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# Labour

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## Academic

- Labour and Social Justice in Bangladesh: Some Conceptual and Practical Issues
- Engagement in Association and the State of Protestation: A Study on Labour Unrests in the RMG Sector of Bangladesh
- Worker's Level of Capability and Involvement in Protest: A Study on RMG Labour Unrests in Bangladesh
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## Trade Union

- An Insight on the Women Workers of Bangladesh: Challenges and Way Forward

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BANGLADESH INSTITUTE OF LABOUR STUDIES-BILS

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January-June 2019

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# Editorial

Trade Union is an important platform to establish workers' rights, while its history is full of struggles for social justice, which is yet to be translated into a reality. We should remember that Social justice contributes to establishing social integration. Bangladesh is attaining fast economic growth in terms of GDP, which needs qualitative changes. Establishing social justice for the workers is one such dimension in the changes.

A recent OXFAM Australia study reports based on interviews of RMG workers that 90 percent of them cannot afford food for themselves and their families, while 70 percent of them cannot seek treatment in the event of sickness. This indicates deprivation of the workers, hence the absence of social justice in the distributional sense. If the wage is enough the worker can more easily access food, avail health or send children to school, otherwise he cannot.

We should be aware that unattended social injustices are potentially explosive, resulting protestation and unrest. Therefore, inequality or deprivation of the workers must be reduced to ensure the smooth social functioning.

It is indeed unsatisfied workers go for protest. A new wave of unrest is seen at RMG sector in recent time demanding higher wages in factories resulting sufferings for workers and Trade Union leaders like losing jobs, facing criminal cases, arrest and imprisonment. It also hampered the production in factories.

However, unwillingness to accept Trade Union intervention was the major cause of the sufferings. One of the major initiatives to reduce dissatisfaction of workers is keeping harmonious Industrial Relation through Collective Bargaining and Social Dialogue. Tripartite mechanism among workers, employers and government plays important role in this regard.

We should keep in mind that satisfied workers can give effort for the development of economy. Without ensuring workers' rights, dignity and social justice it will not be possible to translate development plans into reality.

Md. Mojibur Rahman Bhuiyan

Editor



# Academic Part



# **Labour and Social Justice in Bangladesh: Some Conceptual and Practical Issues**

Monirul I. Khan<sup>1</sup>

## **One: Introduction**

This paper is about social justice and labour in Bangladesh. It will examine the meaning of social justice as found in relevant literature, this definition is important to assess the extent to which the Bangladeshi workers are able to access social justice. The paper will also focus on the relationship between an economic system and its potential to deliver social justice to the workers. In course of the paper the condition of the workers in Bangladesh as reported in the secondary sources will be briefly reviewed to reflect on the issue of social justice in practical terms along with reviewing the condition of trade union movement in Bangladesh. Trade union is an institutional basis to exercise the rights of the workers with a close relationship with the process of delivering social justice to the workers. It will be found there are precise structural factors like economic system that account for a lot to determine the extent of exercising of rights of the workers and their accessing benefits. Therefore, the issue of social justice becomes a lot more complex one; it is not the mere outcome of subjective decision making of the employers rather dealing with the objective factor like surplus distribution in an economic system that is inherently opposed to fair distribution of surplus. The perspective what will emerge out of the above discussions will provide the opportunity to identify the challenges to establish social justice for the workers in Bangladesh.

## **Two: Concept of Social Justice**

The meaning of social justice will be clarified here by referring to a relevant debate taken place in this regard (Johnston 2011). According to some theorist it refers to the distribution of rights, privileges, burden and pain in society to ascertain is it (i.e. the nature of

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distribution) just or unjust. If it is found that the distribution is unjust then one calls it injustice.

Equality and inequality are two important aspects of the idea of social justice. To draw a conclusion about social justice in a society, the pertinent investigation often looks into the issues of equality and inequality in the economic condition of the people, distribution of political power among them or their exercise of cultural rights. When the idea of social justice was germinating in Europe during the period of its transition from medieval to a modern society based on capitalism the issue of individual liberty also came to the forefront of discussion on social justice. The philosophy of liberalism underpinned such reasoning. The individual freedom of action also surfaced in this regard. It was said that the presence of individual freedom is a mark of justice and everyone should have such freedom. Societal role in ensuring social justice appeared more clearly when men found that society is not divinely ordained rather an outcome of the human practices, in other words justice or injustice whatever is there brought into being by the people themselves. Two particular issues received a great deal of importance while the debate on the meaning of social justice was progressing. One of them is the principle of contribution, since justice refers to distribution in society, how would society decide on the distribution of benefit? The issue of contribution came up with the argument that one's reward or benefit should be determined by one's contribution to society. It argues, those privileged in terms of inheritance should not be benefited by virtue of such pre-given advantages. Rather one should achieve such benefit through his actions. The spirit of such definition fits very well with the idea of a market economy based society that highlights one's actions/contributions in determining his rewards. In the same spirit the principle of reciprocity was also promoted to define social justice. One's action and its contribution should be reciprocated by society or individuals who are benefitting from such actions. The most significant problem arises with the above definition of contribution based reward in deciding social justice is the structure of society. In a market economy or a society with inequality each individual does not hold same position or condition to make the same contribution. For example, someone from a well off family completing engineering degree and someone from a slum failing in the school final examination would never be able to make equal contribution to receive equal benefit or reward. Against such anomalous thinking

there emerged the principle with different idea: “...each according to his ability to each according to his need.” It emphasizes whatever one’s contribution is to the society does not matter rather his reward should be decided according to what the person needs. Such consideration would then allow redistribution of wealth, privileges or power if it is found that some people are enjoying more than what they need. In the context of poor workers the concept of social justice in terms of need merits special attention because of the fact that their educational qualification is not comparable with those who are graduated from the universities, therefore in a market economy they cannot compete for a job with good salary or benefits. As a result what they receive from the society is often lesser than what they need to maintain a respectable living.

Now we would turn our attention to the concept of social justice as propounded by ILO, it is especially relevant to the context of the workers. It has introduced a broader meaning of social justice, incorporating the elements like employment, social protection, social dialogue and rights at work. Derived from the spirit of the Philadelphia Declaration of 1944 and the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of 1998 the idea of social justice mooted by the ILO has assumed a conceptual shape (ILO 2008). It calls for the establishment of sustainable economic condition that would give the workers access to employment, or necessary skill to access employment. It says when there is social justice in the society the workers would attain a good standard of living. Social protection will be derived from workers’ access to basic income that should be adequate to face the rapid changes society undergoes; social protection also means good working environment or a fair share of the workers in society. Social dialogue is to be there for translating economic progress into social progress, ensuring decent work or building consensus on national and international policies. Freedom of association is another pillar of the concept of social justice.

With these conceptual points taken as a background the following sections will carry out a number of tasks. It would examine the uniqueness of capitalist system because it provides the concrete perspective in contemporary society to decide the outcome of social justice process. Then it would throw light into the concrete perspective of Bangladesh.



### **Three: Workers' Rights, Social Justice and the Capitalist Economic System**

Bangladesh economy is gradually becoming a capitalist one being based on the capitalist mode of production. Whether the entire economy is capitalistic or still there are a few pockets yet to be capitalistic is a valid question but this paper observes that at present a number of economic sectors could be identified which are capitalist in terms of characteristics. The basis of this observation (i.e., Bangladesh represents a capitalist economy) is the large scale transformation of labour into commodity. The definition of capitalism includes a number of features but in the view of Marx the emergence of landless worker into an economy represents the capitalist feature more precisely. Marx also referred to the transformation of produces into commodity in a capitalist economy which also characterises its nature; it means capitalist enterprise produces exchange value instead of use value (Marx 1887:33).

There is another term called market economy that refers to the one commonly known as a capitalist economy. Its focus is the production of goods in the most efficient way. The efficiency is based on how appropriately the decision on what will be produced is taken but the goal is ensuring profit. The following definition taken from a well known economics text book (Samuelson & Nordhaus 1998: 8-9) underlines this point: “A system of prices, of markets, of profits and losses, of incentives and rewards determines *what*, *how* , and *for whom*. Firms produce the commodities that yield the highest profits (the *what*) by the technique of production that are least costly (the *how*).” Above definition reveals that the most important goal of the market economy is making profit, reducing cost as much as possible, as a consequence the wage level is always tried best to keep at the lowest level. In whatever name we describe it, capitalistic or market economy has got an important feature: it cannot avoid conflict over surplus/profit distribution between the employers and the workers.

In the process of capitalist production the surplus is produced by the worker. The main goal of the capital is to generate surplus/profit, meeting recurrent expenditure, attaining further technological innovation and addressing other imperatives. There is an inverse relation between size of the wage received by the worker and the size of the surplus appropriated by the owner of the capital or the

corresponding factory/industry/enterprise. If the size of the wage increases then the size of the surplus is likely to decrease, similarly if the size of the surplus increases the corresponding size of the wage will decrease at any given point of time. If the wage is enough the worker can more easily access food, avail health or send children to school, otherwise he cannot. Marx (1977: 21) has made the following observation, “*Wages* are determined through the antagonistic struggle between capitalist and worker. Victory goes necessarily to the capitalist. The capitalist can live longer without the worker than can the worker without the capitalist.” The workers also go through other miseries such as poverty and deprivation. They will be found to be deprived not only of food but also of health services, educational opportunities and the likes. Of course these facts are not unknown to us since the history of capitalism is already a few hundred years old, it has gone through a number of changes what the theorist often called ‘late capitalism’, ‘post-industrial society’ and others <sup>2</sup>. However, the primordial conflict between labour and capital still remains valid (will continue to be so as it is the basis) determining the nature of employer-worker relation as well as industrial dispute. But the capital-labour relation does not function in an empty space and there is the government that plays very important role for the mediation between the workers and employers. The legal framework under which the employer-worker relations function in Bangladesh is framed by the government. For example, Bangladesh has got the Bangladesh Labour Act in this regard. One might argue since there is a legal framework there is no challenge to establish social justice for the workers. But this is not the case and still there are many challenges. It will be found there are many cases of violation of the Act or non-compliance with the Act, there may also be the cases that the actual situation is manipulated by the employer to deprive the workers from the benefits stipulated in the Act.

As we said above the history of capitalism is replete with conflicts between the workers and the employers on the determination of wage level, working hours, leaves or other issues. The countries which underwent capitalist development at an early period witnessed such conflicts often violent in nature and the historical events like the

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2 Please see the following for the background of these concepts: Rostow (1979), Bell (1976).

Chartist movement or the May Day exemplifies the intensity of violence and the engagement of the workers to establish their rights.

There are two important approaches that deal with the issue of production of surplus and its distribution among the workers. One of the approaches is radical that prescribes a system where the workers themselves will command the ownership of means of production and the other one prescribes workers should have access to the necessities like education or health. The first approach or model is propounded by Marx who developed the concept of the socialist mode of production to transfer the ownership of the means of production to the workers themselves which he articulated as a part of a broader theoretical framework to bring an end to the alienation of the workers in the society. However, in many countries of the world the socialist mode of production was established through revolutionary ways but later encountered problems with regard to its sustainability leading to its breakdown. On the other hand, Keynes formulated the model or the approach of welfare capitalism or welfare state in which the government is assigned with the responsibilities of providing expenditures for the necessities like health, education, food, housing or providing services in direct terms (Barr 2002:21). What is special about this approach is the measure for adjustment within the capitalist system not radicalising in the way of abolishing the institution of private ownership or socializing the means of production like factories or industries. However, the emergence of neo-liberalism has put the welfare capitalism at stake. The concept of neo-liberalism implies the squeezing of the welfare responsibilities of the state, allow private sector to play greater role in economy or disinvestment in public sector companies by either shutting down or transferring into the hands of the private owners. Above all it allows the market decide at all levels the economic process and activities such as the determination of wage, prices for all essentials like education, health, food, housing and others. When there is abundance of labour in a country like Bangladesh with very high supply of labours in the market the wage level necessarily comes down owing to the fact unemployment often means starvation for the workers. In such cases neo-liberal advocates won't allow state to provide support to the impoverished workers to access the basic necessities like health, food or housing. During 1980's under the effect of Structural Adjustment Policy a large number of state owned

enterprises like jute and textile mills were disinvested in Bangladesh resulting in massive retrenchment of the workers.

This paper argues that capitalism has got inherent limitation to deliver social justice to the workers, it is structural. The issue of surplus distribution is pertinent here apart from the fact that the capitalist owner is primarily driven by the motive of making profit without paying adequate attention what is its social implications. Capitalism is now a global mode of production and the weakness of the establishment of workers' rights is also a global phenomenon as reflected in the following quote taken from a recent ILO publication (Serrano et.al., 2011:xi): “ Most workers have no employment security and billions earn less than a dollar a day. The pursuit of profit trumps the health of people and the future of the planet. Economic growth does not translate into common prosperity. Billions of workers have no say in their working conditions; many are threatened, intimidated, fired and in the worst cases thrown into prison or killed by hired gunmen when they demand their basic human rights of freedom of association, collective bargaining and industrial democracy... The history of trade unions is a history of struggles for greater social justice and against dictatorship, both in societies and at the workplace. Often accused by their opponents of being unreasonable, unable to understand economics, and dinosaurs of the industrial past...”

The capitalist economy is based on the conflicting interest between labour and capital. Such conflict influences the social perspective as well what theorist called commodity fetishism and the above (i.e., commodity fetishism) is an ideology that considers everything including social relation is commodity which may be viewed through the lens of loss and gain. This particular situation (i.e., capitalist economic norms determining social values) has entered a new complexity in the context of globalization. The conflict between labour and capital has been added with the competition between the capital of different countries and between the small and big capital. In such a dialectical and conflicting perspective where do the rights of the workers of Bangladesh stand? In this paper an argument is presented that social justice in the context of workers of Bangladesh is closely related to the extent to which their rights are established particularly the rights of unionization and access to reasonable wages and other necessities such as health or education.

#### **Four: Trade Union Movement in Bangladesh & the Socioeconomic Condition of the Workers**

What is the level of justice in Bangladesh with regard to Workers condition has been reflected in this section laying focus on two aspects: to what extent the workers are allowed to establish trade union and their socioeconomic condition<sup>3</sup>.

