

Exploring Sexual Harassment of Victimized Women Workers in Ready-Made Garment of Bangladesh

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Abstract

The study aims to explore sexual harassment against women garment workers in the RMG sectors of Bangladesh. Women garment workers have faced sexual harassment in different ways in their working atmosphere. Sexual harassment as a study problem reveals the internal phenomenon that happens in the RMG sectors against women workers by their co-workers and administrative part. Exploring the holistic understanding of victimized women garment workers, the study has been designed and conducted by choosing fifteen respondents who have suffered from sexual harassment in many forms. The interviewed respondents have been selected through snowball sampling and techniques. An interview checklist has been used to collect data from the respondents and to make a clear realization of the study area. Selected respondents have been interviewed from more than twenty RMG garment factories maintaining ethical considerations and validity. The findings of the study reveal that interviewed women workers have been harassed in many faces by their co-workers in the same position, linemen or supervisors, and a few persons working in the administration part. The study has found that oral, physical, and mental harassment have been committed against women workers in different natures and approaches. The victimized women have faced it and complained to the management for justice and well-being. The study also found that in most cases, the victimized women didn't get proper support and justice-based intervention from the management. The victimized women have been tortured and re-victimized when they have noticed the news of victimization to the administration and police station. The study connects the views of the respondents and mentions that by introducing a protective policy for all women workers, sexual harassment against women workers has been minimized, and created a secure environment for continuing their jobs and movement.

Keywords

Ready-Made Garment, Sexual Harassment, Victimized Women Workers, Sexual Gangship, Post-Harassment Supports, Cause-Ground-Effect

1. Background and Logical Framework

Women garment workers work in the RMG sectors to enhance their economic stability through economic inclusion and engagement. The previous working status of the marginalized women of Bangladesh was the home-based and non-paid approach. By changing of time, the tendency of women has been changed and modified regarding work and income-generating involvement which is called “income beyond family” (Agarwal, Chandra, Kohli, & Gupto, 2022) and is known as a revolution for economic empowerment of women. A movement by marginalized women has been positioned within the society to be involved in the income source for promoting their life and social status. Women garment workers as a marginalized group have faced different obstacles in their family life due to financial scarcity and not having any occupational status. Chowdhury and Ullah (2010) conducted a study and mentioned that women with different positions of under-privileged status have changed their mentality regarding work and are involved in the formal source of income and facilities.

This proposition has modified their thinking about life and status and way of thinking to earn money with occupational status and dignity. By inspiring this phenomenon, women segments are being motivated to join the formal job sectors with salary and dignity. A dynamic has been established in the RMG sectors that most of the employees are women. A study was carried out by Ahmed (2023) to assess the number of women garment workers. The study found that most of the employees are women and its statistical figure is 53.65%.

By contrast, women garment workers have to face different challenges in their working environment; harassment is one of them. Women garment workers have been victimized sexually in many ways in their working atmosphere. The situation faced by women within the family and society is reflected in the RMG sectors. The co-workers (male) of women have harassed them in various ways and techniques. Women garment workers are being harassed sexually as such orally, physically, and mentally, by work process, and being considered “weaker subjects” of society by their co-workers. Few studies have been led by researchers to know the condition of women garment workers who work in different RMG garment industries and factories. ActionAid (2019) has conducted a study to explain the sexual harassment of women garment workers in Bangladesh. The study claimed that women garment workers have been considered a “weak agent” by their co-workers and the management. A perception discussed by the male workers in the RMG sectors is that women are not more capable of fighting against injustice called “sexual harassment” committed by their co-workers and the process by which

justice comes and resolves the matters.

Women workers have to struggle against the perpetrators and harassers to earn justice and dignity. Furthermore, women workers are not united in their workplace to fight collectively against the man with bad intentions and purposes. In most cases, women workers have tolerated the sexual harassment without taking any actions or steps as mentioned by [Ahmed and Hossain \(2020\)](#). A study was conducted by [Hossain, Ahmed, and Akter \(2021\)](#) to explore the challenges faced by women workers in the RMG sectors and also found the behind causes and natures. In this way, an understanding has been developed about the conditions of women garment workers and faced challenges in the workplace in many aspects. Another study disclosed ([Begum, Ali, Hossain, & Shahid, 2010](#)) that sexual harassment has influenced women workers to leave their jobs and to be domestic workers. As a result, the dependency of women on male income has increased and domestic violence against women by their male partners in family life and community settings has grown and turned into a “new shape”. An investigation has been moderated by [The Daily Star \(2022\)](#) to expose the problems faced by women workers in their workplace and revealed that women workers have been harassed sexually by their co-workers or relevant persons. Most of the studies were quantitative investigations and studies to understand the scenario faced by the women workers. By contrast, there are many causes behind the sexual harassment faced by women workers in their workplace, especially RMG sectors. The in-depth investigations were not found to conceptualize an idea and subjects faced by women workers in the RMG sectors. Motivated by this phenomenon, the present study has been premeditated and prepared to interview sexually harassed women workers from many faces and dimensions.

