

WORKERS' VOICE REPORT 2013

Insight into Life and Livelihood of Bangladesh's RMG Workers



September 2013

The *Workers' Voice Report 2013* is part of the *Workers' Voice Project*, a collaboration of AWAJ Foundation, AMRF Society, and Consulting Service International Ltd.

Dhaka, September 25, 2013

CONTACT

AWAJ Foundation

Ms. Nazma Akter
General Secretary &
Executive Director
awaj@dhaka.net

AMRF Society

Mr. M. Reaz Uddin
Executive Director
amrf@dhaka.net

CSI Ltd.

Mr. Karl Borgschulze
Managing Director
info@consultingservice.hk



CONTENTS

i	Preface.....	4
ii	The Workers’ Voice Project Partners.....	6
iii	Methodology	7
iv	List of Figures.....	9
v	List of Tables	10
1.	The RMG Industry: The Future of Bangladesh.....	13
1.1	Introduction	13
1.2	Bangladesh’s RMG Industry	15
1.3	RMG Industry and Urbanization	16
1.4	Labor Relations in Bangladesh’s RMG Industry	19
1.5	Requirements and Recommendations	21
2.	The Workers’ Voice Survey in Detail	23
2.1	Gender	23
2.2	Age	24
2.3	Marital status	25
2.4	Children	27
2.5	Origin.....	29
2.6	Education	31
2.7	Driving forces for joining the RMG industry	35
2.8	Workers’ designation.....	37
2.9	Workers’ industry experience.....	37
2.10	Wage	40
2.11	Working days & hours.....	45
2.12	Injury & illness.....	46
2.13	Abuse	47
2.14	Workers’ reactions to abusive behavior	49
2.15	Workers’ view on their work place	50
2.16	Accommodation & commute.....	55
2.17	Spending time outside the factory.....	58
2.18	Future plans	62
2.19	Wishes.....	66
ANNEX:	Tables.....	68



Workers' Voice

I PREFACE

The report at hand is the first publication of the *Workers' Voice Project*, a joint undertaking of AWAJ Foundation, AMRF Society and Consulting Service International Ltd. (CSI). *Workers' Voice* is the attempt to investigate and understand the complexity of Bangladesh's RMG industry - from the perspective of the workers.

The first *Workers' Voice* report is the direct result of a large scale survey based on individual face-to-face interviews with over 1,200 Bangladeshi garment workers from more than 250 different factories. The interviews were conducted between June 2012 and April 2013 by the staff of AWAJ Foundation.

This survey is unique, both because of its size in respect to participants as well as its scope in regards to subject matter. In contrast to many other research projects in this field, *Workers' Voice* does not limit itself to a specific aspect but takes a comprehensive approach. It attempts to establish a kaleidoscopic insight into the life of garment workers, those who are the pulse of this important and thriving industry. *Workers' Voice* recognizes the worker as a human being and not merely as a necessary element of the RMG production process. Therefore, much space was provided within the survey to capture the workers' perceptions, feelings, plans and aspirations.

The *Workers' Voice Project* is open-ended and the survey will be continued. A database will be established that will allow tracking the historical development of the industry. Reports, such as this one, will be published on a regular basis.

Workers' Voice represents the collaboration of three different organizations connected by their commitment to facilitate the development of a just and sustainable RMG industry in Bangladesh. *Workers' Voice* is a true multi-stakeholder endeavor comprising a Bangladeshi NGO dedicated to the fight for workers' rights, a local think-tank and watchdog of Bangladesh's labor issues, and a Hong Kong based CSR consultancy with many years of experience in the global apparel business.



Workers' Voice

The *Workers' Voice Report 2013* is divided into two sections. The first section delivers a concise reflection that focuses on the importance of the RMG industry in the context of urbanization and the socio-economic development of Bangladesh. This part is based on those findings of the survey that provide insight into the quality of the industry's management and labor relations as well as workers' perceptions towards the industry and their role within it.

The second section provides the detailed account of the survey data. It is complemented by the collection of tables that were created for the analysis and interpretation of the interview data.

We believe that the reflections, analyses and inferences presented in this report are true to the primary data and important in respect for their practical recommendations. But the interpretations provided here are by no means exhausting the wealth of survey data included in this report. The survey allows for further interpretation and reflection. We made the effort to present the survey in rich detail and included all relevant tables. We invite all interested stakeholders to investigate and explore this data and encourage constructive debate.



Workers' Voice

II THE WORKERS' VOICE PROJECT PARTNERS

AMRF Society stands for **A**lternative **M**ovement for **R**esources and **F**reedom. The organization was established in 1999 and strives to facilitate a society based on human equality and freedom from discrimination. AMRF acts as a watch-dog



observing the prevailing labor issues in Bangladesh. AMRF's mission is to achieve a fair balance of trade gains among the stakeholders of industrial production systems and focuses on the implementation of labor law in Bangladesh. AMRF analyses the labor situation of the country and continually conducts research, which it shares with other bodies that work in the same field and follow the same goals.

AWAJ Foundation (AF) is a Bangladeshi Non-Governmental Organization established in 2003. AWAJ Foundation's aim is to improve the general livelihood



of workers by providing support in form of legal rights counseling, health care services and training activities on subjects such as workers' rights, health and safety, hygiene and reproductive health. Furthermore, AF seeks to build a bridge between workers and factory management with the aim to achieve that legal rights and demands of workers are better addressed.

Consulting Service International Ltd. (CSI) is a CSR consultancy established in 2004. The Hong Kong-based company is active in all major Asian



markets and offers services such as strategic CSR planning & project management, factory qualification with a focus on management systems, workshops and trainings. CSI works closely with brands, manufacturers and local NGOs to develop the potential of Bangladesh's the textile sector and contribute to a sustainable and ethical social-economic development.



Workers' Voice

III METHODOLOGY

This report is based on primary data that was generated through individual face-to-face interviews utilizing a semi-structured questionnaire. The survey took place from June 2012 to April 2013 and produced a total of 1,229 completed questionnaires.

The questionnaire was formulated to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data. It provided scope to capture responses in several different ways. Some of the questions could be answered directly with numeric information, while others included provisions for recording narrative. Ranking scales and visual symbols were also used in order to facilitate responses to specific questions.

The interviews were conducted inside the premises of the AWAJ Foundation with garment workers visiting the organization for different purposes, e.g. to visit the doctor or to take part in training sessions. The location ensured an environment free from the influence of employers or by-standers.

Since the respondents visited the AWAJ Foundation for reasons other than the survey, the participants represent a randomized sample of the RMG workforce. The interviews were conducted by staff of AWAJ Foundation with substantial experience in the RMG industry and knowledge in interviewing.

The completed questionnaires underwent a quality and consistency check that resulted in the acceptance of 1,215 cases for further analysis. Data processing was done by using a software package for statistical data analysis. Descriptive answers were categorized and coded in order to be entered into the database.

The database generated from the questionnaires was analyzed to examine statistical trends and significance of specific variables as well as correlations between two or more variables. In addition, narrative answers were examined and used to corroborate findings that were generated from quantitative information. Qualitative information was also used to understand and explain exceptional/unusual patterns of quantitative information, lack of information and apparently contradictory information.

In this report, the terms 'respondents', 'participants', and 'interviewees' are used interchangeably. They all refer to the subjects of the survey.



Workers' Voice

Limitations

The survey was conducted with garment workers visiting the AWAJ Foundation. For that reason the survey sample has a higher proportion of male respondents in comparison to the actual share of male workers in the industry.

The general level of education among the participants is low and their exposure to the external world - beyond their work place and home village - is limited. Comprehension problems in respect to some questions made it sometimes necessary to reformulate the question text and elaborate.

Although the interviews were taken outside of factories, a certain self-censorship founded in the anxiety of getting into conflict with the employer, cannot be completely ruled out.



Workers' Voice

IV LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:	Distribution of respondents according to gender	23
Figure 2:	Distribution of respondents according to age	24
Figure 3:	Distribution of respondents according to age and gender	25
Figure 4:	Distribution of respondents according to marital status.....	25
Figure 5:	Distribution of respondents according to marital status and gender	26
Figure 6:	Distribution of female respondents according to age and marital status.....	27
Figure 7:	Distribution of male respondents according to age and marital status.....	27
Figure 8:	Distribution of respondents according to number of children (considering only those with children).....	28
Figure 9:	Distribution of respondents according to number of children and gender	28
Figure 10:	Distribution of respondents according to common districts of origin.....	29
Figure 11:	Distribution of respondents according to administrative divisions.....	30
Figure 12:	Distribution of participants according to years of schooling	31
Figure 13:	Distribution of participants according to years of schooling (considering only those who attended school).....	32
Figure 14:	Distribution of respondents according to years of schooling and gender	32
Figure 15:	Distribution of respondents according to reasons for not attending school/school drop-out.....	33
Figure 16:	Proportion of male and female participants who would like to continue/start education if given the chance	34
Figure 17:	Distribution of respondents according to motivation for continuing/starting education and gender	34
Figure 18:	Distribution of respondents according to reasons for joining RMG industry and gender.....	36
Figure 19:	Distribution of respondents according to designation and gender	37
Figure 20:	Distribution of respondents according to years of work experience in RMG industry	38
Figure 21:	Distribution of respondents according to years worked in current factory	38
Figure 22:	Distribution of respondents according to number of factories worked in	39
Figure 23:	Distribution of respondents according to number of factories worked in and years of experience in RMG industry	40
Figure 24:	Distribution of respondents according to wage. The figure shows that the majority of respondents earn below the average wage of BDT 4,500.	41
Figure 25:	Distribution of respondents according to wage	41
Figure 26:	Distribution of respondents according to wage and gender.....	42
Figure 27:	Proportion of male and female respondents in different wage groups.....	42
Figure 28:	Distribution of respondents according to wage groups and years of experience in RMG industry	43
Figure 29:	Distribution of respondents according to wage groups and years in current factory	44
Figure 30:	Distribution of respondents according to wage groups and number of factories worked in	45
Figure 31:	Distribution of respondents according to daily working hours	46
Figure 32:	Distribution of respondents according to statements about reactions of management to workers reporting illness/physical discomfort during working hours	47
Figure 33:	Proportion of male and female respondents who reported abuse by supervisor/management staff.....	48
Figure 34:	Types of abuse reported by respondents.....	48
Figure 35:	Distribution of respondents according to frequency of experienced abuse (considering only those who experienced abuse)	49
Figure 36:	Distribution of respondents according to reactions to abusive behavior (considering only those who experienced abuse)	50



Workers' Voice

Figure 37: The three most common mentions of respondents when asked what they like most about their current factory and share of respondents who refrain from giving a statement	51
Figure 38: The three most common mentions of respondents when asked what they dislike most about their current factory and share of respondents who refrain from giving a statement	52
Figure 39: The most common mentions of respondents when asked what they would like to change if given the chance and share of respondents who refrain from giving a statement	53
Figure 40: Distribution of participants according to their general feeling towards working in RMG industry	54
Figure 41: Distribution of participants according to living situation and gender	56
Figure 42: Distribution of participants according to monthly cost for accommodation	56
Figure 43: Distribution of participants according to time needed to commute to workplace	57
Figure 44: Distribution of participants according to amount of money spent for commuting to workplace	58
Figure 45: The three most common after-work activities	59
Figure 46: The three most common after-work activities according to gender	60
Figure 47: The most common after-work activities chosen because of recreational value	60
Figure 48: The most common after-work activities chosen because of recreational value according to gender	61
Figure 49: The most common activities that are pursued during holidays/larger stretches of free time	62
Figure 50: The most commonly expressed plans for the future	63
Figure 51: The most commonly expressed plans for the future according to gender	64
Figure 52: The most commonly expressed wishes for the future	66
Figure 53: The most commonly expressed wishes for the future according to gender	67

V LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to gender	68
Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to age	68
Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to age and gender	68
Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to marital status	68
Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to marital status and gender	69
Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to marital status age group and gender	69
Table 7: Distribution of respondents according to children (yes/no)	70
Table 8: Distribution of non-single respondents according to children (yes/no)	70
Table 9: Distribution of non-single respondents according to children and gender	70
Table 10: Distribution of non-single respondents according to number of children	70
Table 11: Distribution of respondents according to number of children and gender	71
Table 12: Number of children divided by gender (excluding respondents that are single)	71
Table 13: Distribution of respondents according to divisions/districts	71
Table 14: Distribution of respondents according to level of education	74
Table 15: Distribution of respondents according to level of education and gender	74
Table 16: Distribution of respondents according to reason for not attending school/school drop-out	75
Table 17: Distribution of respondents according to reason for not attending school/school drop-out and gender	75
Table 18: Distribution of respondents according to interest in starting/continuing education (yes/no)	76
Table 19: Distribution of respondents according to interest in starting/continuing education and gender (yes/no)	76



Workers' Voice

Table 20: Distribution of respondents according to motivation to start/continue education	76
Table 21: Distribution of respondents according to motivation to start/continue education and gender	77
Table 22: Distribution of respondents according to reason to join RMG industry	77
Table 23: Distribution of respondents according to reason to join RMG industry and gender	77
Table 24: Distribution of respondents according to designation	78
Table 25: Distribution of respondents according to designation and gender	78
Table 26: Distribution of respondents according to years of experience in RMG Industry	79
Table 27: Distribution of respondents according to years of experience in RMG Industry and gender	79
Table 28: Distribution of respondents according to years in present factory	79
Table 29: Distribution of respondents according to years in present factory	79
Table 30: Distribution of respondents according to number of factories worked in	80
Table 31: Distribution of respondents according to number of factories worked in and gender	80
Table 32: Distribution of respondents according to years in the same factory and wage	81
Table 33: Distribution of respondents according to years in the industry and number of factories worked in	81
Table 34: Distribution of respondents according to wage	81
Table 35: Distribution of respondents according to wage and gender	82
Table 36: Distribution of respondents according to years in the industry and wage	82
Table 37: Distribution of respondents according to wage and number of factories worked in	82
Table 38: Distribution of respondents according to wage and education	83
Table 39: Distribution of respondents according to number of working days per week	83
Table 40: Distribution of respondents according to number of working days per week and gender	83
Table 41: Distribution of respondents according to number of working hours per day	84
Table 42: Distribution of respondents according to number of working hours per day and gender	84
Table 43: Distribution of respondents according to suffering physical ailments (yes/no)	84
Table 44: Distribution of respondents according to suffering physical ailments and gender (yes/no)	85
Table 45: Distribution of respondents according to sick leave granted in present factory (yes/no)	85
Table 46: Distribution of respondents according to sick leave granted in present factory and gender (yes/no)	85
Table 47: Distribution of respondents according management's response to workers' illness	85
Table 48: Distribution of respondents according management's response to workers' illness and gender	86
Table 49: Distribution of respondents according to experience of abuse (yes/no)	86
Table 50: Distribution of respondents according to experience of abuse and gender (yes/no)	87
Table 51: Distribution of respondents according to type of experienced abuse	87
Table 52: Distribution of respondents according to type of experienced abuse	87
Table 53: Distribution of respondents according to frequency of experienced abuse	87
Table 54: Distribution of respondents according to frequency of experienced abuse and gender	88
Table 55: Distribution of respondents according to experienced abuse and education	88
Table 56: Distribution of respondents according to experienced abuse and age	88
Table 57: Distribution of respondents according to experienced abuse and experience in the industry	89
Table 58: Distribution of respondents according to frequency of experienced abuse and age	89
Table 59: Distribution of respondents according to frequency of experienced abuse and education	89
Table 60: Distribution of respondents according to frequency of experienced abuse and experience in the industry	90
Table 61: Distribution of respondents according to response to experienced abuse	90
Table 62: Distribution of respondents according to response to experienced abuse and gender	90



Workers' Voice

Table 63: Distribution of respondents according to response to experienced abuse and age	90
Table 64: Distribution of respondents according to response to experienced abuse and education	91
Table 65: Distribution of respondents according to response to experienced abuse and experience in the industry	91
Table 66: Distribution of respondents according to positive view of own work place.....	92
Table 67: Distribution of respondents according to positive view of own work place and gender	92
Table 68: Distribution of respondents according to negative view of own work place.....	93
Table 69: Distribution of respondents according to negative view of own work place and gender	95
Table 70: Distribution of respondents according to change desired in own workplace	96
Table 71: Distribution of respondents according to change desired in own workplace and gender	97
Table 72: Distribution of respondents according to general opinion of work in industry	98
Table 73: Distribution of respondents according to general opinion of work in industry and gender.....	98
Table 74: Distribution of respondents according to living situation.....	98
Table 75: Distribution of respondents according to living situation and gender	98
Table 76: Distribution of respondents according monthly cost of accommodation	99
Table 77: Distribution of respondents according monthly cost of accommodation and gender.....	99
Table 78: Distribution of respondents according to number of co-residents	99
Table 79: Distribution of respondents according to number of co-residents	100
Table 80: Distribution of respondents according to travel time to factory	100
Table 81: Distribution of respondents according to travel time to factory and gender.....	101
Table 82: Distribution of respondents according to travel cost to factory.....	101
Table 83: Distribution of respondents according to travel cost to factory and gender	101
Table 84: Distribution of respondents according to activities after work.....	101
Table 85: Distribution of respondents according to activities after work and gender	102
Table 86: Distribution of respondents according to recreational activities after work	103
Table 87: Distribution of respondents according to recreational activities after work and gender	104
Table 88: Distribution of respondents according to recreational activities pursued when more time available/holiday	105
Table 89: Distribution of respondents according to recreational activities pursued when more time/holiday available and gender.....	106
Table 90: Distribution of respondents according to future plan	107
Table 91: Distribution of respondents according to future plan and gender.....	107
Table 92: Distribution of respondents according to wish	108
Table 93: Distribution of respondents according to wish and gender	109



Workers' Voice

1. THE RMG INDUSTRY: THE FUTURE OF BANGLADESH

1.1 Introduction

Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) industry stands at a crossroads. The fire at Tazreen factory in November 2012 and the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in April 2013 catapulted Bangladesh and its most important industry into global consciousness. Stakeholders and donor countries have never been so eager in showing their willingness to assist the RMG sector of Bangladesh. Several initiatives have been launched that promise meaningful multi-stakeholder cooperation under inclusion of workers and unions.¹ The forthcoming implementation period will reveal whether these initiatives hold their promises or merely turn out to be quick fixes, targeted at reestablishing the status quo in order to return to "business as usual".

The current global attention and willingness of stakeholders to deploy resources offers the opportunity to initiate positive change. We argue that the key to positive and sustainable change lies in the improvement of Bangladesh's labor relations. The findings of the *Workers' Voice* survey demonstrate that labor relations in the RMG sector are characterized by a deep-rooted antagonism between workers on the one side and managers and industry owners on the other side. The current status of labor relations is preventing the transformation of the sector into a mature and truly professional industry of international standard.

A fundamental change of thought must take place, both among managers and factory owners as well as within the workforce. Managers and industry owners need to shift their perspective from that of a trader to that of a professional manufacturing entrepreneur. They must recognize and safeguard the value and rights of their workers and take responsibility for their well-being. Workers need to recognize their constructive role as acting agents within a thriving industry. They need to cultivate ownership and feel able to shape and drive forward the development of the sector.

More effort needs to be put into education and capacity building of both workers and management. We need to establish a constructive dialogue between both groups that can gradually cultivate healthy labor relations.

¹ The current initiatives are: Global Sustainability Compact with Bangladesh, Northern American Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire Safety, Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh



Workers' Voice

We argue that the RMG industry stands at a crossroads. But it is more at stake than the continued success of the industry, because the future of Bangladesh is intertwined with the fate of the RMG sector and the well-being and prosperity of its workforce.

The RMG industry is at the center of an urbanization process that radically reshapes Bangladesh's socio-economic landscape. The development of the country into a stable middle-income democracy is dependent on how well this process of urbanization will be managed.