In the above section it is discussed that Bangladesh is moving towards the structure of a capitalist society and relevant data show that a large number of workers have now already become industrial labour. The Labour Force Survey of the government shows that there are now 60 million people who are in labour force and about 13 million constitute the industrial work force. In a capitalist country the conflict between capital and labour are manifested in the conflicting relation between the classes who own the industries and those who provide labour. Trade Union is an important platform to establish workers' rights. Its history is also full of struggles at the global level. If we pay attention to the United Kingdom, one of the earliest countries that underwent industrialization, it will be found that the workers had to wage prolonged struggle to establish their rights including the freedom of association or what came to be known as trade union. They had to fight against prolonged working time or reckless retrenchment. In the Indian sub-continent trade union came on the heels of industrialization in the early twentieth century, during the period of Pakistan trade union movement started in East Pakistan, and following the birth of Bangladesh, it was confined to public sector because of the absence of private sector. But the scenario started to change when private enterprises started to emerge from 1980s. Private employers were not always enthusiastic to allow trade union to be established in their enterprises. There were many informal sectors where the very talk about trade union was tabooed let alone its establishment. For example, the construction sector, ship breaking industries did not allow trade union for a long time. There are as many as forty different sectors in the country and the functioning of trade union is very limited to a few sectors. For example, about one-third industrial workers are engaged in the readymade garment sector and the number of plant based trade union

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3 The discussion of this section largely derived from the following two sources: Khan (2019) and OXFAM Australia (2019).

is very few. In the absence of plant based trade union the sector based workers federation is substituting the role for the plant based trade union resulting in a situation where individual workers are deprived of their rights (e.g. employers unilaterally pushing up production target without any bargaining on the part of the workers). There are now many critics who believe that the authority won't oppose trade union openly at the same time won't expedite the process. To apply for the registration for a trade union there is a need for the collection of signature of about one fifth of the workers which is a difficult job. In other countries it is less than two or three percent or not at all<sup>4</sup>. The Bangladesh Labour Act has got the provision of workers participation committee and many employers or the government official would like to argue that it is a good institution to ensure workers rights, while the workers themselves view it as an incompetent institution to protect and establish workers rights.<sup>5</sup> By all account, the present trend in trade union movement in Bangladesh reflects sheer neglect and marginalization resulting in the absence of an important institution recognized as an apt platform towards the establishment of workers' rights and giving voice to their demands.

Another explicit manifestation of the deprivation of the workers of Bangladesh is the recent study on the garment workers of Bangladesh. It is a part of a large story since there are other formal and informal sectors employing the workers. The study shows that 90 percent of the interviewed reported that they cannot afford food for themselves and their families; they starve or get indebted to make up this basic food shortage<sup>6</sup>. In this vein more than 70 percent of the garments workers cannot seek treatment in the event of sickness. All such data indicate deprivation of the workers, hence the absence of social justice in the distributional sense, in which it is not one's contribution that would determine the reward in society, rather what is 'needed' for an individual would be the basis for this distributional arrangement.

One of the structural condition in which the workers of Bangladesh function is stronger supply side vis a vis demand side with regard to workers aspiring for job in the market, it has got depressing effect on

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4 A recent discussion with a relevant ILO official at Dhaka.

5 Khan (2019).

6 OXFAM Australia.

the level of wage and other benefits, to the advantage of the employers and constituting one of the important basis for manifested deprivation and social injustice for the workers of Bangladesh.

### **Five: Challenges**

This paper would like to identify a number of challenges to the establishment of social justice for the workers of Bangladesh. In a capitalist mode of production there is inherent conflict in the distribution of surplus that put limits on the delivery of justice. At present, neo-liberalism and globalization have exacerbated the existing situation further. In the emerging situation the state is forced to reduce its role to allow the market forces to play larger role (e.g., the example of Structural Adjustment Policy or the outcomes of the tripartite negotiation in the Minimum Wage Commissions in different sectors). With the excessive play of the market forces (e.g., competition between the producers and lowering cost of production, mechanization and replacement of manual workers, with the stronger supply side of workers falling wage level) the workers are unable to access a decent standard of living, it means the given situation is far from the one mooted in the idea of social justice discussed earlier in this paper. On the other hand, the absence of trade union and Collective Bargaining Agent has left little scope to the workers to improve upon their condition.

The sheer economic attitude of the employers has created a situation that can hardly allow prioritizing the issue of 'social justice'. The termination of the workers in a frequent manner is a common scenario in different sectors, again the effect of market forces. Similarly decent wage to the workers is far from a reality. Even the recommended minimum wage is not ensured in the sector like inland water vessel or others. In the absence of CBA the terminated/dismissed/retrenched, workers are hardly properly represented in the settlement with the employers and there are evidences that employer dominated conciliation and arbitration process has been institutionalized, bypassing the procedure prescribed the Bangladesh Labour Act. All such evidences indicate that the concept of social justice used by ILO or the one, which one would come across in relevant literature such as distribution according to needs not according to contribution, is yet to be translated into a reality.

## **Six: Conclusion**

The travesty of social justice in the context of the workers of Bangladesh is so explicit that one hardly needs subtle measurements for its establishment as a social fact. Social justice is not a mere moral issue it has got functional implication as well. It means inequality or deprivation of the workers is not an issue that deserve attention from the moral point of view only but also to ensure the smooth social functioning. Unattended social injustices are potentially explosive. The environment of social justice also contributes to establishing social belongingness a prerequisite for social integration.

Bangladesh is attaining fast economic growth in terms of GDP at present, it has to be sufficiently translated into qualitative change and establishing social justice for the workers is one such dimension. In a capitalistic society the issue of social injustice with regard to the workers emanate from the issue of fair or unfair distribution of surplus. Efficient capitalism should address this issue what is absent in the context of Bangladesh rendering its nature oft quoted “primitive accumulation”. In the situation of primitive accumulation plundering was a method of accumulation. In the given situation the state needs to come out of the pressure put on it by the owner of the capital to expand the basis of legitimacy of the state that is produced and reproduced continuously. Often tripartite mechanism fails to deliver the desired result towards admitting workers demands more than those of employers. There lies the future area of intervention associating stakeholders from different levels.

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# Engagement in Association and the State of Protestation: A Study on Labour Unrests in the RMG Sector of Bangladesh

Aftab<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *The study addresses the question whether people's engagement in association influences their state of protestation. Having taken the labour unrests in the Ready Made Garment (RMG) sector of Bangladesh in 2014 as the case, the study argues that membership obligation instead of only dissatisfaction is the major factor that provokes workers in the industry to engage in protests. The study analyzes the tendency of the workers towards and participation in all three phases of labour protests—decision, expansion, and contraction. It contributes to find out the gap between workers' tendency to and participation in protests and discovers that mostly allegiance to leaders and interdependence are the factors that cause the gap. The study reveals that dissatisfaction matters for workers in general but membership-obligation exceeds dissatisfaction as the factor to provoke them to protest.*

**Keywords:** Labour Unrest, RMG, dissatisfaction, association, membership-obligation, protestation, etc.

## 1. Introduction

Since the beginning of its emergence as an independent state, Bangladesh has been facing frequent labour unrest which has significant impacts on the country's socio-economic development as shown by a study that about 20 million of the total population of Bangladesh who are directly or indirectly associated with RMG industry are adversely impacted by labour unrest (Hussain, 2015,

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p.58). Particularly since 1980s, with the permission of forming labour union, enactment of Labour Law 2006, Labour Law Amendment 2010 and the fixing of new wage structure in 2013, it was expected that the frequency of labour unrest would be reduced (Hussain, 2015, p. 58-69). Nevertheless, despite having huge potentials, the sector is facing movements organized by its workers. A study conducted by Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS, the only labour study institution in Bangladesh, reveals that most of the labour unrests in Bangladesh take place in RMG sector. For instance it shows that among a total of 1587 labour unrests during 2008-2012, 870 instances took place only in RMG sector.<sup>2</sup>

Why such occurs? Though the commonplace arguments emphasize that workers' overall dissatisfaction is the main cause of garment conflicts in Bangladesh (Ahmed et al. 2013, p. 72, Kamal et al. 2010, p. 1-18), it is felt by the researcher that conducting a research can move beyond this commonplace arguments.

## **2. Developing the Research Question**

The research question of this paper is generated by indicating a remarkable gap in the theory of relative deprivation introduced by Ted Robert Gurr in 1968. In his theory, Gurr argues that discrepancy between value expectations and value capabilities leads to conflict (Gurr, 1968). Although, in his explanation, Gurr himself also deals with the question of politicization of discontent; he did not clarify the situations where organization itself becomes a factor behind a person's engagement in or refraining from protest. Because, in reality, it is the group obligation that often affects a person's own decisions for action or inaction to protest. However, his basic arguments and the gaps identified by this research can be illustrated with the help of a four-fold table.

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2 Press Clippings prepared by Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS based on different national newspapers.

*Table-1: Relationship between Levels of Dissatisfaction and Involvement in Conflict*

Levels of Involvement in Conflict	Levels of Dissatisfaction	
	Lowly Dissatisfied	Highly Dissatisfied
	Low Involvement	High Involvement
	A	B
	C	D

In this table, A and D are showing a commonplace behavior that is predicted by Gurr's theory. For example, A is lowly dissatisfied and thereby, lowly involved in conflict. On the other hand, D is highly dissatisfied and thereby, highly involved in conflict.

But the anomalous behavior is shown by B and C. Because in spite of being highly dissatisfied; B is lowly involved in conflict. On the other hand, despite being lowly dissatisfied, C has high involvement in conflict.

This situation arises two significant questions that if the discrepancy between value expectations and value capabilities leads to conflict, then

- I. Why do people with low dissatisfaction (C) are highly involved in conflict? And
- II. Why do people with high dissatisfaction (B) are lowly involved in conflict?

Thus, such anomalous behavior of B and C is clearly showing the importance of posing a problem whether there is any other mechanism that may determine people's engagement in or refraining from protestation? It leads to formulating the final research question—is there any relationship between the workers' engagement in association and their state of protestation?

### **3. Operational Definition of the Variables**

The paper deals with three variables where two are independent—'Dissatisfaction' and 'Engagement in Association'; and the other is dependent—'State of

Protestation.’ All of these three variables are operationally defined below.

### 3.1 Dissatisfaction

The terms for the operational definition of dissatisfaction are taken mainly from the literature on Relative Deprivation Theories produced by Džuverovic (2013) and David Donald (1971). Indicators are fixed based on my observations from the field and ideas from KII (Key Informant Interviews). The level-based indicators of dissatisfaction are summarized in the following table.

*Table-2: Operational Definition of ‘Dissatisfaction’*

Level of Dissatisfaction	Indicators
<b>Level-1</b>	Dissatisfaction Based on ‘Reference Group Status’ [For instance, Dissatisfaction in comparison with other industries i.e. Jute Mills/other jobs i.e. government job etc.]
<b>Level-2</b>	Dissatisfaction Based on ‘Own Group Status’ [For instance, Dissatisfaction in consideration of the status of other colleagues or all the garments workers as a whole]
<b>Level-3</b>	Dissatisfaction Based on ‘Personal Status’ [For instance, Absolute dissatisfaction due to lack of sufficient livelihoods for the survival of self and of family members]

### 3.2 Engagement in Association

The terms for the measurement of engagement in association are taken from [a]“Bangladesh Labour Act-2006”<sup>3</sup> and [b] my observations and ideas gathered from the field and KII. The indicators are what follow.

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<sup>3</sup> For this, Articles 175-208 of “Bangladesh Labor Act 2006” are reviewed, where an elaboration is given about the issue.

*Table-3: Operational Definition of  
'Engagement in Association'*

Level of Engagement	Indicators
<b>Level-1</b>	Only "Solidarity Member" of Industrial Federation
<b>Level-2</b>	Both "Solidarity Member" and "Trade Union Member"
<b>Level-3</b>	Having not only formal membership, but also desire to build organizational career

### 3.3 State of Protestation

The terms for the measurement of 'state of protestation' are taken mainly from Koopmans (2004) <sup>4</sup> and newspaper survey 2014 which are shown at a glance in the following Table.<sup>5</sup>

*Table-4: Operational Definition of 'State of Protestation'*

Level of Protest	Indicators		
	Decision Phase	Expansion Phase	Contraction Phase

4 For this, the literature on 'Protest in time and space: The evolution of waves of contention' produced by Koopmans, R. (2004) was reviewed. Thus, terms from this literature was chosen.

5 For this, 8 national newspapers were surveyed using the BILS Press Clippings. In selecting the terms for the measurement of state of protest, particular attention was put on the stages and strategies that the RMG workers usually follow. In-person interviews with Key Informants and insights from newspaper editorials helped me much in this regard.

Level-1	Discussion	Peaceful Protest	Unconditional Sudden Contraction
Level-2	Litigation	Internal Violence	Conditional Contraction
Level-3	Sudden Start of Protestation	Street Violence	No Contraction without Fulfillment of All Demands

#### 4. Theoretical Framework

In order to offer a theoretical framework, this paper draws two propositions based on the existing literature. Here the first proposition delves into the question of ‘how association creates obligations and fellow-feelings?’ The process can be explained through three phases which are what follow.

***First, creating a network:*** An association creates a social network that provides space for the creation and dissemination of discourse critical of authorities and provides a way for active opposition to these authorities to grow (Paxton, 2002). In other words, association is a place where people talk politics and are mobilized for protest. Being integrated in a network increases chances that one will be targeted with a mobilizing message and that people are kept to their promises to participate (Klandermans and Oegema, 1987).

***Second, cultivating relationships, interests and interdependence:*** At this point, the view of Hahrie Han (2014) is crucial who argues that (within this network) organizations build relationships, cultivate interests and motivations, and teach leadership and other skills based on the members’ interdependence to each other. By doing so, organizations seek to build up people-based ‘assets’ of the association, i.e. gaining power through gathering people. It can be more justified by social psychological studies which report that the more the people are related with a group, the more they are interdependent and inclined to protest on behalf of that group (Kelly and Breinlinger, 1995; Klandermans et al., 2002; Mummendey et al., 1999; Reicher, 1984; Simon and Klandermans, 2001; Simon et al., 1998; Stryker et al., 2000).

