

Research Article

# Occupational Health and Safety in the RMG Sector of Bangladesh: An Enormous Order

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## Abstract

Today it's a matter of concern to ensure the occupational health and safety in the Ready Made Garments (Hereinafter referred to as RMG) sector of Bangladesh. Some accidents such as the Tazrin Fashion Fire and the Rana Plaza collapse draw attention - to the critical situation the workers of Bangladesh are working in, and to what extent they are at risk. It's a matter of regret and shame that, it has been forgotten that the RMG sector not only contributes to our national economy but also emancipates the poor people from poverty and hunger, This sector also highlights our country in front of the world. Textiles and clothing account for earnings a lot in Bangladesh, where most of these come from the apparel sector. This sector has a crucial role in alleviating poverty in Bangladesh. However, rapid growth, as well as the failure of the Bangladesh government to enforce its building and labour regulations, resulted in worker abuse and unsafe for poorly constructed factories. This series has been elucidated to what extent occupational health and safety covered and their impact, also focuses on how the rights of the worker are violated and analysis the duties and responsibilities of the related persons such as occupiers of the factories, Trade Unions, Collective Bargaining Agent, Inspector, buyer and so on. It also focuses the statutory protection to ensure Occupational health and safety. Finally, put some recommendations or ways out to ensure the safe and sound working conditions of the workers of the RMG sector in Bangladesh.

## Keywords

RMG, Occupational Health, Safety, Occupational Diseases, Occupational Hazardous, Statutory Obligation

## 1. Introduction

The right to life is a fundamental human right of every person, no one will be deprived of so, It's the right of the worker to work in a safe and health-friendly working condition. The employer is under obligation to ensure Occupational health and safety, because the RMG sector of Bangladesh plays a crucial role in expanding the socio-economic development of Bangladesh. Around 20 million people directly and indirectly depend on the RMG sector to lead their lives. Textiles and clothing account for about 85% of the total export

earnings of Bangladesh. Out of which, 76% comes from the apparel sector and contributes to more than 10 % of the gross domestic product. [18]. Here employing more than four million workers. The industry, which includes more than 4,500 factories of various sizes, [18], Despite many difficulties faced by the sector over the past few years, it has engraved an appropriate place in the world market and kept displaying outstanding performance. At present, the readymade garment industry (RMG) is highly globalized. Most countries, partic-

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ularly in developed countries, including the U.K. and other European countries and the U.S.A, Canada, and Japan, are trying to develop not only the textile but also the apparel industry in response to domestic demand and to cover the international market to earn foreign currency [3]. But in case of Bangladesh, it is required to raise the demand to attract large scale of investment. It is global market which playing a vital role to promote the growth and development of the garment industry in Bangladesh. As a result of effective government production, different types of strategies and activities are adopted in various locations. For each stage value has been added according to the legal framework of the trade system. Regardless of the extraordinary growth of the RMG industry and its vivid prospects, so many substantial challenges are yet to be outperformed. Now the major challenge of RMG industry is to ensure a better occupational health and safety condition for a large number of garment workers [22]. The scenario of Bangladesh RMG sector is miserable because their prime concern is to make higher production and greater profit rather than ensuring safety of workers, workplaces, society, and environment. It is a crying need to understand the worth of workers life, pain, and sufferings [22]. Nowadays it's the big challenge of the RMG sector to ensure the best occupational health and safety, otherwise, the buyer will refuse to import the product where there is the blood of workers, and ultimately the economic condition of Bangladesh will collapse very soon, it will be very tough to protract in the global market. The preconditions for sustainable socio-economic development and improvement of quality and quantity of productions are to ensure the health, safety and well-being of working people [2].

## 2. Occupational Health and Safety: An Explanatory Note

The goal of occupational health should always be to promote and maintain the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations; to prevent all types of negligence in workplace which may cause departure from health of the worker; to protect workers from such risk factors which are adverse to health. They should be placed and maintained in an occupational environment adapted to their physiological and psychological capabilities and they should also be well instructed regarding their job nature [2].