The following background is motivated to design the research plan and complete all necessary works: 1) in-depth investigations to understand the sexual harassment faced by women workers in the RMG sectors, 2) comprehend the causes and factors related to the sexual harassment and abusive behavior interviewing victimized (respondents) considering all aspects and grounds, and 3) present an inclusive concept and findings for undertaking policies and programs to protect the women workers from all types of sexual harassment and dignity-based offensive behavior.

2. Concepts Used in the Study

The conducted study included some concepts to explore the insights of the study. The used concepts bear different meanings and thoughts. Under the conducted study, the used concepts have been applied to explain the meaning of the study as per the research design. The study includes sexual harassment, victimized women workers, and the ready-made garment sector. Sexual *harassment* is a term that refers to unfair behavioral actions by men against women that violate the dignity, privacy, and respect of women's community and by imposing legal and social actions it is prevented or controlled. Sexual harassment ([Aji, Adamu, Kefas, & Godwin, 2024](#)) is defined as an unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature that may be

committed by any person to others violating dignity, personal choice, consent, social and professional position. The study has defined “sexual harassment” as an unexpected behavior against women workers created by a male worker (s) without consent and imposing “male power”. It can be committed in many ways like physical, verbal, and non-verbal. The study has included these means of offensive behavior as “sexual harassment” which has been viewed in the ready-made garment sectors. Who called “victimized women workers” under the study who have faced sexual harassment in their workplace in physical, verbal, and non-verbal ways? The study has selected those women as respondents who have suffered sexual harassment and exploitation. These women workers were chosen by obtaining her consent and agreeing to share committed harassment against them. At the same time, ready-made garment indicates those manufacturing factories where cloths/garments have been made by the workers for export mainly and to sell as per demand. These factories have been considered “research areas” to interview the victimized women workers.

3. Research Questions

The following research questions have guided the study:

- 1) What factors are influenced and alive in the garment sectors to make the sexual harassment?
- 2) How the women workers victimized sexually in the workplace?
- 3) What types of systems for safety for victimized women workers are activated in the workplace?
- 4) What interventions have been taken by the relevant garment authority to resolve the sexual harassment and to save the victimized women?

4. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study is to explore the sexual harassment of victimized women in the ready-made garment of Bangladesh. The specific objectives are to:

- assess the nature of sexual harassment faced by women workers in garment sectors;
- identify the cause(s) of committed sexual harassment against women workers;
- explain the strength of perpetrators for committing sexual harassment against women workers;
- understand the working environment, victimhood-friendly atmosphere, and safety for women workers;
- explore the factors that make obstacles to taking action against sexual harassment; and
- recommend ideas to prevent sexual harassment against women workers in the ready-made garment sectors.

5. Used Method and Approach

The study has been conducted to explore the sexual harassment of victimized

women in readymade garment sectors. It is a qualitative study in nature. Considering its objectives, the required respondents have been determined and interviewed following a *pre-tested interview checklist (PIC)*. *Case Study*, described by Rebolj (2013) as a type of qualitative study, will be used to realize the research problem profoundly understanding all intrinsic figures and factors (IFF). The conducted study in nature carries this characteristic and the interviewed respondents were scattered by being victimized and suffered a lot in social and personal life with family settings. Applying the method of *Case Study*, the selected respondents were interviewed under a structural frame. Under the structural frame, the following issue(s) have been ensured before taking the interview: the eagerness of respondents to participate in the interview was ensured, confirmed that collected data would be used for research purposes, and the identity of the respondents was not be disclosed to others. By building a rapport with respondents, the needed interviews were conducted, and recorded the essential data as per the scope of the study. *Face-to-Face Interview (F to FI)* technique was used to collect the data from the respondents by spending enough time considering the nature of the study.

The study has focused on victimized readymade garment workers to identify the events of sexual harassment and understand the process by which the victimized women have resolved their sufferings. Seeing the Bangladesh context, most of the victimized women didn't report their pains and traumas to the police stations and garment authorities due to different reasons and grounds. Sexual harassment against garment women (SHGW) is available but the victimized women didn't disclose the events and stories. Using *snowball sampling*, the required sample has been identified for interview and the essential data have been recorded by asking various questions. By this approach, one (respondent) was identified by another and interviewed very carefully showing the respondent's dignity. The number of twenty (20) victimized women garment workers from fifteen (15) garment industries were interviewed maintaining confidentiality. The collected data have been classified into different categories and nature to display and analyze. The verbatim quotation, conceptual frame, interpretation of respondent's response, framing content, and analytical figure for data display were used to analyze the collected data and replies. Creswell (2009) interpreted the techniques to analyze the qualitative data and replies collected from the selected respondents. The study has used the noted techniques of data analysis as per the characteristics of collected data. Getting a holistic idea about the study topic, the techniques presented by Creswell (2009) were used to make a reliable and independent understanding.

The study is profound to realize the *cause-ground-effect (CGE)* of committed sexual harassment against women garment workers. The personal privacy of the respondents, confidentiality of data, using pseudonyms instead of the respondent's name, and trusted correspondence have been maintained to achieve the study goal. The validity and reliability of the data have been ensured by selecting the respondents based on the nature of the study. Those were selected as a

respondent who have been victimized by sexual harassment and suffered. The below process was followed under the research design of the conducted study.

6. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

6.1. Literature Review

Ready-made Garment (RMG) is a hub to explore the products globally made by Bangladesh for economic purposes and to make a brand value. The marginalized people have worked there as an income-generating source and way of livelihood approach. Both male and female workers are working in the RMG sectors as per their skill and interest in work. The workers of RMG sectors come from all corners of Bangladesh. The present study has been designed to explore the workplace victimizations faced by female workers in the working environment. Some relevant studies and writings have been reviewed to understand the previous scenario with different research-based inquiries. *A study was conducted by Chowdhury and Ullah (2010)* to determine the socioeconomic situation of female garment workers in Bangladesh. The study has focused on the socioeconomic conditions of female workers in the Chittagong Metropolitan area. The study was quantitative in nature and the Survey Method was followed to achieve objectives. The study selected 151 female workers as respondents for face-to-face interviews following a tested questionnaire including open-ended and close-ended queries. Primary techniques and approaches of quantitative study like frequency distribution and percentage of frequency have been used to present the collected data for realizing the research questions.

The noted study reported that most of the workers earn a low range of income, live the below standard of life, suffer different occupation hazards, nutritional deprivation, and face the scarcity of food, and lead an unsecured life. The reviewed study noted some major findings about female workers as 42.38% were from the 21 - 30 years age group, 80.00% were married, and 32.45% had above five (5) members in the family. The study collected the educational picture of the respondents and found that 2.65% were illiterate, 24.50% knew how to sign only, and most of the respondents (38.41%) had crossed the class I-V. It indicates that most of the female workers are introduced to education and know how to write and read. The study has focused on the working freshness and hours of female workers. It was noticed that 93.00% of women worked 8 - 9 hours every day.

The reviewed study also highlighted the working environments of female workers following the picture of 72.00% considering the environment as *good*, 32.00% evaluated as *neutral*, 17.00% mentioned as *bad*, and 26.00% claimed as *very good*. On the other hand, the study invented the types of harassment that have been faced by female workers in the garment of Chittagong Metropolitan City. It noted that 75.00% of workers faced no type of harassment, 13.00% faced physical harassment, 38.00% were tortured mentally, and 13.00% claimed sexual violence with forceful physical relations by powerful persons in the workplace.

A study was conducted by *Milon, Al-Amin and Saha (2022)* to identify workplace

bullying and harassment against women employees in the banking industries of Bangladesh. It was a co-relational research design that tested hypotheses and assumptions to assess the causes and grounds of workplace harassment, bullying, and discrimination faced by female employees in the banking sector. By applying a survey questionnaire, the required data have been collected from the relevant respondents. Most of the respondents were under the age of 20 - 30 ages (46.25%), and 52.08% of respondents were married. The culture of harassment in workplaces like the banking sector is not a new aspect. The study applied the steps of co-relational investigation to assess workplace harassment and bullying. Different scales and assumptions have been used to understand the level of harassment and discrimination against female employees in the banking industry. The researchers have concluded the study by mentioning some ideas for future investigators. Based on the findings, some pertinent suggestions like scoping managerial supervision, and ensuring a safe and secure working environment have been practiced by the bank authorities and management to certify an atmosphere where all employees like females are safe and dignified.

Another study has been conducted by *ActionAid (2019)* to explore workplace victimization against women in the ready-made garment of Bangladesh. The principal objective of the conducted study was to assess the types of victimization that have been committed against women in RMG industries. By conducting the study, 200 female garment workers were interviewed using an interview schedule and guidelines. The interviewed respondents were chosen from various garment industries based on age, experience of sexual harassment, witness of victimization, and realization about the workplace environment. The study has conducted some qualitative sessions to understand the real picture regarding women's victimization. The major findings of the study are that 80.00% of the female workers who work in different garments have faced sexual harassment directly or seen evidence of sexual victimization committed by a powerful person(s) in the workplace. The study noted that most of the respondents (81.5%) were aware of the harassment but didn't get brave enough to make complaints. The study has gathered the harassed women workers by a question to know what types of post-impact have been suffered. The respondents claimed that 90.0% faced severe health injuries and were demotivated to work, 43.0% have been depressed and isolated, and 78.0% have changed the workplace for further sexual harassment. The study has searched the in-depth context of sexual harassment committed in the RMG industries in many ways by many people as follows:

<i>Accused Person by Women Workers</i>	<i>Working Environment and Relating Factors</i>	<i>Preventing Measures and Actions</i>
Male Worker(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By nature of work, women need support from male partners in some cases. In this way, male partners with bad intentions have 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The women who have been harassed sexually by male partners didn't inform the authorities. They think that