***Finally, creating obligations or fellow-feelings:*** Social networks function as communication channels (Gamson, 1992; Klandermans, 1988) and at this point, the view of Stürmer (2003) has significant

relevance as it argues that social network or association generates among the members an inner obligation to behave as a ‘good’ group member. And through this process, when self-definition changes from personal to organizational identity, the group norm of participation becomes salient; the more one identifies with the group, the more it will result in an ‘inner obligation’ to participate on behalf of that group.

In addition, in his theory of Political Obligation, Margaret Gilbert (2006) explains the notion of membership problem and argues that “*to be a member of a political society is just to have an obligation to uphold and support that society’s political institutions*”(Gilbert: 2006). The key to Gilbert’s argument is the idea of a joint commitment (leader-member exchange) which implies that the members of a society have genuine obligations to support each other and to support their political institutions.

Based on the abovementioned literature, the following proposition is offered.

***Proposition-1: Association creates a social network within which individuals’ common interests, relationships and motivations are cultivated functioning through a structure that induces obligations and fellow-feelings.***

The second proposition of this paper is, however, concerned with the influence of these organizational obligations and fellow-feelings on a person’s own decisions for action or inaction. Below is the explanation to reach this second proposition.

***First, leader-member exchange and its influence on personal decisions:*** In explaining the process, the arguments of John French and Bertrand Raven is significantly relevant. French and Raven (1959) introduce five sources of power that a leader exercises upon his/her members. Through a detailed analysis of these sources, they come up with a conclusion that each of these sources of power, whether separately or together, facilitates leaders’ control over members and makes the members obliged to obey and implement the decisions taken by the leaders.



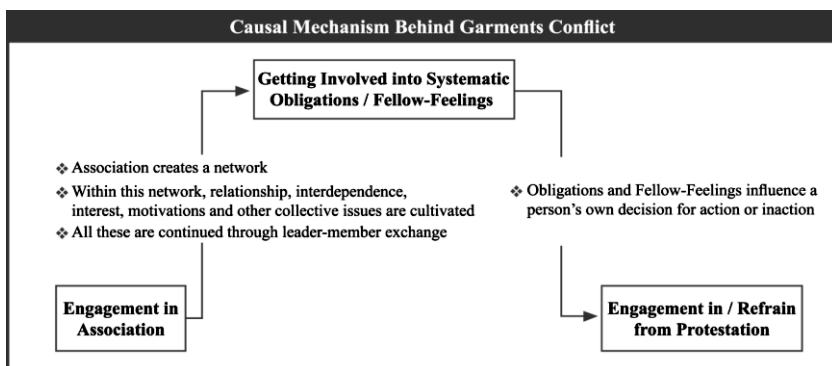
***Second, fellow-feeling and its influence on personal decisions:*** The impact of fellow-feelings on a person's own decisions can best be investigated based on "Group Think Theory pioneered by Irving Janis who suggests that *"The more amiability there is among the members of a group, the greater the danger that independent critical thinking will be replaced by groupthink, which is likely to result in irrational and dehumanizing actions directed against other groups"* (Janis: 1982). In his argument, members sacrifice their individual critical thinking for the sake of upholding groupthink. Therefore, a person's course of action or inaction is highly dependent on the groups he/she belongs to.

So, based on the above literature, the following proposition can be drawn;

***Proposition-2: both obligations and fellow-feelings play the decisive role on a person's action or inaction which may cause the person to engage in or refrain from protestation.***

Building on the abovementioned two propositions, however, the following theoretical framework is offered in this paper to test.

*Figure-1: Causal Mechanism behind Garments Conflict*



Source: Author's own

This figure shows the theoretical framework of this research. Here, engagement in association is regarded as an independent variable which leads to engagement in or refraining from protestation. The process is such that association creates a network within which members' relation to each other, their interdependence, interests, motivations, and other collective issues are cultivated and all of these activities are continued within the association through a leader-member exchange. And by involving in such organizational systems and activities, people also get involved into systematic obligations or fellow-feelings that highly influence a person's own decision for action or inaction, and hence lead to engagement in or refraining from protestation.

## **5. Methodology**

This paper is written mainly by following qualitative method. In following deductive reasoning, the paper offers first a theoretical framework and then tests the theory based on data available. For this, the data were collected both from primary and secondary sources. For primary data, sample was taken in three steps and four categories based on some specific indicators. Interviewing a total of 175 workers, conducting 7 FGDs, attending 7 training programs—arranged by labour organizations—for observations and taking interviews from a total of 25 KIIs were the major sources of primary data. On the other hand, secondary data were collected mainly by surveying 8 National Daily Newspapers of Bangladesh—ProthomAlo, Jugantor, Samakal, Ittefaq, KalerKantho, Shambad, Shokal erKhorbor and Amader Shomoy—and by reading through the Government Labour Journals, BILS Labour Journals, different articles, books and other secondary resources on the topic. Finally the analytical part mainly follows the Bivariate procedures to check whether there is any association between the independent and dependent variables. Using Microsoft Excel, all the data and findings are presented by using different analytical tools— Frequency Table, Cross Tabulation, Graphs and the others.

## **6. Analysis and Major Findings**

Data are analyzed into four organized sections. The first and second sections deal with workers' personal tendency and participation in protest respectively. And the third section

indicates the gap between workers’ tendency and participation while the final section analyses what causes this gap—i.e. whether it is organizational obligation or something else.

### 6.1 Workers’ Personal Tendency of Protest

Workers’ personal tendency of protest is elaborated here into two steps; *the first step* will show the relation between workers’ levels of engagement in association and their personal tendency of protest in each of the three phases which is as follows.

*Table-5: Crosstab between Workers’ Levels of Engagement in Association and their Personal Tendency of Protest [in %]*

Levels of Engagement in Association	Workers’ Personal Tendency of Protest								
	Decision Phase			Expansion Phase			Contraction Phase		
	Discussion	Litigation	Sudden Protest	Peaceful Protest	Internal Violence	Street Violence	Unconditional Contraction	Conditional Contraction	No Contraction
Level-1	88.60	2.63	8.77	91	6.14	2.86	4.39	3.51	92.10
Level-2	40	20	40	40	20	40	19.30	20	60.70
Level-3	21.74	8.70	69.56	26.10	13.04	60.86	69.57	17.39	13.04
<b>Total Respondents: 142</b>									

Table 5 shows that in decision phase, workers who have low level of involvement in organization, 88.60% of them want discussion to solve their anomalies and 2.63% & 8.77% of them want litigation and sudden start of protestation respectively. On the other hand, workers who have secondary level of involvement in organization, 40.00% of them want discussion to solve their anomalies and 20.00% & 40.00% of them want litigation and sudden start of protestation respectively. And the workers who have the highest level of involvement in organization, 21.74% of them want discussion to solve their anomalies and 8.70% & 69.56% of them want litigation and sudden start of protestation respectively.

In the expansion phase of movement, almost all the workers with low level of involvement in organization are populated in the category of peaceful protesters i.e.91% of them want to expand their movement by peaceful means while 6.14% and 2.86% of them want internal violence and street violence respectively. On the other hand, workers who have secondary level of involvement in organization, 40.00% of them want peaceful protest and the other 20.00% & 40.00% of them want internal violence and street violence respectively. And finally, the workers having the highest level of involvement in organization are showing the most aggressive tendencies as most of them [60.86%] are in favor of street violence while 13.04% and 26.10% of them support internal violence and peaceful protest respectively.

But in contraction phase, almost all the workers with low level of involvement in organization are supporting ‘no contraction without fulfillment of all demands’ i.e. 92.10% of them want to continue the movement while only 3.51% and 4.39% of them want conditional contraction and unconditional sudden contraction respectively. On the other hand, workers who have secondary level of involvement in organization, 19.30% of them want unconditional sudden contraction and the other 20.00% &60.70% of them want conditional contraction and no contraction without fulfillment of all demands respectively. This implies that most of such workers possess high level of ‘protesting tendencies’ in this phase. And finally, workers having the highest level of involvement in organization are showing the most recessive tendencies in this phase. Because, they showed the most aggressive tendencies in the decision and expansion phases. But in this contraction phase, most of them [69.57%] are in favor of unconditional sudden contraction while 17.39% and 13.04% of them support conditional contraction and no contraction without fulfillment of all demands respectively. Based on such evidences, however, it can simply be inferred that once the movement is expanded, workers with low and secondary level of engagement in association show the high level of ‘protesting tendencies’, although they were clearly the opposite in the decision phase—as is evident by FDGs.<sup>6</sup>

*In the second step*, however, the paper is concerned with showing the relation between workers’ levels of dissatisfaction and their personal tendency of protest in each of the three phases.

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6 For this, 7 FGDs were conducted being present in the offices of respective 7 organizations where workers gathered for organizational training and attended me after the training program. In these FGDs, most of the participants were quite spontaneous.

*Table-6: Crosstab between Workers' Levels of Dissatisfaction and their Personal Tendency of Protest [in %]*

Levels of Dissatisfaction	Workers' Personal Tendency of Protest								
	Decision Phase			Expansion Phase			Contraction Phase		
	Discussion	Litigation	Sudden Protest	Peaceful Protest	Internal Violence	Street Violence	Unconditional Contraction	Conditional Contraction	No Contraction
Level-1	30.77	3.85	65.38	26.92	15.38	57.70	69.23	11.54	19.23
Level-2	27.56	29.58	42.86	42.86	28.57	28.57	14.29	28.57	57.14
Level-3	89.90	2.75	7.35	93.58	4.59	1.83	2.75	3.67	93.58
<b>Total Respondents: 142</b>									

Table 6 shows that in the decision phase of movement, most of the workers with low level of dissatisfaction—having personal well-being but are dissatisfied based on reference group status i, e, the status of government employees—are in favor of sudden start of protest. For instance, 65.38% of them want sudden protest while 3.85% and 30.77% want litigation and discussion respectively. On the other hand, 42.86% of the workers with secondary level of dissatisfaction also have their support to sudden protest while their support to discussion and litigation is remaining between 27.56% and 29.58% respectively. It implies that such workers are on an average less violent than those at the first level of dissatisfaction. But the puzzle lies in the tendency of workers who are highly dissatisfied. Because, it is commonly assumed that people with high level of dissatisfaction—i, e, when they cannot earn sufficient livelihoods for their survival—have the high tendency of protest. But this research found that almost all the workers with such level of dissatisfaction [89.90%] want to solve their problem through discussion while a handful of them want litigation or sudden protest i, e, 2.75% and 7.35% respectively.

In the expansion phase of movement, most of the workers with low level of dissatisfaction are in favor of street violence. For instance, 57.70% of them want street violence while 15.38% and 26.92% want internal violence and peaceful protest respectively. On the other hand, in terms of workers with secondary level of dissatisfaction, it is seen that 42.86% of them support peaceful protest while the percentage of support to internal and street violence is the same i, e, 28.57%. But the anomaly takes place in the tendency of workers who are highly dissatisfied. Though they are highly dissatisfied, almost all of them (93.58%) are in favor of peaceful protest while a handful of such workers support internal violence and street violence—4.59% and 1.83 respectively.

But surprisingly in the contraction phase, most of the workers with low level of dissatisfaction are in favor of unconditional sudden contraction. For instance, 69.23% of them want such a radical contraction while 11.54% and 19.23% want conditional contraction and no contraction without fulfilling all demands respectively. On the other hand, workers with secondary level of dissatisfaction conform at this stage with the tendency of those at level-3 as most of the workers of both categories are showing their high tendency of protest. Here is a significant point to be mentioned that they are showing their high tendency of protest not because of mere dissatisfaction but because of getting stuck into a dilemma—where they have no way but to resort to risk taking behavior.

## **6.2 Workers' Participation in Protest**

Workers' participation in protest is also illustrated here into two steps; *the first step* will show the relation between workers' levels of engagement in association and their state of participation in each of the three phases which is as follows.

*Table-7: Crosstab between Workers' Levels of Engagement in Association and their Participation in Protest [in %]*

Levels of Engagement in Association	Participation in Protest								
	Decision Phase			Expansion Phase			Contraction Phase		
	Discussion	Litigation	Sudden Protest	Peaceful Protest	Internal Violence	Street Violence	Unconditional Contraction	Conditional Contraction	No Contraction
Level-1	-	33.76	96.89	53.22	51.75	94.96	97.36	-	2.64
Level-2	21.5	18.39	91.22	49	62.43	89.32	80	-	20
Level-3	38.79	-	93.76	26.09	8.7	95.2	91.3	14.22	8.7
<b>Total Respondents: 142</b>									
<b>Multiple Response</b>									

This table shows that in decision phase, almost all the workers irrespective of their levels of engagement in association—level-1, 2, and 3—participated in sudden start of protest while a very few of them were engaged in discussion or litigation. The same scenario is found in the expansion phase where most of them are engaged in street violence.

But the anomaly is shown by those at level-3 whose percentage of participation in peaceful protest or internal violence is remarkably lower—26.09% and 8.70% respectively. However, a radical recession in their participation happens in the contraction phase where almost all of them—irrespective of their levels of engagement in association—participated in sudden contraction while a handful of them were continuing the protest as shown in the last cell. A very significant point is that 14.22% of the workers with high level of engagement in association took part in conditional contraction. For instance, they expressed in their interview that in this contraction phase, they met their factory owners and put some conditions for future relations.

In the *second* step, however, the paper is concerned with showing the relation between workers' levels of dissatisfaction and their state of participation in each of the three phases.