Occupational health and safety usually refer to the materials and processes that have the potential not to cause harm to the workers. To protect the worker from every sort of risk including physical and mental health. It's the prime responsibility of the owner of the factories to ensure a safe and healthy working zone for the workers. To ensure the worker's human rights, Occupational safety and health are key elements in achieving sustained decent working conditions and strong preventive safety cultures [3]. To maintain occupational safety and health the authority shall concentrate not only on

working conditions but also its impact on workers in the future. Occupational Safety may be achieved by preventing and controlling occupational diseases and accidents and by eliminating the occupational factors that are hazardous to the health and safety of the workers at the workplace. To attain such objectives multidisciplinary act is needed including the development and promotion of safe working environment and working organizations. It will help to enhance workers' physical, mental, and social well-being [3]. The above analysis regarding occupational safety and health may be identified comprehensively in three heads: 1) occupational accidents, hazards, and diseases; 2) safety equipment, tools, and facilities; 3) workplace environment.

## 3. Underlying Principles of OHS (ILO 1984)

Occupational safety and health is an extensive field where the main objective is to ensure a safe and healthy environment. It covers fundamental principles to guide policies for promotion, action, and management and should emphasize on protection of specific branches of economic activity of specific professions for specific risks such as ionizing radiation, benzene, asbestos, etc. Some key principles work in the field of Occupational Safety and health [22]. These principles and the provisions of international labour standards are all designed to achieve the vital objective of working in a safe and healthy environment [10]. Workers, as well as employers and the Government, must ensure that these rights are protected and must strive to establish and maintain decent working conditions and a decent working environment.

1. All workers have the right to work in healthy and safe working conditions.
2. Conditions of work should be consistent with worker's well-being and human dignity.
3. OHS policies must be established and communicated to all parties concerned.
4. A national system of OHS must be established and maintained, progressively developed, and periodically reviewed.
5. Social partners and other stakeholders must be consulted.
6. OHS programmes and policies must be planned and designed to be safe and healthy.
7. OHS promotes health policy to protect healthy and improved working conditions.
8. Education and training are vital components of a safe, healthy working environment [22].

This is very much necessary to ensure that national laws, regulations, and technical standards prevent occupational injuries, diseases, and deaths. Here state should develop a mechanism and a national programme should be formulated to ensure occupational safety and health. It's the tripartite responsibility.

## 4. Prime Sector of Non Complying with OSH

The prime concern of Chapter iii of the Labour Act 2006 is health, safety, and welfare measures, it emphasizes the welfare of the workers by requiring certain minimum standards of occupiers to keep the workplace safe and healthy [2]. Though there is law but occupier is reluctant about the rights of the worker. The major sectors regarding noncompliance with OSH are as follows...

### a) Non-cleanliness

The owner of the factory is under obligation to keep the workplace clean and free from effluvia arising from any drain or other nuisance [6]. But the real scenario is different because the dust is not moved daily and does not wash as per the rules of law. Hence the worker suffering from physical sickness. The occupier has to compensate when the worker is absent because it will be impossible to produce the product as per target.

### b) Improper ventilation, temperature, and lighting-

Every occupier shall take effective and suitable measures for securing and maintaining every room with adequate ventilation through the circulation of fresh air (Section: 52) [6]. There will be a proper system of lighting natural or artificial which is scientifically required. but it's the harsh reality that the worker does not see the sunlight in a whole day. They enter in the early morning and go out at night. Lack of proper ventilation, lighting, and temperate rooms the longevity of the workers are decreasing.

### c) Overcrowding

Each worker occupies 500 cubic feet of space (Section: 56) [6]. But the reality is heinous. In most of the factories, there is no scope to stand between two workers. There are more workers than the required number which creates an unhealthy living condition, which may cause harm to the worker's health.

### d) Lack of adequate arrangement for drinking water

The management of the factory has to maintain a suitable point conveniently situated for all workers to supply sufficient drinking water (Section: 57) [6]. They have to arrange cold water during the hot weather. But in most of the factories, there is a scarcity of pure drinking water, they just take the water from a normal pipeline which is mostly unhygienic. Then workers suffer from typhoid, jaundice, and so on.