	<p>provoked sexual relationships, bodily bad touch, saying various unpleasant and pre-sexual talking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working at night, women have faced terrible experiences and felt unsaved. • Male partners with distorted natures offered to see off the women workers in the house. Male partners with a devil mentality touch the women's hand, kiss forcefully, and be close to riding buses and rickshaws. 	<p>to save the job, need to hide the incident.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few women workers have complained but got bitter feedback from authorities. The respondents who joined in the qualitative session assumed that <i>there was a connection between the accused and the garment authority</i>.
Line Manager(s)/ Supervisor(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few Line managers/Supervisors have proposed sexual offers to women workers due to various benefits like extra money, part-time benefits, avoiding simple mistakes at work, and giving over-benefits for working leave and opportunities. • Sometimes, women workers are informed the issues to the CBA leaders, but an ill-legal connection has been found between CBA leaders and Line Managers. • The study noticed that most of the time, line managers/supervisors are relatives or very closely connected with owners/investors. Those are the most dominant factors in not judging the committed harassment and other workplace violence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The conducted study found that victimized women were being demotivated to inform complaints to the higher authority due to fear of losing their jobs. • The study revealed that victimized women and non-victimized women were being motivated to protest legally, but some have been confused and demotivated to go ahead to fight in favor of harassed women. • Considering the non-supported factors, some have switched jobs, some tolerated the situation to earn money for living.

A study has been conducted by *Sohani, Chaklader, Faruquee, Bashar, Yasmin, and Yasmin (2011)* to determine the pattern of workplace violence against women garment workers in selected areas of Dhaka city. The conducted study was a cross-sectional investigation that collected data from 180 respondents who were selected purposively. The study noted that 66.7% of women workers have faced physical assault, 68.9% were harassed psychologically, 7.2% were victimized sexually, 84.4% faced economic disadvantages, and 58.3% and 100.00% experienced unfair discrimination and verbal abuse respectively. At the same time, the study focused on the nature of perpetrators who victimized female workers in the garment industry. The nature of perpetrators as male workers (16.1%), female workers (7.8%), supervisors (32.2%), and helpers (43.8%) were identified. On the other hand, the conducted study has mentioned the actions taken by the victimized women workers against violence. The following actions have been taken: filed complaints

against perpetrators (6.1%), authority taking action against perpetrators (6.1%), verbal and written warning issued by the authority (6.1%), and 2.2% have been suspended from the job. The study mentioned various subjects as suggestions to control workplace violence against women. Every harassment and violence must be reported to the law enforcement agency for a legal solution. No scope is there to avoid these criminal events. Awareness for prevention should be raised by women-driven institutions and all agencies might be welcomed to protest the workplace violence committed to the female workers in the garment sectors.

Another study has been conducted by *Hossain, Ahmed, and Akter (2021)* to explore the rights and working status of women in the RMG industries of Bangladesh. The study has been done through a mixed approach. Multiple respondents have been interviewed to collect the required data and facts. The study has paid attention to the comprehensiveness of women workers in the RMG sectors. The harassment of different natures faced by women workers has been voiced in the study by showing the statistical data and verbal quotations raised by the respondents. The conducted study has unearthed workplace harassment and abuse. Among respondents, 93% claimed verbal harassment in different forms and ways. Regarding verbal harassment, 95.9% faced slang language, and 83.5% have been rebuked by the authority or senior employee, particularly male persons. The study noted that 86.7% of respondents had to tolerate psychological harassment in the workplace in various means. Significant results have been explored by the study that 32.6% and 27.2% of respondents have been facing sexual and physical harassment at the duration of conducting the study.

The workplace conditions for women workers are one of the core reasons to be victimized. A discriminated environment based on gender sensitization is absent in most industries. The male attitude works in the working environment against women workers. *Centre for Policy Dialogue-CPD (2004)* published a paper to open the nature of harassment and lay out a design to solve it through multi-level stakeholders. Most women workers are facing sexual harassment by male co-workers and personnel at the management level. The study exposed that women faced pressurized sexual relationships, proposed love, and affection for sexual intimacy, touched bodily with ugly meanings, and talked about body shaming by indicating different ways. In addition, the *National Girl Child Advocacy Forum, Plan Bangladesh, and Girls Advocacy Alliance (2022)* jointly conducted a study to discuss sexual harassment in the workplace of Bangladesh. It found that 22.96% of women faced sexual harassment once, 41.48% were harassed twice or three times, 25.93% mentioned four to five times, and 8.89% shared being sexually victimized six to ten times.

6.2. Theoretical Framework

The study has been conducted to explore the nature of victimization faced by women workers in ready-made garment industries including its aftermath prosecution. The study has focused on the approach(s) that have been applied by

different corners to reconcile the matter of committed victimizations. The conducted study tried to understand the theoretical framework to be victimized in the ready-made garment industries for women workers. By doing the study, the atmosphere reality and factors that influence the victimizations have been understood by collecting response(s) from the respondents. The **Criminal Opportunity Theory (COT)** has been realized by taking the victimization-related experiences and solution approach.

