

THE DARK SIDE OF FAST FASHION: EXAMINING THE EXPLOITATION OF GARMENT WORKERS IN BANGLADESH

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Abstract

There have been several attempts to decrease the usage of fast fashion, but no one has been able to stop its development. We are aware that fast fashion is a business model that imitates the most recent catwalk trends, has evolved into high fashion, is produced in large quantities, and is priced affordably. Fast fashion has come under fire from a wide range of people due to the fact that no worker receives the minimum wage, yet products must be mass-produced. In addition to examining the legal and regulatory framework for protecting Bangladesh garment industry workers to fulfill their rights as laborers and how these rights are applied, this article looks at the shadowy side of fast fashion in Bangladesh. This paper elaborates on Bangladesh's experience in managing the situation of a garment industry building that collapsed in 2013, killing hundreds of people inside, using a normative analysis-oriented approach. This study demonstrates that Bangladesh's legal and regulatory framework for worker protection has yet to explicitly state what rights workers are entitled to. Another factor is that Bangladesh does not yet have a robust and consistent practice of human rights-

based instruments considered in court and that law enforcement does not fully grasp how to execute these rights. At the same time, it is crucial to improve law enforcement interpretation for worker-focused solutions, giving their rights, and promoting human rights practices in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Bangladesh Garment Industry; Fast Fashion; Human Rights; Worker's Rights.

Introduction

Fast fashion is still widespread now and will continue to expand swiftly in the future; even in our current period, fast fashion is one of the essential demands for all people worldwide. ¹Fast fashion is no longer solely sold in brick-and-mortar stores; many of these garments are now sold online, for example, on numerous websites and e-commerce, and the prices given are significantly lower. ² Cheaper than clothes sold in offline outlets such as malls or markets. Not to mention, if we use the store's discount coupons, the cheaper and more affordable the prices offered by the sellers, the more fans of the product, and it's not uncommon for stores to always use a refill system to fulfill the requests of their consumers and employ this approach to raise the store's rating.

Their trendy fashion styles are similar to those of famous catwalk designers, making fast fashion even more popular with many people because they can follow fashion trends that are currently popular, they can follow fashion styles like famous designer clothes where we know that the price of clothes owned by this famous designer offers fantastic prices, and the stock they issue is limited. If it runs out, no more similar products will be released. However, unlike garments sold and disseminated in any store, the prices offered are significantly lower; however, the models and quality provided are no less good than clothes sold exclusively by a designer. That is why so many people like fast fashion; additionally, it has received a positive response from many parties because the clothing models are very trendy and fashionable, and

¹ Madison Van Oort, "The Emotional Labor of Surveillance: Digital Control in Fast Fashion Retail," *Critical Sociology* 45, no. 7–8 (2019).

² Md Afzalul Aftab et al., "Super Responsive Supply Chain: The Case of Spanish Fast Fashion Retailer Inditex-Zara," *International Journal of Business and Management* 13, no. 5 (2018).

the prices are reasonable, making fast fashion an alternative to meet the needs of people from all walks of life.³

Although fast fashion has become a necessity and is even considered daily food by others,⁴ many still need to understand how these clothes can be created in large quantities, with varied models, colors, and sizes, and in such a short time. Perhaps some individuals assumed that these clothes were made by factory machinery or possibly by a clever robot, given the large number of things produced by a single business. However, this assertion is incorrect. Behind the beauty of the garments we wear, thousands of textile workers manufacture our clothes with their hands, aided by a sewing machine, but even a sewing machine cannot help them. They tirelessly work on thousands of garments that will be sold and disseminated across the stores.

They are frequently subjected to pressure and continuous requests to manufacture thousands of these garments in a very short amount of time, not to mention that their salaries do not meet the minimum they should receive, causing issues for garment workers in Bangladesh.⁵ Their economy and body are on the line. Many families are suffering financial difficulties, and many of these garment workers' children are forced to drop out of school because their parents are unable to pay their school fees; the meager money they receive can only be used for food and cannot be utilized to cover other basic necessities.

Not only that, but when the public discovered that even small children were employed in this factory, they had to drop out of school in order to get money from this job, but the wages that were given were never even commensurate with what they had been working on, which is, of course, being questioned by many people. Consequently, the author will go further into what is going on behind fast fashion in Bangladesh and respond to those who challenge the rights of Bangladeshi garment factory employees.

³ Brittany Sierra, "The Psychology of Fast Fashion: Why Conversation About Fast Fashion Evokes Such Strong Emotions In Us."

⁴ Alexandra Rese, Tobias Schlee, and Daniel Baier, "The Need for Services and Technologies in Physical Fast Fashion Stores: Generation Y's Opinion," *Journal of Marketing Management* 35, no. 15–16 (2019).

⁵ Md Shohel Mahmud et al., "Health Issues of Female Garment Workers: Evidence from Bangladesh," *Journal of Population and Social Studies* 26, no. 3 (2018).