The RMG industry is the stepping stone for countless rural poor people into an urban livelihood. The industry has the potential and responsibility to shape and steer urbanization into a positive direction by facilitating the transformation of these people into professional and empowered urban citizens.

Structure of argumentation

- Bangladesh's development is closely connected to the process of urbanization and its future depends on how well this process will be managed.
- The RMG industry is the biggest pull factor of rural-urban migration. RMG constitutes a crucial force in the urbanization process.
- The RMG industry has the potential and responsibility to shape the urbanization process and hence facilitate Bangladesh's development into a democratic middle-income country
- **The future of the RMG industry and the future of Bangladesh are intertwined.**
- **The RMG industry has so far not succeeded to realize its potential.**
- **A key reason for that lies in the quality of management and the industry's labor relations**



Workers' Voice

1.2 Bangladesh's RMG Industry

In economic terms Bangladesh's RMG industry is an unprecedented success story. From the first RMG export in 1978, worth USD 12,000, the industry has grown rapidly to become Bangladesh's most important economic sector with a value of a USD 20bn. The RMG industry generates 13 percent of total GDP and contributes 78 percent to the country's total export earnings. Bangladesh is now the second largest apparel exporting country in the world. Around 90 percent of its earnings are generated by exports to the USA and the European Union.

Easy access to foreign markets through the Multi Fiber Agreement (MFA) and the country's abundance of cheap labor facilitated rapid emergence of the industry. But even after the phase out of the MFA at the end of 2004, Bangladesh remains internationally competitive. Fundamental factors of this competitiveness are low labor costs and high capacity. The industry is highly centralized with approx. 70 percent of its 5,600² factories situated within Dhaka metropolitan area.

These numbers demonstrate the obvious economic relevance of the industry. But a broader perspective that captures the industry's social-cultural impact and potential is necessary. According to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), the RMG sector employs 4m people, 80 percent of whom are women, most of them originating from poor rural households from all over the country. The RMG industry is the only sector in Bangladesh that offers formal employment to these women. Compared to the few other available income opportunities for unskilled women, the RMG industry might be perceived as the "least worst" of options for ensuring economic survival.

² BGMEA Trade Information (Accessed September 7, 2013)

<http://www.bgmea.com.bd/home/pages/TradeInformation#.UirAiNKeghV>



Workers' Voice

1.3 RMG Industry and Urbanization

It is necessary to think about the RMG sector in the context of urbanization. RMG is the biggest pull-factor of rural-urban migration. The potential of the industry to shape and steer urbanization into a positive direction cannot be overstated.

Bangladesh is a predominantly agrarian country and the agricultural sector is still the largest employer. Only 29 percent of Bangladesh's total population estimated at around 160m people, live in cities. In comparison with Germany, where 74 percent of the population live in cities and the USA, where the share is as high as 82 percent, the figure for Bangladesh seems low.³ But with an urban growth rate of 3 percent, urbanization is rapidly progressing in Bangladesh and it is drastically reshaping the country's socio-economic landscape.⁴

Urbanization is a global trend and has proven to be an effective engine of economic growth and socio-cultural development that leads to higher literacy rates, more individual freedoms, improvement in education and better service delivery. But rapid urbanization has its dark sides and they can be observed in Dhaka, a metropolis of 15m inhabitants. The ongoing growth of Bangladesh's capital is characterized by uncontrolled construction, the destruction of the environment, the increasing shortage of resources such as water and gas and a lack of basic services. 40 percent of the city's inhabitants live in slums. Many of them are garment workers.

In fact, the tragedy of the Rana Plaza building collapse as well as the countless number of unsafe buildings that Rana Plaza was only one of, can be understood as a symptom of badly managed urbanization.

According to the Livability Survey of the Economist Intelligence Unit from August 2013, Dhaka ranks second to last, which makes it the least livable city aside of war torn Damascus.⁵

³ CIA World Fact Book, Bangladesh, Germany, United States (Accessed September 10, 2013)

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bg.html>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gm.html>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>

⁴ UN data, Bangladesh (Accessed September 10, 2013)

<http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=Bangladesh>

⁵ Global Livability Report (Accessed September 10, 2013)

http://www.eiu.com/site_info.asp?info_name=The_Global_Liveability_Report



Workers' Voice

For countless rural people in Bangladesh, the RMG industry is the stepping stone into the city and into a new, urban existence. It is the RMG workforce that is positioned at the center of the urbanization process. The shape and the effects of this process will depend to large extent on the well-being and prosperity of these people and whether they receive the chance to fulfill their inherent potential, whether they are facilitated to feel empowered and able to make demands for better education, health services, and an end to corruption.

The RMG industry has the potential and responsibility to shape and steer urbanization into a positive direction. An important key for realizing that potential is the transformation of the rural poor into socially, culturally and economically active citizens of Bangladesh.

In the context of urbanization and a wider development framework, the RMG industry has the potential to:

- ❖ be a catalyst of women empowerment by providing them with a means to gain economic and social independence;
- ❖ be a catalyst of broader social change towards a modern urban society, free from gender discrimination;
- ❖ turn Dhaka's slums into true "arrival cities" for the rural poor who aspire to ascend into the urban middle class;
- ❖ be the fertile ground for a participatory democratic development towards a free and fair society that embraces innovation and productivity.

The RMG industry has so far not succeeded to bring about such transformation. Its enormous development potential remains largely unrealized. Despite some improvements made in recent years, the RMG sector is still characterized by poor working conditions, low wages, insufficient health and safety standards and frequent harassment and abuse at the workplace.

The emergence of the RMG industry is widely regarded as being a positive step towards female emancipation and empowerment. It can be argued that RMG indeed offers the "least worst" of all available income options for rural, unskilled women. But this form of employment remains embedded in an exploitative context that does not leave any space for individual self-fulfillment. Neither is this



Workers' Voice

context conducive for cultivating identification with the industry and developing a professional industrial work ethos.

The RMG industry does not exhibit a practice that facilitates the transformation of poor rural people into a professional industrial workforce.

The RMG industry in its current state aggravates the negative effects of urbanization. Rather than using its positive potential for shaping urbanization, the industry realizes its negative potential for “mis-shaping” the process. Instead of facilitating the transformation of the rural poor into a modern urban middle-class, it keeps its workforce largely locked up in a destitute economic position that does not allow for social upward mobility. According to data from the *Workers' Voice* survey, the average monthly salary of a female sewing machine operator with two to five years work experience is around BDT 4,400, excluding overtime payment (approx. EUR 44). The amount increases to around BDT 6,300 when considering overtime (approx. EUR 63). But the long working hours take their toll on physical and mental health of workers. Nearly 80 percent of the survey's participants state that they suffer some kind of physical ailment. The life of the garment worker is dictated by the merciless cycle of the industry. 80 percent of participants report to work ten to 12 hours on a daily basis, six days a week. The little time left outside of factory work hardly suffices for the most necessary: cooking and housekeeping, personal hygiene, and sleeping. Even under consideration of overtime, the monthly pay of most garment workers falls far short of what would be needed to sustain a humane urban livelihood. These conditions contribute directly to the growth of slums, to which garment workers must resort because they cannot afford proper housing.



Workers' Voice

1.4 Labor Relations in Bangladesh's RMG Industry

Functioning labor relations are a key to the development of a professional industrial workforce and a crucial factor in creating a mature and sustainable urban industry. However, healthy labor relations do not exist in Bangladesh's RMG industry.

The labor relations between the industry's management and its workforce are characterized by a deep-rooted antagonism. This antagonism lies at the core of the industry's lack of success to realize its potential as a positive driving force of urbanization and socio-economic development.

The findings of the *Workers' Voice* survey lend support to this thesis. Especially the data on workers' perceptions, feelings and behavioral patterns provides valuable insight into the workers' mindset and indirectly into the mindset of the factory managers/owners. These two mindsets are fundamental to the quality of labor relations.

Workers	Factory management/owners
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Workers have no sense of identification with the industry. They do not perceive themselves within the industry, but rather apart from it (alienation).❖ Workers do not understand themselves as agents with the ability to change the situation (in their factory or the industry as a whole). There is no feeling of empowerment or ownership. The industry is perceived as a machine, unchangeable and indifferent to the feelings and opinions of its workers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Management/owners lack valuation of their workers and exhibit little empathy towards their situation.❖ Workers are considered a disposable resource. A concept of human <i>resource</i> dominates over a concept of human <i>relations</i>.❖ Management/owners have no interest in a stable workforce. A high turnover rate is favored because it ensures that bargaining power of workers remain limited. The management needs not to worry, as they have access to a seemingly inexhaustible pool of



Workers' Voice

- ❖ Workers have no trust in their management.
- ❖ If communication systems exist they are mistrusted because they are understood as non-functional. When communication takes place, it is often antagonistic, e.g. in the form of derogatory or abusive behavior.

workers flocking in from rural areas seeking a means of survival. There is no other sector in Bangladesh that competes for this abundant, mainly female, workforce.

The antagonistic essence of labor relations in Bangladesh's RMG industry

Management perceives the worker as a necessary "production aspect" that needs to be controlled and contained

Workers perceive their work in the factory as a necessary "negative aspect of their life" that needs to be endured

It must be emphasized that the quality of labor relations is constituted by both sides; the workers as well as the factory management and garment owners. Their distinctly different mindsets are intertwined like two gear wheels. Together - in unintentional cooperation - they maintain the mechanisms of exploitation and antagonism that prevent the transformation of the rural poor into empowered, urban citizens.

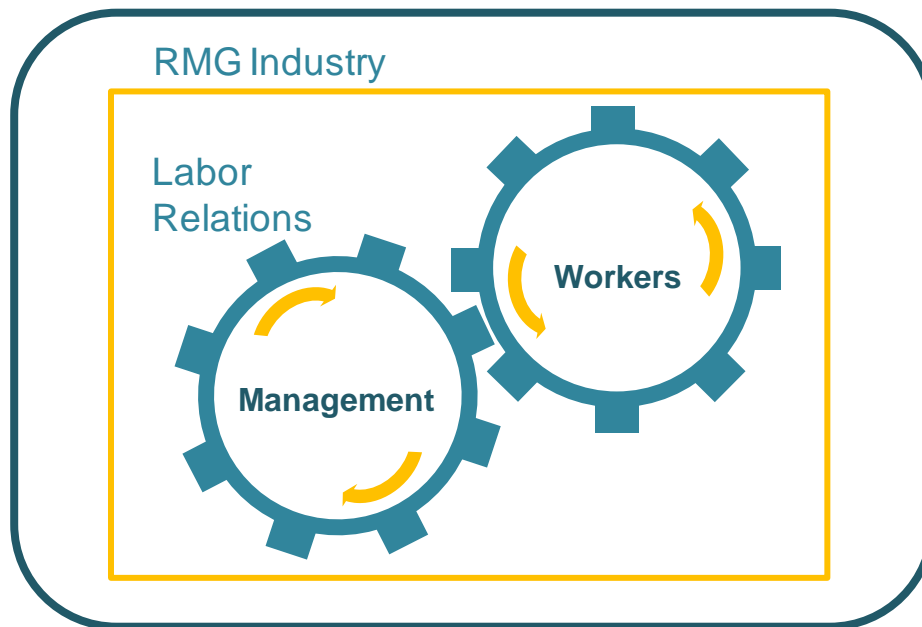
The industry is run by individuals who operate from the perspective of traders, and not of professional manufacturing entrepreneurs.

The industry is exploitative. But it must be acknowledged that it is the fatalism and feeling of impotence embraced by the workforce, which facilitates this exploitation.



Workers' Voice

To stay with the metaphor of the two gear-wheels: One wheel cannot run without the other and each wheel supports and determines the other in its motion. Surely it is true that economic and political power sides with industry owners. They have more immediate potential to influence developments. But on the other hand it is the worker who constitutes the pulse of the industry. It is her labor that makes the clothes that earn the revenue. We must realize that the one part cannot function without the other.



1.5 Requirements and Recommendations

Based on the *Workers' Voice* survey and the reflections and interpretations it allows for, a set of requirements and recommendations can be concluded in order to improve the quality of labor relations:

- A professional entrepreneurial mind-set that recognizes the value and rights of workers needs to be cultivated.
- Workers need to recognize their constructive role as acting agents within a thriving industry that bears the potential for meaningful and sustainable social-economic development. Workers need to develop ownership and feel able to shape and drive forward the development of the industry.

Workers' Voice

- More effort needs to be put on intensive education and capacity building activities for both workers and management.
- A constructive dialogue needs to be established between workers and management, including participatory structures in factories.
- Functional communication systems, including suggestion and complaint systems, need to be implemented.
- Joint worker-management committees, such as health and safety and participation committees need to be implemented and qualified via appropriate and interactive training measures.



Workers' Voice

2. THE WORKERS' VOICE SURVEY IN DETAIL

This section of the report presents in detail the findings of the survey, based on 1,215 individual interviews with both male and female workers from more than 250 factories of Bangladesh's RMG industry.

2.1 Gender

This survey considers both female and male workers of Bangladesh's RMG industry. By most accounts women constitute around 80 percent of the RMG workforce. The total number of people employed in this industry is estimated to be around 4m. In this survey female respondents constitute 69 percent of the total sample, instead of the expected 80 percent (Figure 1). The reason for this slight deviation is coincidental. The sample includes a significant share of participants from sweater factories. Traditionally, sweater factories employ a large number of males.⁶ For that reason the share of male workers interviewed for this survey is around 11 percent higher than expected.

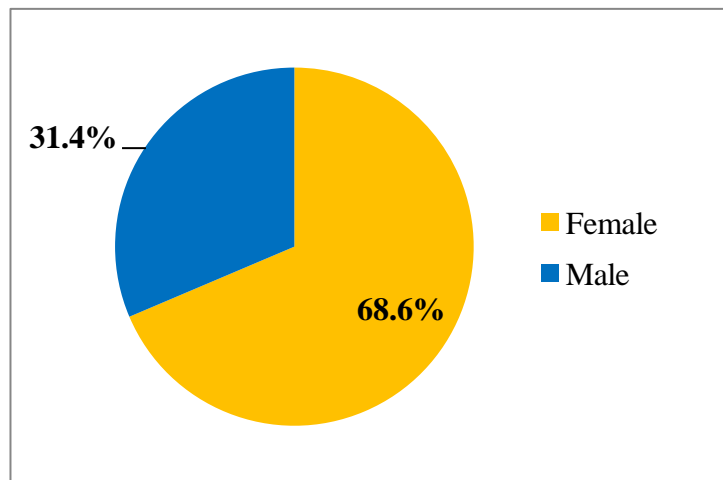


Figure 1: Distribution of respondents according to gender

⁶ Manufacturing in sweater factories is physically more demanding and requires the operation of heavy machinery. Additionally, workers are usually paid according to piece rate. Both of these factors contribute to a much lower proportion of female workers being employed in sweater factories.

Workers' Voice

2.2 Age

Included in the sample are RMG workers from under the age of 14 to 65 years. The distribution of participants among the six chosen age groups reflects that the RMG industry is clearly dominated by young workers. More than three-fourths of the interviewees are below 28 years of age. The single largest group, accounting for almost 44 percent of the sample, is between the age of 18 and 22 years. 17 female workers and one male worker, accounting for 1.5 percent, are below 18 years of age (Figure 2).

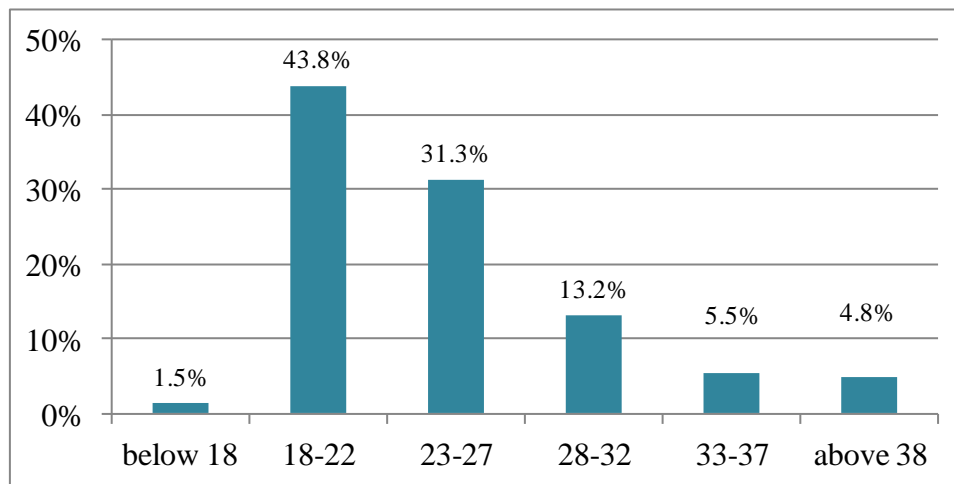


Figure 2: Distribution of respondents according to age

Taking gender division into account, the data on age shows that female respondents are younger than their male counterparts. As demonstrated in figure 3, female participants clearly dominate in the age group of 18 to 22 years (47 percent female vs. 38 percent male).

Workers' Voice

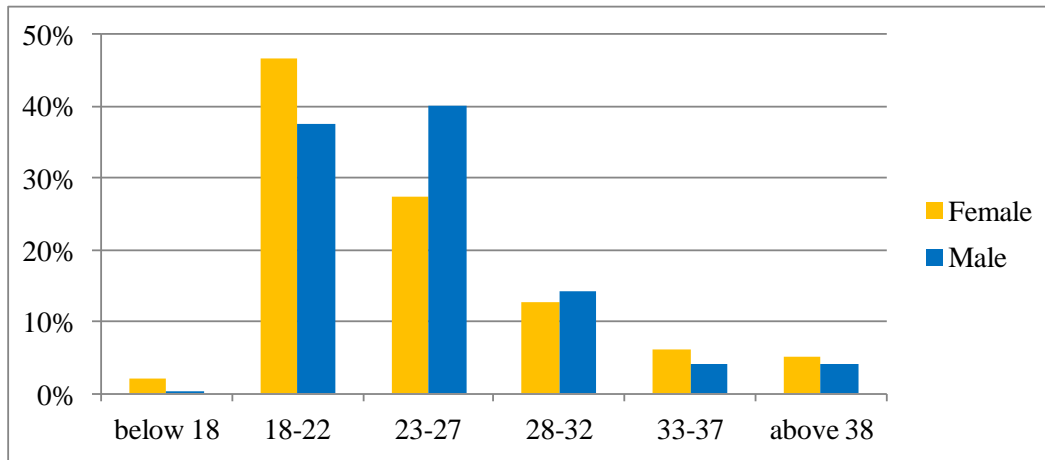


Figure 3: Distribution of respondents according to age and gender

2.3 Marital status

More than half of all survey participants are married: 62 percent of the female respondents and almost half of the male respondents. Less than 3 percent of the women are divorced or widowed. Among the male participants, only 0.3 percent mentions to be divorced (Figure 4 and 5).