### e) Improper and unhygienic sanitation system

It is the major problem of almost all garment factories. The latrines maintained by the factory and not only insufficient but also unhygienic, sufficient and separate latrines and urinals for all workers are required (Section: 59) [6]. There is one urinal for every 50 males up to the first 500 employed and one for every 100 thereafter [8].

### f) Non-precautionary regarding fire

Tazreen Fashion Fire reminds us of what a crucial situation the workers of Bangladesh are working in and proves the recklessness of the occupier. There is no precautionary

knowledge and management in case of an outbreak of fire. The infrastructure of the building does not comply with laws, which state that in every factory the doors affording to exist from any room, shall not be locked or fastened and they shall be constructed to open in the direction of the nearest exit from the building. In case of an outbreak of fire, most of the worker died on the stairs because of crowding, because all tried to down at the same time to save their own life. If a labour inspector finds a building, or any part of a building, or its machinery and plant which may cause a serious threat to workers, in that case, the inspector may issue a written notice to the owner to take initiative (Section: 62) [6].

### g) Lack of training about fencing and revolving dangerous machinery

The worker loses their limbs and live in the moving dangerous machine. This is not stopping because of inadequate penalty provisions of law for the worker. The occupier of the factory appoints unskilled and untrained personnel. Where they are under obligation not to appoint them (Section: 61) [6]. There shall be permanently affixed to each machine in use a notice indicating the maximum safe working peripheral speed [6].

### h) Lack of protective substances or equipment

It requires that effective screens of suitable goggles shall be provided for the protection of persons employed. (Section: 75) [6]. No one shall be allowed to enter to workplace without glass, mask, gloves, belt and other required substances. But the reality is different; they only use it at the time of inspection by the factory inspector.

### i) poor infrastructure

Rana Plaza collapse proves that the infrastructure of most of the factories of Bangladesh is too poor, One Rana Plaza took away more than 1000 lives at a glance [2]. The owner of the factory just takes a rent of abandoned house without any fitness test or without taking into consideration of the capacity of the building, which causes an accident. This accident not only took away the lives of human beings but also created obstacles to the progressive economic development of the country.

### j) Lack of alternative way to exit

It's the point of violation of worker rights, in most of the factories there is no emergency exists. Some have but which is locked always. Hence, at times of emergency, they have to be confined or the normal way of exit is not enough up to the number of workers, that's why another accident takes place on the stairs with crowded people.

So promotion of occupational safety and health is part of an overall improvement in working conditions. It should be a vital technique to contribute positively to productivity. Healthy workers are more likely to be better motivated. If they have job satisfaction they will be dying hard to contribute for better quality products and services.

## 5. Impact of Non-Complying Occupational Health & Safety

Occupational health and safety play a vital role in the life of a worker because their health and non-risk solely depend on healthy and safe working conditions. Otherwise, they have to suffer a lot in different ways; their suffering is the indicator of the sufferings of the RMG sector, and suffering of the RMG sector means suffering of the whole economic condition of the country.

### 5.1. Impact on the Health of a Worker

The prime concern of practicing occupational health and safety is to focus on formal workers of different workplaces like shops, factories, offices, and mines. Till now a very less attention has been given to different occupational hazards of workplaces commonly chemical hazards, dust, noise and musculoskeletal disorder problems [16]. Due to such occupational hazards, the suffering of the workers has also been increased mostly to the uninsured workers.