Human rights are still being expanded on an international and national scale. Nonetheless, in this day and age, human rights frequently tend to target only specific people, or it can be claimed to only lead to lucky people; nonetheless, the phrase is rapidly embracing the rights of Bangladeshi garment industry employees as a vital aspect. Human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch have urged Bangladesh to address labor issues such as worker safety, excessive working hours, the freedom to organize, and the ability to earn a living wage. This group also claimed that the government is still destroying labor leaders. H&M⁶ Operates 2,600 apparel outlets in 44 countries. This shop is one of a number of large Western brands that get goods from Bangladesh.⁷

Exploitation in Bangladesh's Garment Industry

The global fashion industry, driven by the demand for fast fashion, has transformed how we consume clothing. However, behind the glitz and glamour lies a harsh reality: the exploitation of garment workers in countries like Bangladesh. Bangladesh has emerged as a significant player in the global garment industry, supplying clothing to numerous renowned Western brands. Sadly, this rapid growth has come at a high cost for the workers. Exploitative practices, such as inadequate wages, long working hours, hazardous working conditions, and restricted labor rights, are prevalent in many factories across the country.

Within Bangladesh's garment industry, a darker side lurks beneath its dazzling success. Behind the glamorous facade of fashion trends and brand names, the reality for many garment workers is one of exploitation and hardship.⁸ In factories scattered across the country, workers toil under deplorable conditions, facing numerous challenges that strip away their dignity and basic human rights. One of the most pressing issues is the prevalence of inadequate wages, where workers

⁶ Hennes & Mauritz AB, also known as the H&M Group, is a Swedish international apparel company specializing in fast-fashion clothing for men, women, and children. H&M Group operated in 75 geographical markets as of June 23, 2022, with 4,801 stores under the various corporate brands and 107,375 full-time equivalent employment.

⁷ VOA Indonesia, "Bangladesh Didesak Naikkan Upah Minimum Pekerja Tekstil."

⁸ Deccan Herald, "Sweatshops: Textile Industry's Dark Side," <https://Www.Deccanherald.Com>.

receive meager compensation that fails to meet their basic needs and support their families. Moreover, long working hours, stretching far beyond what is legally permissible, become the norm, leaving workers exhausted and deprived of precious time for rest and personal well-being.

The very spaces in which they labor become hazardous, with unsafe buildings, lack of proper ventilation, and insufficient safety measures, posing significant risks to their health and well-being.⁹ Perhaps most distressing is the restricted labor rights that persistently hinder workers' ability to organize, collectively bargain, and advocate for their own rights. Such oppressive conditions create an environment where garment workers face a constant struggle for survival, trapped within a system that prioritizes profit margins over their well-being. It is essential that urgent action is taken to address these exploitative practices, ensuring fair wages, reasonable working hours, safe working conditions, and the protection of labor rights for the resilient and dedicated workers within the Bangladesh garment industry. Only then can the global fashion industry truly move towards a more ethical and sustainable future, where the glitz and glamour extend beyond the clothes themselves to encompass the respect and dignity of those who make them.

Improving Working Conditions in the Garment Industry

The exploitative conditions faced by garment workers in Bangladesh have shed light on the urgent need for an ethical and sustainable future within the garment industry.¹⁰ The global fashion landscape, driven by the demand for fast fashion, has perpetuated a system that prioritizes profit at the expense of human rights and environmental well-being. However, there is growing recognition of the need for change, and stakeholders within the industry are increasingly advocating for a shift toward ethical and sustainable practices.

⁹ Vikas Bajaj, "Fatal Fire in Bangladesh Highlights the Dangers Facing Garment Workers," *Nytimes.Com*, last modified November 25, 2012, accessed June 30, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/26/world/asia/bangladesh-fire-kills-more-than-100-and-injures-many.html>.

¹⁰ ILO Newsroom, "International Labour Organization, "Improving Working Conditions in the Ready-Made Garment Industry: Progress and Achievements," *Ilo.Org*.

Improving working conditions in the ready-made garment industry has been a pressing concern and a focal point of efforts to achieve a more equitable and sustainable industry. Over the years, notable progress and achievements have been made in addressing the exploitative practices that have plagued the industry.

One significant achievement has been implementing safety initiatives and regulations to ensure safer working environments for garment workers. Following the tragic Rana Plaza building collapse in 2013, which claimed the lives of more than 1,100 workers, there was a collective awakening to the need for better workplace safety. As a result, the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh and the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety was established. These initiatives have played a crucial role in improving fire safety standards, conducting safety inspections, and implementing necessary structural changes in factories, thus mitigating the risks faced by workers.¹¹

Furthermore, collaborations between international brands, local stakeholders, and civil society organizations have contributed to enhancing transparency and accountability in the supply chain. H&M takes several initiatives to manage its supply chain in Bangladesh. These initiatives include monitoring factory compliance and providing training to suppliers and their workers to address potential hazards, such as fire safety.¹² In order to reduce the negative impact on manufacturing, H&M takes many initiatives with Bangladeshi suppliers, including monitoring factory compliance and providing training to suppliers and their workers.¹³

Efforts to enhance worker empowerment and representation have also yielded positive outcomes. Trade unions and labor rights organizations have played a crucial role in advocating for workers' rights, ensuring fair wages, reasonable working hours, and better working conditions. Workers' ability to organize, collectively bargain, and voice their concerns has improved, leading to positive changes in many factories.