6.3. Criminal Opportunity Theory (COT)

Felson and Clarke (1998) have progressed the Criminal Opportunity Theory (COT) to understand the related issues that make victimization in the workplace or within the community. COT argues that opportunities and vulnerabilities are the root cause of being victimized and harassed. According to the COT, the vulnerability/risk faced by the staff/inhabitants is produced pre-situations which insist the potential criminal to violate the existing rules and manners. In addition, the aftermath impacts of committing victimization irritate the criminal to make noise within the workplace against those classes who are vulnerable as per potential criminal(s). The study has investigated the key points of the criminal opportunity theory to present the inherent cause of being victimized and why the number has increased with multi-complexity. Based on the assumptions of COT (Felson & Clarke, 1998), the following matters have been checked to understand the workplace victimization faced by women workers in the ready-made garment industries:

Existing Situations Covered by Vulnerabilities and Opportunities	Province and Execution of Victimizations
(a) Potential Victim	If the target people are vulnerable to save from forceful injustice and harassment, the opportunity of being victimized by potential offenders is increased.
(b) Considering a non-major matter by authority/community	If the potential victim is considered a non-major party by the authority/community, the offenders have been motivated to commit any type of crime and harassment.

Source: Developed by Researcher.

The study has paid attention to why women workers are being victimized and realized the atmosphere-related factors that motivate the potential offenders to harass the women in different ways for different reasons and grounds.

The study has aimed to explore the sexual harassment of women garment workers in RMG sectors. By reviewing the relevant literature and theoretical frame, the gap has been identified and disclosed. The reviewed literature revealed that women garment workers have been victimized in many ways by male workers and people who work in administrative settings. The reviewed literature mentioned different statistical figures and descriptions that revealed the picture of sexual

harassment against women garment workers. However, the insights phenomenon was not assessed and realized by reviewing the literature. By contrast, the theoretical framework mentions different affairs that make scope of sexual harassment and exploitation. The theory argues that potential offenders in an environment commit crimes and unlawful behavior. The women garment workers in the RMG sectors of Bangladesh have faced the difficulties of sexual harassment. Focusing on the assumptions, the conducted study has been planned to interview the relevant respondents as per their interests and outlooks to prevent the issue of sexual harassment.

7. Findings and Analysis

The study has been designed to explore the factors and consequences of victimized women workers who faced sexual harassment in the ready-made garment industry of Bangladesh. The respondents were interviewed through face-to-face interviews following a checklist and guidelines. The pseudonym like A, B, C.... is used to identify the respondents. Based on the study objectives (SO), the findings are interpreted as follows:

SO-1: assess the nature of sexual harassment faced by women workers in garment sectors

The study has been conducted to assess the sexual harassment that happened in the ready-made garment sectors of Bangladesh. The women garment workers who were interviewed to know the nature of victimizations. According to the respondents, women faced the following sexual harassment: *teasing, body shaming, proposed sexual relations, having sex making a relationship, sexual cheating, touching the body without consent, kissing abruptly, offering money and food for sex, proposing for loitering in anywhere and convinced to do sex, and being forced for sex by male colleagues and management-level staff, and convincing or making threats for sex*. These types of nature have been determined by the study to understand the sexual harassment against women garment workers. The women segment of the garment sector is passing a “vulnerable circumstance” for their job stability. It is a major cause of being victimized sexually. The women workers realized their job security for survival and to ensure livelihood-related demands. By this factor, the women workers are being more victimized sexually by the male working partners (MWP) and management-level staff of the working garment industry.

Respondent “A” mentioned that:

“In a night before going house, a male colleague called me. I went to him to listen why calling me. My male colleague talked about different unnecessary affairs to me. I didn’t understand. By way of talking, he touched my hand. And said, ‘Oh! Very nice hand and face of you.’ I didn’t realize what should be done by me. During a stage of abnormal talking by my male colleague, he trapped my right hand and adored it. For my shouting and crying, he was sensed and abandoned my hand.”

The statement mentioned by respondent “A” clearly understood that women garment workers are facing different sexual harassment in different formats. Sexual harassment against women workers (SHAWW) is sustained in the RGM sectors caused of economic vulnerability and job scarcity of women workers. The women of marginalized communities searched a job through various corners and windows. By managing jobs, the women workers are being harassed and victimized. Furthermore, women are being “next door harassed” after getting jobs by their male partners and staff who are working at the management level. Almost all respondents shared that a trend remains among the perpetrators, “*all circumstances which made for harassment would be managed within the house by convincing victimized women to provide compensation and to ay not repeat it.*” This tendency makes more sexual harassment against women workers. The theoretical clarification notes that potential perpetrators make victims and target to next victim by shaping an environment. The case(s) of sexual harassment that happened in the RMG sectors indicate the mentioned phenomenon and victimhood-friendly atmosphere (VFA). Three dimensions are more considerable for women workers being harassed sexually by their male working partners. The first one: the male working partners and management-level staff consider the women workers as vulnerable workers. The second one: women workers have no capable guardians/defenders to protest the actions that happened against women workers. Furthermore: male partners and the management-level staff keep the concept of compensation for sexual harassment. A situation is very realistic for women workers that due to job continuation. Women workers have to tolerate the incidence and harassment.