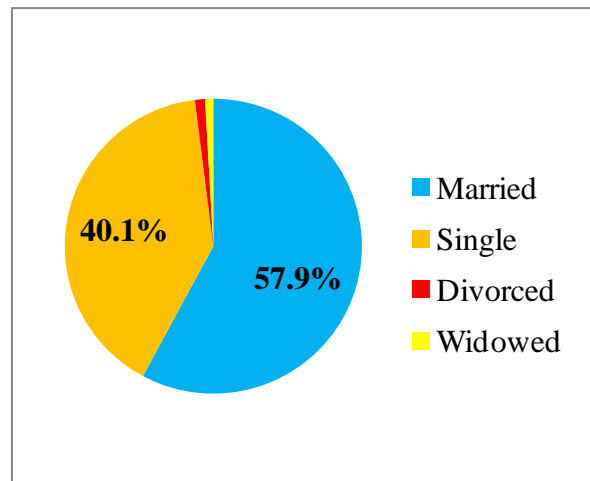


Figure 4: Distribution of respondents according to marital status

Workers' Voice

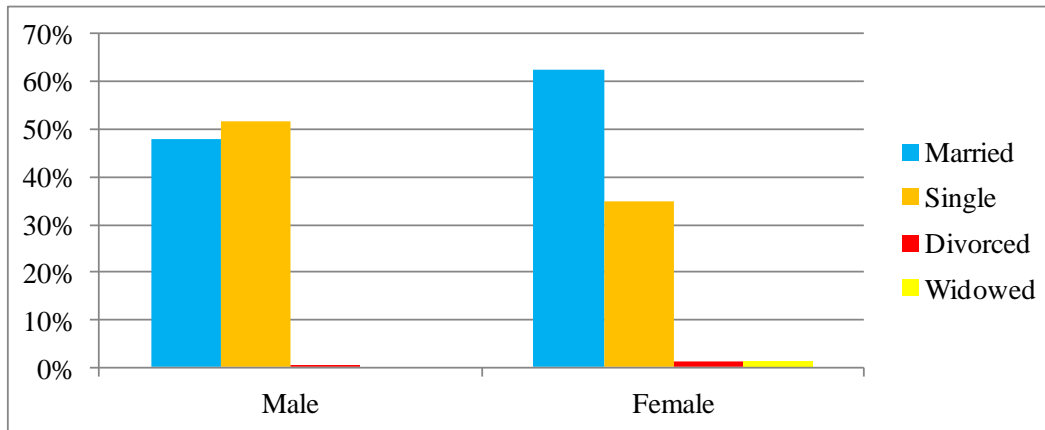


Figure 5: Distribution of respondents according to marital status and gender

Even in the group of participants between the age of 18 and 22 years, nearly one-third is married. The share of married females in this age group is 38 percent and much higher than the proportion of married males (Figures 6 and 7). The survey includes two female workers that are married and still below the age of 18 years.

The data reflects the great importance that Bangladeshi culture subscribes to marriage. Independent of sex, it is normal to get married at a young age. However, females tend to be married at an earlier age than males. This is also indicated by a much smaller share of women being single: Considering the whole sample, only 35 percent of the interviewed females are unmarried compared to 52 percent unmarried males. In the age group 23 to 27 years, merely 14.5 percent of the young women are still single, compared to 44 percent men in the same age group.⁷

⁷ Entering into marriage at an early age remains a common social phenomenon in Bangladesh. This applies to both rural and urban areas and comprises all social strata. In many cases marriages are arranged by the parents of groom and bride, who both have normally little influence in this process, let alone the final say. The rigid implementation of this social practice of ‘marrying the child off’ is becoming less relevant in higher socio-economic strata, but it remains prevalent among poor and especially rural families. Among the poor the process of marriage is mostly dominated by the desires of the groom’s family, who are the one’s choosing the bride and setting the amount of dowry required to finalize the bond. This reflects the lower valuation of girls compared to boys. Marrying off girls at an early age has social and economic reasons. Girls are often regarded by their family as a financial burden. Offering young girls for marriage increases the chance of being selected by a wealthier household and reduces the cost of dowry. Furthermore, as girls grow older they increasingly become a risk to the social reputation of the family. Sexual

Workers' Voice

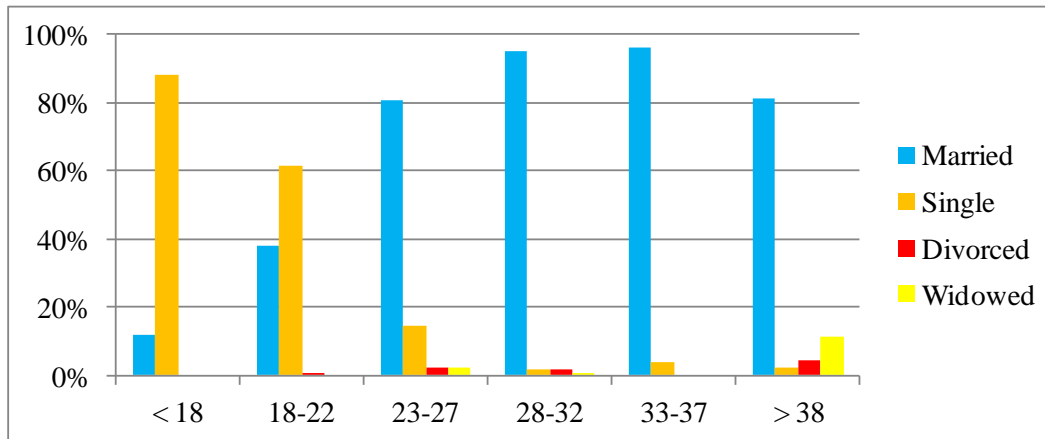


Figure 6: Distribution of female respondents according to age and marital status

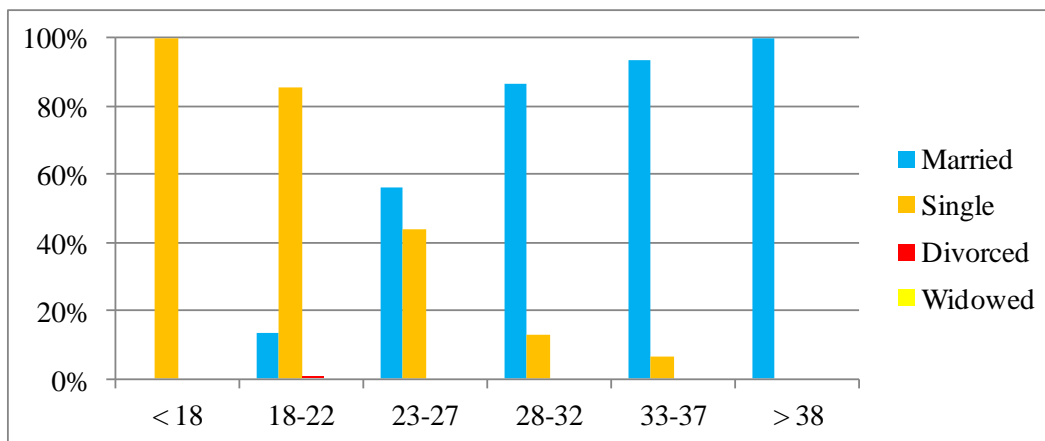


Figure 7: Distribution of male respondents according to age and marital status

2.4 Children

Considering the whole sample, 40 percent of interviewees have at least one child. However, considering only those that are married or have been married in the past, the share of participants with child(ren) rises to 66 percent. All single respondents report that they have no children. This is not surprising, because having children outside of marriage is not accepted in Bangladeshi culture.

harassment, including rape, of young and even minor girls is common in Bangladesh. Marrying off the girl at an early age decreases the risk for the family of becoming the target of social stigma, which often follows harassment and rape inflicted on their daughters.

Workers' Voice

In the group of respondents with children, the majority has one child and 25 percent have two children. Around 6 percent have four children and nearly 2 percent have five children (Figure 8).

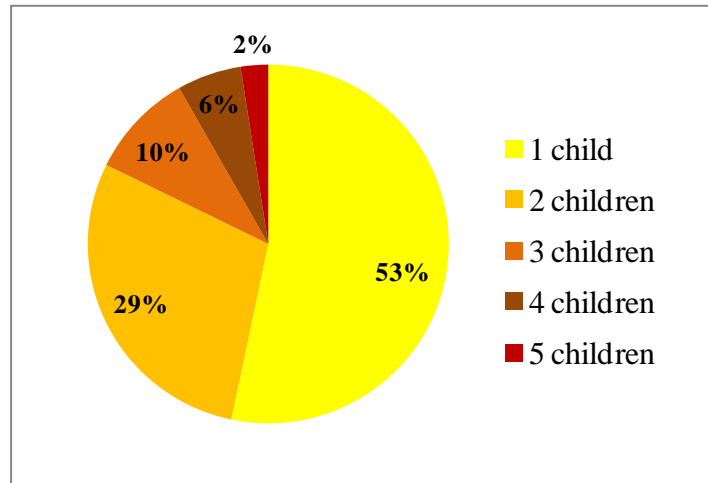


Figure 8: Distribution of respondents according to number of children (considering only those with children)

Dividing the data by gender shows that female participants are more likely to have children than their male counterparts. In the group of non-single female workers, 71 percent have at least one child. For the group of non-single male workers the share of respondents with at least one child is only 54 percent. Because females get married earlier than males they also tend to have children at an earlier age (Figures 9).

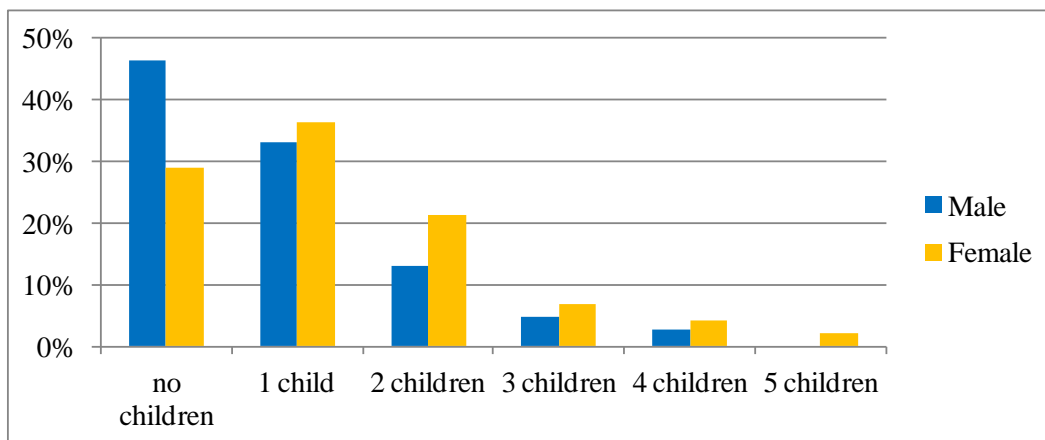


Figure 9: Distribution of respondents according to number of children and gender

Workers' Voice

2.5 Origin

Dhaka's RMG industry attracts people from all over the country. The survey sample includes participants from 59 out of 64 districts in Bangladesh⁸. However, numbers of individuals from each district vary widely. Respondents from 18 of the 59 districts account for 70 percent of the sample. Two districts, Barisal and Mymensingh, each represent one-tenth of the total sample (Figure 10).

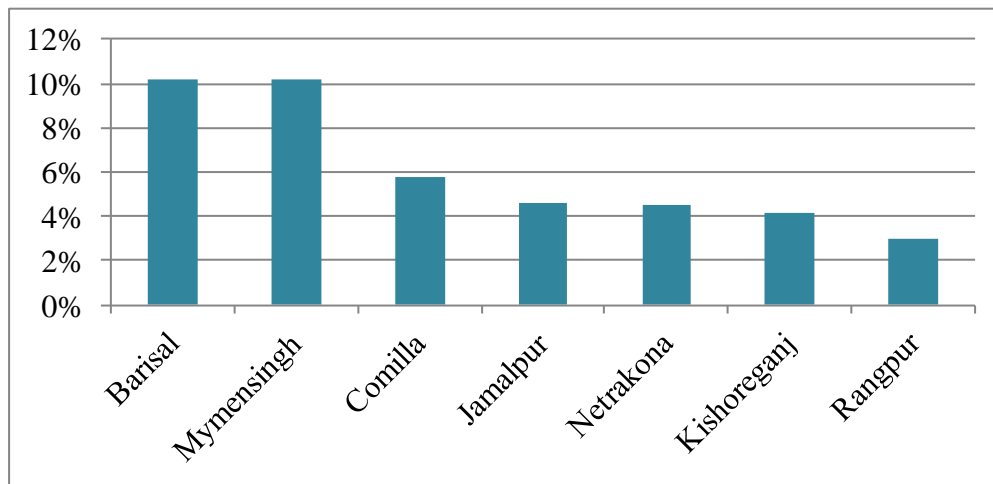


Figure 10: Distribution of respondents according to common districts of origin

Mymensingh is geographically relatively close to Dhaka and the transport infrastructure from this district to the capital is also comparably well developed. This is obviously one reason for the large proportion of participants originating from this district. Another factor is that Mymensingh area is very poor with hardly any industry. Employment opportunities outside of agriculture are scarce. Traditionally, Mymensingh has a large indigenous population as well as history of strict class division that was characterized by a strong patron-client relationship. Latter has started to erode during the last decade, which gave the population a reason to seek employment in other parts of the country.

The case of Barisal, located in the southern part of the country, is similar in that it offers hardly any income opportunities. The population of this area is severely affected by regular flooding, which forces them to remain mobile. The factor of proximity to the capital is of not much importance. In fact, the travel to Dhaka from Barisal is arduous and mostly takes place via water ways. It is the

⁸ Bangladesh has 64 districts under 7 divisions.

Workers' Voice

lack of economic opportunities and the fact that Barisal's people are generally more mobile than their countrymen from other regions that explain the high share of respondents from Barisal.

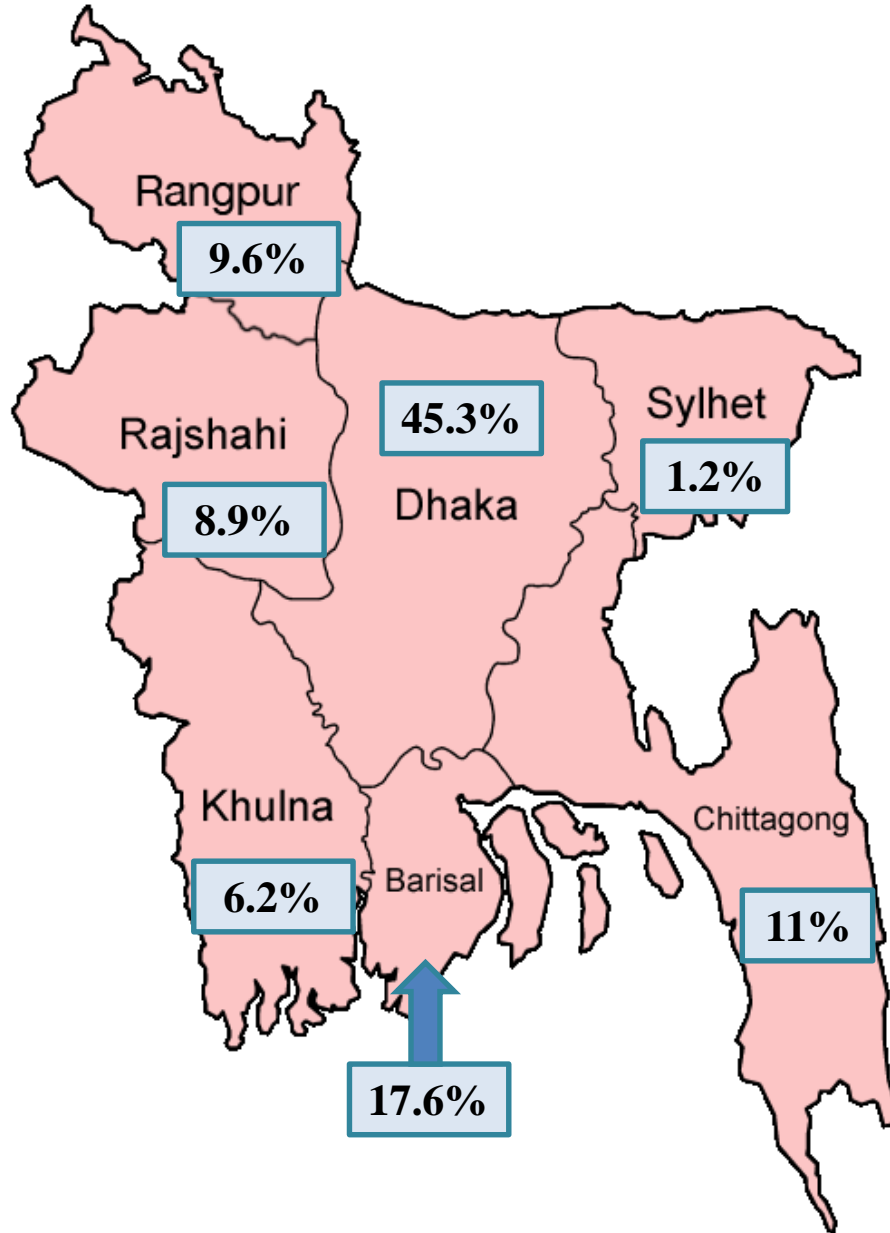


Figure 11: Distribution of respondents according to administrative divisions

Workers' Voice

2.6 Education

The level of education among the participants differs widely. A significant 17 percent have not attended school at all. A slightly higher percentage of 19 percent studied up to 10th grade, which concludes with the SSC (Secondary School Certificate)⁹. 6 percent of the respondents attended college (above 10th grade) (Figure 12).

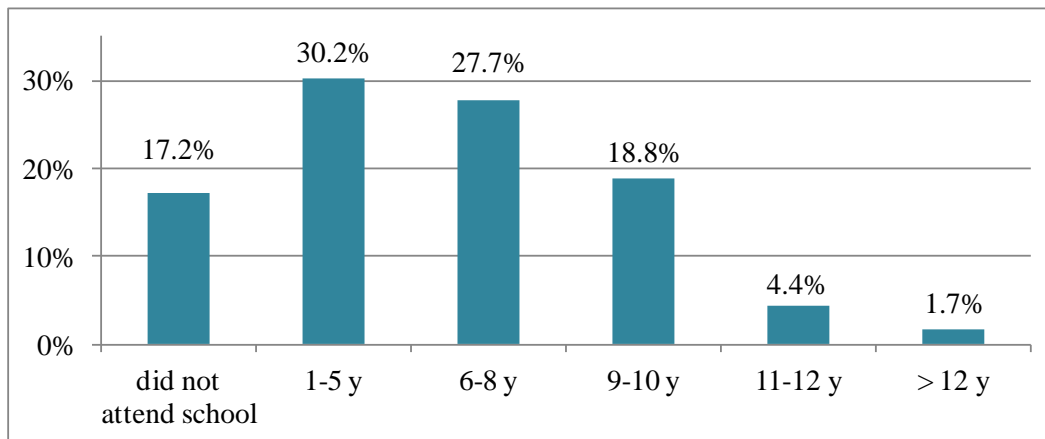


Figure 12: Distribution of participants according to years of schooling

83 percent of interviewees have attended school, but the level of education among this group is rather low. Only 30 percent of respondents who attended school have studied beyond 8th grade. The single largest group of participants with school education, accounting for 36.5 percent, did not study beyond primary level (Figure 13).

⁹ Bangladesh follows the British School System.