More than 85% female workers suffer from different reproductive health issues, malnutrition. But they cannot even think of taking proper medication due to their very poor income [3]. As per government rule female workers are entitled to get four months maternity leave but in garment industries, they get minimum 30 days and maximum 60 days for maternity leave as per situation. Most of the female worker during pregnancy commonly found suffering from malnutrition, anemia and lots of serious complications [1]. Work related diseases, hazards and accidents cause not only death and injury to workers, also enormous emotional and financial costs to families as well as to society. The main aim of occupational safety and health is to ascertain the prevalent occupational diseases, hazards, and risks or accidents faced by workers of different sectors. In the garment industry it is observed that workers commonly suffer from flu, cough, bronchitis, asthma, tuberculosis, fungal infections and dermatitis. Some of these are contagious in nature and others may be caused due to dust and the working environment. Irregular food habits and unhygienic sanitation are also responsible for occupational diseases such as peptic ulcer, diarrhea, and dysentery. Insufficient water intake and unhygienic toilet trace out to cause urinary tract infections. Another series of diseases also suffered by the workers due to tension, heavy workload, inconvenient working environment, insufficient food intake, boring job and concentrating continuously on stitching. Such diseases are headache musculoskeletal pain and eyestrain etc. Lengthy duration of work, high pitch sound, low light, humidity, and particle dust are identified as crucial factors to calls hearing impairment, eyestrain, heat stroke and breathing problems. We may categorize hazard into chemical, biological and economic hazard. Chemical hazard is mostly liable due to inhaling chemical vapor and coming into contact with skin by chemical liquid which may create breathing problems, chest pain etc. Biological hazards are caused by

parasites, helminth, fungus etc. It may produce abdominal discomfort, flu, dermatitis etc. The economic hazard may occur out of manual handling work which is responsible for so many occupational accidents e.g. pricking of finger by needle which may result into cutting off hand, sewed hand by machine, nail damage and burning of hand while handling hot machineries and apart from these, risk of fire is very common [11].

### 5.2. Effect on the National Economy or GDP

Bangladesh is the fourth greatest exporter of clothing in the world and leading garment manufacturing industry in the world. Today garment sector represent the 80% of the national export and counts USD 19 billion revenues [17]. In the fiscal year 2015-2016, the garment sector accounted for 78.6% of Bangladeshi total exports, bringing 19 billion dollars into the country and contributing to more than 13.5% of the total gross domestic product [7]. So there is no doubt that the RMG sector plays an important role in the economic development of Bangladesh. If the workers suffer from occupational disease they will lose interest to carry on their service in this sector, if they do so ultimate loser will be the national economy. Because if the factories fail to produce the product then they will not earn the money. If they do not do so how National GDP will be rich? How they will contribute to the national GDP?

### 5.3. Loss of the Trust of Foreign Buyer

Bangladesh earns a vital portion of its national GDP from depending upon exporting readymade garments materials from foreign countries. Non-availability of products, accidents in the factory, and dissatisfaction of the workers make the buyers refuse to buy the ready-made garments of Bangladesh because it's the corporate social responsibility to ensure the Occupational Safety and Health of the factory. After the Rana Plaza collapse some countries like the USA (President Barak Obama announced on June 27, 2013) suspended Bangladesh's trade benefit under the Generalized System of Preference (GSP) [12]. Because of insufficient progress by the Government of Bangladesh in affording Bangladeshi workers internationally recognized worker rights. That decision followed an extensive, interagency review under the GSP program of worker safety in Bangladesh during which the US government encouraged the Government of Bangladesh to implement needed reform to improve the working conditions of workers which is their fundamental right [12].

### 5.4. Financial Sufferings of the Worker

It may be said undoubtedly that the conditions in which the millions of people employed in the garment sector work are unsatisfactory. Poor working conditions are the everyday problem of RMG workers. Though this sector suffering from problems the fate of the poor people is changing through working here. They can see a dream because economic empowerment is the main pillar to make a man independent. So

by the RMG sector, not only the owner of the factory but also the workers of Bangladesh benefited. Almost 150 million people of Bangladesh directly and indirectly earn money from the RMG sector [22]. If we fail to protect this sector on the ground of OHS the ultimate loser will our worker, then law and order situation will not maintain, crime will increase; their suffering will know no bound.