SO-2: identify the cause(s) of committed sexual harassment against women workers

The women workers have been harassed in many ways by the male workers and management-level staff. The conducted study has traced the behind cause(s) of committed sexual harassment against women workers. The summary of the respondents’ review regarding causes of sexual harassment indicates the *systematic disruption practiced in the garment industries to operate the workers based on their gender and occupational identity*. With this phenomenon, societal regulations influence the male members in all institutions to violate women and children. Women in garment industries are being victimized by their co-workers in various ways and the co-workers (male) have insisted on violating women workers’ gathered experience from society’s practice. Most of the respondents mentioned that a patriotic outlook against women is activated in the garment sectors and this way, the women workers have been harassed sexually. Respondent ‘F’ noted that:

“A male working partner talked to me as like his wife or girlfriend. I protested many times but he didn’t care about my objections. Due to the need for work, I have to take the advice and direction from the mentioned male partner. Giving advice, he showed different unfair body gestures and unpleasant

words. When I protested, he mentioned that what would be your loss if you had sex with me. From my colleagues of the same gender, I have heard that many of them have faced similar sexual exploitation in different natures and types. I realized what was happening in the community, I showed its reflection in my working station.”

The women workers in the RMG sectors faced different types of sexual harassment and exploitation by their male partners. Sexual harassment against women is committed for different causes within the community settings. One of the major causes is the conventional outlook towards women. Women who are working in the garment sectors face similar situations in different natures and looks. The victimized women have shared various causes of sexual harassment in the garment sectors under the three forms as follows:

Nature of Cause(s)	Interpretation of Causes	Approaches Followed by the Victimized Women
Conventional Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The male working partners use different words and unfair attitudes toward women without any tension or fear. The recorded grievance against male partners has been managed by doing different steps like compensation, apology, managing the person who works in the policy-making or owner, giving threat not to record the complaint, and forcing to leave the job. Most of the perpetrators supposed that marginalized women in any place couldn't protest the incident committed against them. Women are subordinate to male partners-believed by the most male partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In most cases, the victimized women have avoided the incidents saving their jobs. The women as respondents have noted that the <i>garment authority resolves the incidence but doesn't do justice</i>. In this way, the male partners have earned the courage to engage in sexual harassment. The respondents in a major portion claimed that there is an understanding between the perpetrator (male partner) and the higher authority of the garment.
Administrative Frame for Negligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The victimized women complained to the higher authority about the sexual harassment mentioning all events and facts. The perpetrators have maintained unfair relations with some selected higher persons who bear the same characteristics. From the administrative settings, the victimized women threatened to lose their jobs if any steps were taken. A gang of sexual perpetrators works in the garment sector hiding their basic character and identity. The authorities accused the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victimized women have abandoned their complaints due to many reasons like continuation of jobs, and not facing re-victimization. The administrative settings assured the victimized women of getting justice at the primary steps but the incident(s) has been displaced from the mind of administration by passing the time. When the victimized women collectively meet with the

	victimized women for the committed sexual harassment. Most of the respondents have faced victim-blaming.	administration to get justice, the administration makes threats and dishonors in most cases.
Delayed Approach to Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small number of victimized women have filed a case to the police station against perpetrators but the process of execution is slow and steady. • By managing the investigation team, the perpetrators have changed the FIR (first information report) and the ground of the recorded case. • The victimized women moved themselves from the case platform when they saw the questionable actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The victimized women communicated with the police station to move the case against the accused person but the situation did not work in favor of them. • The authorities didn't assist the victimized women to get justice within a short time. • Due to the incorporated attitude of the authorities, the victimized women stopped themselves to deal with the case and tried to lead a victimhood life.

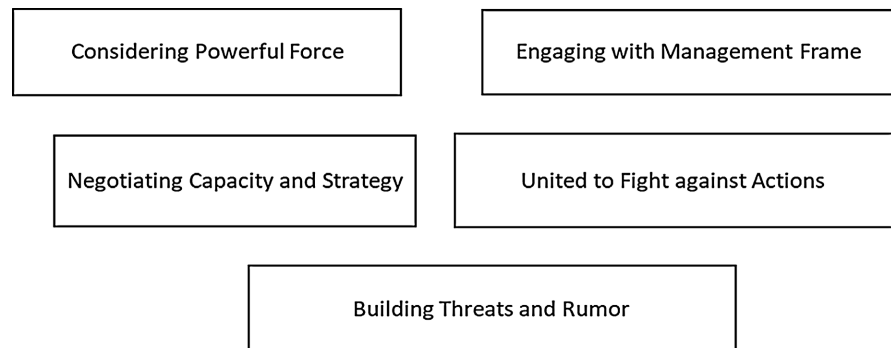
Source: Developed by the researcher.

The causes of sexual harassment in the garment sector have been mentioned by the victimized women with the ground and its logical consequences. The cause of sexual harassment faced by the women within the community. In the garment sector, the women workers have met people with different natures of the same society. Sexual harassment against women in the garment sector presents various causes under the three dimensions mainly and the origin of most causes are made within the society.