*Table-8: Crosstab between Workers' Levels of Dissatisfaction and their Participation in Protest [in %]*

Levels of Dissatisfaction	Participation in Protest								
	Decision Phase			Expansion Phase			Contraction Phase		
	Discussion	Litigation	Sudden Protest	Peaceful Protest	Internal Violence	Street Violence	Unconditional Contraction	Conditional Contraction	No Contraction
Level-1	28.16	-	81.70	28.10	8.70	82.07	88.46	12.50	11.54
Level-2	-	22.60	87.25	51.00	64.58	85.71	71.42	-	28.58
Level-3	-	33.76	96.89	56.32	58.00	91.68	97.36	-	2.64
<b>Total Respondents: 142</b>									
<b>Multiple Response</b>									

It is to be mentioned first that there is a significant similarity of data that are sorted in Tables 7 and 8. For instance, Table-8 also shows that in decision phase, almost all the workers irrespective of their levels of dissatisfaction—level-1, 2, and 3—participated in sudden start of protest while a handful of them were engaged in discussion or litigation. The same scenario is found in the expansion phase where most of them are engaged in street violence while 28.10% and 8.70% of the workers with low level of dissatisfaction are involved in peaceful protest and internal violence respectively. In fact, a difference happens in terms of those who are at secondary level of dissatisfaction whose 51.00% and 64.58% are engaged in peaceful protest and internal violence respectively. It also shows that a large number of workers with high level of dissatisfaction took part in peaceful protest and internal violence whose percentage is 56.32% and 58.00% respectively. However, a dramatic recession in their participation is seen in the contraction phase where almost all of them—irrespective of their levels of dissatisfaction—participated in sudden contraction while a handful of them were continuing the protest as shown in the last cell.

### 6.3 Gap between Workers' Tendency and Participation

The above discussion indicates a clear gap between the workers' tendency and participation in terms of engagement in protest. It has already been shown that most of the workers with low and secondary



levels of engagement in association were in favor of discussion in the decision phase. But in terms of participation, almost all of them are engaged in sudden start of protest. The same has happened in expansion phase where almost all of them are engaged in street violence, although they were in favor of peaceful protest. It is also a matter of concern that although those workers at lower levels of engagement in association had the tendency to continue the protest—once it has started—they are not showing such participation as represented in sections 6.1 and 6.2. The above discussion also clarifies that only the workers with higher level of engagement in association can maintain balance between their tendency and participation while those at lower level can't.

Thus, there arise questions that “*what causes the workers to engage in violent protest while they have no tendency to do so?*” And similarly, “*what restrains the workers from continuing the protest while they have the tendency to continue?*” All of these factors, however, will be dealt with in the next section.

### 6.4 What Causes the Gap between Tendency and Participation?

This section is concerned with revealing the factors that affect a worker's personal decision for action or inaction. For this, answers of the respondents from open-ended questions were used those were basically concerned with identifying the factors that influence a workers' own decision in terms of engaging in or refraining from protestation and was answered by the respondents at their free will. All the answers given by the respondents can be set into four categories which are shown in the following table with the percentage of respondents;

Table-9: Factors that affect a worker's personal decision for action or inaction

Factors	Membership Obligation	Interdependence	Fellow-Feelings	Following Others
Percentage of Respondents	93.26%	45.20%	34.38%	11.16%
Total Respondents: 126 Multiple Response				

Table-9 shows that most of the workers [93.26%] regard membership obligation as a factor that affects their personal decision for action or inaction. Besides, interdependence is considered as an influencing factor by the second highest of respondents—45.20%—while 34.38% of them answer that their fellow-feeling to each other affects their personal decision. Also there are some workers [11.16%] who participate in the protest just in following others—they feel that since lots of workers participate in the protest, they should follow them.

This conforms, however, to the theoretical framework that was offered where it was argued that people's engagement in association binds them into an organizational network within which interpersonal relationship, fellow-feelings and interdependence are cultivated. Since all these tasks are performed through leader-member exchange, it entails what Hahrie Han (2014) calls 'membership-obligation' in which general members remain obliged to follow the instructions provided by the organizational leaders. Such obligation often influences a member's personal decision for action or inaction as is the case in Table-9, where most of the workers [93.26%] feel that they have organizational obligation to obey their leaders and to implement whatever those leaders decide. Thus there is a significant correlation between workers' engagement in association and their state of protestation.<sup>7</sup>

## **7. Critical Analysis of the Research Findings**

In the previous sections, particular attention has been put to indicate the gap between workers' tendency and participation and to analyze the factors that cause the gap so that the relevance of the theoretical framework can be traced. Drawing on all these above, however, there is some general learning.

### **7.1 Job Dissatisfaction**

Dissatisfaction matters. Workers' dissatisfaction is significantly related with their engagement in protestation. Such evidences are also found in FGDs when some of the participants told that sometimes their dissatisfaction becomes so intense that they can be easily mobilized by labour leaders to engage in violent protest, although it was not their personal preference.

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7 Such evidences are also found from in-person interviews with the KIIs.

## **7.2 Inevitable Obligation**

Obligation outdoes dissatisfaction. This research comes up with a major finding that almost all the participants regard their sources of dissatisfaction as something caused by their personal inabilities, i.e. lack of academic knowledge, lack of institutionally recognized working efficiency, absence of alternative source of income, and so on. They also acknowledge in FGDs that despite a lot of problems, they are now better than they previously were and thus they do not want to get involved in any violent activities against the owners who pay them wages. Nevertheless, being the members of labour organizations—where organizational leaders are highly powerful having affiliation with national and international politics—they get stuck into systematic obligations. Besides, within such organizational network, they are interdependent and are trained and asked to follow the organizational instructions as provided by the leaders.

## **7.3 Intimidated Decisions**

Association influences workers' personal decisions, which leads them to suffer the costs of both action and inaction. For instance, workers have to suffer the costs of action in both decision and expansion phases of movement as they themselves have to actualize the protest while not willing to do so. On the other hand, they also have to suffer the costs of inaction in the contraction phase because most of the workers opine that once they have manifested their protest and the owners also identified the protesters, it is no better for them to fall back. Because, in their view, such recessive strategies make them more losers in many respects.

## **7.4 Trivial Influence**

Minority decides, majority suffers. The number of workers having high level of engagement in association is very poor. But in practice, they are the most influential having close relationship with high-profile leaders, national political personalities, international buyers, law-enforcing agencies and so on. Thus, they take the decisions in every phase of protestation while general workers remain the victims.

## **7.5 Dilemma of Unity**

The workers suffer from ‘dilemma of unity’. On the one hand, they are the victims of low payment or mistreatment by their factory owners or mid-level management, which encourages them to be united under an organizational banner. On the other hand, these organizations are more willing to serve their organizational agendas and personal interests than to improve the conditions of the workers. Such engagement in association creates a dilemma for most of the general workers.

## **8. Conclusion**

It can be concluded that workers may have dissatisfaction but it is not the decisive factor that provokes them to be engaged in violent protest. Most often they want to overcome their crisis through discussion or negotiation with the factory owners, not by protest or any kind of violent means. Rather, it is the membership obligation that entails from the dilemma of what Margaret Gilbert (2006) calls ‘membership problem’, which provokes them to be involved in such kinds of destructive protestations. The study is expected to have some theoretical and policy implications. Theoretically it is supposed to contribute to the knowledge of the field by revealing the relation between workers’ engagement in association and their state of protestation. In practice, the findings of this research may help the general workers understand one of their basic strengths which they can utilize to eradicate one of their basic weaknesses and design their steps in favor of their interests. On the other hand, owners as well as government authorities can also think of some policy implications in the sense that these findings have revealed one of the decisive factors behind labour unrests in this productive sector. In this field, however, further studies can be conducted on potential ways through which workers’ dilemma of unity can be eradicated.

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# **Worker's Level of Capability and Involvement in Protest: A Study on RMG Labour Unrests in Bangladesh**

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**Abstract:** *This study, at first, puts light on contemporary situation of unrests in Ready Made Garment (RMG) industry in Bangladesh and finds out that both overt conflict and covert grievances are present in it. Central argument of the study is that level of capability of the workers effect their involvement in protest, where the former is the independent variable while the latter is the dependent one. Review of the existing literature reveals that questions like why only some of the unsatisfied workers go for protests, why all labour organizations do not succeed in organizing protests, are still unanswered. The study contributes to this gap and presents a theoretical framework that capabilities create social support networks that motivate in protest. This study is conducted using correlational method to analyze association between the variables, where both primary and secondary data are used. Major findings of the study include that diverse capabilities are influential factors in the changing industry and that the deprived workers with strength from their social support mechanism continue to rise against the owners.*

**Keywords:** RMG, labour unrest, capability, protest, social support mechanism.

## **1. Introduction**

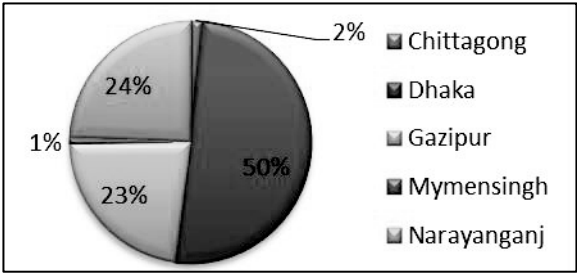
Ready Made Garment (RMG) sector is the leading contributor in case of export oriented industry in Bangladesh. However, the sector faces a number of challenges as well. Along with workplace accidents that claim even hundreds of lives at times and unremitting global market competition from countries like China, Hong Kong, India, and Vietnam, one of the most pressing problems in the RMG sector is labour unrest. Unfortunately, the sector has often faced

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series of unrests and that provides a significant area for research on conflict, particularly labour unrest (Hussain, 2015). Following a relatively less violent period of two years in the sector after the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013, however, a new wave of unrest arose in 2016 when hundreds of garment workers walked out on strike demanding higher wages in several factories across the country (Marriot, 2016). During the time, some significant socioeconomic and sociopolitical changes like the suspension of GSP, the 2014 national elections, and the 2015 political crises took place. It may be presumed that all had impact on the violent events in the RMG sector in 2016. With 55 factories operationally stopped for few days and more than 1000 workers accused of instigation, trespassing, vandalism, and theft, the unrests resulted in 9.36% decline in export earnings of woven garment in July-December period of the year (Akter, 2017). However, in the newspaper survey 2016, it was found that at least 123 labour unrest incidents happened around the country in 2016. The district-wise number and percentage of the incidents are shown in the following table and chart respectively.

Chart-1: Percentages of the Labour Unrest, 2016



[Source: Newspaper survey 2016<sup>2</sup>.]

From the chart, it is evident that Dhaka, Narayanganj, and Gazipur were the three districts where most of the RMG labour unrests occurred in 2016. However, Dhaka tops the list with more than half of the incidences.

A number of researches have been conducted looking for causes behind the unrests, which discover labour dissatisfaction, management inefficiency, national and international conspiracy as

2 Collected from newspaper clippings prepared by.

some of the major causal factors. But in this study, it is intended to focus on another aspect of the problem and in a view to find out whether or not there is an association between level of capability of the workers and the state of their protest. That is the objective of the study.

## **2. Literature Review**

To review the current literature on the issue, relevant documents are categorized into ten distinctive sections under three general areas. These areas focus on the relevant literature on protest and capability as the causal factors behind the labour unrests. It is to be mentioned here that identifying gaps in all the sections of the literature are not within the scope of the study and therefore have not been attempted. Only relevant gaps that are necessary for the research are identified. After that it is tried to find out the overall gaps in the whole literature reviewed and propose what this particular research is intended to offer to fill those gaps.

### **Dissatisfaction**

In their study, Iaffaldano and Muchinsky (1985) argue that workers are less motivated, require costly supervision, and less productive when they are dissatisfied. And less motivated people are usually more conflict-prone. Himi and Rahman (2013) find a significant link between the workers' job dissatisfaction and the occurrence of labour unrests. Their study reveals that workers experience inhuman treatment and insecure working environment in the factories, which hampers their functioning both in workplaces and other spheres of life. They also added denial of opportunity of expression and inhuman treatment by mid-level managers to the list of causal factors. Kamal et al. (2010) in their study confer that the state of industrial relation, working hours and leave policy, safety are not satisfactory to the workers and such dissatisfaction impacts on the labour unrests in the sector. However, Hossan et al. (2012) identify lack of mutual trust between workers and management results in poor relationship between them. It is considered as a major reason of the labour unrests.

### **2.2 Labour Unrests in the RMG Sector**

The basic reason of the labour unrests is that the authorities ignore the rights and privileges of the workers (Islam and Ahmed, 2010).

Referring to Milner's (1994) term 'non-strike action', Gosh et al. (2010) also think that in labour unrests workers take violent actions in response to any/or inadequate action by the managements. Webb (1920) identifies three basic factors behind labour unrests- liberty, equality, fraternity. He argues that employers consider liberty and equality of workers as inconsistent in the existing organizational structure and thus do not encourage fraternity either. It deteriorates the owner-worker and manager-worker relationships that ultimately result in unrests. Islam et al. (2014) add poor life standard and socioeconomic conditions of the workers as major reasons behind the RMG conflicts in Bangladesh. However, Apu (2010) reveals that in the RMG sector of Bangladesh, top-level employees draw more than 100 times monthly salaries than low-level employee. This discrimination causes jealousy, non-motivation, and dissatisfaction in the lower-paid workers and results in labour unrest. Shahiduzzaman (in Khan et al., 2011) argues that an appropriate formal channel to air workers' grievances is absent in Bangladesh and the only avenues open to the RMG workers are street protest, picketing, or surrounding of managers' offices and factories. Hasan et al. (2015) identify another significant reason behind the labour unrests. They think that absence of a tripartite committee formed by the representatives of the government, factory owners, and workers is one of the major reasons behind the labour unrests. Gender discrimination is identified as another major reason behind the labour unrests. Paul-Majumder and Begum (2006) find that women workers cannot really obtain full remunerations and privileges in the industry and it converts into conflict between them and their male counterparts and owners. Faruk et al. (2014) also support this finding. External actors and international conspiracy are yet two other factors behind the unrests (Hossan et al., 2012).