¹¹ Jennifer Bair, Mark Anner, and Jeremy Blasi, "The Political Economy of Private and Public Regulation in Post-Rana Plaza Bangladesh," *ILR Review* 73, no. 4 (2020).

¹² Bin Shen, "Sustainable Fashion Supply Chain: Lessons from H&M," *Sustainability (Switzerland)* 6, no. 9 (2014).

¹³ H&M Group, *Conscious Action Sustainability Reports 2013*, 2013.

One example of efforts to enhance worker empowerment and representation in Bangladesh is the initiative taken by the global fashion brand H&M. Recognizing the importance of ensuring fair working conditions and empowering workers, H&M has implemented various programs to support its supplier factories in Bangladesh. H&M, in collaboration with the Swedish trade union IF Metall initiated the Workplace Dialogue Program. This program focuses on promoting dialogue between workers and management within H&M supplier factories. It aims to create a conducive environment for open communication, where workers can voice their concerns, raise grievances, and actively participate in decision-making processes. This program provides workers with training and workshops on their rights, labor laws, and collective bargaining, empowering them with the knowledge and skills to advocate for their interests effectively.¹⁴

Another notable initiative by H&M is the Fair Wage Methodology. In partnership with global unions and labor rights organizations, H&M developed a fair wage methodology to ensure that workers receive wages that meet their basic needs and enable a decent standard of living. The methodology takes into account factors such as living costs, social protection, and discretionary income. H&M has committed to implementing this methodology in its supplier factories and encouraging other brands to adopt fair wage practices as well.¹⁵

Human Rights Violations in Garment Industry in Bangladesh

The vital topic of human rights for Bangladeshi textile workers has generated a lot of discussion and debate in recent years. Bangladesh has one of the largest garment industries in the world, employing millions of people and making a sizable economic contribution. However, the sector is rife with severe human rights abuses, such as exploitation, low pay, and rights denial. With a focus on the difficulties they encounter and the demand for stronger protection of their rights, this research study tries to outline the human rights violations committed against Bangladeshi textile workers.

¹⁴ Christina Hajous, "H&M Global Framework Agreement," *hmgroup.com*, September 29, 2016.

¹⁵ Sabita Banerji, Katharine Earley, and Peter McAllister, *Ethical Trading Initiative*, December 2018.

Low Wages and Exploitation:

According to reports, Bangladeshi garment industry employees are among the lowest paid in the world and frequently make less than the legally mandated minimum wage.¹⁶ Since clothing made in a variety of places, including Asia and Eastern Europe, makes its way to shops in nations like the US and Canada,¹⁷ this exploitation is not exclusive to Bangladesh. Factory owners have been known to fire pregnant workers or refuse to give them maternity leave as a result of the low pay and unfavorable working conditions.

Denial of Rights: Bangladeshi garment workers routinely have their rights, such as the right to maternity leave, denied to them. According to research, maternity leave rights have been routinely denied to women working in the clothing industry, depriving them of the care they need during and after delivery. In addition to harming workers' well-being, this denial of rights helps to maintain gender disparity in the workplace.¹⁸

Human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch have urged the Bangladeshi government to uphold labor laws, defend workers' rights, and change legislation to conform to international standards. Major US and European retailers and other foreign purchasers are asked to make sure that Bangladeshi suppliers uphold labor rights and offer a safe workplace. In order to remedy these violations of human rights, both the government and international partners have a duty. Governments and other international parties should be held accountable for correcting human rights violations, and human rights groups should continue to fight for the protection of workers' rights. The abuse of human rights by Bangladeshi garment workers is a serious problem that needs to be addressed right away. These workers encounter a variety of difficulties, including exploitation, low pay, rights violations, and the effects of the pandemic. Governments, global organizations, businesses, and customers may all help promote and uphold the preservation of workers' rights. We can

¹⁶ Sarah Butler, "Why Are Wages so Low for Garment Workers in Bangladesh," *Theguardian.Com*.

¹⁷ Eleonora Saylon, "These Are The Top 5 Countries To Produce Clothing In Europe," *manufy.com*, September 14, 2022.

¹⁸ Andrew Brooks, *Clothing Poverty: The Hidden World of Fast Fashion and Second-Hand Clothes*, 2015.

work to create a more equal and just garment industry in Bangladesh and worldwide by addressing these abuses.

Bangladeshi garment workers' human rights are a crucial and complex topic that deserves to be discussed. Garment workers in Bangladesh are crucial to the country's economy, yet they confront several hurdles and violations of human rights on a regular basis. Let's dig deeper into this subject. Bangladesh's garment industry is one of the largest in the world, employing millions of people, most of whom are women. While the business has helped to increase economic growth and reduce poverty, it has also been chastised for bad working conditions, low wages, and breaches of labor rights.¹⁹ The right to a safe and healthy working environment is a major human rights concern for Bangladeshi garment workers. Tragic instances, such as the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in 2013, emphasized the need for enhanced workplace safety measures. Since then, efforts have been made to improve safety procedures, but more may be done to safeguard workers' well-being.