Workers' Voice

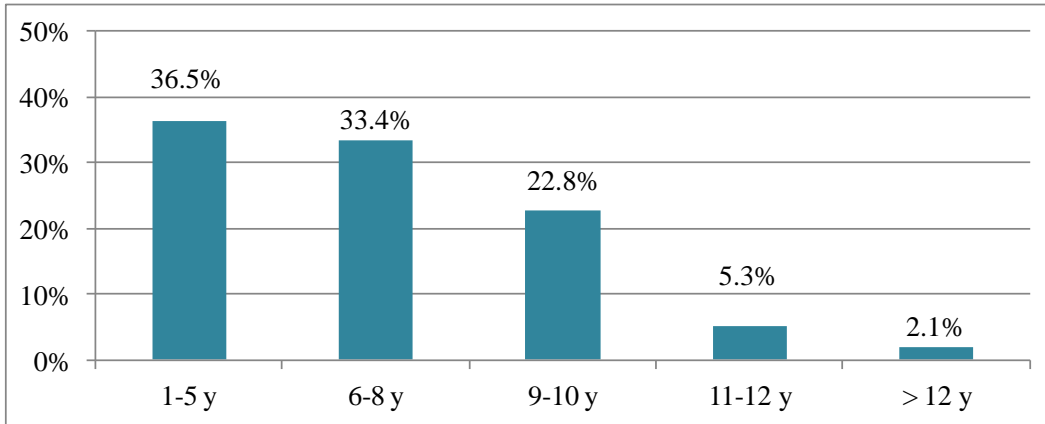


Figure 13: Distribution of participants according to years of schooling (considering only those who attended school)

The available data reveals a distinct gender pattern of school attendance and level of education. Almost all male workers that participated in the survey have attended school at some point in their life. As for the group of surveyed female workers, 33 percent have never attended school. More significantly, only little more than half of the educated female workers have attended school beyond primary level. In contrast, almost three-fourths of the male respondents studied beyond primary level (Figure 14).

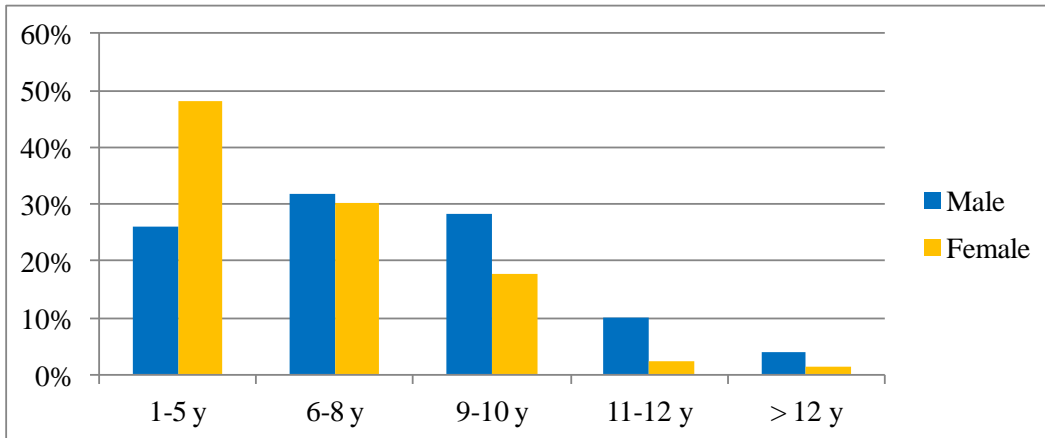


Figure 14: Distribution of respondents according to years of schooling and gender

The low level of education is in most cases linked to the economic situation of the respondents' families. The main reasons for not attending or dropping out of school are "financial problems" (34 percent), "domestic problems" (25 percent), "marriage" (9 percent) and "death of a parent" (7.6 percent). Considered together,

Workers' Voice

these factors account for 76 percent of all responses given to why school was not attended or education discontinued (Figure 15). These factors apply in very high proportions to both female and male interviewees. For the female group of participants they represent 80 percent and for the group of male participants 68.5 percent of all cases. The share of males is lower, because the factor “marriage” hardly applies this case.

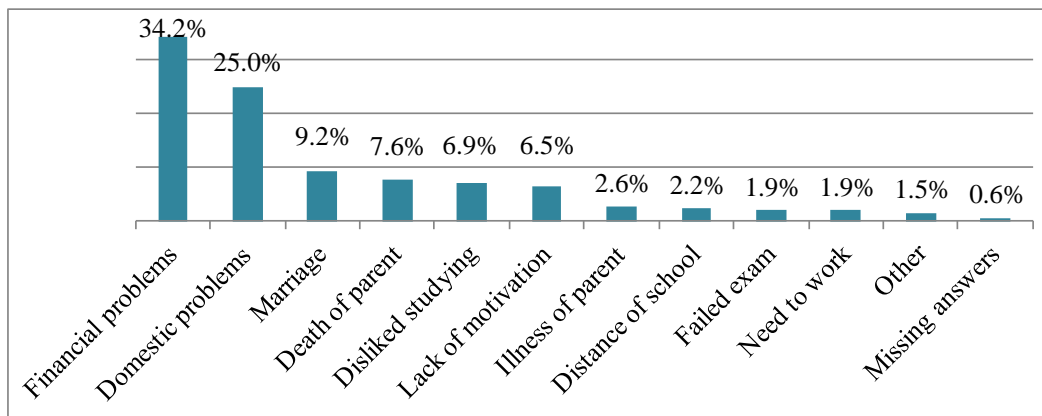


Figure 15: Distribution of respondents according to reasons for not attending school/school drop-out

All of these factors can be seen as manifestations of economic hardship or situations causing economic crisis. “Domestic problems” can refer, for example, to the break-up of the core family because the father divorces or abandons the mother. This inflicts severe economic stress on the mother and her children, because most likely it was her husband who earned the income for the family. The fact that usually the male is the owner of property, leaving the mother behind without any assets, aggravates the situation. The marriage of an elder brother might also be the trigger of “domestic problems”. After the wedding the brother might move away and stop his financial contribution to his parents. In order to reduce costs, they might take one or more of the younger children from school. In some cases the next older child is encouraged to work in order to financially support the family. The factor “marriage” as a reason for school drop-out applies almost entirely to girls, since they are more likely to get married below the age of 18.

In most cases the respondents were forced to prematurely end their school career. That is probably why a significant share of interviewees, accounting for 40 percent, would like to continue or start education if given the chance. The share of

Workers' Voice

males interested in education is 6 percent higher than the proportion of females. For the large majority of those interested in education, the motivation is the desire to learn (Figures 16 and 17).

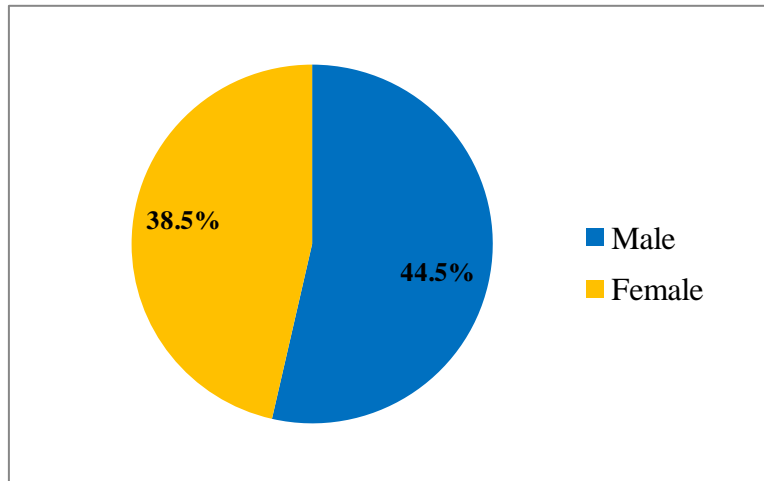


Figure 16: Proportion of male and female participants who would like to continue/start education if given the chance

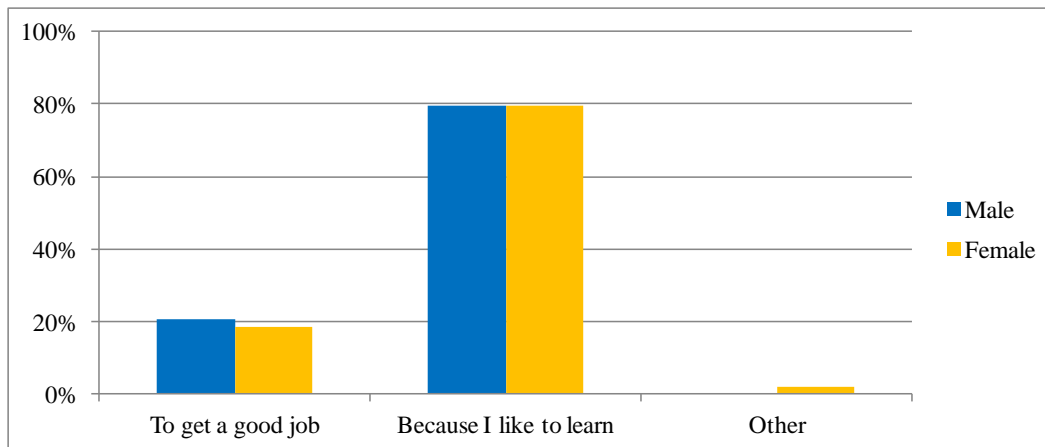


Figure 17: Distribution of respondents according to motivation for continuing/starting education and gender

Workers' Voice

2.7 Driving forces for joining the RMG industry

The need to ensure economic subsistence is obviously the central reason to join the RMG industry. However, the statements made by the participants in regards to their individual reasons reveal the different shades of that driving force.

The most common statements, accounting for 89 percent of the interviewees are:

I joined the RMG industry...

- 1) because it offers better facilities than other jobs (30 percent)
- 2) because domestic problems forced me to (21 percent)
- 3) because of my lack of education/qualification (21 percent)
- 4) in order to support my family (17 percent)

The reference to “better facilities” offered by the RMG industry is the single most commonly made statement by both female and male respondents. It indicates that the RMG industry has a rather “good reputation” among many job-seekers, at least in comparison to other employment opportunities available for unskilled, young people. After all, the RMG industry provides a relatively stable source of income, including benefits such as paid leave and festival bonus, in a relatively safe working environment.

Compared to the male respondents it is a smaller share of female interviewees that refer to “better facilities” as the dominant factor for joining the RMG industry (Figure 18). But also among females, this is the single most common factor, subscribed to by one-fourths of all interviewed women. In addition to being the only formal employment opportunity for unskilled women, the RMG industry makes for a comparatively safe work environment for women. The few other remaining alternatives for women are highly precarious, such as working as a domestic help or on construction sites.

The relative attractiveness in connection with the fact that there are no requirements in regards to previously acquired skill or education make the RMG industry seem to be the “least worst” option for young women and men from poor families.

Rather saying that the RMG industry is a “great place” to earn an income, it might well be the “least worst” of all available options, especially for young poor women.



Workers' Voice

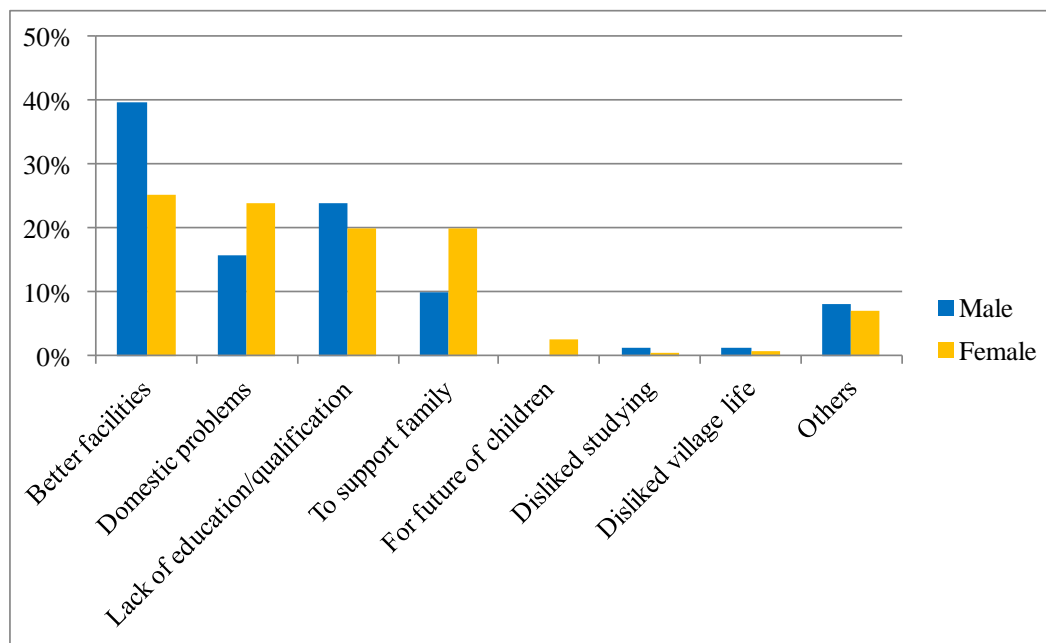


Figure 18: Distribution of respondents according to reasons for joining RMG industry and gender

The factors “better facilities” and “lack of education/qualification” indicate a degree of active choice in the sense of: “I chose to work in the RMG industry because it provides better facilities than other jobs” or “I chose to work in the RMG industry because it demands no education and pre acquired skill”. The two next most commonly mentioned factors carry a more distinct flavour of economic hardship that underlies the decision to join the RMG sector (‘lack of education & qualification’ and ‘to support family’).

According to the survey, ‘domestic problems’ are more likely to affect females than males in a way that prompts them to find work. ‘Domestic problems’ often result in the loss of family income because one of the earning members leaves the family, e.g. father divorces mother or elder brother marries and moves away. Apparently this situation does not only make it more likely that younger children are taken from school to reduce costs. It can also mean that another young family member is encouraged or feels the obligation to go work.

The share of female participants referring to “supporting the family” as a main motivation factor is twice as high as in the case of male participants. To great

Workers' Voice

extent this is because “supporting the family” is considered as understood by the male respondents.

2.8 Workers' designation

The survey includes participants from all production steps of RMG manufacturing: from cutters to finishing staff. Unsurprisingly, however, the largest groups represented in the study are machine operators, helpers, and quality controllers (Figure 19).

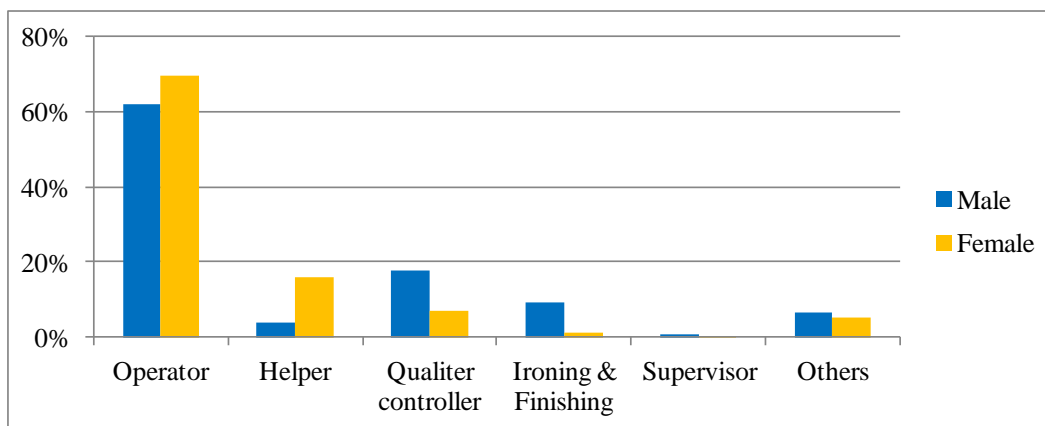


Figure 19: Distribution of respondents according to designation and gender

2.9 Workers' industry experience

Included in the survey are both the new entrants and industry veterans. Interviewees with five to ten years of experience in the sector represent the single largest group. New entrants with less than two years experience constitute one-fifth of the survey's participants. Those working in the industry for more than ten years account for almost one-tenth of the sample (Figure 20).

Workers' Voice

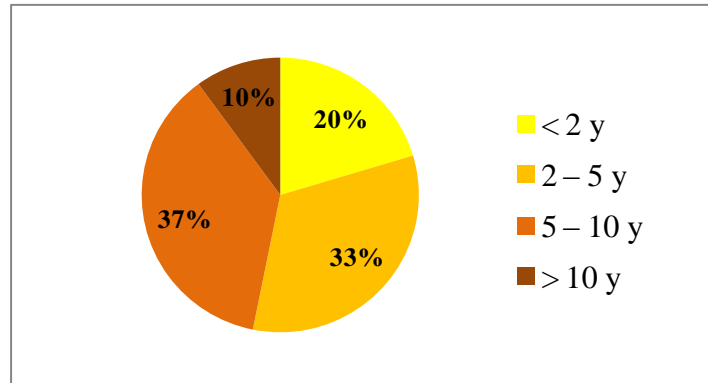


Figure 20: Distribution of respondents according to years of work experience in RMG industry

Interesting is that the majority of interviewed workers have been working in their present factory for less than two years. This indicates a high degree of workforce turnover in the industry, considering that almost 80 percent respondents have more than two years of experience as RMG workers. It seems that the garment worker is very mobile. This is also supported by the number of different factories that the respondents have worked in during their careers. Little more than one-third of the participants have worked in only one factory. The majority of interviewees have worked in two to four factories (Figures 21 and 22).

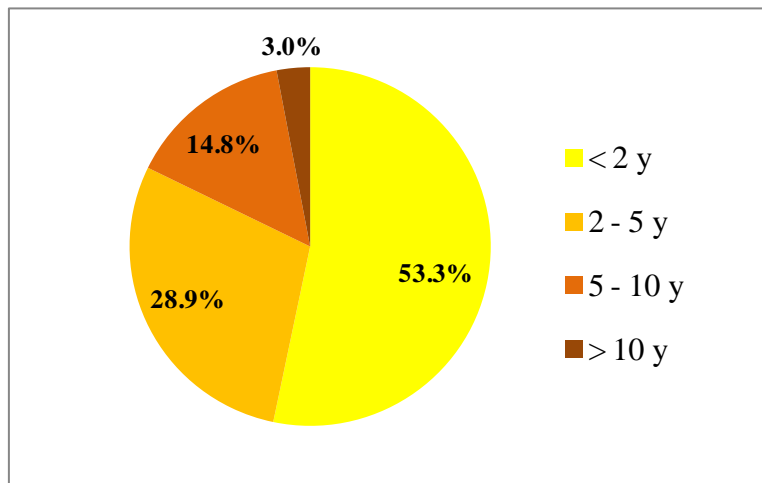


Figure 21: Distribution of respondents according to years worked in current factory

Workers' Voice

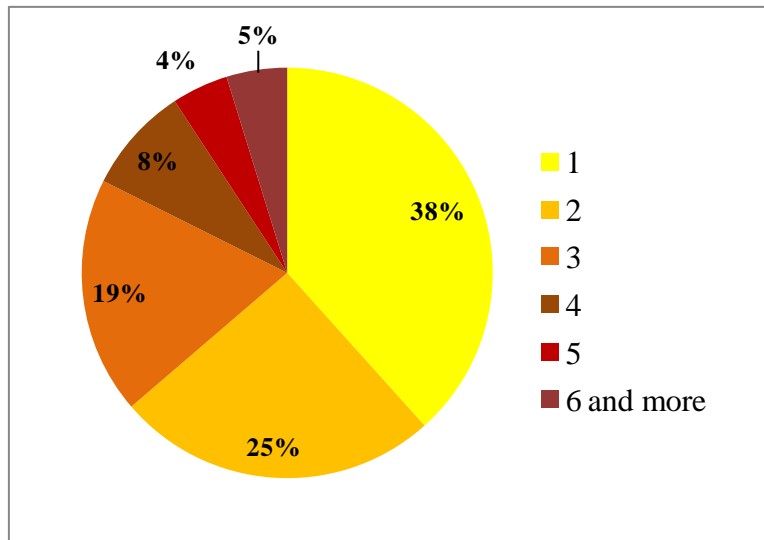


Figure 22: Distribution of respondents according to number of factories worked in

A cross-tabulation of ‘years worked in the industry’ and ‘number of factories worked in’ indicates that workers tend to start switching factories early in their career. In the group of participants with less than two years of industry experience, already 31 percent have worked in more than one factory. That means that nearly one-third of interviewed workers had left their first factory before completing the second year of employment. In the group of workers with two to five years experience, only 40 percent are still employed in their first factory. In the group of veterans with five to ten years experience in the industry, 76 percent have worked in at least two factories and one-fourth in four or more different factories (Figure 23).