### 5.5. Social Condition

Economic empowerment or financial empowerment plays a vital role in making a man independent. Being involved in female workers they become independent and may take a position in the family with dignity and honour, ultimately they may raise their voices against violence in the family. Then, violence against women will decrease in society. Hence, due to failure to ensure the OHS the RMG sector will collapse, and ultimately violence against women will increase in society. Because 80% worker of the RMG sector is women.

Hence, it's the demand of the time to ensure occupational health and safety not only for the worker but also for the best interest of the country, because the economic development of a country makes the country more prosperous and progressive, that's why the rights of the worker regarding OHS is immense for the socio-economic development of the country. The trained, skilled, and hardworking manpower is the main pillar of the development of a country, so nourishment and care of them is most important.

## 6. Statutory Bindings Relating to OHS

The states are under obligations to ensure healthy and safe working conditions for the workers. No one may keep them at stake, because it's the fundamental right of every human being to lead a safe life, to do this they have the right to work. So it's the fundamental duty of the owner to ensure friendly working conditions. Here it has been mentioned the national and international instruments by which they are under obligation, such as follow.

### 6.1. ILO (International Labour Organization)

ILO is such an organization of the United Nations, who are engaged to promote a healthy working environment by implementing the international Labor Standards. In the tripartite system ILO ensures the exchange of information between workers, employers and government which is called social dialogue [15]. It arranges training for workers through the NCCWE (National coordination Committee for Workers Education), for employers through employer's federations and for ministerial bodies through ILO itself directly [5]. The ILO convention addresses the issue of workplace safety [14]. All the ratifying states are under obligation to consult on a regular basis with the workers and the employers and after a periodical review of the national policy on occupational safety, health, and environment, ensure its effective implementation

[14]. The prime concern of the policy is to ensure safe working conditions for workers by eliminating the risk of accidents and injury to health occurring in the course of work. As per the policy it is required to form a disciplinary committee to arrange training on workplace safety, for workers and their representatives. (Article: 5) [14]. The signatory states are directed to develop an effective system to conduct an inspection to ensure the compliance of law and regulations regarding occupational safety by the authority. (Article: 9) [14]. Employers and workers are also guided to enact such conformance. Article 42 [14], is worth mentioning, especially when thinking about the Rana Plaza accident, as the article expressly entitled a worker to remove himself from a work situation which is threatening to his life or health and in such circumstances, employers shall protect the worker from possible accidents as per national conditions and practice. (Article: 13) [14]. Articles 16 to 20 impose obligations upon the employers to implement the legal provisions regarding workplace safety. A hazard-free workplace should be provided to the workers by the employers. Employers are responsible for facilitating necessary protection and adopt effective measures to deal with emergencies and accidents including adequate first aid arrangements. According to article 20, it is the duty of the employers to bear all the expenses of occupational health and safety measures for workers.

### 6.2. The Preamble to the Constitution of the ILO

The working condition of a large number of people of the world is in hardship and injustice, who are unrest to produced. It is necessary to improve the condition of worker as well as the rights of the worker shall also be protected. It is a crying need to improve the condition of this sector. Here, the protection of the worker against sickness, diseases, and injury arising out of his employment is the prime responsibility of all concerned with work; they are also responsible for ensuring occupational health and safety.

### 6.3. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is another global milestone to ensure the rights of human, this instrument declares that everyone has the right to work, free choice of employment. It is necessary to ensure just and favourable conditions of work and take step to remove unemployment. Here social security and protection shall ensure through just and favourable remuneration for himself and his family to ensure human dignity [20].

### 6.4. International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

The International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights provides that this is the obligation of state party

to guarantee the rights of everyone and ensure the just and favorable conditions of work which ensure equal remuneration, fair wages, and a decent living for themselves and their families. The state is also bound to ensure safe and healthy working conditions for all [19].

## 6.5. The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

The constitution is the supreme law of Bangladesh and provides its citizens the right to freedom of association, reasonable wages, equal opportunity in employment, and social security and prohibits forced labour. The constitution has indicated work as a right and duty of the citizen [5].