SO-3: explain the strength of perpetrators for committing sexual harassment against women workers

The perpetrators of the sexual harassment against women workers have expressed their strength and gangship in many ways. The conducted study has focused on the strength of perpetrators of committing sexual harassment. Within the working environment, the perpetrators make a gang or individual corridor as a trap to harass the women sexually. The male workers and persons engaged in the management level with sexual perversion make different windows called traps to offer women for doing sex by money or forceful sex. The respondents noted that the main strength of the perpetrators is to manage the post-situation of the committed sexual harassment. The male workers who are involved in the sexual harassment form a gang to save themselves from the accusations and complaints. By forming a gang or sex exposure group (SEG), the accused male workers communicate with each other to negotiate the incidents. Respondents "G" and "M" revealed that the perpetrators captured the video or documents of sexual harassment and showed these, the repetition of sex has been performed by the perpetrators. Many traps and strategies have been applied by male workers to harass women workers. Behind this scenario, the accused male workers design various techniques

and ways to save themselves from accusations and grievances. The strength of the perpetrators has been interpreted by the respondents as follows (**Figure 1**):



Source: Developed by Researcher.

Figure 1. Strength of perpetrators for committing sexual harassment.

SO-4: understand the working environment, victimhood-friendly atmosphere, and safety for women workers

The women workers in the RMG sectors have been harassed sexually in many ways and systems. The male workers with a perverted nature have made various traps and circles to propose the women for sex and live together. The interviewed victimized women shared different views and opinions on how to be victimized. On the surface, the working atmosphere is good and friendly for all but the inner condition of the working atmosphere is not safe, particularly for women workers. The respondents have noted that women with physical beauty and “sexy” characteristics have been victimized more and called by their male working partners. Based on the views of the respondents, a trusted relationship has been made by the male partners by providing money for borrow, assistance in going home from the office at night, carrying food and goods many times, talking in favor of a particular woman, and helping to introduce with management for submitting works that have been completed. In these ways, a relationship has been established between a male and a woman worker. A male worker with sexual intentions has created a trap and offered various proposals to acquire the mind of a particular or selected woman. The mentioned objective covers the following dimensions as follows:

Safety measures taken by authorities for women workers

The respondents revealed that the authorities have taken many measures to ensure the safety and security of all workers. But its application is not satisfactory. The person who works at the management level tells the regulations and punishment if anyone violates them. Most of the respondents noted that they have complained to the authorities against the perpetrator(s) but the management takes time to impose the actions and punishment. Reality has been made in the RMG sector regarding gender-based violence, women workers are being harassed sexually in the workplace and the authorities have tolerated it or taken some steps which are not worked. The respondents of “D” and “F” claimed the following

complaints:

“D” mentioned:

“I have been assaulted sexually by a male worker at my workplace. This male worker made a relationship with me by telling different stories and events. I didn’t understand his intentions. He convinced me to go to his mess (residence) at a convenient time. I was convinced to go and be assaulted sexually. I informed the management about this assault and requested to take action. At the duration of submitting the prayer, management told me that necessary actions would be taken. But after two or three days, the perpetrator assaulted me again and charged why I informed the matter to authority. And pressured me not to meet with the management. In this way, my issue has been hidden and untold.”

“F” disclosed:

“In a day at the duration of working hours, I worked and talked to my friend. A male working partner who was introduced to me before and maintained a ‘hi-hello’ relationship. But that day, he touched my body at the duration of talking and he laughed. I protested his attitude and unfair behavior. He asked me why I felt uneasy if he touched my body. I protested his arguments and wrote an application against his deviant behavior. I submitted it to the higher authority for justice, but after some days, the management forgot the matter. I was astonished and thought that if this situation continued in my workplace, it would be very difficult for me to do the job.”

The measures for safety and security for the women workers in the RMG sector don’t announce the full strength of protection. The respondents noted different issues that indicate what is happening in the workplace against women workers. A harassed atmosphere has been created against women workers by some male workers who allow the intention of sexuality. Due to the uncivilized practice and absence of applying rules in the garment sector, the culture of sexual harassment has captured a position against women workers.

SO-5: explore the factors that make obstacles to taking action against sexual harassment

Sexual harassment against women workers in the RMG sectors is increasing in many faces and forms. The respondents have claimed that absence of a violence-free environment in the workplace of RMG sectors, sexual harassment against women workers turns into a “culture”. Different affairs related to sexual harassment have been established due to the deactivation of the management and authorities. The respondents submitted the complaints to the authorities for justice and safety. According to the respondents, there is an understanding between the perpetrator and some persons in the management. As a result, most of the cases of sexual harassment have been scattered from the underline management. As per the respondent’s opinions, three things have been made against the complaint by the management:

(a) The perpetrators and their gang forced victimized women workers to withdraw their complaints. Otherwise, a threat of re-victimization will be faced, and abandoned from jobs.

(b) The perpetrators have offered through someone to compensate for the incidents giving money or saying sorry.

(c) The management committed to justice for the submitted matter but after a few days, they ignored the matter and in some cases, a non-recorded reconciliation was offered and tried to mitigate in favor of the perpetrators.