Workers' Voice

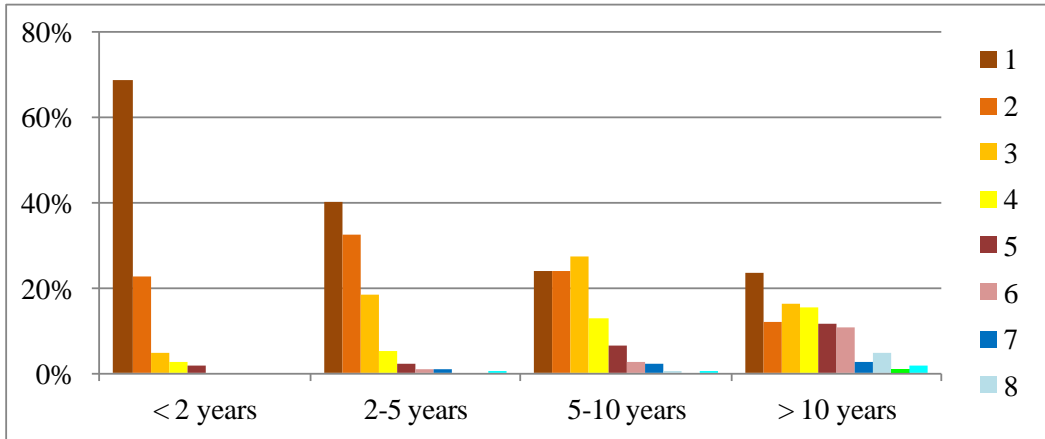


Figure 23: Distribution of respondents according to number of factories worked in and years of experience in RMG industry

2.10 Wage

Wages in the RMG industry have been a contentious issue and source of discord ever since the industry grew in importance. The survey data provides insight into the wage regime of RMG workers and, in extension, into their economic situation.

The monthly wage, excluding overtime payment¹⁰, ranges from below BDT 3,000 to BDT 10,000 (approx. EUR 30 to EUR 100). The average wage considering all participants of the survey is around BDT 4,500 (approx. EUR 45). However, figure 24 demonstrates that the majority of workers receive a monthly salary below that average.

¹⁰ All following salary amounts are without consideration of overtime payment.

Workers' Voice

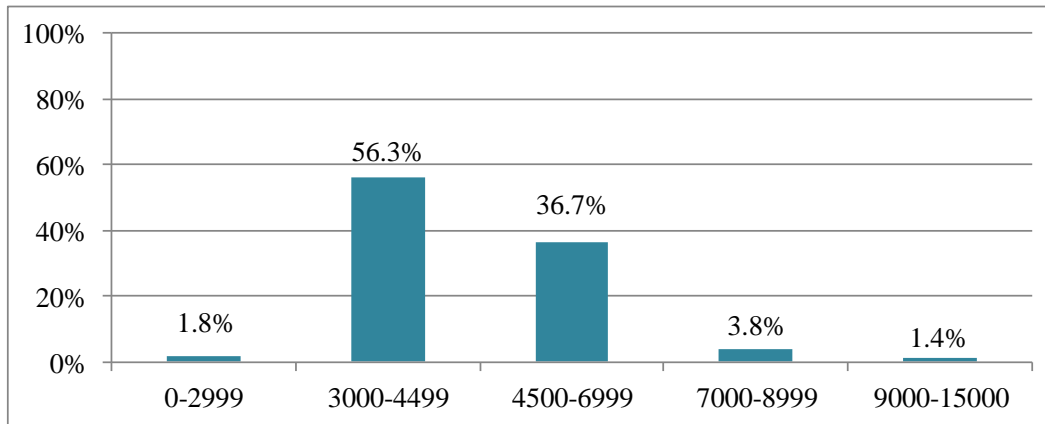


Figure 24: Distribution of respondents according to wage. The figure shows that the majority of respondents earn below the average wage of BDT 4,500.

Figure 25 uses a different set of wage groups to show the strong concentration of participants in the category BDT 3,000 to 4,999. (approx. EUR 30 - 49).

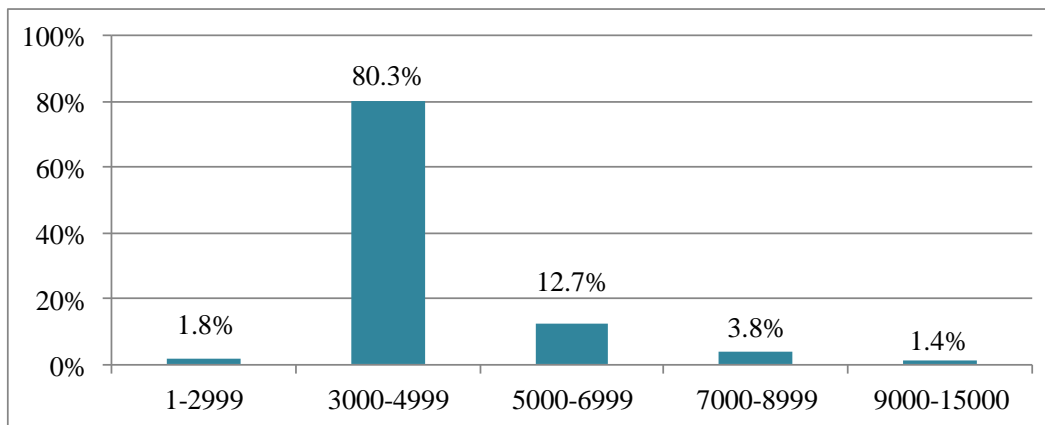


Figure 25: Distribution of respondents according to wage

In order to gain a deeper understanding of what affect workers' salaries, the data was analyzed under consideration of different factors, namely gender, experience and mobility. Because the age of entry into the RMG industry is very low, age corresponds with level of experience. With time workers receive promotions and move up the grade levels codified in the Bangladesh law, thus receiving a higher monthly pay. The education level has been found to have no significant influence on salary.

Workers' Voice

Gender

Gender has significant influence on the wage level. The monthly salary of female workers is drastically less than the amount received by their male colleagues. Among the group of surveyed male workers, around 40 percent receive a monthly salary of BDT 5,000 or above (approx. EUR 50). This is the case for only little over 10 percent of female workers (Figure 26).

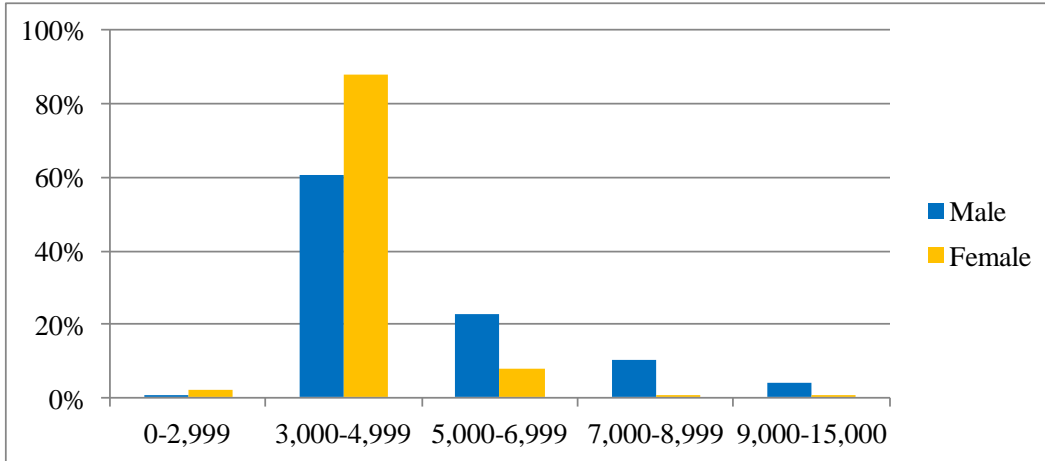


Figure 26: Distribution of respondents according to wage and gender

The chart below displays the distribution of male and female within the single salary groups. It visualizes clearly the dominance of males in higher wage ranges (Figure 27).

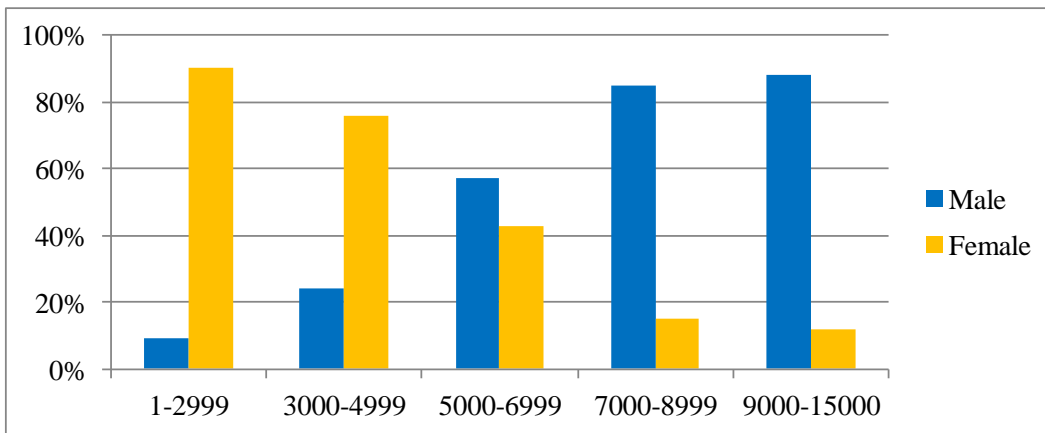


Figure 27: Proportion of male and female respondents in different wage groups

This gap between the genders remains when considering factors such as age, years worked in the industry and designation. According to the data gathered by

Workers' Voice

this survey, a female machine operator between 23 and 27 years of age with five to ten years work experience earns an average salary of BDT 4,400 per month (approx. EUR 44). A male worker with the same characteristics earns an average salary of BDT 5,600 per month (approx. EUR 56). That is 27 percent more than the average pay of his female colleague. The difference remains nearly the same, at around 25 percent, when just comparing female and male operators, without considering the factors age and experience.

Experience and mobility

The level of experience, measured here as the number of years worked in the industry, correlates with the level of salary to some extent. The more experienced the worker is, the more money he is likely to earn. This pattern is reflected in figure 28, but it is not as pronounced as one might expect. In fact, independent of the number of years spent in the industry, the worker is most likely to earn between BDT 3,000 and 4,999 (approx. between EUR 30 and EUR 49). Even in the group of respondents with five to ten years of experience, the share of those earning not beyond BDT 5000 is 80 percent.

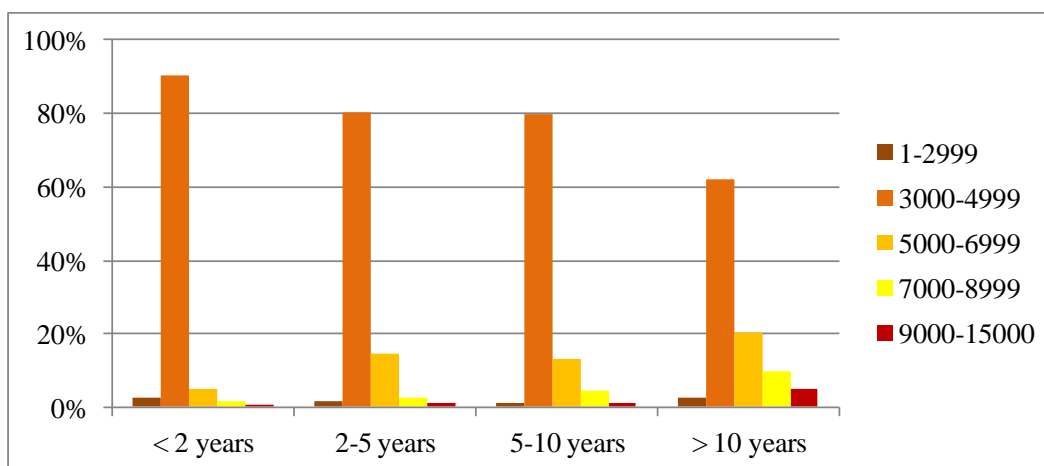


Figure 28: Distribution of respondents according to wage groups and years of experience in RMG industry

A similar lack of progression can be observed when exploring how the number of years in the same factory affect wage level. Initially, one would assume that staying with the same employer for a longer period of time would result in an economic benefit for the worker. This is apparently not the case, at least not to the extent that one would expect. The result of such a cross-tabulation, displayed in

Workers' Voice

figure 29, is similar to the pattern shown above. The longer the worker is employed in one and the same factory, the higher are her/his chances, statistically speaking, to earn a higher wage. But these chances are slim. It is more likely that the worker will earn a monthly salary that is less than BDT 5,000, even if she/he has served more than 10 years in the same factory.

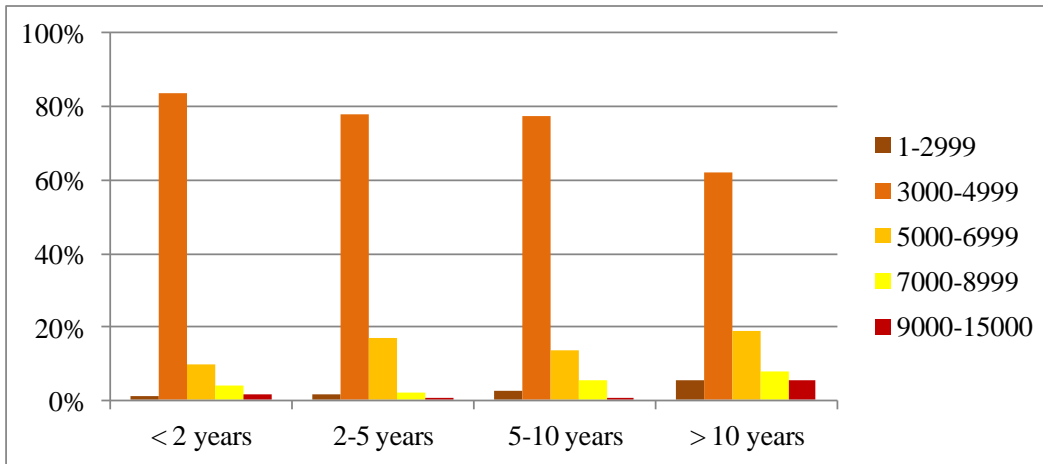


Figure 29: Distribution of respondents according to wage groups and years in current factory

The most interesting tendency is revealed by cross-tabulating the distribution of participants by wage groups with the number of factories they have worked in during the time of their career (Figure 30). It shows that the more different factories the participant has worked in, the bigger are her/his chances to earn a higher salary. This is curious but complementary to the previous assumption that staying with one employer fails in generating any economic benefit for the worker. To the contrary, being mobile even seems to be a clear advantage. The share of respondents that have worked in 5 factories and earn between BDT 5,000 to BDT 6,999 is higher than the share of participants earning in the same range that have been stable and remained with the same factory for more than ten years (compare figures 29 and 30).

Workers' Voice

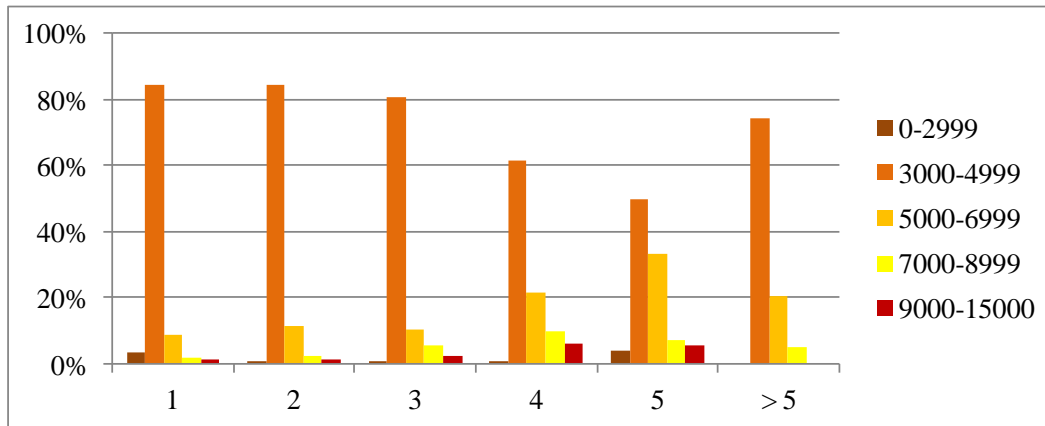


Figure 30: Distribution of respondents according to wage groups and number of factories worked in

These findings suggest the following: (i) The RMG industry provides only very limited opportunities for financial advancement. The majority of workers remain stuck on a very low salary level. (ii) Rather than remaining with one employer for longer, it seems more beneficial to be mobile and switch factories. At least there is no financial advantage in being stable. (iii) The industry provides no (financial) incentives for workers to become stable. It seems that the industry's management is not interested in cultivating a stable workforce. To the contrary, the management seems to prefer a high turnover rate. The reason for that could be that it ensures that influence and bargaining power of the workers remain on a low level.

2.11 Working days & hours

The vast majority of interviewed workers, accounting for almost 87 percent report that they work six days a week. However, a significant 13 percent attend work in the factory every day. These workers do not receive - at least not on regular basis - the legally required off-day.

92 percent of the participants mention to work ten or more hours on a daily basis. Almost 4 percent report daily working hours of more than 14 hours (Figure 31).

Workers' Voice

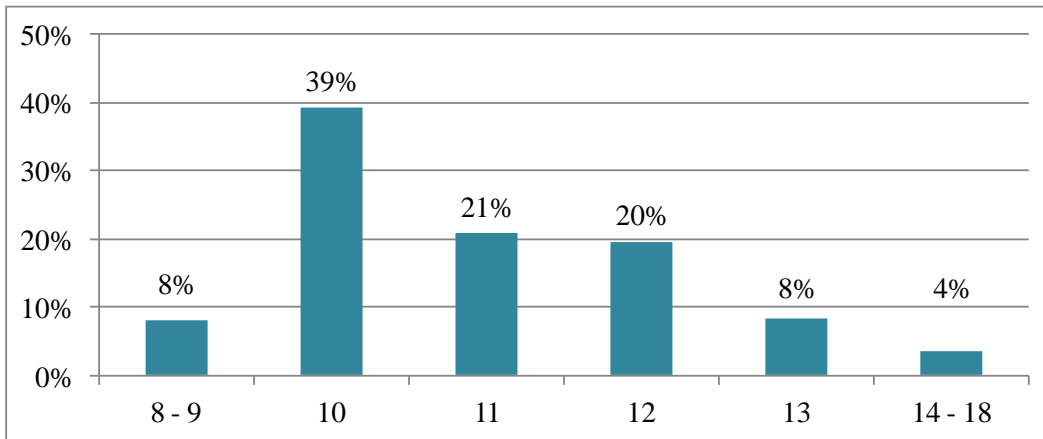


Figure 31: Distribution of respondents according to daily working hours

2.12 Injury & illness

Long working hours take their toll on workers' health and increase the risk of injury at work. Almost 80 percent state that they suffer some sort of physical symptom. Many of the symptoms mentioned are likely to be related to excessive working hours. The single largest group of respondents, accounting for 31 percent, reports exhaustion/tiredness as the most frequent physical ailment. Other major problems are headache and pain in legs, back and shoulder.

The most common reactions to illness are “going to the doctor”, “taking leave”, and “taking a rest from work”. Together, these types of behavior account for 73 percent of all responses.

66 percent of interviewees confirm that their management provides sick-leave in case of illness. This might indicate improvement in complying with legal obligations. But it should be emphasized that the flipside of those 66 percent is a significant one-third of interviewees who claim that they are not granted sick-leave when they ask for it.