Another key issue is the right to a living wage. Many textile workers in Bangladesh are paid poor pay that may not often cover their basic needs. Fair pay for their job is critical for alleviating poverty and fostering human dignity. Efforts to establish livable wages and empower workers to bargain for better terms and conditions are critical to enhancing their economic rights. Furthermore, employees' freedom of association and collective bargaining rights are critical for them to express their concerns and bargain with employers. There have been reports of restrictions on workers' rights to organize unions and engage in collective bargaining in Bangladesh. Workers can be empowered, and their working circumstances improved by protecting and advocating their rights.²⁰

Addressing gender inequality is also critical in the garment business. Women comprise a sizable proportion of the workforce but frequently experience discrimination, harassment, and unequal treatment. Providing support mechanisms for women and ensuring

¹⁹ Hoang Tien Nguyen et al., "Enhancing Sustainability in the Contemporary Model of CSR: A Case of Fast Fashion Industry in Developing Countries," *Social Responsibility Journal*, 2020.

²⁰ Rebecca Prentice et al., "Health and Safety in Garment Workers' Lives: Setting a New Research Agenda," *Geoforum*, 2018.

gender equality in the workplace can assist in their empowerment and general well-being. To improve the human rights situation for Bangladeshi garment workers, all players, including the government, employers, trade unions, multinational brands, and consumers, must collaborate and commit.²¹ Labor laws should be implemented and enforced, workplace safety standards should be improved, fair salaries should be promoted, employees' freedom to organize should be supported, and gender-based discrimination should be addressed. Consumer education and responsible shopping can also have a substantial impact. Consumers may push the sector to maintain human rights norms by supporting brands that promote worker rights and sustainability. Providing human rights to Bangladeshi textile workers is a continuing concern. It necessitates a multifaceted approach that tackles issues such as worker safety, fair salaries, associational freedom, and gender equality. Working together, we can build a more equitable and just environment for these employees while protecting their basic human rights.

Children, as well as adults, work and are employed in this sector. This is, of course, a public problem because children who work as garment workers in Bangladesh face comparable treatment, namely they do not get the justice they deserve. They are required to work for several hours straight, and many of them have dropped out of school in order to work in the industry and meet their economic needs and those of their families. In Bangladesh, underage children have been forced to earn money. Commonly, underage children should receive proper education for their future, yet they must deal with textile fabrics to earn wages. However, the amount of wages is not in accordance with the predetermined minimum salaries.²² Their fatigue is not comparable to what they get because their work is equated with adult work, which is very heavy and tires them physically.

Like many other children in Bangladesh who are not in the garment industry, they are engaged in some of the most hazardous

²¹ Fahreen Alamgir and Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee, "Contested Compliance Regimes in Global Production Networks: Insights from the Bangladesh Garment Industry," *Human Relations* 72, no. 2 (2019).

²² Sadika Haque et al., "Nutritional Status of Under-Five Aged Children of Ready-Made Garment Workers in Bangladesh: A Cross-Sectional Study," *PLoS ONE* 18, no. 4 APRIL (2023).

forms of child labour, particularly in agriculture and domestic work. Children working in agriculture are exposed to hazards such as unsafe tools and instruments, toxic chemicals, and heavy loads. In Bangladesh, children, especially girls, work as domestic workers in private families. Some child domestic workers are exploited and subjected to various abuses, including sexual ones. Welding, carpentry, rickshaw pulling, and car repair are dangerous jobs for children. Salt, soap, matches, bricks, cigarettes, footwear, steel furniture, glass, hemp, leather, and textiles were also produced by children. They face dangers when making these goods, which are generally produced in small workshops or homes, such as working with toxic chemicals and sharp instruments in cramped conditions with dim lighting for long periods. In Bangladesh, children are forced to work. Bangladeshi minors are also exploited in any way for commercial reasons, with some being transported both within Bangladesh and to India for sexual exploitation. Many of the boys and girls live on the streets and are exploited in illegal operations such as smuggling and selling weapons and drugs.

Treading Labor Rights Pathways - Contrasting Realities in Bangladesh and Indonesia

Labor Rights in Bangladesh:

Bangladesh, being a nation with a substantial textile and garment industry, has garnered global scrutiny about the labor conditions of its workforce. The discourse around labor rights in Bangladesh is inherently intertwined with the garment industry, which has a pivotal position in the nation's economy.²³

The overall condition in Bangladesh exemplifies the primary obstacles encountered by workers in this industry. The primary concerns are on inadequate remuneration and excessive working hours. Workers often get ensnared in a perpetual state of poverty due to inadequate pay that fail to cover their fundamental necessities. Protests and worker demand in the garment industry have arisen due to the disparity between working conditions and income levels, as well as the cost of living.

²³ Priya Deshingkar et al., "Producing Ideal Bangladeshi Migrants for Precarious Construction Work in Qatar," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 14 (2019).