### **2.3 Insufficient Wages**

This section emphasizes on reviewing literature that concerns economic conditions of the members of the working class, particularly the garment workers. Economic conditions usually refer to the financial position and thus the economic capabilities of individuals, societies, and countries. But as mentioned, this particular study considers literature on individuals' economic conditions more relevant. However, these individualistic economic conditions may change in line with the economic cycles of

communities, societies, and states. Economic conditions of the RMG workers in Bangladesh can perhaps be best described referring to the study of Keynes (1936). He argues that when effective demand increases, employment increases, but at a wage equal or even less than the existing one. Since unskilled workers are easy to be found in the country, factory owners exploit them (mainly entry level machine operators) economically. As of the study of Tahmina (2006), RMG workers in Bangladesh are underpaid. Owners of the factories are not willing to pay the minimum wage set by the law, which is 5300 Bangladesh Taka (BDT) with 5% of basic salary as yearly increment (Waze Gazette, 2013). Workers dissatisfaction about their salary and other financial benefits cut short their economic capacity and that creates grievance.

## **2.4 Healthcare**

The concept of health is at the center of human capability. Health is viewed as a condition an individual can cope with his/her needs in. Ruger (2004) argues that the capability view of health includes human agency. Although health affects the ability of exercise agency directly, agency also influences health. The part of his study which is most relevant to this particular research is that Ruger thinks that making individuals capable to exercise their agency enables them to decide which health domains they value most and to choose what health services they would like to consume. The process can and actually does go the other way round too, that means other human agencies (including conflict) also depend on their health facilities and conditions. Nahar et al. (2010) also find healthcare, disease, and hygiene as important factors for the development of socio-economic status of the garment workers. Sikdar et al. (2014) argue that healthcare facilities for the class the garment workers belong to in the society are strikingly questionable. They suggest that 15% of the RMG workers fall seriously sick after joining the industry and do not get necessary healthcare. Himi and Rahman (2013, p.51-52) also find out that the workers experience unhygienic and insecure working environment.

## **2.5 Education**

Nancy and Katherine (2002) identify education as an important factor for the garment workers to achieve working rights and social status. In their study, Ahmed et al. (2013, p.72) also think that un-fulfillment of educational demands of the family members, particularly children, is a factor behind the labour unrests in the RMG sector.

## **2.6 Political Participation**

Political instability, intervention, and participation are also found in some existing literature as relevant to the discussion of human capability and labour unrests. According to Deneulin (2006), membership to community is constitutive of human selves and solidarity and responsibility are at the heart of human freedom and capability. Freedom acquires strength when individuals commit themselves to the service of human community and participate in activities that promote common good, the study argues. Deneulin also adds that political participation shapes human capabilities and for that adequate institutional framework is required. Nussbaum's (2000) list of capabilities suggests that being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life, having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association are important human capabilities.

## **2.7 Human Capabilities**

Capability of a person is related to his/her ability to lead a good and desired life. How they are and what they do actually define how much capable they are. A person's ability to lead life in a favorable way depends on how he/she pursues the activities of life, which means how the person functions. Aristotle considers life as in a sense of activity (in translation by Ross, 1980). In the same book he writes that the good of human beings are linked with the functions of them. Although the Aristotelian theory goes much beyond this particular issue, his view of seeing the quality of life in terms of valued activities and the capability to accomplish the activities relates much to the issue. Adam Smith (1776), the great moral philosopher and the founder of modern Economics categorizes human functionings into two particular sections- elementary and complex. According to Smith, getting adequate nourishment and enjoying usual movements are examples of elementary functionings

while achieving self-respect and participating in community activities are that of the complex ones. He argues that though precise commodity needs may vary from society to society these functionings constitute person's being and evaluate his/her well-being. Moreover, Karl Marx, while explaining his programme of reformulation of the foundations of political economy (1844), stressed on fulfilling the needed human activities as the indicator of success of human life. He also said that totality of human life-activities is an inner necessity like all other needs. However, Nobel laureate, Amartya Sen also suggests that person's capability is related to his/her ability to live a desired and good life (1980). He argues that human capability is related to their quality of life. He pursues the 'capability approach' that evaluates the quality of life to assess the capability to function. He defines human capability in terms of a set of 'beings and doings' and takes being in good health and having loving relationships as examples. In addition to that, Sen by 'capabilities' refers to not only 'functionings' but also bundles of the same that person has the freedom to choose from to achieve the life he/she values (1985). Heckman and Corbin (2016, p.510) also support Sen's CA in a way that capabilities create resources and freedoms. These resources include opportunities to acquire skills as well, add Nordhaus and Tobin (1973, pp.514-520). Adapting to changes (Grant, 1988) and critical thinking (Mohasundaram and Chandrasekar, 2014) are two such skills. However, in their work (2009) Smith and Seward argue that the concept of capability may not always be individualistic; it has social aspects as well. Capabilities are constituted by societies and individuals together.

## **2.8 Social Support Mechanism**

Development of capabilities is a dynamic process and it makes individuals work together. According to Sen (1985), capabilities are ability to achieve, which relates to functions and functioning indicates an environment where individuals constantly interact. Therefore, the process of developing and exercising capabilities establishes a system of individuals who are pursuing similar capabilities together. Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) further illustrates that these capabilities are identifiable and specific processes such as knowledge creation, strategic decision making, and alliance formation. Zollo and Winter (2002) further adds to it



that capabilities are stable pattern of collective activity. However, social support theory also argues that in a social support mechanism, people seek four particular types of support—emotional (like empathy and trust), instrumental (like tangible aid and services), informational (suggestions and information), and appraisal (like feedback and affirmation)—to share life experiences and to cope with social events (House, 1981) and for that people communicate with each other and build relationships.

## **2.9 Collective Capabilities**

Sen's CA approach is criticized for being limited to individual capabilities because collectivities in human capabilities are also prevalent in the world. People have always showed the tendency to combine their capabilities because it is generally perceived that they create greater impact. Tripp (2010) argues that creating capabilities is a process that requires several agents and their agency, which means that it is essentially a collective approach. In line with the argument, it can be said that any creation of capability needs a prior collective functioning and collective functioning is performed in a network. According to Pelenc et al. (2015), individuals first interact with each other and then act as a collective actor to use their collective capabilities. However, Ibrahim (2011) comments that particularly poor and working class people act together to expand and thus they form networks that make them able to exercise collective capabilities. Networks offer collective freedoms and produce collective agency and Ibrahim (2011) adds that collective actions and institutions form a framework of collective capabilities. Stewart (2006) argues that formation and quality of groups are instrumental to new capabilities and groups play much important role in influencing people's choices and values. Collective capabilities transform individualistic values and make choices like starting, joining, or even refraining from protests available. Trani (2011) states that collective capabilities like participation in group and community affairs surpass individual basic capabilities in time of deprivation.

## **2.10 Capability as a Factor behind the Labour Unrests**

Sen's (1999) CA links capability and freedom in line with the development discourse. He argues that freedoms are not only the primary ends of development but also its principal means. He

continues that development requires major sources of ‘unfreedom’ as well and states that poor economic opportunities, systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities, intolerance, over-activity of repressive authorities, and tyranny are such sources. They get in the way of human capability and functioning and then protest by the deprived is just a usual consequence. Actors in any conflict face a number of dilemmas. Lawler et al. (1988) argues the conflicting actors must assess the prospects of resolving the conflict both through force and compromise. In order to do that, they weigh the costs of continued conflict against that of accommodation. For that measurement of capabilities of the conflicting actors is necessary. Lawler and associates call it ‘power’, which undeniably fall into the definition of ‘capability’ by Sen (1999).

### **3 Theoretical Framework**

The reviewed literature provides the study some indications that create a number of sequences when combined. Assembling those sequences, we find a complex process. The entire process is not within the scope of the research; it focuses on a certain portion of that. However, in order to offer a theoretical framework, this study goes through some specific steps that are mentioned below.

1. Drawing two key propositions based on the existing literature
2. Explaining the propositions
3. Explaining why and in which context the propositions are valid or invalid
4. Causally linking the propositions
5. Summarizing the propositions

Developing the first proposition starts with the question, ‘how capabilities enable individuals to establish networks’. The process is explained in three phases here.

#### **i. Capabilities create opportunities**

According to Sen’s CA, capabilities make sets of opportunities available to individuals in a wide range of life-relevant outcomes and resources and their freedom to choose from those sets

(Heckman and Corbin, 2016). When capabilities are created, new opportunities offered by societies are available for individuals. Opportunities created by capabilities include non-market benefits like new skills available to acquire, which promote human flourishing (Nordhaus and Tobin, 1973).

## **ii. Capabilities provide skills**

As Grant (1988) refers, capability is the capacity to produce a certain value activity. Capabilities develop in individuals the skill to adapt to changes. Skills like influencing situations also derive from capabilities. Life skills like critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving are skills developed in line with capabilities (Mohanasundaram and Chandrasekar, 2014).

## **iii. Capabilities establish social support mechanisms and networks**

Exercising both their unique and common capabilities, individuals utilize their social support mechanism and build networks from it basically for instrumental and informational support (Zollo and Winter, 2002). In this process, as Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) add, individuals identify their common capabilities, form alliances, and make strategic decisions.

Therefore, discussing the three abovementioned arguments derived from the reviewed literature, first proposition of the study is offered as follows.

***Proposition-1: Capabilities create opportunities for individuals and by taking the opportunities individuals develop some skills including that of utilizing the social support mechanisms to establish networks.***

In explanation of the proposition, it will be sensible to say that the relationship between capabilities and opportunities is complementary. Individuals become capable when they take proper opportunities and these capabilities produce further opportunities. Opportunities make scope for individuals to develop various skills including that of adapting to changes, influencing people and situations, taking right and beneficial decisions on time etc.

Everyone in a society, no matter skilled or unskilled, has a social support system. But an individual skilled in the way knows how to utilize the social support mechanism and build a network of individuals he/she can work with and benefit from.

Now, second proposition of the study concerns ‘how networks enable individuals to engage in or refrain from protests’. The process is explained in two phases here.

#### **i. Networks produce collective capabilities**

When individuals build networks, as Pelenc et al. (2015) argues, they act as collective actors and pursue their collective capabilities. Actually, creating capabilities itself is a collective process because it requires agency pursued by several agents (Tripp, 2010). However, this networking tendency is much more prevalent in the working class of society (Ibrahim, 2011).

#### **ii. Collective capabilities influence protests**

When a community or group is dissatisfied and aggrieved due to deprivation on them, their collective capabilities surpass their individual capabilities (Trani, 2011) and ensure better back-up for them. Wood (2013) also thinks that in time of protest or rebellion, individuals depend on collective capabilities because they believe that collective capabilities would produce greater impact.

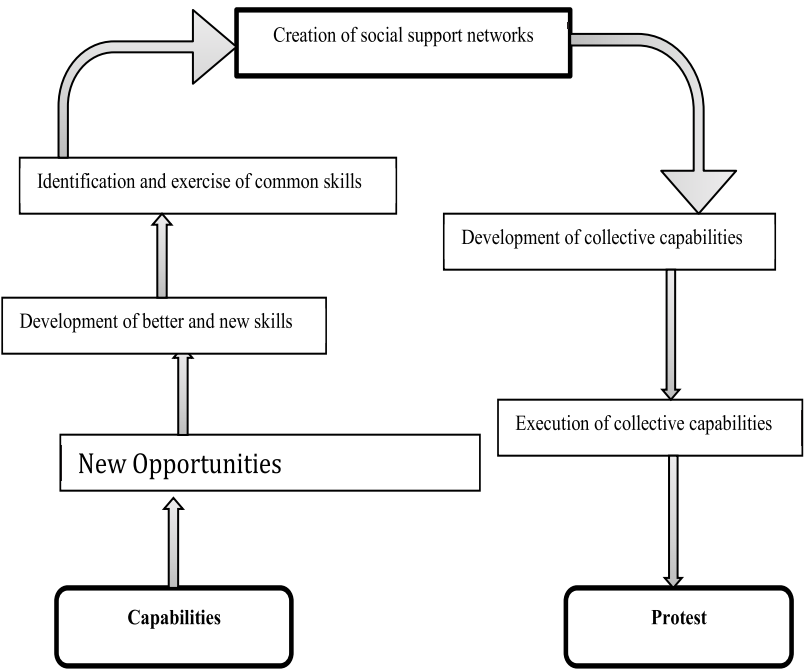
Therefore, discussing these two arguments derived from the reviewed literature, second proposition of the study is offered as follows.

***Proposition-2: Networks produce collective capabilities that lead individuals to protests.***

However, this proposition is also contextual. Usually networks create collective capabilities but that also depends on the effective formation and functioning of the network. There might be networks as well where the members prefer to pursue diverse individual capabilities instead. Moreover, not always collective capabilities lead to protests. Contending issues might relate to a particular group or even an individual and the network might not be interested to execute its collective capabilities in the specific unrest.

Building on propositions 1 and 2, however, the following theoretical framework is offered in this study.

Diagram-1: How Capabilities Lead to Protest



The figure shows theoretical framework of the research. Here, capabilities are the independent variable, which lead to engagement or nonparticipation in protestation. The process indicates that capabilities create new opportunities that include that of developing better and new skills. Skilled individuals tend to identify and then exercise their common skills, which eventually create networks among them, which is the intermediate variable of the study. When individuals pursue their common capabilities in networks to gain better output, collective capabilities are developed. Collective capabilities assure them of greater impact in time of struggle. This ultimately results in either engagement or nonparticipation in protests, and that is the dependent variable of the study.

#### **4. Methodology**

Having known that there are a number of methods to conduct a research in order to understand the phenomenon, the correlational study method is applied for this particular research, which means to study whether an increase or decrease in one variable corresponds to an increase or decrease in the other. According to the hypothesis, this study predicts that it is a positive correlation, which means an increase in the independent variable leads to a corresponding increase in the dependent variable and a decrease in the independent variable leads to a corresponding decrease in the dependent variable. But it is considered very importantly to mention that correlation does not imply causation in any way. Both primary and secondary data are used in the study. Six dailies, namely the Daily Ittefaq, the Daily Jugantar, the Daily Kaler Kantho, the Daily Prothom Alo, the Daily Samakal, and the Daily Sangbad are reviewed and every article of all 366 (2016 was a leap year) days of the year in these newspapers are reviewed also, which related to the RMG sector. Besides, Government journals (like Bangladesh Economic Review), BILS labour journals (like Shram Sangbad, Labour, Nabeender Chokhe Shram etc.) and different books, book chapters, journal articles, online news portals are also reviewed. Secondary data about labour unrests in Gazipur, Dhaka, Narayanganj, Mymensingh and Chittagong are collected. For primary data, 100 workers are interviewed, two FGDs are arranged (each consists of 10 participants), and interviewed 10 key informants (KIIs of two factory owners, three labour leaders, two government officials, two BILS labour specialists, and one BGMEA labour specialist).