### 6.5.1. Preamble

This is the fundamental objectives of the state to establish a democratic state where people shall be free from exploitation and main philosophy shall be to establish socialist society to ensure rule of law, human rights, freedom, equality and justice where all the people will be free from political, economic and social injustice [5].

### 6.5.2. Articles

The Constitution of The People's Republic of Bangladesh states that it shall be the obligation of the state to ensure the rights of worker and backward sections of the people, who shall be free from all sorts of exploitation [5].

Right to work is a matter of honour and dignity of every citizen, everyone has the right to work to earn income. They may engage in the form of physical and intellectual work. There shall be a scope to flourish human personality through creative endeavour [5].

### 6.5.3. Labour Act 2006

The prime legislation dealing with the labour issues in Bangladesh is Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, later on Labour Rules 2015 enacted to deal with labour issues. Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 has been amended three times since its formulation, and the latest amendment was done in 2013. The Labour Act consolidated 25 separate acts into a single labour Act in 2006. In 2022 Bangladesh Labour Rules have been amended. Here, emphasize on Trade Union, Working Condition, working hour, minimum wage, employment and industrial relations. Similarly health standards have been set out to ensure occupational health and safety. There are also provisions for compensation for injury in accident, maternity benefits, factory inspection by the inspector and restrictions on child labour. The provisions related to EPZ enterprises are within the EPZ Workers Association and Industrial Relations Act (2010) (EWIRA2010). Factory Rules 1979 (currently under consideration for a new Rules) elaborates the legal framework for the country. Numerous other laws including the Fire Prevention and Extinguishing Act 2003, Bangla-

desh National Building Code 2020, Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation Act 2006, and Ship Breaking and Ship Recycling Rules 2011 have provisions related to OHS. Through the legal provisions on OHS-related issues, Bangladesh established a tripartite National Industrial Health and Safety Council in 2009. The Council formulated a National Occupational Safety and Health Policy in 2013 and working towards implementation of the policy in every industrial sector [5]. There are a number of policies to ensure occupational safety the National Labour Policy, National Child Labour Elimination Policy, Industrial Policy, and Children Policy provide guidelines on OHS. It to be noted that Bangladesh has ratified seven fundamental Conventions of ILO (out of eight) on core labour. Similarly, two governance convention (out of four) on labour issues has been signed and adopted by Bangladesh. Consequently, states are obliged to ensure occupational safety, health and working environment. State shall take initiative to prevent accidents and injuries arising in the course of work, which is inherent to the working environment and condition [14]. To improve the environment of the workplace, ILO Convention 120 has made various provisions on cleanliness, noise, temperature, ventilation, lighting, ergonomics, pure drinking water, and gender-segregated toilets/washrooms [14].

Under national and international instruments the states are bound to ensure occupational safety and healthy working conditions for the worker, which are the fundamental rights of the worker. If the states fail to ensure OHS then the economic condition of the country will not be changed.

## 7. Responsible Person Towards OHS: A Way Out

Some persons are directly and indirectly related to occupational health and safety. They are mainly responsible for compliance with the OHS in the factories and workers. So as a man of ordinary prudence, the following persons should ensure their duties to ensure occupational health and safety in every case of complying and non-complying with OHS principles the credit goes to them and also burden lies to them regarding Occupational Health and Safety.

### 7.1. Owner/ Occupier of the Factory

It is not only corporate responsibilities but also morals and human responsibilities to ensure occupational safety and health. They are under obligation to provide and maintain a workplace safe and friendly. They shall take steps to maintain chemical, physical, and biological substances and agents under their control and also give necessary training and instructions to the manager and staff [22]. The occupier has to monitor with adequate supervision and shall take all reasonable and practicable measures to eliminate excessive physical and mental fatigue of the worker.

## 7.2. Worker

A man should love himself first. They should take reasonable care not to affect the other workers by their activities. For their own benefit or safety, they have to comply with instructions and use safe devices and protective equipment correctly. They have known about their work condition and how they may be safe [22].