An important point to consider is that the absence of safeguards for workers is a significant hindrance. Individuals employed in the informal or contractual sector may lack sufficient welfare assurances, such as access to health insurance and retirement benefits. This situation leads to economic insecurity for employees and their families.²⁴

Workers in Bangladesh often encounter the issue of contract ambiguity. A significant portion of them are employed as temporary laborers or hired on contractual terms, with little or no assurance of securing a stable job in the long run. This exposes workers to the risk of being dismissed from their jobs without sufficient advance warning or proper compensation.

The endeavors to enhance the working conditions in Bangladesh have garnered the interest of global organizations and non-governmental groups focused on human rights. Although there have been some advancements, such as the augmentation of the minimum wage, there remain many concerns that want attention. The viability of government and corporate initiatives to enhance labor conditions is a crucial inquiry.²⁵

Work issues in Bangladesh may also be analyzed via a gender lens, revealing disparities. Women often comprise the predominant proportion of employees in the textile and garment industry, and they may encounter supplementary obstacles, such as sexual harassment and disparities in job prospects.

Upon analyzing the minimum salaries, working hours, and job protection levels, it is evident that the labor rights situation in Bangladesh requires more change. Collaboration among governments, corporations, and NGOs is necessary in order to establish an equitable and environmentally responsible work environment.

The exertion of international pressure on clothing firms to guarantee adherence to labor rights norms also serves as a significant catalyst for promoting good transformation. When considering this issue, it is necessary to examine the role and influence of globalization on labor conditions in Bangladesh. What is the impact of foreign

²⁴ Richa Shivakoti, Sophie Henderson, and Matt Withers, "The Migration Ban Policy Cycle: A Comparative Analysis of Restrictions on the Emigration of Women Domestic Workers," *Comparative Migration Studies* 9, no. 1 (2021).

²⁵ Kamal Sadiq and Gerasimos Tsourapas, "The Postcolonial Migration State," *European Journal of International Relations* 27, no. 3 (2021).

enterprises on employment patterns in the nation and how may labor standards be enhanced?²⁶

When confronting this difficulty, it is crucial to emphasize the constructive endeavors or undertakings that the government and private sector have executed or are intending to enhance working conditions. Training and education programs may exist to enhance workers' abilities, with ongoing labor legislation improvements aimed at safeguarding workers' rights.

In order to establish a sustainable solution, it is essential to address strategies for enhancing workers' involvement in decision-making processes that impact them. There is a need to enhance awareness about workers' rights, freedom of association, and the crucial role played by syndicates in safeguarding workers' interests.

When examining the labor rights situation in Bangladesh, it is crucial to take into account several dimensions, such as the economic, social, and political factors. Therefore, this conversation offers a more profound comprehension of the intricacy of the difficulties and possibilities in enhancing labor rights in the nation.²⁷

Labor Rights in Indonesia:

Indonesia, similar to Bangladesh, has a substantial industrial sector, and a juxtaposition of worker rights between the two nations yields a thought-provoking distinction. In Indonesia, endeavors have been undertaken to enhance working conditions and labor rights, but there are still obstacles that need resolution.

An example of a favorable development worth mentioning is the implementation of worker protection measures by the Indonesian government. The legal framework for safeguarding the rights and well-being of workers is established by labor legislation, specifically legislation Number 13 of 2003. This include regulations pertaining to remuneration, duration of labor, and safeguards against workplace prejudice.

²⁶ Markus Maurer and Mohammad Mahboob Morshed, "Promoting the Recognition of Prior Learning in the Context of Development Cooperation: The Case of Bangladesh," *International Journal of Educational Development* 91 (2022).

²⁷ Harisur Rahman and Shamir Shehab, "Media Representations of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Formation of Public Opinion in Bangladesh," *Journal of International Communication* 29, no. 2 (2023).

Emphasizing the significance of trade unions or syndicates in safeguarding worker rights in Indonesia is crucial. Trade unions play a crucial role in safeguarding workers' interests and securing the acknowledgment and adherence to their rights. Preserving workers' rights in Indonesia is contingent upon the presence of freedom of association and the entitlement to engage in strikes.

Indonesia exhibits advancements in minimum salaries, similar to Bangladesh. While distinctions between the formal and informal sectors persist, there has been a rise in endeavors to establish minimum salaries that are equitable and account for the expenses associated with sustaining a basic standard of life.

Examining the contribution of firms to improving working conditions in Indonesia is crucial. Multiple major corporations have implemented sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives that include a dedication to worker rights. These activities include areas such as skill development, enhancing working conditions, and ensuring employment stability.²⁸

Nevertheless, there are lingering concerns that require attention in Indonesia. The global economic landscape is subject to changes, with the COVID-19 epidemic exerting extra strain on working conditions. Furthermore, the informal sector is a persistent difficulty, since labor rights safeguards may be inconsistently enforced.

The gender viewpoint has significance inside the Indonesian setting as well. Although there have been advancements in the integration of women into the labor market, persistent issues such as wage disparity and limited career prospects need more focus and action. Efforts to promote diversity and gender equality in the workplace should be consistently supported.