According to one-third of the interviewees, the most common reaction of supervisors/management to workers reporting physical malaise is indifference and in many cases annoyance and bad behavior. This does not necessarily mean that the worker is barred from her/his right to take a rest, go on sick-leave or see the

Workers' Voice

factory's nurse. 23 percent of respondents mention that upon reporting illness the supervisor/management suggests to take leave. But the significant share of respondents referring to annoyance and misbehavior of superior staff provides an unsettling indication of the quality of labor relations (Figure 32).

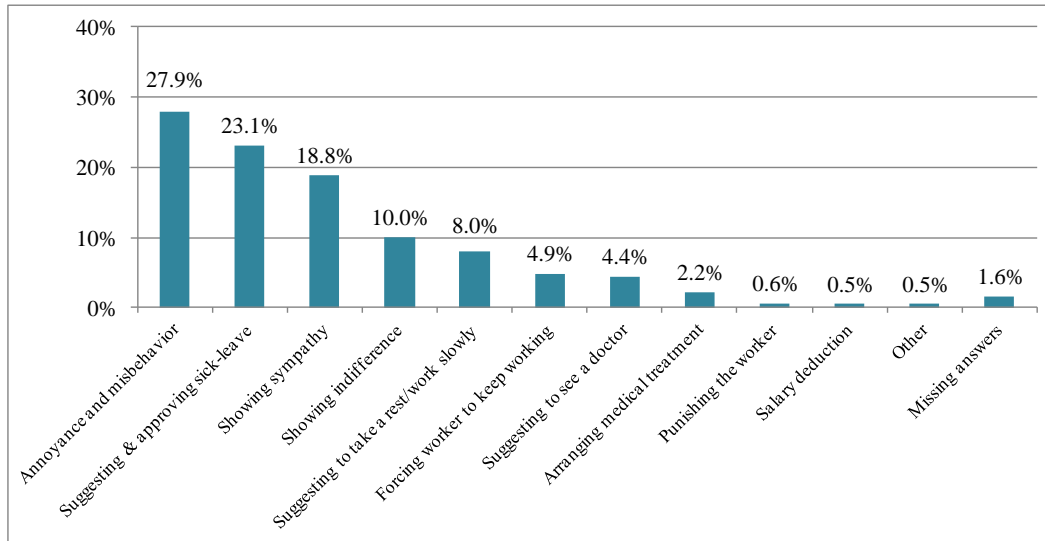


Figure 32: Distribution of respondents according to statements about reactions of management to workers reporting illness/physical discomfort during working hours

2.13 Abuse

The survey data indicates that abuse of workers, both females and males, is a common phenomenon in the industry and not merely an exceptional transgression. This is revealing in regards to the quality of labor relations and professionalism of the industry's management.

More than one-third of the interviewed workers report to have been abused by either line supervisors or higher management staff. The proportion is almost same for females and males. The most common type of abuse reported is of verbal nature (Figures 33 and 34).

Workers' Voice

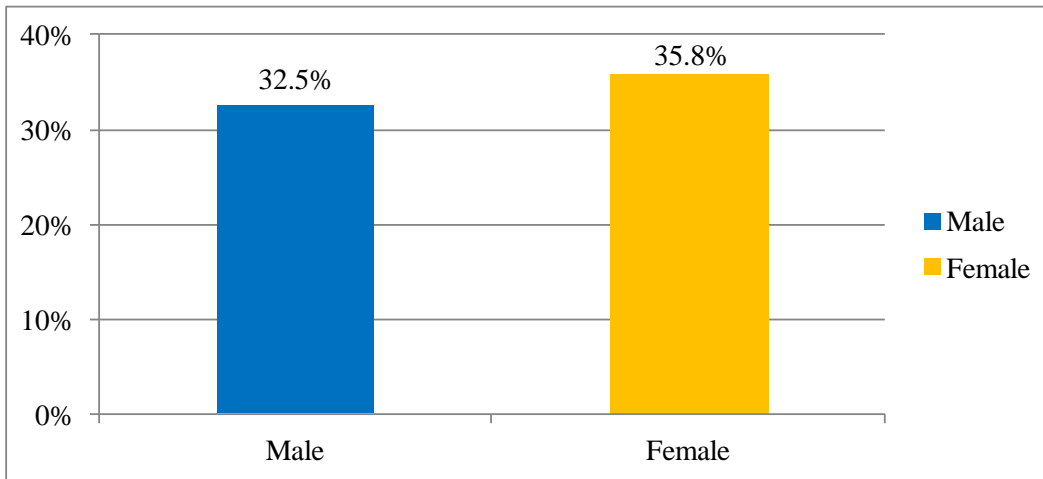


Figure 33: Proportion of male and female respondents who reported abuse by supervisor/management staff

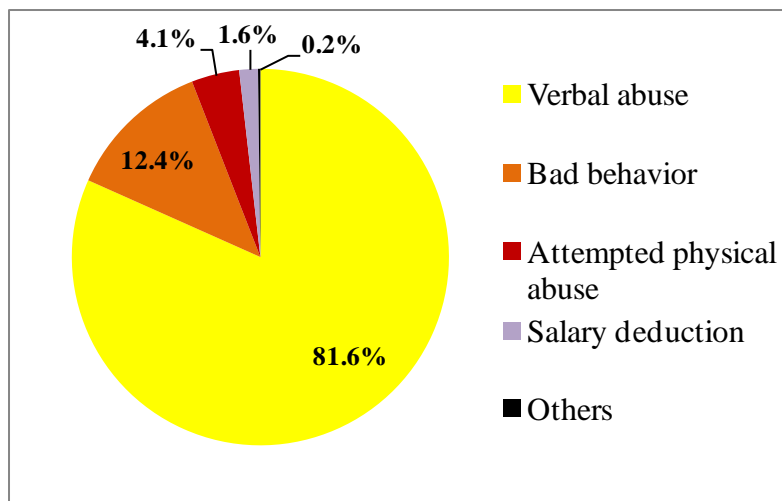


Figure 34: Types of abuse reported by respondents

It needs to be considered that the interviews of this survey did not focus on the topic of abuse. The interviewers were not coached for this sensitive topic. Therefore one can expect a significant number of unreported abuse cases, both of the verbal and physical kind. The available data, however, is sufficient in indicating a “culture of disrespect” that has taken root in the labor relations of the RMG industry. This is especially highlighted by the fact that where abuse happens it seems to happen repeatedly. The vast majority of interviewees familiar

Workers' Voice

with abuse have experienced it more than once. One-fifth of those workers even mention to experience abusive behavior “very often” (Figure 35).

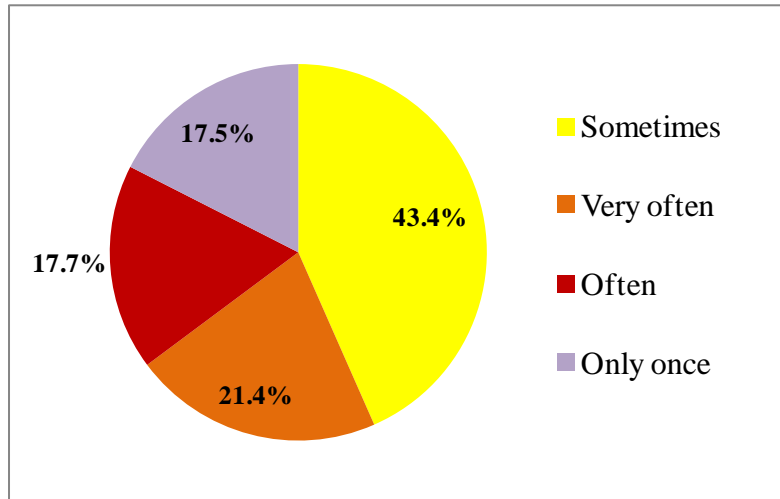


Figure 35: Distribution of respondents according to frequency of experienced abuse (considering only those who experienced abuse)

Abuse is reported by both females and males of all age groups in similar proportions. However, women face abuse more frequently than men. 45 percent of female workers that mention abuse claim that it occurs “often” and “very often”.

A curious correlation can be identified between level of education and mentions of abuse. The higher the education level of the respondent the less likely is the occurrence and frequency of abuse. In fact, uneducated participants report both the occurrence as well as high frequency of abuse most often.

One can only speculate about this seeming relationship. Could it be that more educated workers display better performance and discipline and henceforth give lesser reason to be verbally punished? Are educated workers more ready witted and able to counter abusive behavior? On the basis of available data no conclusive remarks can be provided in this matter.

2.14 Workers' reactions to abusive behavior

Further insight into the quality of labor relations can be acquired by taking into consideration the accounts given by the participants on their reactions to abusive

Workers' Voice

behavior. In fact, the large majority of interviewed workers do not react to abuse at all (Figure 36). The seeming “submission to abuse” is irrespective of sex, age, experience and education of the “victim”. It is not the case that only inexperienced and young new-comers remain silent when mistreated by superiors. Perhaps abuse has been internalized by workers and they come to consider it as a “necessary occupational” hazard.

The prevalent apathy of workers in case of abuse is also a sign of missing institutionalized grievance mechanisms. There is no way for affected workers to convey complaints. In this context the prevalent response of “doing nothing” in the face of abuse might also be a “strategic indifference” and perhaps the most rational way to react. Without any system in place that could provide sufficient bargaining power to break through the oppressive structures of social and sexual hierarchy, to what could the complaint of the worker possibly lead to, if not to more harassment?

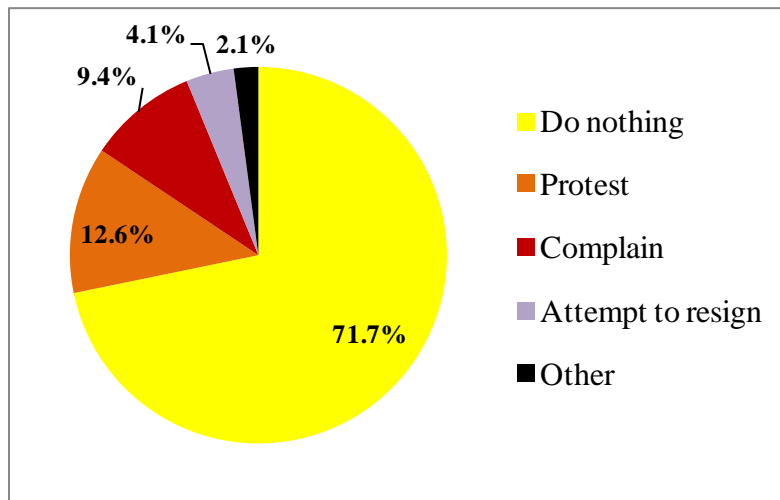


Figure 36: Distribution of respondents according to reactions to abusive behavior (considering only those who experienced abuse)

2.15 Workers' view on their work place

In order to investigate workers' perceptions and valuation of their workplace, the participants were asked four related questions:

1. What do you like most about your current workplace?

Workers' Voice

2. What do you dislike most about your current workplace?
3. Do you generally enjoy working in the RMG industry?
4. What would you change in your factory if given the chance?

The majority of interviewees mention their appreciation for “good environment” (27.5 percent), “timely salary and overtime payment” (24 percent), and “good behavior of management and supervisors” (10 percent) (Figure 37).

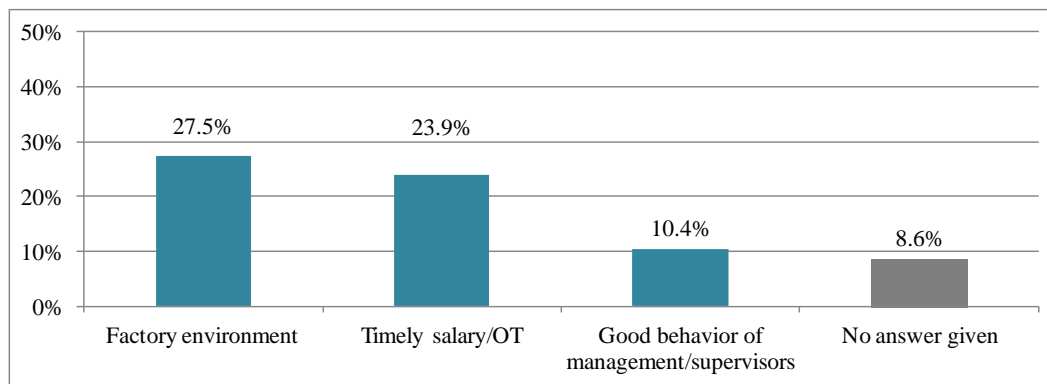


Figure 37: The three most common mentions of respondents when asked what they like most about their current factory and share of respondents who refrain from giving a statement

The emphasis on “good factory environment” leaves some room for interpretation. It might indicate workers’ appreciation for the relatively safe work environment and the fact that the RMG industry provides better facilities compared to other sectors that employ unskilled labor. This makes sense, considering that “better facilities” of the RMG industry are an important factor for joining the industry in the first place.

The social aspect might also play into evaluating the factory environment as positive. This might be especially true for women in the industry. The majority of them are roughly the same age and the factory provides sufficient opportunity for them to socialize and become friends.¹¹

The aspect disliked by the largest group of interviewed workers is “bad behavior of management and supervisors”. This is not surprising, considering the

¹¹ Although it is true that Bangladesh is steadily becoming more liberal in respect to female-male interaction, mixed-sex friendships outside of family and marriage are still discouraged and frowned upon by society.

Workers' Voice

pervasiveness of abusive and disrespectful behavior in RMG factories. The non-responsive behavior towards abuse, that was pointed out earlier, does apparently not translate into a “mentality of indifference” towards abusive behavior. Two other commonly mentioned dislikes refer to violation of “leave facility” (13 percent) and “delayed salary and OT payment” (10 percent) (Figure 38).

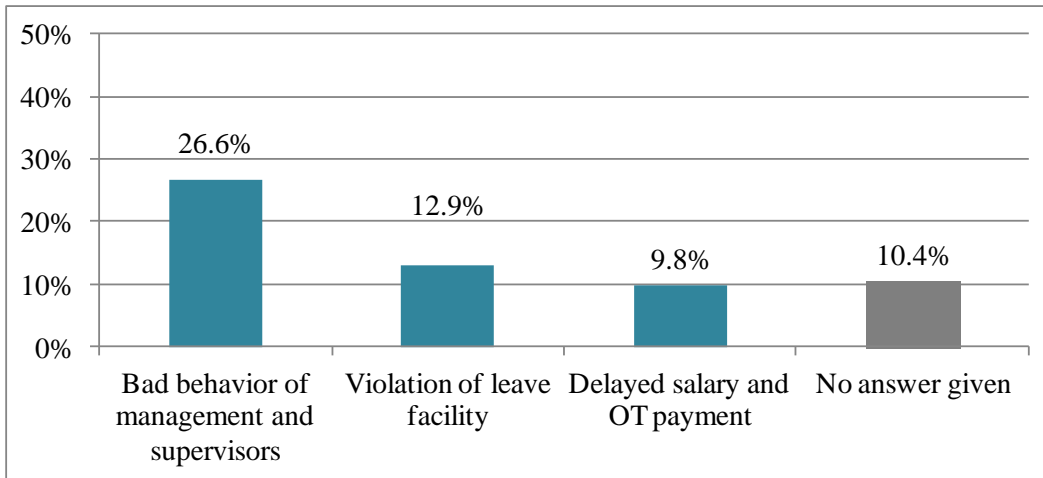


Figure 38: The three most common mentions of respondents when asked what they dislike most about their current factory and share of respondents who refrain from giving a statement

Interestingly, aspects that are usually high on the agenda of the media, NGOs and other pressure groups, are not significantly reflected in the interviewees' expressions of what they dislike. The aspects “excessive OT”, working on “weekly off-days”, “low salary”, “no bonus payment” and “excessive work pressure” are only mentioned by a small fraction of participants. Considering how common long working hours and seven-day work weeks are, this is quite thought provoking. Of course, the absence of explicit complaint about these rights violations does not make dealing with these problems less important. To the contrary, it strongly emphasizes the need for increasing education and awareness of RMG workers through appropriate measures. At the moment it seems that getting paid on time is more important to the worker than any other compliance issues. This is understandable. For the worker it is all about to ensure her/his survival and that of her/his dependents. The tolerance for hardship at the workplace is therefore high. Furthermore, the current practices of long working hours and low base payment are likely to be perceived by many as unchangeable and inherent to the industry. In connection with the general ignorance of the

Workers' Voice

workers, this might lead to an attitude of indifference to certain labor rights violations.

If given the opportunity to make a change in their factory most workers would ensure “good behavior of management and supervisors”, “eliminate physical and verbal abuse in the factory”, “ensure timely salary and overtime payment” and a “good factory environment in general” (Figure 39).

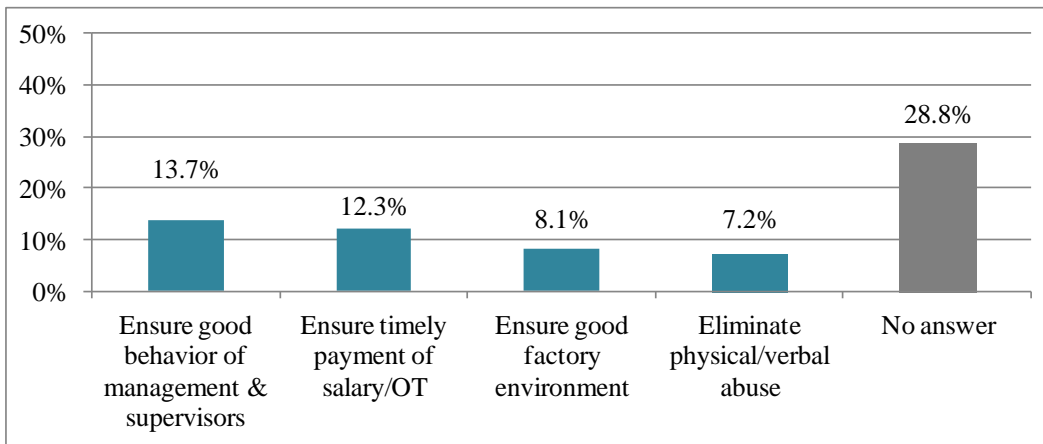


Figure 39: The most common mentions of respondents when asked what they would like to change if given the chance and share of respondents who refrain from giving a statement

The figures 37 to 38 show that the number of interviewees refraining from providing answers to the questions is very high: 9 percent and 10 percent for questions one and two respectively. When prompted to express their desire of what to change, 29 percent of the participants remained silent (Figure 39). And when the workers were asked how they generally feel about working in the industry, an overwhelming majority of workers expressed indifference¹² (Figure 40).

¹² The respondent could choose between 3 answers: 1) I enjoy working in my factory, 2) I don't care and 3) I don't enjoy working in the factory.