#### **5. Findings and Analysis**

Data of the research are analyzed in two specific sections. The first section deals with the univariate analysis that means basic distributions of the respondents and the second section deals with the bivariate analysis that means the potential association between workers' level of capability and their involvement in protest.

## **5.1 Univariate Analysis: General Status and Opinions of the Workers**

In the data set, most of the respondents were male. Only one third of the respondents were female. Data from both of the FGDs also support the statement that number of male respondents in the RMG sector is increasing considerably. Almost half of the respondents have studied up to the primary level. Majority of the respondents joined this profession because the previous jobs were worse. Almost equal number of respondents joined the sector because they could not find any other job. Notably, almost one fifth of the respondents said that they were motivated by others and did not even know the potential consequences. 40% of the respondents felt happy about their statuses working in the RMG sector. They thought that their present statuses were better than before. But there were three other groups, each containing 11% of the respondents who thought that their statuses were very good, unchanged, and very bad respectively. 12% respondents said their status were bad after joining the sector. This statement was also supported by data gathered from the FGDs. In both FGDs, workers did not express any wish of changing their present profession. Actually almost two thirds of them, were satisfied with their job with different responsibilities in the sector. 72.7% were dissatisfied with their personal status. Interestingly, no respondent was dissatisfied comparing his/her status with that of the owners. Data from KII-8 (Appendix-3) also supports the statement. The BILS labour specialist also thought that there is a clearly wide difference in the statuses of owners and workers in the sector and the workers have somewhat accepted it. They just claim their demands to be fulfilled. More than four fifths (86%) of the respondents got their over-time remunerations, increments, bonuses regularly. 14% of the respondents said that they did not get it on regular basis. 88% of the respondents were given their financial benefits on time. Only 12% said that they had dues in their factories. An alarming fact is that only 13% respondents took balanced diets and the other 87% were deprived of this very basic need. In the FGDs too, the participants said that they have been on extremely imbalanced diets. A gross majority of the respondents, 82.3%, lived in tin-shed buildings while 17.7% lived in ten-shed houses with earth floor. No

respondent could afford to live in buildings. 92% of the respondents shared their kitchens with other families. Participants in the FGDs also talked about this issue. They said that kitchen sharing is one of the major problems in their lives. They often fail to cook and take meal on time because of it. 97% of the respondents were able to get hospitalized when fallen seriously sick. But here the data from KII-6 and FGDs slightly differ from this statement. In that set of data, the informant and the participants said that not this much gross majority could get hospitalized. Health insurance is a vital indicator of capabilities related to health. 88% of the respondents did not have any health insurance. Data from KII-I and II, and FGD-1 also support the statement. The key informants (labour leaders) and the participants (RMG workers) said that accidents like breaking out of fire and machinery accidents are common in the factories and without health insurance most of the workers and their families are unsafe and insecure physically and financially. 73% of them, to be exact, could afford to provide education to their family members, while 27% of them could not. For example, 92% of the respondents were not used to reading newspapers regularly. Besides, 84% of the respondents did not watch news on television regularly. Data from FGD-2 (Appendix-4) also show that more respondents had access to television than to newspapers. They also said that they generally watched news on television in neighbors' houses or at tea stalls at night after office. 70% respondents did not vote in any general election. Only 30% of them have that experience. 60% respondents did not take part in any political program of a political party, while 40% of them did. But data from KII-10 (Appendix-3) and FGD-1 (Appendix-4) show that the real rate of political participation is somewhat higher. They stated that more than half of the workers participated in programs of the political parties, particularly the ruling party. Approximately 57% of the respondents were partially satisfied with their economic, social, and political capabilities. Approximately 12% and 31% of them were satisfied and dissatisfied respectively. 86% of them thought that increased capabilities create new opportunities in life. In the FGDs as well, participants said that they try to increase their capabilities so that new opportunities would come to their lives. All the respondents thought that new opportunities create scope for developed and new



skills. Almost all (99%) respondents connected and share experienced with workers of similar skills. FGD-2 also finds out that this statement is true. They said that they generally discuss about problems and share experiences during lunch hours in the factories and after office. The RMG workers live in same or nearby neighborhoods and they socially gather in evenings and weekends generally. 71% respondents did not have membership in any labour organization. But, all the KIIs and FGDs showed that this might not be totally true. The RMG workers often try not to disclose their labour organization memberships because of fear. However, 75 respondents also did not answer this question, which again indicated to their fear about the membership. 80% valid respondents were just solidarity members, 12% were trade union members and 8% of them had the desire to build organizational career. Almost all the respondents recognized that there are networks of workers in the RMG industry. In the FGD too, they were confident recognizing it. Also, all the respondents thought that the networks of workers increased the capabilities of them. 98% of them thought that the increased capabilities strengthened them more to protest. 64% respondents heard about the unrests and 36% said that they did not know about the unrests. The KIIs and FGDs, on the other hand, revealed that almost all the workers knew about the incidents but many of them were afraid of admitting that. 47% respondents said that they had come to know about the unrests from media, 22% while they were in the labour organization meetings, 22% from other sources, and 9% heard about the unrests from colleagues who themselves were involved in the protests. But in the FGDs, participants informally said that most of them came to know about the potential or already happening incidents either from their participating colleagues or from labour organizations. Most the labour unrests, 96.9% to be exact, ended in less than 03 days and only 3.1% prolonged more than that. However, the KII and FGD data also support the information. 65% respondents observed the unrests from their own factories, 22% observed them from the crowds or processions of protesting workers, 8% from the roadsides, and 5% from areas of the affected factories. Data from the KIIs and FGDs added that the percentage related to the protesting workers' crowds and processions might be higher than it

is here. 59% respondents participated in the protests and 41% said they did not participate. But, the KIIs and FGDs found out that the percentage of non-participants could be lower than it is here.

**5.2 Bivariate Analysis: Relation between Level of Capabilities and Involvement in protest**

This study has examined the effects of the following independent variables of the dependent variable- involvement in protest. The independent variables here are- present status of worker, worker’s attitude about the relationship between increased capabilities and involvement in protest, and membership in labour organization.

The analysis starts with testing the relation between the present status of worker with the involvement in protest. A total of 85 out of all the 100 workers responded in this respect.

Table-1: Relation between Present Status and Involvement in Protest

Present Status of Worker	Involvement in Protest			Chi Value	μ (asymptotical significance)
	No	Yes	Total		
Very Good	4 (36%)	7 (64%)	11	19.240	.001
Good	19 (41%)	27 (59%)	46		
Unchanged	4 (36%)	7 (64%)	11		
Bad	5 (36%)	7 (64%)	12		
Very bad	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	5		
Total	33 (39%)	52 (61%)	85		

As the p-value is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there exists relation between present status of worker and the involvement in protest.

Now the relation between worker’s thought that increased capabilities create new opportunities and the involvement in protest is tested. All of the 100 workers responded in this respect.

Table-2: Relation between New Opportunities Created by Increased Capabilities and Involvement in Protest

Increased Capabilities Create New Opportunities	Involvement in Protest			Chi Value	$\mu$ (asymptotical significance)
	No	Yes	Total		
Yes	35 (41%)	51 (59%)	86	0.002	.032
No	6 (43%)	8 (57%)	14		
Total	41 (41%)	59 (59%)	100		

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there exists relation between worker's thought that increased capabilities create new opportunities and the involvement in protest.

At this point, testing the relation between worker's membership of labour organization and the involvement in protest is done. All of the 100 workers responded in this respect too.

Table-3: Relation between Membership of Labour Organization and Involvement in Protest

Membership of Labour Organization	Involvement in Protest			Chi Value	$\mu$ (asymptotical significance)
	No	Yes	Total		
Yes	7 (24%)	22 (76%)	29	0.623	.016
No	34 (48%)	37 (52%)	71		
Total	41 (41%)	59 (59%)	100		

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there exists relation between worker's membership of labour organization and the involvement in protest.

Finally, the relation between worker's thought that increased capabilities give him/her greater strength to protest and the involvement in protest is tested. Here too, all 100 workers responded.

Table-4: Relation between Greater Strength to Protest and Involvement in Protest

Increased Capabilities Give Greater Strength to Protest	Involvement in Protest			Chi Value	$\mu$ (asymptotical significance)
	No	Yes	Total		
Yes	36 (43%)	51 (57%)	89	1.418	.034
No	5 (27%)	8 (73%)	11		
Total	41 (41%)	59 (59%)	100		

Finally, since the p-value is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there exists relation between worker's thought that increased capabilities give him/her greater strength to protest and the involvement in protest.

## 6. Major Findings

There are many causes behind labour unrests in Bangladesh but capability is the main causal factor because until and unless the workers are capable, they do not start or join any protest. Generally economic abilities are treated as capability but freedoms, functionings, and therefore, achievements in social and political spheres of life are equally, sometimes even more, important capabilities. Salary, bonus, increments, over-time remunerations do not make the workers capable enough until they are socially empowered and politically included.

Many RMG workers lack the confidence to apply their capabilities just because of the absence of a properly functional working-class-friendly support mechanism in the society. Social and political elites deliberately exploit the workers and hinder any development of collective capability in the workers. Because they fear that collective capabilities of workers might challenge their dominance. And interestingly, on the other hand, workers are aware of that. But they lack both resources and confidence to build collective capabilities.

RMG industry is continuously facing new challenges. Regional competitions are improving gradually. The country is improving in a number of socioeconomic indicators and more educated workers are joining the industry nowadays. But international expansion of the industry has not been satisfactory for almost a decade. Accidents like Rana Plaza collapse, Tazreen Garments incidents have made problems for the international image of the industry.

Despite all discriminations and deprivations, general workers of the industry are making progress in terms of socioeconomic and sociopolitical indicators. They are taking part in the technological revolution and much more conscious than before. But politicization of the labour organizations is a big problem in this respect.

## **7. Conclusion**

Finally, it could be said that this research has both theoretical and practical implications. It contributes to the theoretical knowledge of the field by revealing the association between the workers' level of capability and their involvement in protest. Implication of this finding might not be limited to the RMG industry of Bangladesh; it is perhaps generally application in almost all sectors. Practical implications of the research include that it might help the workers better understand their potentials and encourage them to obtain new capabilities as well as give the owners and labour leaders a reorientation about workers' problems and demands. The research may have some policy implications for the concerned government authorities. However, definitely there is a wide scope for further research in the field. One further study may possibly find out a causal relationship between capabilities and protest.

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# Circular Labour Migration: Determinants issues in the context of Bangladesh

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***Abstract:** Bangladesh is called as over populated country. She has much manpower but most of them are unskilled. In every year, Bangladesh sends many labourers in various countries in the world and gains foreign remittance. After analyzing the data from the questionnaire survey, it has found that maximum labourers are not satisfied with their salary where they first move in. Consequently, they try to come back to their native country and move out again to another country. For their movement, they get help from the overseas recruiting agencies. This is how the labourers try to move and send remittance as well as bring human capital for the country. This remittance makes important contributions to accelerate economic growth of the country, like addressing unemployment problems, poverty reduction, and increasing foreign exchange reserves. The study will find out the reasons and causes of circular labour migration which are considered as determinant.*

**Keywords:** Circular Labour Migration, Movement, Determinants.

## 1.0 Introduction:

The term ‘Circular Labour Migration’ (CLM) consists of two issues: those who move back and forth and migration. Migration can be considered as an investment of human capital, as the workforce is employed in the most effective way. Circular labour migration is the term where labour movement exists between home country and one or more countries of destination. Circular migration is the way to channel of human mobility. Most of the migrations happen for economic and social purpose. By the political and economic agents, CLM is increasing day by day in the world. Geographical factors

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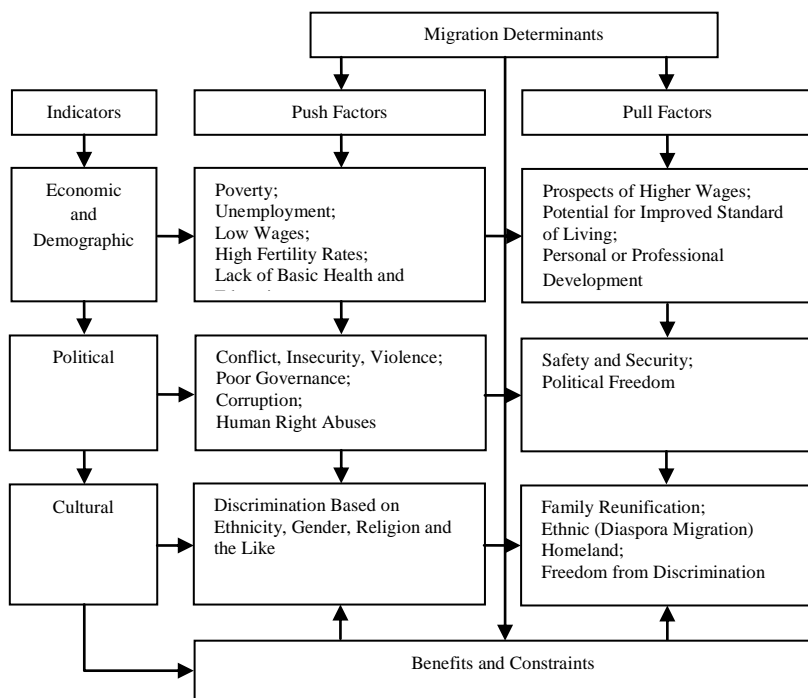
have a great impact for circular labour migration. Circular migration describes to be the condition in international movement policy. A diversity of policy-makers within national and international institutions is supporting procedures to aid the movement of migrants' back and forth between their home countries and abroad. Their prime objective is the circular labour migration systems could be run in ways that bring well-known 'win-win' situation. The outputs for accepting countries stem from fulfilling labour market shortages in the destination countries, and through remittances for development in the countries of origin, and for migrants themselves through getting employment and skill development. However, there are some challenges for circular labour migration. The national and international policy of circular labour migration is being aided as a possible solution to meet the movement challenges.