When comparing Bangladesh and Indonesia, it is crucial to acknowledge that these two nations possess distinct historical, cultural, and policy contexts. This comparison aims to not only emphasize disparities but also to comprehend the distinct approaches that each nation is using in addressing labor rights issues at both the global and local levels.

The endeavor to enhance labor conditions in Indonesia include not only the government and corporations, but also civil society, non-

²⁸ Ellen Minkman, "Resolving Impasses in Policy Translation: Shall We Adjust the Idea or the Process?," *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 41, no. 2 (2023).

governmental organizations (NGOs), and the international community. Sharing experiences and adopting best practices may facilitate ongoing progress.²⁹

The debate of labor rights in Indonesia encompasses several factors like pay, working conditions, protection, and corporate social responsibility. This conversation provides insights into the changing dynamics of labor and the measures being made to improve labor rights standards.

Bangladeshi Garment Workers' Rights

Sewing is the process of attaching or fixing goods using needle and thread stitches. Sewing dates back to the Paleolithic era and is one of the oldest textile handicrafts. Garment workers are individuals who design and manufacture clothing. Garment workers may have various different meanings. Garment workers are persons who make or repair fur apparel. According to one source, garment workers are individuals who make or mend clothing in a factory or garment company. It also includes those who work with a needle, such as sewing or embroidery, someone who sells clothes, a garment maker who does the finishing operations, and making and altering garments.³⁰

The following garment workers' rights are listed below:

The Right to Earn a Living

Everyone has the right to a living standard enough for his or her personal and his or her family's health and well-being, which includes food, clothes, shelter, medical treatment, required social services, and the right to security. Wages and benefits are among the most important concerns that an employee may have, and salary and benefit conflicts are all too prevalent. Wage and benefit obligations may be confusing, and this section discusses workers' legal rights in these areas, including information on overtime pay, employee health insurance, and retirement plans. Every worker has the right to be compensated for their efforts. Unless otherwise specified in your employment contract,

²⁹ Sebastian Thomas et al., "Transdisciplinary Research Methods in Community Energy Development and Governance in Indonesia: Insights for Sustainability Science," *Energy Research and Social Science* 45 (2018).

³⁰ Robayet Ferdous Syed, "Theoretical Debate on Minimum Wage Policy: A Review Landscape of Garment Manufacturing Industry in Bangladesh," *Asian Journal of Business Ethics* 9, no. 2 (2020).

they are likewise entitled to compensation if they are available and eager to work, but their employer has not assigned them a job. An employee is entitled to remuneration if he or she is unable to work due to illness or is on maternity, paternity, adoption, or parental leave. Employees are also entitled to a certain amount of paid vacation days every year. They are usually entitled to their regular income while on leave. These regulations have certain exceptions. For example, parents on maternity, paternity, adoption, or parental leave are entitled to a specified period of paid leave, but the law establishes the amount at which this must be paid, which may be less than their regular salary. Your contract may pay you less than usual if you are on sick leave. Most workers have a legal right to the statutory minimum sick pay.³¹

Right to Leave and Vacation

The vast majority of employees are entitled to some amount of paid time off. This is a state-mandated holiday. According to the legislation, they are entitled to paid time off from work. Those in this category work full-time, part-time, for a firm, or on a contract basis. Self-employed workers and a few tiny outliers are the sole exceptions. Statutory holiday regulations apply regardless of the length of service with your firm or age. However, They do not have the right to statutory vacations if their kid is under 18. Employees had just 4.8 weeks of paid vacation each year prior to April 1, 2009. The leave year may have begun before April 1, 2009, and may have ended after that date. If this is the case, annual leave will be calculated pro-rata, with 4.8 weeks pro-rata before April 1, 2009, and 5.6 weeks pro-rata after April 1, 2009. Employment contracts may provide for more paid vacation time than is required. It, on the other hand, cannot provide less. A contractual holiday is defined as the right to take a more paid vacation than is legally necessary. The right to recreation and leisure.

Recreation is a time-unstructured activity. The "need to do something for recreation" is a key component of human biology and psychology. Recreational activities are generally carried out for the purpose of enjoyment, entertainment, or pleasure and are therefore

³¹ Zikrul Alam Mandol, "VIOLATION OF LABOR RIGHTS IN BANGLADESH: IMPROVEMENT OF BANGLADESH LABOR LAW," *International Journal of Advanced Research* (December 2017).

classified. The term recreation refers to participation in order to keep a healthy mind and body.

The Right to Form a Union

Trade unions have always been denied a genuine foothold in the garment industry, and as a result, they have limited influence over workers or the ability to mediate problems. Aside from clothing, every worker has a basic right to create and join a trade union. After protests reach a certain level, fresh pledges to allow trade union activity are made, but after the commotion dies down, most plant owners continue their unwillingness to allow union representation. The recruitment and education of industrial managers from within the workforce is one of the most essential roles of trade unions.