Source: developed by the researcher

In the interviewing session, the respondents mentioned different factors that make obstacles to taking action against perpetrators and preventive actions against sexual harassment by the authorities or management. The *analytical point of view* of the given reactions by the respondents has focused on an environment that welcomes sexual harassment against women workers. The women workers of the RMG sectors are vulnerable in terms of income capacity, post and job nature, and support from workmates. As a result, male workmates with sexual perversion have insisted more on sexual harassment or exploitation. This nature of the male partners makes them more vulnerable and insecure about working in the office, especially at night. The summary of the responses mentioned by the “L” “O” “K” “H” and “E” is as follows:

The perpetrators of sexual harassment are strong and form a gang in most cases. The victims of sexual harassment didn't protest properly. The victims had to face it personally. At the primary stage, getting some support from co-workers of the same gender. But being of time, the incident has been faced by the victim as a personal matter. In group-based prevention and fight against sexual harassment is moved within the limited space. Understanding the gap or limitation of the victims, the perpetrators have acted the sexual harassment or abuse.

The victims are being tensed more for their jobs and income. Most of the victims have been threatened to abandon their jobs and benefits. The group of perpetrators is made stress upon victims to withdraw their complaints. If don't do it, the scope of the job will be lost. In most cases, the accusers have convinced the victims by giving money or any other gifts. The accusers said that there is a good relationship with the management.

A few victims with strong characters have complained to the management and administration for justice. Here, they had to face another situation in the name of justice and intervention. During the complaint submission, the management agreed to judge the incident and assured the victims. But different situations and mentalities have been made after a few days. In most cases, the management didn't do justice. The management called the perpetrator(s), listened to the voices from both sides, and made a “mutual” ending. With this attitude from the management, the male workers with the mentality of sexual harassment have considered a “chance” to act as wish and

dominant.

Source: developed by the researcher

SO-6: ideas as recommendations from the respondents to prevent sexual harassment against women workers in the ready-made garment sectors

The respondents have opined their opinions on preventing sexual harassment in the ready-made garment sectors. The most demanding idea from the interviewed respondents is to promote a “women-prone culture” in society. The practicing customs regarding women in society have needed to change by involving different stakeholders. The study found that the reflection against women in the family and society has turned into the working environment and the outsides. The space for women workers in the ready-made garment sectors is not safe and secure to be involved broadly in income-generating activities without fear and tension. The fear of sexual harassment by male co-workers in the working environment is one of the significant barriers for women workers. The study revealed that the marginalized women segments are engaging in garment sectors for income to lead their families and lives. The consequences of sexual harassment have made different fears and obsessions for women workers to continue their jobs. The victimized women workers have mentioned various ideas to prevent sexual harassment in the ready-made garment sectors that can be considered *policy intervention* as follows:

1) Formulation of a monitoring team supervised by the government: A team for monitoring the sexual harassment against women workers should be formulated and implemented in all garment factories. The interventions by the government to protect the harassed women workers and to create an environment to protect all women from any type of sexual harassment must be taken and continued.

2) Factory-based interventions and committees: An order should be circulated by the government to formulate the factory-base committee to prevent all types of sexual harassment and any other violence against women workers. This committee must ensure the safety and security of the victimized women workers. The perpetrators or accused person must be processed to face the incidence(s) that has been claimed and reported. The accountability and transparency of the formulated committees must be counted by the concerned ministry and factories.

3) Resolve the grievance against the management and administration of the factories: The victimized women workers have complained against the administration and management to save the perpetrators and accused persons. The respondents have mentioned that there is a correlation between perpetrators and the management bodies. This correlation must be stopped and punished.

4) Awareness and fight for justice: A holistic awareness must be taken from the government and NGOs to aware the women garment workers. Economic inclusion will be ensured by engaging women in income-generating sources and scopes. The women workers will abandon their jobs when adequate security and safety are not ensured. The legal interventions must be prioritized by the victimized

women workers and the concerned factory will provide support and assistance. “*Fight for Justice*”—this slogan will be the core manifesto to minimize the sexual harassment against women workers. The relevant awareness programs should be extended engaging different organizations who can provide legal support and awareness to raise the voice against sexual harassment.

8. Conclusion

The study has been conducted to explore the sexual harassment faced by women garment workers in the RMG sectors. The interviewed respondents mentioned their harassment experiences and factors that insisted perpetrators to make harassment and abuse women workers. Under a qualitative framework, fifteen victimized women garment workers were interviewed following an “interview checklist” by sitting face-to-face session. The interviewed respondents have been identified through snowball sampling and justified their experience according to the study objectives. The respondents have clarified their harassment history mentioning the factors and atmospheres that promote the “culture of sexual harassment against women garment workers”. As per the respondent’s views, the culture towards women practiced in the society that reflected in the RMG sectors against women garment workers. The co-workers harassed the women workers sexually. It makes burden for women workers to continue their jobs and duties. According to the findings of the study, women workers faced sexual harassment in the working environment and its post-impact on their families has evolved and influenced with negative narrates. The safety and security services for women garment workers mitigating sexual harassment should be introduced as a policy-based focus ensuring their participation in wide-ranging feedback.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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