## 7.3. Buyer

The buyer community may play a vital role in ensuring the OHS. This class has the right to impose an embargo on the occupier and may ban the RMG of Bangladesh because they believe that the lives of the workers of Bangladesh are at stake. They banned the BD-e garments items until the owner. The Global buyers are mostly from western countries like Europe, USA, Canada. Bangladesh occupies a big space of those countries to export ready made garments. Similarly global buyers relay upon the Bangladesh e garments. Here supplier may be under condition to comply on occupational health and safety and pressurize to maintain healthy working condition and occupational safety. They also follow the strict role through imposing embargo on the establishment to ensure occupational health and safety. It to be mentioned that USA already withdraw GSP facility and declare that they do not want to wear a cloth with the blood of worker. It is matter of regret that Bangladeshi garment workers are paid one of the lowest salaries in the world. Moved by private funds and having big profits consolidated the capacity of the global buyers allowing a strong position pushing the development of the garment industry pushing the factories to keep the prices low and to respect the code of conduct presented.

## 7.4. Customer

Customers are important stakeholders that indirectly affect the system; eighty percent of the exports go to Europe and the USA and their citizens prefer this product because of quality and comfortable product in reasonable price. Customer community has a large influence to the RMG sector, because satisfaction of customer depend not only on wearing the cloth but also on the healthy working condition and mental satisfaction of the worker. This stakeholders may create pressure upon the buyer, supplier and owner to comply with the principle of occupational health and safety [22]. As said earlier, at the moment the major customers are European and American citizens, but the market is opening towards new opportunities in Japan, Russia, South Africa, and China; therefore in the future new customers and new demand will impact the garment industry. In case of any sort of accident or violation of the principles of OHS the customer both national and international may refuse to buy the garments product.

## 7.5. DIFE (Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments)

The DIFE is the national labour inspectorate that is obliged to enforce labour laws and rules through workplace inspections, as per the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 and ILO Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 [21]. This institution has expanded its technical and institutional capacity. Although still insufficient, the DIFE now has a bigger workforce and more skilled inspectors than before the 47% of the total sanctioned post is yet to be filled [9]. In the year 2021-2022, the inspectors of DIFE have completed a total of 43644 inspections in factories, shops, and establishments, and a total 5,944 inspections were done using the Labour Inspection Management Application in the mentioned period [9].

## 7.6. Labour Inspector

The factory inspectorate is the main enforcing body of the government of Bangladesh's application to enforce occupational safety and health within the ambit of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006. They act as an administrative body in a sense to ensure the effective application of that said section [12]. Because they have the exclusive power to lodge any complaint against the wrongdoer with the labour court, There are 80 personnel involved in inspection activities throughout the country based in four divisional offices having exclusive power over 24,229 registered factories [4]. For certain violations such as bathrooms, staircases, cleanliness, ventilation, lighting, machine guards, and wiring a warning may given, if they do not follow the instructions then may decide to prosecute [4]. The whole socio-economic and industrial development of the country has now drastically changed and in this new era of globalization as well as vast industrialization, a more efficient, accountable, and specialized factory inspectorate has now become a crying need for the greater interest of the occupational health and safety of the worker.

## 7.7. Collective Bargaining Agent

Measures appropriate to national conditions shall be taken, where necessary, to ensure and promote full development and utilization of machinery for voluntary negotiation employer's and employee's organization and worker's organizations, with a view to the regulation of terms and conditions of employment by means of agreement [13].” So it can be said that the Collective Bargaining Agent works as a bridge between employer and worker to ensure the rights of the worker in different ways. In this regard, they play a crucial role in ensuring Occupational Health and Safety through applying effective bargaining methods.

## 7.8. Bangladesh Fire Services and Civil Defence (BFSCD)

Bangladesh Fire Services & Civil Defense department is responsible for fire fighting, fire prevention, rescue mission, and ensuring fire safety during any kind of natural or man-made disaster [21]. It maintains 340 fire stations network to respond fire incident quickly. Though industrial accident through fire is common in Bangladesh but the owner does not maintain proper maintenance to avoid fire.