Employees have the right to work in an environment that is adequately safe and free of health and safety dangers. OSHA is a government organization that creates and enforces rules to guarantee the safety and health of America's employees. It is a crime for an employer to fail to observe a rule. A rule specifies the bare minimum of protection that an employer must provide employees against health and safety hazards. As a norm, the bare minimum of security is indicated. When an employer fails to set workplace health and safety standards that are at least as strict as those needed by law, the regulations must be followed. Government inspectors are crucial in rule enforcement because they ensure that employers obey the law.

Garment Workers' Rights are Protected by the Constitution

The Bangladesh Constitution guarantees and defends the rights of employees. The State must take on the critical role of liberating the working masses, peasants and workers, and backward segments of the people from all kinds of exploitation. This statute protects the rights of garment workers. This right cannot be violated, even if it is not legally enforceable. The State must make every effort to ensure that all residents have equal access to opportunities. To achieve a consistent level of economic growth throughout the Republic, the State should make the necessary steps to decrease social and economic disparities among men and to ensure an equal distribution of wealth and opportunity among people.

The government should make every effort to guarantee women's equality of opportunity and participation in all aspects of national life.³² Labor is a right, a responsibility, and an honor for everyone capable of working, and everyone must be compensated for his or her efforts per the principle "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his or her work." The State should strive to establish circumstances in which individuals, on the whole, will be unable to enjoy undeserved wealth and in which human activity in all its forms, intellectual and physical, will become a complete manifestation of creative effort and human identity. All citizens are equal before the law and receive equal legal protection in all areas. All citizens should have equal opportunities for employment or positions in the service of the Republic. No citizen shall be refused or discriminated against in any career or job in the service of the Republic simply on the grounds of religion, race, caste, gender, or place of birth.

Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making special provisions in favor of any backward section of citizens in order to ensure their adequate representation in the service of the Republic, giving effect to any law which makes provision for reserving appointments relating to any religious or denominational institution to persons of that religion or denomination; reserving any class of employment or office for members of one sex on the grounds that If such rights are breached, the worker may seek redress in the High Court Division.

Protection of Garment Workers' Rights under the Labor Act of 2006

All monies owed to a worker must be paid within thirty working days of his employment ending due to retirement, discharge, retrenchment, dismissal, or termination. Every employee, even casual or incompetent workers, is entitled to a certificate of service from his employer upon retrenchment, discharge, dismissal, removal, retirement, or termination of employment. Any employee who has been laid off, retrenched, discharged, dismissed, removed, or otherwise removed

³² Pamela Alonso, Silvia Moscoso, and Jesús F. Salgado, "Structured Behavioral Interview as a Legal Guarantee for Ensuring Equal Employment Opportunities for Women: A Meta-Analysis," *The European Journal of Psychology Applied to Legal Context* 9, no. 1 (2017).

from employment who wishes to seek redress under this section must submit his grievance to his employer in writing, by registered mail, within thirty days of being informed of the nature of his grievance. However, registered mail delivery is not required if the employer confirms receipt of the grievance.³³ Within fifteen days of receiving such a grievance, the employer is expected to investigate it, offer the employee a chance to be heard, and convey his decision in writing to him.

If the employer fails to make a decision under subsection or the worker is unsatisfied with the decision, the worker may file a written complaint with the Labour Court within thirty days after the last day under subsection or thirty days of the date of the judgment, whichever is later. After receiving the complaint, the Labour Court will hear the parties and issue any orders it deems suitable and necessary. The complainant's employment may be returned with or without back pay, and the Labour Court may also convert the order of dismissal, removal, or discharge to any other Lesser penalty described in section 23. Anyone who disagrees with a Labour Court ruling has thirty days to appeal it to the Tribunal, and the Tribunal's decision is final. No court expenses are involved with filing a complaint or appealing under this provision.

No legal action will be taken in response to a complaint lodged in compliance with this provision. No employee may dispute an order to terminate employment issued under Section 26 unless it is stated that the employee's union participation was the basis for the order's issuance, the employee's purpose is obvious, the employee has finished their duty, or both. No kid shall be employed or authorized to participate in any employment or business. No teenager may be employed or granted permission to work in any vocation or business unless the following conditions are met: a) his certificate of fitness, issued in the appropriate form by a licensed medical professional, is in the hands of the employer; and b) he carries a token at work that refers to the certificate.³⁴

³³ Bhadra Samir et al., "The Rights of Women Employees under Bangladesh Labor Act: The Case of Ready-Made Garment Industry in Bangladesh" 3 (August 23, 2022): 1–14.

³⁴ Md. Al-Amin, Shahidul Alam, and Sohrab Hossain, "Analysis of the Present Condition of Garment Workers' Rights and Its Protection under Domestic and

This subsection does not apply to the employment of an adolescent as an apprentice or for the purpose of obtaining vocational training in any profession or company: If the government judges that an emergency has occurred and that the public interest necessitates it, it may declare that the requirements of this subsection shall be suspended for the period stated in the notification by notice in the official Gazette. No adolescent shall be permitted to work between moving components of moving equipment or to clean, lubricate, or adjust any part of machinery while it is in motion. No youngster should be required or permitted to work in a mine or other sector for more than five hours per day or thirty hours per week. No teenager should be forced or permitted to work more than seven hours per day or forty-two hours per week in any other institution.