Workers' Voice

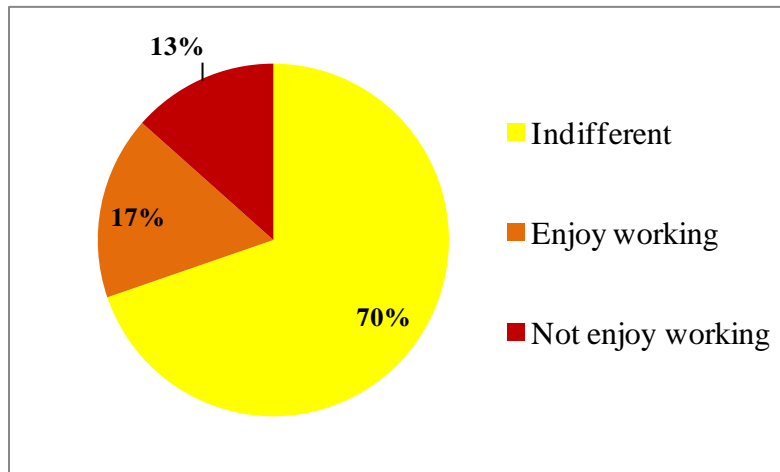


Figure 40: Distribution of participants according to their general feeling towards working in RMG industry

The high degree of expressed indifference might indicate a fatalist mindset among many workers, perhaps a result of prolonged subjugation. The conditions of the RMG industry are perceived as an inherent and unchangeable situation. Because of that the workers display an attitude of general disinterest in factory affairs. Most important is that the worker apparently does not perceive her/himself as someone who can successfully affect or change things related to her/his work and the industry. The general feeling of impotence is not conducive in triggering critical reflection of the situation. This is clearly visible in the most common reaction of workers to abuse inflicted on them by management and supervisors, which is, as pointed out above, “to do nothing” and endure the situation until it passes. Instead of identifying with the industry and perceiving her/himself as an integral component of it, the worker sees her/himself as apart from the industry. The RMG industry is rather seen as a machine that is indifferent towards the feelings and opinions of those working for it. This antagonism can be seen as characteristic of the relations between workers and the industry’s management.

The high degree of indifference reflected in the data might also be a result of RMG workers not used to being asked about their opinions and feelings in respect to the industry they work in.

It is worthwhile to think a moment about what has not been mentioned at all by the interviewed workers. None of the given expressions touched upon the issues of worker participation, e.g. in form of worker representation committees and health & safety committees or by organizing in trade unions. Of course, one needs

Workers' Voice

to keep in mind, that the respondents did not receive any cue to talk about that specific issue. Nonetheless, the complete absence of this topic from the collected data is indicative of what position the topic of worker organization, representation and participation holds in the reality of the Bangladesh RMG industry. Considering ongoing repression of unionism and harassment of workers engaged in union activities, self-censorship could be another reason for the absence of these issues from the interviews.

Reflecting the available data, two factors seem to have highest priority for most workers:

- 1) A good factory environment free from harassment and abusive behavior
“Good environment” may include the relative orderliness/tidiness of the factory, the existence of drinking water and sanitary installations, segregated lunch areas, the relative safety inside the factory from outsiders, the social aspect
- 2) Timely payment of salary, incl. overtime
Since the salary of a garment worker does usually not allow for accumulating savings that would suffice to survive larger stretches of no income it is of utmost importance that the salary is paid on-time in order to secure livelihood (shelter and food) of the worker and her/his family. It also seems as if timely payment of wages has a higher priority than the actual amount of payment.

2.16 Accommodation & commute

The large majority of respondents, accounting for 69 percent, live together with (parts of) their family, including spouses. The next largest group, accounting for 14 percent, shares their living space with friends. 11 percent live together with colleagues. Family and kinship constitute the social core of Bangladesh society. Hence it is no surprise that only 3.5 percent of respondents live alone. Living alone in a household is not the social norm and in many cases even frowned upon by society.

By far most of the female workers live with their family. The same applies to the male respondents. However, male workers are more likely to stay with friends and colleagues compared to women workers. This is not surprising since the liberty of women in the country remains restricted by the traditional patriarchal sentiment that prevails in large parts of society (Figure 41).



Workers' Voice

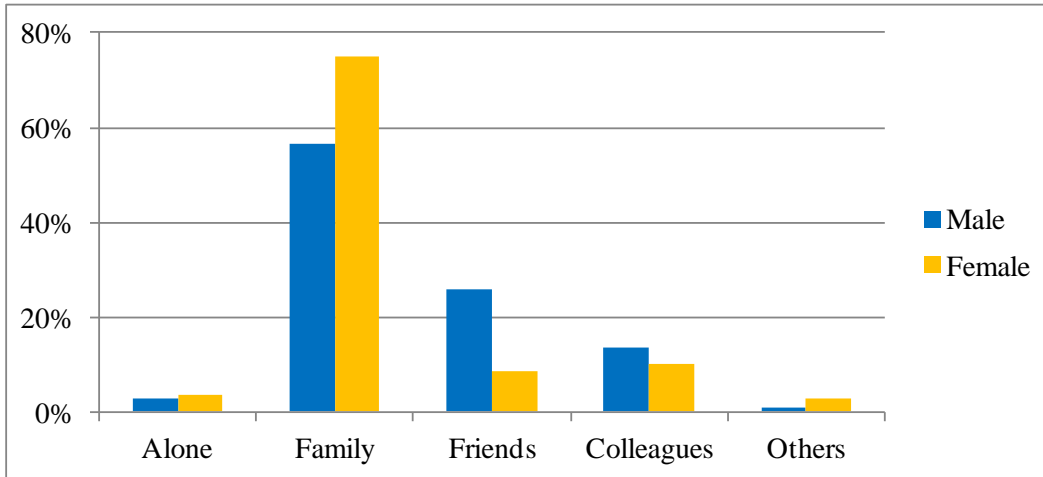


Figure 41: Distribution of participants according to living situation and gender

The monthly cost for accommodation ranges from below BDT 1,000 to more than BDT 6,000. The majority of the interviewees pay monthly rent between BDT 1,000 and BDT 3,000 for their accommodation. The single largest group, accounting for 40 percent, pays between BDT 2,000 and BDT 3,000 (Figure 42).

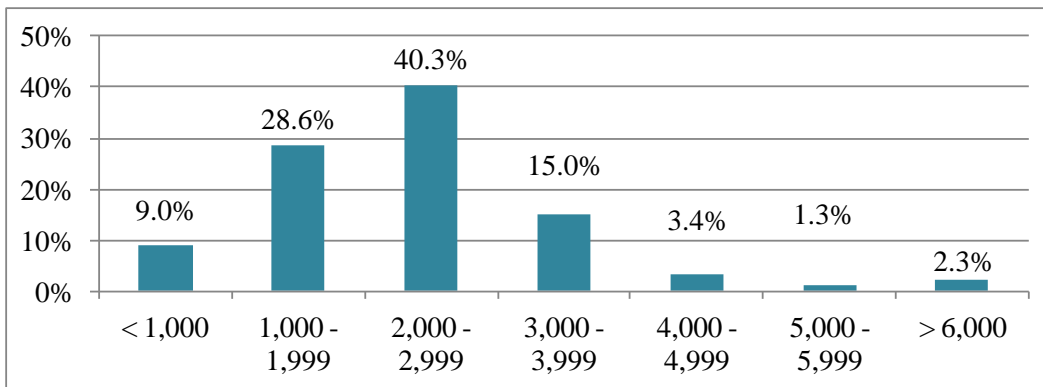


Figure 42: Distribution of participants according to monthly cost for accommodation

The details of the type of accommodation, i.e. size, number of rooms, construction material, location, have not been considered by the survey. However, most of the garment workers live in slums, which are plentiful in the metropolitan area of Dhaka. Slum shelters are primarily made from corrugated iron sheet. One shelter, consisting of one room, is usually occupied by a whole family or several people living together. Most slums have illegal and improvised gas and electricity connections, established by the slum owner. These are mostly illegal, unsafe and unreliable. Sanitary installations (water and latrine) are external to the living

Workers' Voice

quarters and must be shared with neighboring residents. The same applies to cooking facilities.

The majority of respondents, accounting for 63 percent, live less than 15 minutes walk away from their factory. The share of females living 30 to 45 minutes away from their workplace is more than twice as high as the share of males in this category (Figure 43).

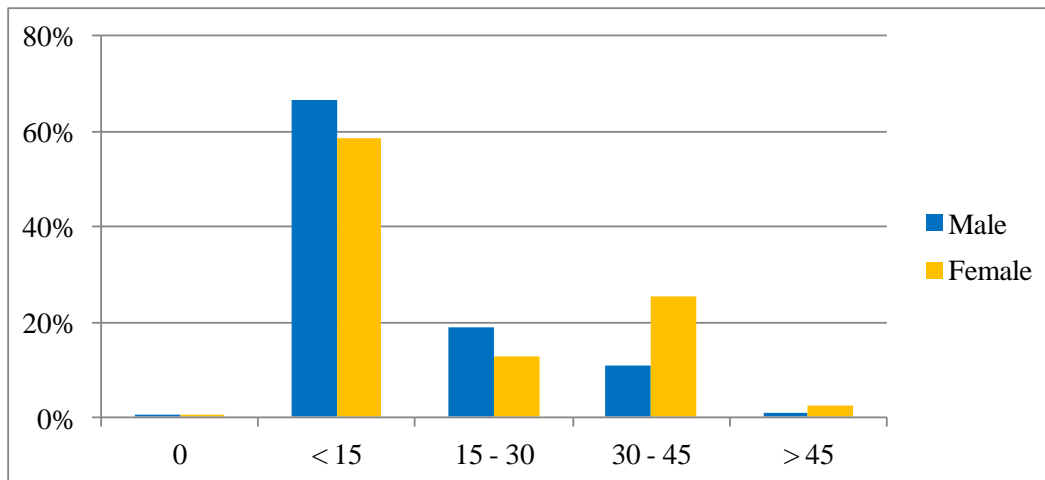


Figure 43: Distribution of participants according to time needed to commute to workplace

Close proximity is also indicated by the amount of money spent by workers for commuting to their workplace. According to the survey, 88 percent of respondents do not spend any money at all on transport. That implies that they go by foot. This applies to both genders, but with females having a slightly higher share in this category than male respondents (Figure 44).

Workers' Voice

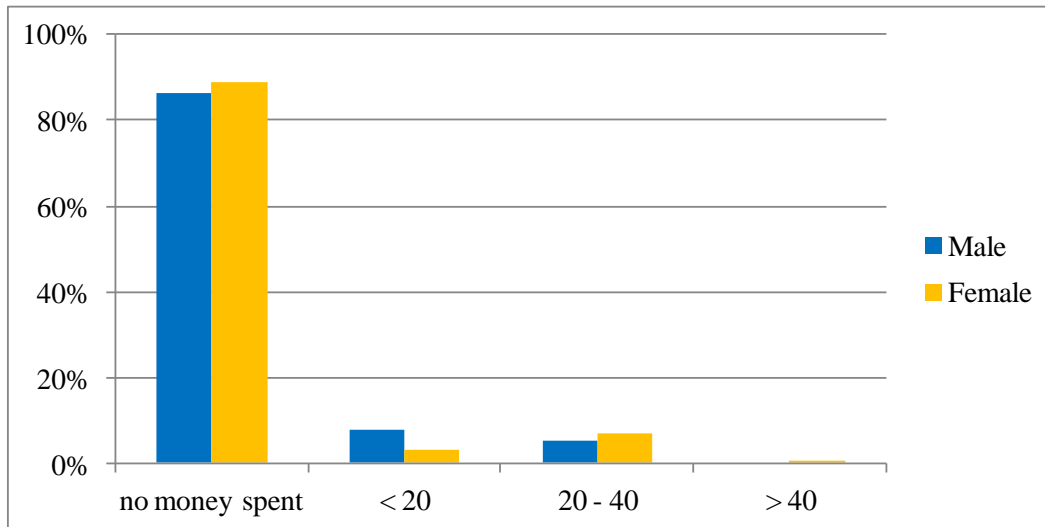


Figure 44: Distribution of participants according to amount of money spent for commuting to workplace

However, a significant number of workers choose to walk even if they live further away from the factory. The share of interviewees not spending any money on transport is more than 20 percent higher than the share of workers living within 15 minutes walk away from the factory. Understanding the physical condition of roads and sidewalks as well as the social environment, walking to work does not seem to be the best option for women. However, the proportion of women walking to work is 90 percent, despite the fact that a large share of women live 30 to 45 minutes walk away from their workplace (see figures 43 and 44). The majority of young women, very often subject to inappropriate behavior and harassment in the public, chose to walk, or believe to have no other choice, considering the cost, even when living as far 30 to 45 minutes away from their factory.

2.17 Spending time outside the factory

Recalling the findings on daily working hours it can be said that the lifestyle of RMG workers is largely dominated by the industry. Workers return from the factory, seemingly for the singular purpose of going back to it after a short interval that contains household work, feeding the family, personal hygiene and sleep.

Workers' Voice

To obtain insight into the 'after-work' activities and priorities of RMG workers, the interviewees were asked three related questions:

- 1) What are your daily activities when not in the factory?
- 2) What activities do you pursue that add recreational 'value' to the time spent outside the factory?
- 3) What activities would you like to pursue if you would have more free time available?

Daily activities when not in the factory

All answers were initially coded into 14 distinct activities. However, 90 percent of the given answers fall into the three following categories of activity (Figure 45):

- 1) Household work (can be understood as including the procurement of daily necessities and ensuring personal hygiene) (46 percent)
- 2) Sleeping/resting (34.4 percent)
- 3) Casual chatting with family members/neighbors/friends (10 percent)

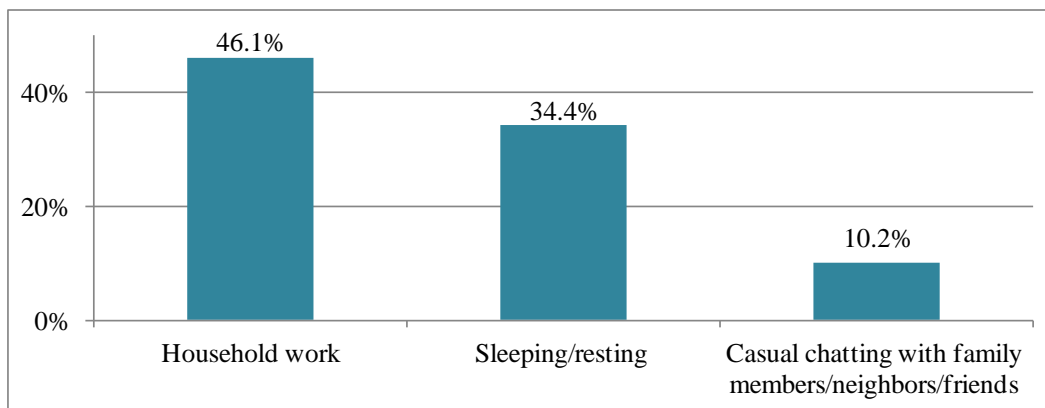


Figure 45: The three most common after-work activities

It is not surprising that under consideration of the social context, the share of female workers mentioning "household work" is almost thrice as high as the share of males subscribing priority to this chore. The most prominent mention among male interviewees is "sleep/rest". Male workers also seem to spend more time socializing: 16 percent of males expressed this being a prioritized 'after-work activity' compared to only 7 percent of female workers doing so (Figure 46).

Workers' Voice

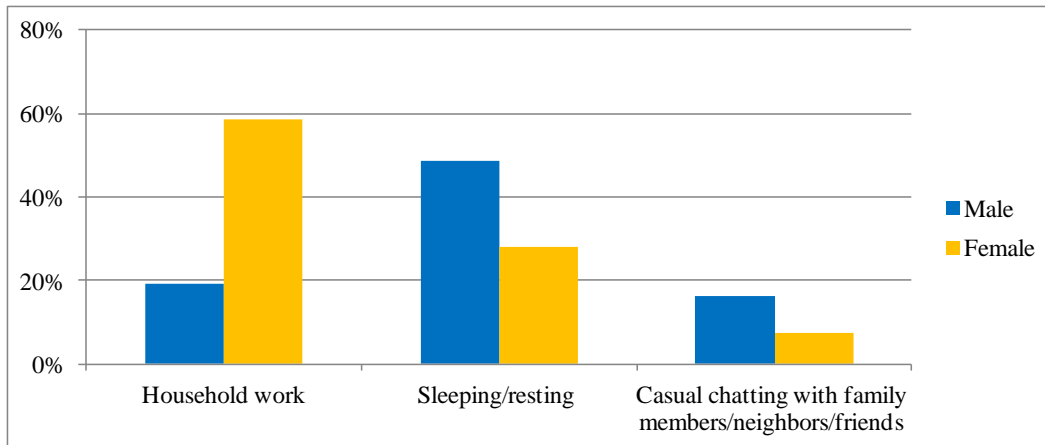


Figure 46: The three most common after-work activities according to gender

Activities that add recreational value

On basis of the given answers 21 different recreational activities can be identified. However, the pattern that emerges from the data is not much different from the one presented in above paragraph. “Household work” and “sleeping/resting” are prioritized very high. “Watching TV”, however, emerges as the most popular recreational activity after “household work”. The ranking of activities is therefore (Figure 47):

- 1) Household work (41 percent)
- 2) Watching TV (13 percent)
- 3) Sleeping/resting (12 percent)
- 4) Spending time with family (6 percent)

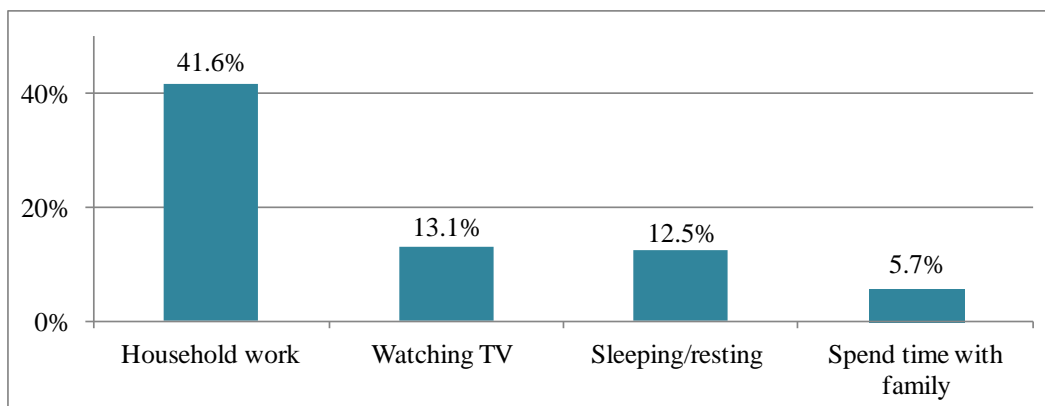


Figure 47: The most common after-work activities chosen because of recreational value

Workers' Voice

Again, female participants mention “household work” almost twice as frequently as male respondents do. This time, a larger share of women mention “sleeping/resting” as a favorite recreational activity compared to men who rather “watch TV” and “hang out with friends” (Figure 48).

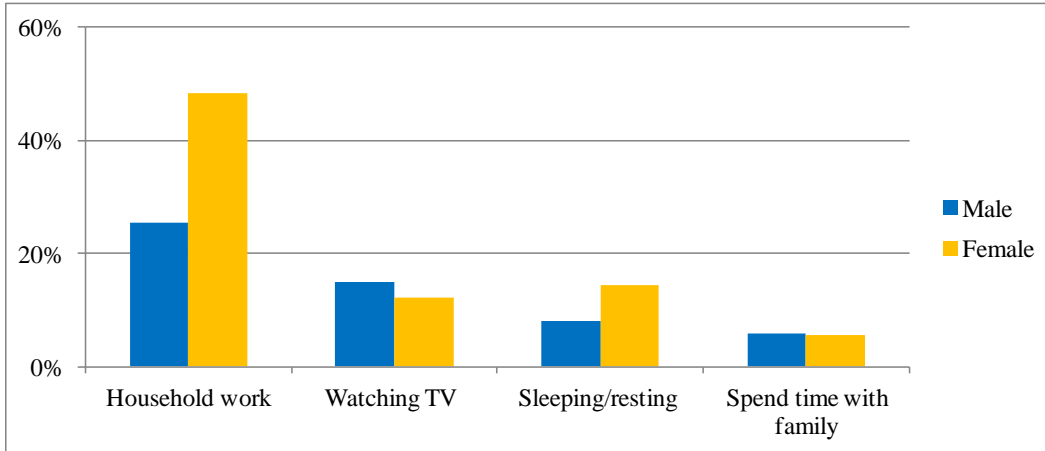


Figure 48: The most common after-work activities chosen because of recreational value according to gender

Noteworthy is that “spending time with family” is explicitly mentioned by only 6 percent of respondents, with no difference between females and males. This might be surprising considering the importance that the family has in society. But exactly that might be the reason for the lack of explicit mentions. While doing the “household work” and “watching TV”, family members are likely to be around. The urban garment worker lives in a densely populated area, usually a slum, where real privacy or physical solitude is impossible to achieve. On the other hand it is also true that the very short free-time available to the worker, leaves little opportunity for genuine “quality time” spent with the family. After all, the available time is to the largest extent used for “household work”, which includes the preparation of food and henceforth fulfils the function of ensuring the family’s survival. Naturally this ranks higher than spending time with the family.