## 7.9. National Council for Industrial Health and Safety

There is an office of the National Council for Industrial Health and Safety, that is chaired by the State Minister, Ministry of Labour and Employment, and consists of concerned Ministries, representatives of employers, workers, and industry experts [21]. This office is under an obligation to ensure the OSH for the sustainable survival of this industry.

## 7.10. Department of Labour (DOL)

The Department of Labour mainly deals with ensuring prompt and efficient settlement of labour disputes, registration of TU, Collective Bargaining Agents, and negotiations [21]. Here DOL may be involved actively through TU & CBA to ensure OSH. Similarly, this department runs 4 training institutes, to provide training on safety and health issues and 28 Labour Welfare centers to provide medical services including health and family planning activities.

## 7.11. Trade Union

An effective trade union may ensure the occupational health and safety of the workers. The right to Trade Unions and associations is a fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh every citizen shall have the right to form associations or unions, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of morality or public order [5]. The fundamental objectives of the Trade Union are to ensure advancing the social and economic well-being of workers and to secure the speedy improvement of conditions of workers, life, and status of the worker in industry and society. It is the fundamental duty of the Trade Union to take initiatives for social security, health, hygiene, accident, maternity, sickness, and so on. Similarly, it serves to negotiate with the employer to regulate the conditions of employment of the worker. But Garment workers in Bangladesh face poor working conditions and anti-union tactics by employers including assaults on union organizers. Still, fewer than 10 percent of garment factories in Bangladesh have unions. Because there is a risk of dismissal from his service.

Besides these, some initiatives may be taken to ensure oc-

cupational health and safety such as the following:

- i. Have to ensure the implementation of the existing laws relating to Occupational Safety and health.
- ii. May impose a fine upon the owner of the factory by enacting new laws, if they fail to comply with the rules and regulations relating to Occupational health and safety.
- iii. ILO, GO, and NGO may arrange training, and workshops to aware the worker about OHS and its future impact on their life.
- iv. The buyer may impose obligations to ensure occupational safety and health towards the worker.
- v. Increasing the commitment of employers and workers in the field of OHS.
- vi. Installing an understanding of OHS from an early age in higher education.
- vii. Enhancing the role of professional organizations, Universities, practitioners, and other in society in improving the understanding, ability, attitude, and behavior associated with OHS culture.
- viii. The government may develop competent authority to review, and monitor the factory to inspect the condition of OHS.
- ix. The government may direct the occupier to form a management board in every factory to ensure OHS.
- x. The NGO, GO, Media, and Government should come forward to ensure the rights of the workers by ensuring health and environmental safety working conditions. In Bangladesh there are many Local NGOs (NGOs), International NGOs (INGOs), and institutions that provide different kinds of support in several aspects of the society, they may also concentrate on assurances of OHS to ensure the safe and healthy working zone of the worker.

## 8. Conclusion

*“Continuing the economic success of Bangladesh's garment sector offers benefits for everyone retail companies and their consumers, factory owners, and the Government, but those gains should not come at the cost of lives and the suffering of garment workers struggling for a better future”-Robertson [18].*

Most of the workers in the RMG sector are almost illiterate; they have no knowledge of human rights, working conditions, and labour standards. On the other hand, the owner of the factories are lax or relaxed to ensure their rights very technically. They never concentrate on occupational health and safety conditions rather than profit. Now it's the time to take immense responsibility to ensure better occupational health and safety conditions in the RMG sector. Otherwise, it will be injustice towards the workers, because the owners of the factories become millionaires depending on their blood and sweat, and the socio-economic condition of the country also increases rapidly. So it is their legitimate right and expectation

to work in a safe and healthier environment. To ensure it the Govt, INGO, NGO, Owners, Buyers, and stakeholders should take the social and corporate responsibilities to promote the working conditions for the economic development of the country. The workers are the pillar of the occupier to earn a lot, if they fail to nourish and protect the worker's rights regarding OHS then it threatens the occupier about their sustainability in the global market.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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