0.226	**-1.10%**	0.017	-0.610	0.543	-0.044	0.023
Automation												
Positive Attitude	0.167	0.131	1.270	0.203	-0.090	0.423	**1.70%**	0.014	1.280	0.202	-0.009	0.044
Work Conditions												
Harassment	0.356	0.126	2.830	0.005	0.109	0.602	**3.70%**	0.013	2.820	0.005	0.011	0.062
Work Place Safety	-0.481	0.183	-2.630	0.009	-0.839	-0.122	**-5.00%**	0.019	-2.660	0.008	-0.086	-0.013
Low Salary	0.288	0.100	2.870	0.004	0.091	0.484	**3.00%**	0.011	2.830	0.005	0.009	0.050
Fear of Miscarriage	-0.290	0.115	-2.520	0.012	-0.515	-0.064	**-3.00%**	0.012	-2.520	0.012	-0.053	-0.007
Need to Work during Weekends	0.309	0.124	2.490	0.013	0.066	0.552	**3.20%**	0.013	2.480	0.013	0.007	0.057
Good Health Conditions	0.737	0.287	2.570	0.010	0.176	1.299	**7.60%**	0.029	2.580	0.010	0.018	0.134
Social Obstacles	1.312	0.360	3.650	0.000	0.607	2.017	**13.60%**	0.037	3.710	0.000	0.064	0.207
Controls												
Age	-0.001	0.019	-0.070	0.946	-0.039	0.036	**0.00%**	0.002	-0.070	0.946	-0.004	0.004

Marital Status	-0.156	0.293	0.530	-0.595	-0.731	0.419	**1.60%**	0.030	0.530	-0.596	-0.076	0.043
_cons	-7.063	1.575	-4.490	0.000	-10.150	-3.977						

Long Run

Automation

Automation Training	-0.470	0.282	-1.670	0.095	-1.023	0.082	**-13.9%**	0.083	-1.680	0.092	-0.302	0.023
# of Automation Training	0.100	0.090	1.110	0.267	-0.077	0.277	**3.00%**	0.027	1.110	0.265	-0.023	0.082
Negative Attitude	0.137	0.043	3.150	0.002	0.052	0.222	**4.10%**	0.012	3.260	0.001	0.016	0.065

Work Conditions

Misbehaviour of Higher Management	0.170	0.079	2.160	0.031	0.016	0.324	**5.00%**	0.023	2.200	0.028	0.005	0.095
Social Obstacles	0.521	0.289	1.800	0.071	-0.045	1.087	**15.4%**	0.084	1.830	0.068	-0.011	0.320
Workplace Safety	-0.244	0.116	-2.100	0.036	-0.471	-0.016	**-7.20%**	0.034	-2.130	0.033	-0.139	-0.006
Good Health Conditions	0.252	0.173	1.460	0.145	-0.087	0.590	**7.50%**	0.051	1.460	0.144	-0.025	0.175

Personality

Neuroticism	0.038	0.022	1.750	0.080	-0.005	0.081	**1.10%**	0.006	1.770	0.077	-0.001	0.024
Openness	0.067	0.033	1.990	0.046	0.001	0.132	**2.00%**	0.010	2.020	0.043	0.001	0.039
_cons	-4.511	1.287	-3.510	0.000	-7.034	-1.989						