No woman is permitted to work in any institution for the first eight weeks after giving birth. If a woman has notified her employer that she is expecting a child within the next ten weeks, or has given birth within the previous ten weeks, or if the work is physically demanding, requires long periods of standing, or entails any of the following: A woman working on a tea plantation, on the other hand, may conduct light labour if and only if the treating physician for the tea estate in question certifies that she is physically capable of doing so. She will be compensated for the days she performs such employment at the going rate of pay for such labor, in addition to any maternity benefit to which she may be entitled under the present provisions of this Act.³⁵

Any pregnant woman who is qualified for maternity benefits under this Act may tell her employer, either orally or in writing, at any time that she anticipates being hospitalized for at least the following eight weeks. She may also name someone to receive the rewards if she dies. Any lady who has given birth without providing this notification must notify her employer within seven days. If the notice referred to in the sub-section or is received, the employer shall enable a woman to

International Legal Framework: Bangladesh Perspective,” *British Journal of Arts and Humanities* (2020).

³⁵ Robayet Ferdous Syed, “Mechanisms Implementing Minimum Wage Policies and Compliance with the ILO’s Provisions: The Case of Bangladesh’s Garment Global Supply Chain,” *E-Journal of International and Comparative Labour Studies*, 2020.

take unpaid leave beginning the day after the notification date and ending eight weeks after the day of delivery.

We are aware of the legislation regulating garment workers and its application to the Bangladesh issue. Members of our society who work in the clothing business are very valuable and needed. Every day, from dawn to sunset, they labor constantly. Our government should take all necessary steps to ensure that garment workers' rights are not infringed.

Conclusion

The fast fashion sector has altered the worldwide garment manufacturing landscape, with Bangladesh emerging as one of the top production centers. However, this quick expansion has come at a high cost since Bangladeshi garment workers continue to experience exploitation and hazardous working conditions. This conclusion summarizes the important findings about the negative aspects of fast fashion in Bangladesh and underlines the critical need for systemic reforms to address these challenges.

Inadequate salaries and lengthy working hours: Garment workers in Bangladesh sometimes get less than the living wage. They labor long hours, often exceeding legal limitations, resulting in physical and emotional weariness. These circumstances maintain a circle of poverty, locking employees in an exploitation loop. **Dangerous working conditions:** Despite improvements in the aftermath of significant catastrophes such as the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013, many factories in Bangladesh continue to lack sufficient safety precautions. Workers are exposed to dangerous working conditions such as insufficient fire safety, low ventilation, and crowded quarters. Such working conditions endanger their lives and lead to countless industrial mishaps.

Gender inequality and discrimination: Women comprise a significant proportion of Bangladesh's textile workforce. They encounter extra hurdles such as gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and restricted prospects for growth. This reinforces the industry's cycle of gender inequity and further marginalizes female employees. **Limited worker representation and negotiating power:** Garment workers in Bangladesh often lack effective representation and bargaining power. Unions encounter several challenges, including anti-union attitudes, legislative constraints, and harassment. Workers are

vulnerable and unable to bargain for better salaries, working conditions, and social safeguards due to a lack of empowerment.

Environmental effect: The fast fashion business creates large quantities of garbage and pollution, which have a negative impact on Bangladesh's fragile ecosystems. Unregulated chemical disposal, water pollution, and excessive resource use contribute to environmental deterioration and negatively impact local residents' health and well-being.

Government accountability: The Bangladeshi government should enhance labor laws and guarantee their effective implementation, including boosting the minimum wage to a living wage level. Regulations governing working hours, worker safety, and gender equality must be strictly enforced. Improved labor inspection mechanisms and worker union backing are critical for empowering garment workers and protecting their rights. **Corporate responsibility:** Fashion firms and merchants must accept responsible for their supply networks. They should use transparent procurement processes, perform stringent audits, and cooperate with suppliers to improve working conditions. To decrease environmental impact, brands should promote long-term relationships, fair pricing, and investments in sustainable manufacturing practices.

Consumer action and education: Educating consumers about the actual cost of fast fashion and supporting ethical alternatives may help to drive change. Consumers may support businesses that value workers' rights and sustainability by making educated purchasing decisions. Brands may be pressured to adopt fair and ethical practices via advocacy campaigns, social media activism, and boycotts.

International collaboration: The global community, especially international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and trade unions, should work together to solve the issues confronting garment workers in Bangladesh. Sharing best practices, giving technical assistance, and campaigning for stricter restrictions may all help to enhance long-term outcomes.

Finally, the dark side of fast fashion in Bangladesh exposes the harsh realities of exploitation and injustice suffered by garment workers. Governments, firms, consumers, and international players must work together to promote fair pay, safe working conditions, gender equality, and environmental sustainability in the fashion sector. Only by working

together can people ensure a more equitable and ethical future for the others who are the backbone of the business.

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