In developing countries, circular migration is widely seen among the low and mid level skilled Labour. With increasing number of CLM, border crossing social network relation is increasing largely day by day from developing country to developed country in both legal and illegal channel. In Bangladesh, circular labour migration has been happening since 1971. Nearly nine (09) million labours have been sent in around 160 countries till now from Bangladesh as the migrant workers. Bangladeshi migrant workers normally choose the countries of the Middle East, Northern Africa and Southeast Asia-particularly to Malaysia and Singapore for destinations. Bangladesh earns hefty amount of foreign remittances each year from circular migration.

The aim of the proposed study is to find out issues relating to the conceptual issues of circular migration and its broader implications for migrant rights and protection, especially those relating to low skilled workers or labourers. Foreign remittance comes from abroad by the migrant workers. Circular labour migration is the movement for better earnings. Against this backdrop, they should have proper legal right and protection. To analysis this issue, current legal, political, social, and economic frameworks need to be reassessed.

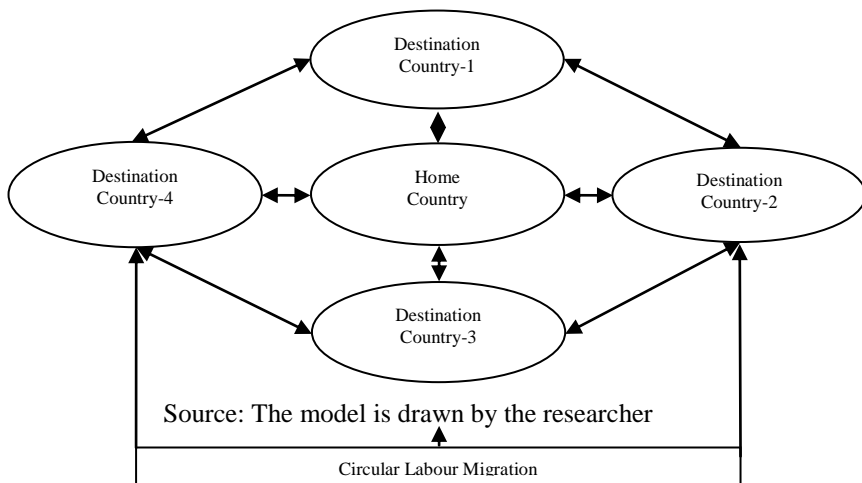
## **2.0 Conceptual Framework and Literature Review**

Generally the concept of CLM is the decision to return to the home country after spending a certain period of time in the host country and going again to another country for seeking better opportunities. In addition, with the idea of return migration is at odds with the perceived impression of migration which is seen as a strategic choice by individuals to move from a low-wage, high unemployment country to the one where has comparatively higher wages and employment rates. Migrant labours naturally remain home and abroad until retirement due to receive benefits. So, the increase of CLM is quite natural in the world. Migration has investigated the possibility of return migration before the end of the individual's active life cycle by analyzing behavioral and aggregate population models to identify the determinants and constraints factors of migration. The conceptual framework of the study is a composite one, taking up specific analytical frameworks for the problems addressed in each paper. During the past three decades, significant evidence has been derived concerning migrant characteristics, migration patterns, and the major causes of circular labour migration. Circular migration is historically the way of life in Bangladesh. An attempt has been made to review the article, research paper, conference paper, books, and valuable empirical studies on the determinants, benefits, and constraints of CLM. A summary of the literature reviewed is identified for searching the research gap which is formed the basis for the development of the conceptual model. From the determining of migration, push and pull factors are considered. From the model, the push and pull factors are divided into three categories. Those are economic and demographic, political and finally cultural. Under the economic demographic category, push factors are poverty, unemployment, low wages, High fertility rates, lack of basic health and education. On the other hand, pull factors are prospects of higher wages, potential for improved standard of living and personal or professional development. Under the political category, the push and pull factors are conflict, insecurity, violence, poor governance, corruption, human right abuses, safety, security and political freedom. From the cultural point of view, the push and pull factors are discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, religion, family reunification, ethnic (Diaspora Migration), homeland, and freedom from discrimination.



Source: The model is drawn by the researcher following (Courgean 1995) and (Reubens 1983)

In the context of Circular Labour Migration the conceptual model is different from the migration model. The model is shown below.



From the model it is observed that people move from their home country to destination country one, two three or four. Then they may return to home country or move another destination country. So, conceptually circular migration is considered as moving from home country to destination country, destination country to home country, again home country to another destination country, destination country to destination country.

According to the EU Commission's Report (2011), generally growth in immigration after 2004 was rather limited and was attributable mainly to the increases in Austria, Ireland and the United Kingdom. It also suggests that there is no conclusive evidence on a direct link between the Determinants, Benefit, and Constraints of migration and the transitional arrangements.

An article named a model of labour migration and urban unemployment in less developed countries (1969) formulated an economic behavioral model of rural urban migration which represents a realistic modification and extension of the simple-wage differential approach commonly found in the literature.

The paper "Circular migration patterns and determinants in Nairobi slum settlements" by Donatien Beguy, Philippe Bocquier, Eliya Msiyaphazi Zulu (2010) measures migration flows and determinants in two slum settlements in Nairobi City between 2003 and 2007. A circular migration system is at play whereby the majority of slum dwellers are short-term migrants spending on average less than 3 years in the area. It contributes to the internal migration literature and in particular to the understanding of circular migration in the poorest informal urban settlements.

In a discussion paper "Global Union Research Network" (2011) conducted by existing temporary labour migration programs highlights that they also have some elements of circularity, as in seasonal workers programs where the same workers return for several seasons. Some of the so-called 'best practice' programs, such as the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (CSAWP), have major problems relating to workers' rights in the form of poor conditions of work, denial of freedom of association, and absence of pathways to residence rights, even after long years of work. The claimed success in the form of a high return rate of workers to home countries is because workers are virtually kept captive, as their



continued employment the following season is crucially dependent on recommendations of employers.

G. Battistella (2014) discussed the various understandings and policy models of circular migration, particularly with regard to different skill categories. He provided brief case studies of some national approaches, and discussed the extent to which worker and human rights are affected by circular migration policies. He also discussed evidence on the development impacts of circular migration and the effects for workers, their families and communities, as well as examining which groups might benefit in destination countries. He argued that migration policies are bound to fail if they do not consider the social dynamics and the human side of migration.

Tasneem Siddiqui and Chowdhury R. Abrar (2003) mentioned, in their working paper named “Migrant Worker Remittances and Micro-Finance in Bangladesh” the scope and origin of migrant remittances in Bangladesh. It examines the current role of financial institutions in transferring remittance and macro-economic background against which such transfers takes place. It also evaluates current use of remittance, the characteristics and needs of remittance sending and remittance receiving persons. The study also explores the possible role of micro- finance institutions in attracting, transferring, and administering remittance.

ILO (2015) publication about the homecoming: profiling the returning a migrant worker of Bangladesh has seen a profile of returning migrant worker, reintegration has identified and addressed in provisions of the adoption process. The study revealed that returning migrants often face problem of getting jobs after coming back to the country and often left on their own to face miserable conditions socially, economically and psychologically while reintegrating themselves into society.

Partha S Ghosh (2004) in his book “Unwanted and Uprooted: a political study of migrants, refugees, Stateless and Displaced of South Asia” is the study of migration and human security in South Asia. The book is thoroughly research based and the compilation of a series lecture which the author delivered on the theme ‘cross-border Migration and Regional Security in South Asia’ in the North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong in 2000. In this book Ghosh attempted to underscore the dynamic relationship between the movement of people and the politics of South Asia Region, both in its well as

international settings. The author critically discussed the trends, causes and consequences of cross-border migration of Hindu minority from Bangladesh to west Bengal of India in a broad spectrum but inquisitive manner.

Christian Dustmann (2003) wrote in his article that two diverse approaches to draw the return migration decisions. The first one is to consider the return decision as a vital part of the one-time migration decision. It is the favorable residential location plan over the life cycle. Next is to dispute used for explaining return migration to less rich economies are, for example, location-specific preferences, relative deprivation, and differences in purchasing power between the host and home country currencies, and returns to the human capital mounted up in the host country.

### **3.0 Research Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to explore issues relating to circular migration including its broader implications, and migrant rights and protection, especially those relating to low skilled workers. The specific objectives are-

1. To identify the benefits of CLM for the immigrant households;
2. To explore constraints of CLM in the context of Bangladesh; and
3. To investigate the migrant rights and the conditions to further shed in light on determinants of CLM.

### **4.0 Methodology**

This study is basically qualitative in nature, supplemented by quantitative analysis in a limited scale. The methodology segment comprises major aspects of nature of the study, sample size, nature and sources of data, preparation of data collection tool, and techniques of data analysis.

#### **4.1 Study Area and Population of the Study**

Circular labour migration from Bangladesh is seen all over the country. There are sixty four (64) districts in Bangladesh. From all the districts labours have the movement circularly over twenty (20)

countries in the world. Top five and the bottom five labour sending districts of Bangladesh for overseas employment of labour from the year 2005 to 2018 is selected purposively for proposed study. The top five districts are Comilla, Chattogram, Brahmanbaria, Tangail, Dhaka and the bottom five districts are Khagrachari, Lalmonirhat, Panchagarh, Rangamati, and Bandarban. Migrant people are selected for the study population of the research who moved to and back to home country at least once upon a time.

## 4.2 Sample Size Determination and Distribution of Samples

It is found that the purposively selected 10 districts of highest and lowest overseas employment. The total number of migrant labour is 2654563. From the ten districts, 100 (hundred) migrants are selected randomly. Each district contains 10 (ten) respondents for questionnaire survey. These respondents constitute overseas migrants labours. In some cases, in their absence, their family member, household head or spouse can be taken as respondents.

Respondents of Questionnaire Survey

Sl	High/ Low	District	Migration in year 2005-2018*	Sample size
1	High	Cumilla	833,626	10
2		Chattogram	660,053	10
3		Brahmanbaria	412,235	10
4		Tangail	375,033	10
5		Dhaka	347,731	10
6	Low	Khagrachari	7,361	10
7		Lalmonirhat	6,166	10
8		Panchagarh	4,558	10
9		Rangamati	4,251	10
10		Bandarban	3,549	10
Total				100

\*Source: Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) of labour Ministry of Bangladesh 2018

### **4.3 Data Sources**

There are two types of data sources, one is primary data sources and another is secondary data sources. Both types of sources shall be used for proposed study.

#### **4.3.1 Primary Data**

Primary data is collected from the respondents of the study area using questionnaire survey, and In-depth Interviews, Case Study, Key Informant Interview and Focus Group Discussion.

#### **4.3.2 Secondary Data**

Secondary data collected from various reports, books, journals, working papers, dissertations, research reports, websites of various organizations and newspapers etc.

### **4.4 Data Preparation and Analysis**

After collection of data, it has scrutinized thoroughly and edited manually to remove all types of inconsistencies. Qualitative data has analyzed through inductive reasoning process for drawing appropriate descriptive statistics. Quantitative data, collected through questionnaire survey, analysis has carried out using descriptive statistics. For primary data, the descriptive statistics has been used to explore the existing situation and in some cases to draw inference or prediction of CLM of the proposed study. Quantitative data has also presented by tables, graphs, or charts. Errors and other pitfalls has addressed in compliance with the standard rules accepted by research community.

For finding the association between the variables for socio-economic, political and cultural factors that determined the migration boost up. In this case, we have used chi-square and likelihood ratio test for identifying the association between two categorical variables (Nominal or Ordinal). Migration is a binary or categorical variable. It has two levels. One is migration to Muslim and another is migration to Non-Muslim country.

## 5.0 Migration Distributed for some specific variable as percentages:

In the category of age, between the ages of twenty five to twenty nine, the highest numbers of labour are circulated for migration and its percentage is 42%. On the other hand after the age of thirty five, labours are not interested to move. So, it can be mentioned that young people have interest to move than the old. In the situation of religion, Muslims are more migrated than Non-Muslims. Unmarried people are more migrating than the married people. People are migrating before marriage. The ratio of male and female for migrating is seventy four to twenty six. It has found that Comilla is the highest labour sending district.

**Table 01:** Determining of CLM for various variables

Variables		Percentages
Age	20-24	37
	25-29	42
	30-34	17
	35+	04
Religion	Muslim	94
	Non-Muslim	06
Marital Status	Married	31
	Un-married	59
	Divorce	04
	Widow	06
Gender	Male	74
	Female	26
District	Enterprising	54
	Non-enterprising	46
Educational Status	Below SSC	49
	SSC	42
	HSC	07
	Graduate	02

## 6.0 Binary Logistic Regression (BLR) Model of Migration on Explanatory Variables

Binary logistic regression was fitted considering complexities in migration to Muslim and Non-Muslim country as dependent variable and explanatory variables as the independent variables. The binary logistic regression model is given by:

$$Pr(Y_i = 1) = \frac{\exp(X_i\beta)}{1 + \exp(X_i\beta)} \quad (1)$$

Where,  $Y_i$  is a binary variable that takes a value of 1 for migrated people comes from Muslim country and '0' for migrated people comes from Non-Muslim country.  $X_i$  is a vector of independent variables and  $\beta$  is a vector of unknown parameters. The estimated form of the general multiple variables binary logistic transformation can be expressed as:

$$\ln[P_i/(1 - P_i)] = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_k X_k \quad (2)$$

The odds Ratio (OR) (Exp ( $\beta$ )) in favor of  $Y_i = 1$  together with its 95 confidence interval (CI) were computed for  $X_1, X_2, \dots, X_k$  to indicate explanatory variables that determines on push and pull factors. To test the desired significant level of the estimated coefficients from the binary logistic regression model by Wald Test as follows:

To find if there is a significant slope in the population, we have to test the following null hypothesis:

$$H_0: \beta_0 = 0 \text{ vs } H_a: \beta_0 \neq 0$$

Under the null hypothesis, the test statistic is

$$t = \frac{\beta - \beta_0}{SE(\beta)} \quad (3)$$

Test significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) and  $SE(\beta)$  represents the standard error of estimates.

**Table 06:** Binary Logistic Regression (BLR) Model of Migration on Explanatory Variables

Explanatory Variables	Wald's Test Statistic Value (Z-Value)	P value	OR	95 CI for OR	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Constant	0.32	0.75	1.48	0.13	16.87
Age	-1.50	0.13	0.87	0.72	1.04
Gender	0.53	0.60	1.81	0.20	16.27
Marital status	1.75	0.08	4.49	0.84	24.07
Home district	-0.58	0.56	0.92	0.68	1.23
Family members	-1.81	0.07	0.27	0.06	1.12
Educational qualification	-0.76	0.45	0.67	0.23	1.90
No. of countries worked	0.38	0.71	1.53	0.17	13.78
Income before migration	1.76	0.08	1.00	1.00	1.00
Expenditure before migration	1.90	0.06	1.00	1.00	1.00
Before coming to abroad what was your average monthly savings/deficit?	-1.01	0.31	1.00	1.00	1.00
Before coming to abroad what was your professional position?	-0.62	0.54	0.77	0.33	1.79
If you were a job holder what was your wage amount?	1.76	0.08	1.00	1.00	1.00
What was your first earnings in the home country?	1.75	0.08	1.00	1.00	1.00

How much money did you spend before boarded the plane?	-2.19	0.03	1.00	1.00	1.00
How much have you remitted so far in last one year?	-0.20	0.84	1.00	1.00	1.00
What was the family expenditure before migration?	-2.68	0.01	1.00	1.00	1.00
What is the family expenditure after migration?	-2.03	0.04	1.00	1.00	1.00
What was your monthly income before migration?	1.65	0.10	1.00	1.00	1.00
What is monthly income after migration?	-1.98	0.05	1.00	1.00	1.00
If you have come through registered agent, state the salaries promised?	-2.39	0.02	1.00	1.00	1.00
If you have come through registered agent, state the salaries you got actually?	-1.99	0.05	1.00	1.00	1.00
How much are you asked to pay by your employer/agent to get the work permit?	-2.21	0.03	1.00	1.00	1.00
What is your expectation of salary?	-1.63	0.10	1.00	1.00	1.00

According to the results of binary logistic regression (BLR) model that migration creates complexity on socio-economic, political and



cultural with corresponding to the explanatory variables are Age, Gender, Marital status, Home district, Family members, Educational qualification, How many countries move?, Before coming to abroad what was your average monthly income?, Before coming to abroad what was your average monthly expenditure?, Before coming to abroad what was your average monthly savings/deficit?, Before coming to abroad what was your professional position?, If you were a job holder what was your wage amount?, What was your first earnings in the home country?, How much money did you spend before boarded the plane?, How much have you remitted so far in last one year?, What was the family expenditure before migration?, What is the family expenditure after migration?, What was your monthly income before migration?, What is monthly income after migration?, If you have come through registered agent, state the salaries promised?, If you have come through registered agent, state the salaries you got actually?, How much are you asked to pay by your employer/agent to get the work permit?, What is your expectation of salary? BLR model of migration creates complexity on socio-economic, political and cultural with Wald test, *OR* and 95 Confidence Interval for *OR* is shown by Table 3.19. The *OR* are used to determine whether Muslim and Non-Muslim country ( $OR=1$ ) exposure does not affect odds of migration effect, ( $OR>1$ ) exposure associated with higher odds of migration and ( $OR<1$ ) exposure associated with lower odds of migration. BLR model has been revealed significantly higher *OR* of migration creates complexity in socio-economic, political and cultural with a view to the explanatory variables.

After analyzing of dependent and independent variables we have got statistical result. According to the results of binary logistic regression (BLR) model, circular migration has highly effect in the situation of remittance sending, countries to move, gender, home district and professional position before migration where p value is 0.84, 0.71, 0.60 0.56, and 0.54 respectively. But in the condition of odds ratio is 1.00 for remittance sending which has no effect for circular migration. Subsequently, the odds ratio are 1.53 and 1.81 for countries to move and gender that's indicate the highly effect on probability but insignificant. On the other hand, the odds ratio are 0.92 and 0.77 indicate the low effect on probability for migration and insignificant. When the p value is less than 0.05 at 95% confidence level, then the measurement is significant. The significant situation

contains for the variable of family expenditure, salary promised to get, pay for going abroad and their p value is 0.01, 0.02, and 0.03. They have low effect on migration because their odds ratio is less than 1.00.

## **7.0 Finding**

Economical and demographical factors both in and out migrant labours assigned overcoming poverty for their family is one of the causes behind the migration decision. Economic status by measuring socially is also considered. Higher pays in developed country than the domestic country for the same work is the reason for circulating.

Generally it has been seen that at the young age of male and female are interested to take decision for international migration. Unmarried males are highly motivated to move from the country to country. On the other hand married women are gradually increased for migration. It indicates the gender discrimination that married women suffer in society by physically and mentally.

Given similar geographical and macro level of socio-economic realities the members of some households have not been interested to migrate again after their back to home due to bad experiences. Even they are not interested to go another country. There are some geographical perspectives on circular migration which determinants to move another country. Most of the male migrants are interested to go Saudi Arab whereas female migrants have equal interest to move Saudi Arab and Jordan. In some developed countries like Singapore, Hongkong, Bahrain etc, there is no female migrant labours are found. Generally female are interested to go in the Middle East countries.

By studying migration at different levels of time-space resolution, alternative explanations of international migration and immobility are identified. It is also found that domestic levels of migration shall have different aspects but in international levels of migration has taken a great advantage of economically and in some cases of politically and culturally.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

Circular Labour Migration is determined by recognized distinction in the value of existing or working in two or more geographical places. The places or locations are chosen by the labourers who are moving

circularly in developed countries. Many labours are circulating due to economic factors, security issues and getting better environment. They are searching better wages and security. After a certain period of time, they are migrating from their origin country through crossing national borders and arriving out to other countries in search of better earnings. Migration is just a fair expression of individuals that overcome from adversity and to better standard of living. When it can get support by suitable policies, migration can contribute to comprehensive and sustainable economic growth and development in both home and host communities. These types of movement always happen between one place to another place, one country to another country by the migrant labours. These migrant labours are motivated by many matters like higher pay, better living standard, security of job, regular employment, evaluating their skills etc.

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# Trade Union



# **An insight on the women workers of Bangladesh: Challenges and way forward**

Saheeda Parveen Shikha<sup>1</sup>

In our country, women have been subjected to various forms of discrimination, deprivation, negligence and torture. About half of the country's population is women. We can never build a prosperous and developed modern Bangladesh, while fundamental rights of the half of the population are deprived and degraded. In many ways, attempts are made to deprive women, including women workers. However, responsible for this is mainly the predominantly patriarchal society. In this case, the social and family perspectives also in some cases hinder the progress of women. However, the hope and encouragement is that women are coming forward in various activities today, ignoring all obstacles and tackling them. Women are participating in various occupations, ignoring prejudice and religious restrictions. The contribution of women to economic activities is increasing, which is making significant contribution to national development. Women are also involved in various challenging occupations, including police, army, aviation and signatures of success.

Women's participation in the labour market is also increasing day by day. Women are engaged in various occupations in order to be economically self-sufficient and to meet the financial needs of their families. While the country's constitution, the prevailing labour law, the ILO Convention, etc. all mention the rights and equality of men and women, women workers are often subjected to wage discrimination. In addition, women face various forms of harassment, including sexual harassment in the workplace. Working with honor and dignity often makes it difficult for women. Family, work, work

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paths are not safe for women. Because of maternity leave and child care centers, women workers have to leave workplace many times.

'Since 80's, our country has built large garment industry, where 70-80% women workers are employed. Apart from this industry, a significant number of women workers are employed in the tea garden. More than 51 percent of the total labour force in the tea garden is women. They are forced to live a miserable life because their salaries and other facilities are low. In addition, a large number of women workers work in some other unorganized sectors. Notable among those are construction, livestock, shrimp farming, cleaning, etc. The participation of women in agricultural work is huge. But their work has no recognition. Women in household work are also deprived of all rights. There is a "Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy-2015" for the workers employed in the domestic work, but it is not implemented.

Although the number of women workers in the garment industry is more than 70 percent, they are often employed on temporary basis. There is no post-employment pension or any other financial benefits, as there is no job security. Many factories are open on national holidays or on weekends according to the directions of authorities. Workers are bound to work according to the direction of their authority. Women workers are sometimes fired because most of the garment factories do not have trade union rights. According to the rules, women workers are not allowed for working on night shifts. But in Bangladesh their working hour at garment factories started at 9am and ended at 9pm. In this case, the issue of their safety and labour laws are not given proper importance.

Women, who are earning in some profession, are expected to be better in society and in their families. Their dignity is about to rise. Is it happening in all cases in our country? The attitude of the society towards working women is not so conservative, but again it cannot be said that it is liberal enough. It cannot be said that the status of working women in the family is improved significantly. There has been some additional pressure on them. They have to work outside and maintain the family affairs. Moreover, working women do not have the freedom to spend the money they need. This situation needs to change. There is a need to think about what can be done to solve these problems.

Women workers are exploited as an integral part of the working class of the country, while as women, they are also being subjected to some kind of social exploitation, discrimination and injustice. That is why they have some special problems and demands. Women workers mainly have to work long hours in unhealthy environment. Due to environmental reasons, women workers are seen to be more affected by various diseases including chest diseases and breathing problems. After working in the unhealthy environment for 4/5 years, their health deteriorates and they lost their performance. Lack of separate toilets, being discouraged to drink water frequently for avoiding toilets, and due to lack of adequate drinking water, they become victim of many types of disease.

Apart from equal wages for equal work, the other issues that need to be addressed urgently for women workers are: a. Maternal leave with pay as per government policy, b. Healthy work environment, c. Separate toilet at workplace, d. Daycare centre, e. Safe transportation facilities and f. Accommodation arrangements.

The rights and privileges of women workers mentioned in the Labour Law 2006 are: a. Equal pay for equal work, b. Safe and healthy working environment, c. Maternity leave and child care center, d. Sewerage system etc. The labour law also states that if a woman is employed in an organization, no matter what rank she has, no one at that institution can treat her with indecent or abusive behaviour or that is contrary to the modesty and dignity of the woman.

The rights of the women workers of Bangladesh have to be ensured by implementing the labour law.



## **Publication Policy**

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies - BILS has been working on labour issues since its establishment in 1995. BILS endeavors to uphold the causes of working people and Trade Unions of Bangladesh. Twelve major National Trade Union federations are associated with BILS.

Keeping in view to build a just and democratic society, enabling the workers organizations to play proper role as a major force, BILS emphasizes on capacity building of the Trade Unions through trainings, research and information sharing. Protecting workers rights is the main objectives of BILS and it strives to promote fair and worker friendly policies and Laws in Bangladesh. It also plays the role of a catalyst in building relations between trade unions, civil society and the government on labour market issues.

The ‘Labour’ is a half- yearly journal published by BILS with twin objectives. The first objective is publishing research-based articles on different issues related to the labour, establishment of labour rights, labour welfare, labour laws and the likes. The research articles published are ‘double blind’ peer reviewed. Secondly, it publishes contributions from the labour activists focusing on the above-mentioned issues with the hope that the practical and empirical realities are properly recorded with an archival value. The journal actually seeks to provide an intellectual platform for the national and international scholars, critics, academicians, researchers and activists of labour rights and human rights issues. It aims to promote interdisciplinary research on labour laws, labour policy, occupational health and safety, job market situation, industrial relations, conflict resolution, wages, employment generation, workers migration and social safety net in Bangladesh.

The guidelines to the contributors for the manuscripts preparation and submission are mentioned below:

1. The submitted manuscript should be original and contributing to some new dimensions in the concerned fields noted and is not published or under consideration for publication elsewhere.
2. Each manuscript is first reviewed by the editorial board to judge its thematic suitability for publication, the selected ones are then sent to reviewer(s) for ‘double blind’ peer review. Based on the recommendation of the peer review, the editorial board decides the acceptability, revision or rejection of the manuscript.

3. The paper should include an abstract, which is not more than 150 words.
4. The Keywords used in the article should appear at the beginning and which should not exceed five in number.
5. Manuscripts to be considered for publication must be written in correct English and be submitted in accordance with the prescribed format. Articles must be free from all kinds of grammatical mistakes.
6. The author should retain a copy of the manuscript for his/her own reference.
7. Three (3) copies of article(s) are to be submitted to the Editor of the Journal in font size 12 (twelve) of Times New Roman on A4 size paper.
9. The figures & diagrams should be commensurate with the font size of the article.
10. Manuscripts will be accepted for publication on understanding that they are subjected to editorial revision.
11. The manuscript should be typed, double spaced throughout (excepting the abstract) with wide margin, on one side of the paper only.
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13. The length of the manuscript should not exceed 5000 (five thousand) words and Book Review should not exceed 1000 (one thousand) words.
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# **BILS**

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS was established in 1995. The main objectives of BILS are follows :

- To help in strengthening the democratic functioning of the trade unions and to improve their services towards the society.
- To assist the trade unions in Bangladesh for becoming self-reliant through education, training, research, campaign and communication among them and other social partners as well as civil society.
- To provide various support to the trade union movement in Bangladesh and to participate effectively in the development process of the country.
- To assist the increased participation and representation of women and young workers in trade unions.
- To eliminate all kinds of discrimination between male and female workers.
- To improve occupational health and safety situation and worker's welfare as a whole.
- To brighten the image of the trade union movement in Bangladesh and to increase the organised workforce & consolidate the strength of trade union movement.
- To establish greater unity in labour movement of Bangladesh.
- To undertake multifaceted activities for human resource development.
- To introduce programmes for productivity and good industrial relation.