Activities that would be pursued if more time would be available

Given more free time, the overwhelming majority of workers would visit their home village. This applies in strikingly equal manner for both female (66 percent) and male (65 percent) respondents. The next most frequent mentions are “sleeping/resting” (6 percent) and “spending time with family” (5 percent),

Workers' Voice

equally with no significant difference between male and female (Figure 49). It can be assumed that “spending time with family” is in the majority cases already implied in “visit the home village”. In most cases parts of the family still live in the village, e.g. parents, younger siblings, children, grandparents, cousins, uncles etc., and most likely receive financial support from the worker.

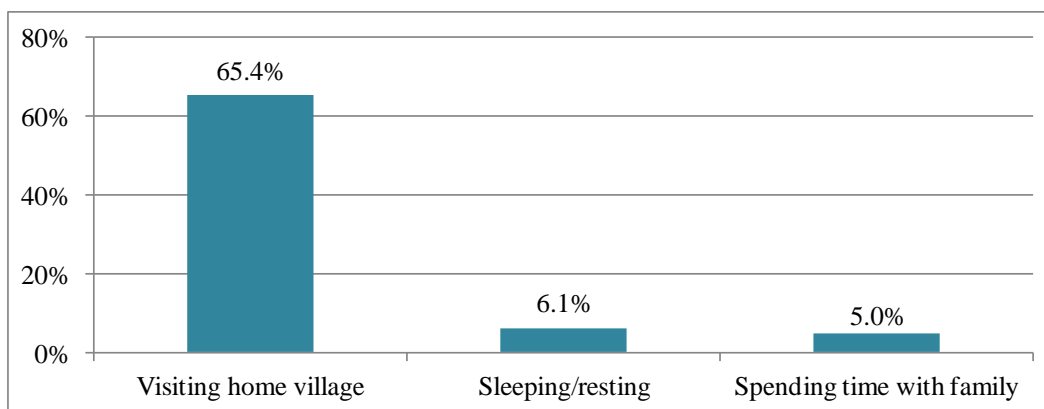


Figure 49: The most common activities that are pursued during holidays/larger stretches of free time

The result is highly interesting in that it clearly demonstrates the strong rural-link that apparently still persists with the majority of the urban RMG workforce. This raises intriguing questions and allows for further interpretation. Does the urban workforce equal an urban citizenship? Have these rural migrants integrated into urban life? It rather seems that their desire towards their rural home indicates the opposite. Perhaps the workers feel alienated by the urban environment and hope to find opportunities back in their “native” environment. The migration to Dhaka probably also meant the separation from family members which could be a reason to prevent the ultimate “arrival” in the city. Another factor stalling urban integration might be the poverty which most RMG workers are subjected to because of low wages and poor living conditions.

2.18 Future plans

In order to increase the understanding of workers’ priorities and perceptions, the participants were asked about, first, their future plans and, second, what they wish for, not considering the current constraints of their situation.



Workers' Voice

Again the interviewees provided a wealth of answers that were coded into 14 distinct future plans. However, the mentions of 76 percent of respondents concentrated on four priorities (Figure 50):

- 1) Start an own business (25 percent)
- 2) Save money (22 percent)
- 3) Educate children (17 percent)
- 4) Build a house (12 percent)

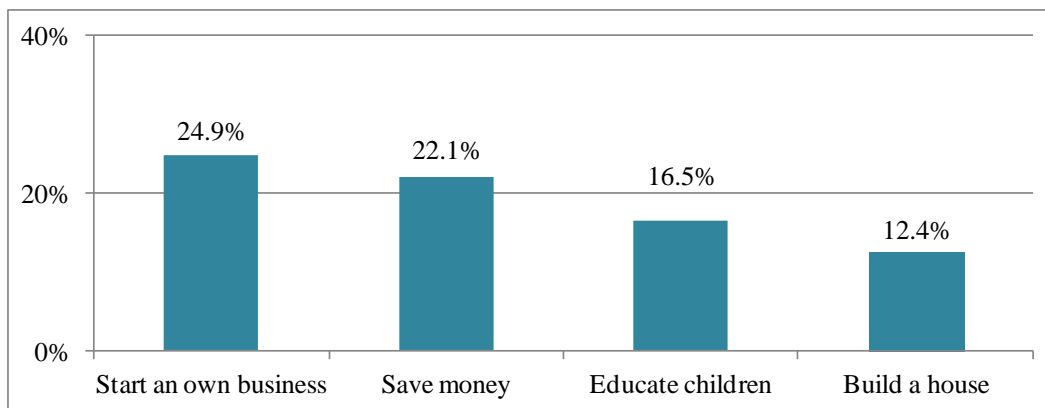


Figure 50: The most commonly expressed plans for the future

The dissection of the data reveals a distinct and telling difference of prioritization between the genders (Figure 51) Almost half of the interviewed male workers (43 percent) make “starting an own business” their first priority when thinking about the future. This is followed by 23 percent of male respondents who plan to “save money”. “Educate children” and “building a house” are the priority for only 6 percent respectively.

The interviewed female workers concentrate on the same set of priorities, but they weigh them in a distinctly different manner. For the single largest group of females, accounting for 21.8 percent, “educate children” is the most important future plan. Almost an equal amount of women workers put top priority on “saving money”. “Starting an own business” (either on their own or through father/brother) and “building house” is prioritized by around 16 percent respectively.

Workers' Voice

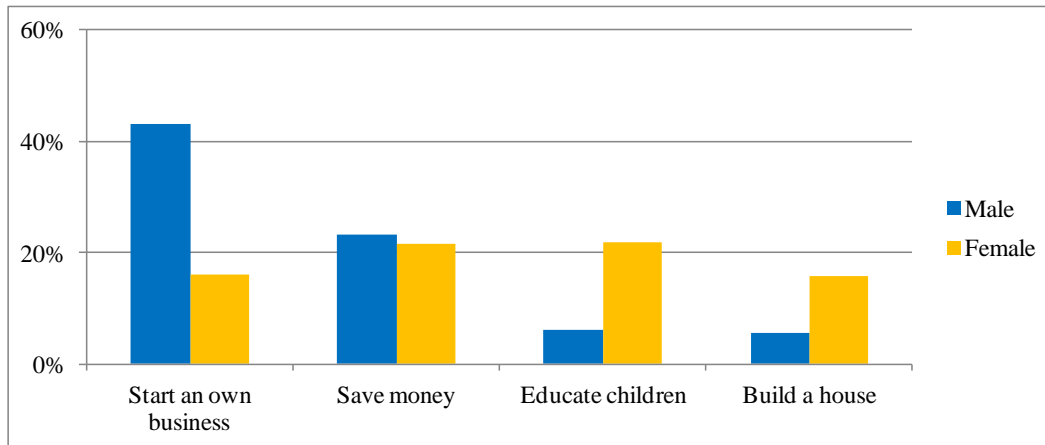


Figure 51: The most commonly expressed plans for the future according to gender

Almost equal proportions of female participants attach priority to each future plan. Some less concentration lies on “starting an own business” and “building a house” in favor of more emphasis on “child education” and “saving money”. In contrast, the majority of males in this group is fixated on “starting an own business”. The next highest share, accounting for 30 percent prioritize to “save money”. “Educate children” and “building a house” lie far behind, considered only by 8 percent and 7 percent of respondents respectively.

Starting own business

It is not surprising that the share of females planning to start an own business is lower in comparison to the share of males. Much effort has been undertaken in Bangladesh to create an environment that encourages females to become active in an entrepreneurial sense. Although improvement has taken place, society is still making it difficult for women to run a business. Many of the interviewees that plan to start their own business in future will very likely have their husbands or brothers in mind, who would act as the official legal proprietor of the business.

Interestingly, the high prevalence of this future plan among workers, both male and female, is that it seems to indicate the longing for professional independence outside of the industry they are engaged in at the moment. If this longing is specific to RMG workers is doubtful, however, it makes clear that many workers do not see themselves in the RMG industry in future.

Workers' Voice

Saving money

Money is obviously required to achieve all of the other mentioned future plans. Hence the proportion of male and female respondents in this category is almost equal.

Educate children

It seems that educating their children is a core concern of mothers rather than fathers. The proportion of women that make child education their first priority is almost thrice as high as is the case with male workers. The mother seems more likely to invest into the education of her child than the father. This finding emphasizes the importance of the RMG industry as an employer for women. Because the income flows into the education of their offspring, women contribute more significantly than men to the long-term development of the country.

Building a house

To own a house is by far more on the mind of the female worker. In fact, as a future plan “building a house” is mentioned by male workers as many times as “going overseas” and “finding a better job”. Perhaps this is a reflection of traditional gender roles, which are still strongly rooted in Bangladeshi society. The home can be considered as the manifestation of safety, which the women attaches more value to than the man. On the other hand this finding might also indicate a more social and in some way more rational, because long-term, thinking of the female. The woman worker, so it seems, earns and saves money not primarily for herself but for her family and especially for her children, who she wishes to educate in order to facilitate their social upward mobility.

In general it is important to note that none of the four prominent future plans are related to the RMG industry or the present occupation of the respondent as a RMG worker. In fact, considering all given answers, only seven respondents, accounting for less than 1 percent, mention that they strive to become an “efficient worker”. This is the only mention that can be seen as connected to the RMG industry.



Workers' Voice

2.19 Wishes

The participants were asked to express their biggest wish. Nearly 64 percent of the participants focused on 4 wishes in the following order (Figure 52):

- 1) Start an own business (31 percent)
- 2) Build a house (13 percent)
- 3) Educate children (11 percent)
- 4) Have a happy family (6 percent)

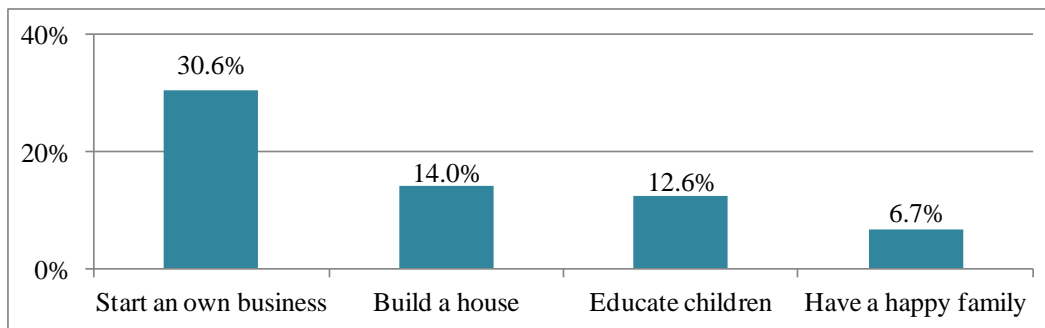


Figure 52: The most commonly expressed wishes for the future

The wishes do not differ significantly from the future plans. The proportions of male and female in the single categories are also almost the same with the exception of 'build a house' which is the aspiration of both males and females to same degree. However, the idea of 'starting an own business' is again more dominant among male workers and "educate children" is of larger importance for women (Figure 53).

Workers' Voice

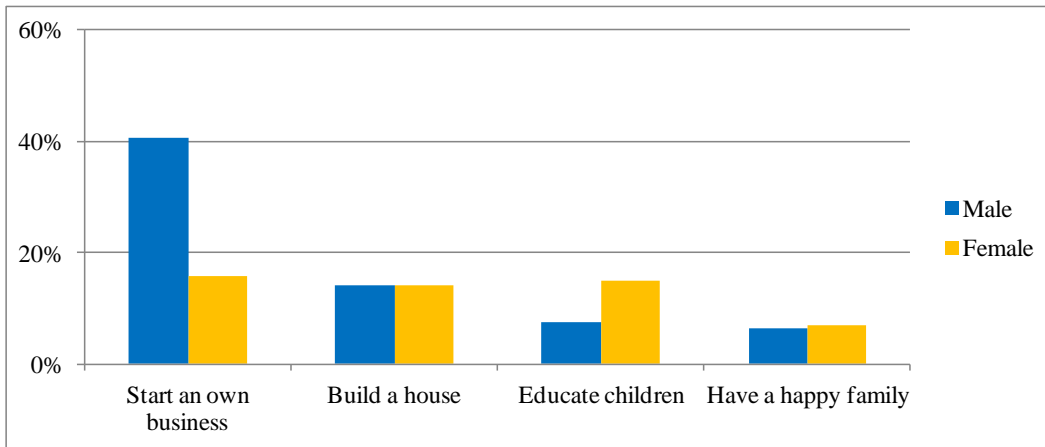


Figure 53: The most commonly expressed wishes for the future according to gender

The findings in respect to future plans and wishes demonstrate the worker's lack of identification with the industry. Virtually nothing that is of importance to the worker is related to her/his present occupation. The worker's aspiration is situated outside of the industry, and not within it. The industry management is apparently unable (or reluctant) to instill true commitment into the workers. The engagement of the worker with the RMG industry remains grounded in the sheer need for survival.

Workers' Voice

ANNEX: TABLES

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to gender

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	382	31.4
Female	833	68.6
Total	1,215	100.0

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to age

Age in years	Frequency	Percentage
<18	18	1.5
18-22	529	43.8
23-27	379	31.3
28-32	159	13.2
33-37	66	5.5
38+	58	4.8
Total	1209	100.0

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to age and gender

	< 18	18-22	23-27	28-32	33-37	> 38
Female (%)	2.0%	46.6%	27.4%	12.7%	6.1%	5.2%
Male (%)	.3%	37.5%	40.2%	14.1%	4.0%	4.0%

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to marital status

	Frequency	Percentage
Married	704	57.9
Single	487	40.1
Divorced	13	1.1
Widowed	11	0.9
Total	1,215	100.0



Workers' Voice

Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to marital status and gender

	Married	Single	Divorced	Widowed
Male	48.0%	51.7%	0.3%	0.0%
Female	62.4%	34.8%	1.4%	1.3%
Total	57.9%	40.1%	1.1%	0.9%

Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to marital status age group and gender

Age Group	Sex / Marital Status	Married	Single	Divorced	Widowed
< 18	Male	.0%	100.0%	-	-
	Female	11.8%	88.2%	-	-
	Total	11.1%	88.9%	-	-
18-22	Male	13.5%	85.8%	.7%	-
	Female	38.1%	61.6%	.3%	-
	Total	31.6%	68.1%	.4%	-
23-27	Male	56.3%	43.7%	.0%	.0%
	Female	80.7%	14.5%	2.6%	2.2%
	Total	71.0%	26.1%	1.6%	1.3%
28-32	Male	86.8%	13.2%	.0%	.0%
	Female	95.3%	1.9%	1.9%	.9%
	Total	92.5%	5.7%	1.3%	.6%
33-37	Male	93.3%	6.7%	-	-
	Female	96.1%	3.9%	-	-
	Total	95.5%	4.5%	-	-
> 38	Male	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
	Female	81.4%	2.3%	4.7%	11.6%
	Total	86.2%	1.7%	3.4%	8.6%



Workers' Voice

Table 7: Distribution of respondents according to children (yes/no)

	PERCENTAGE
Children	39.8%
No children	60.2%

Table 8: Distribution of non-single respondents according to children (yes/no)

	PERCENTAGE
Children	66.5%
No children	33.5%

Table 9: Distribution of non-single respondents according to children and gender

	MALE	FEMALE
Children	54%	71%
No children	46%	29%
TOTAL	100%	100%

Table 10: Distribution of non-single respondents according to number of children

NUMBER OF CHILDREN	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
0	244	33.5
1	258	35.4
2	140	19.2
3	46	6.3
4	28	3.8



Workers' Voice

5	12	1.6
Total	728	100.0

Table 11: Distribution of respondents according to number of children and gender

NUMBER OF CHILDREN	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
0	22.5%	19.0%	20.1%
1	16.0%	23.6%	21.2%
2	6.3%	13.9%	11.5%
3	2.4%	4.4%	3.8%
4	1.3%	2.8%	2.3%
5	0%	1.4%	1.0%
Respondents that are single	51.6%	34.8%	40.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 12: Number of children divided by gender (excluding respondents that are single)

NUMBER OF CHILDREN	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
0	46.5%	29.1%	33.5%
1	33.0%	36.3%	35.4%
2	13.0%	21.4%	19.2%
3	4.9%	6.8%	6.3%
4	2.7%	4.2%	3.8%
5	0.0%	2.2%	1.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 13: Distribution of respondents according to divisions/districts

Name of /Division/District	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Barisal division	210	17.6%
Barguna	14	1.2%
Barisal	122	10.2%
Bhola	31	2.6%



Workers' Voice

Jhalokati	4	0.3%
Patuakhali	28	2.3%
Pirojpur	11	0.9%
Chittagong division	133	11%
Bandarban	0	0.0%
Brahmanbaria	10	0.8%
Chandpur	12	1.0%
Chittagong	1	0.1%
Comilla	69	5.8%
Cox's Bazar	0	0.0%
Feni	4	0.3%
Khagrachhari	1	0.1%
Lakshmipur	1	0.1%
Noakhali	35	2.9%
Rangamati	0	0.0%
Dhaka division	540	45.3%
Dhaka	8	0.7%
Faridpur	24	2.0%
Gazipur	28	2.3%
Gopalganj	25	2.1%
Jamalpur	55	4.6%
Kishoregonj	49	4.1%
Madaripur	21	1.8%
Manikganj	5	0.4%
Munshiganj	17	1.4%
Mymensingh	122	10.2%
Narayanganj	3	0.3%
Narsingdi	17	1.4%
Netrakona	54	4.5%
Rajbari	3	0.3%



Workers' Voice

Shariatpur	19	1.6%
Sherpur	65	5.4%
Tangail	25	2.1%
Khulna division	74	6.2%
Bagerhat	10	0.8%
Chuadanga	0	0.0%
Jessore	13	1.1%
Jhenaidah	2	0.2%
Khulna	19	1.6%
Kushtia	11	0.9%
Magura	2	0.2%
Meherpur	4	0.3%
Narail	4	0.3%
Shatkhira	9	0.8%
Rangpur division	115	9.6%
Dinajpur	32	2.7%
Gaibandha	16	1.3%
Kurigram	13	1.1%
Lalmonirhat	7	0.6%
Nilphamari	0	0.0%
Panchagarh	5	0.4%
Rangpur	36	3.0%
Thakurgaon	6	0.5%
Rajshahi division	108	8.9%
Bogra	32	2.7%
Chapainababganj	0	0.0%
Joypurhat	4	0.3%
Pabna	6	0.5%
Naogaon	24	2.0%
Nature	8	0.7%



Workers' Voice

Rajshahi	14	1.2%
Sirajganj	18	1.5%
Sylhet division	14	1.2%
Habiganj	3	0.3%
Maulvibazar	1	0.1%
Sunamganj	4	0.3%
Sylhet	6	0.5%
Total	1,193	100.0%
Missing	36	
Total	1,229	

Table 14: Distribution of respondents according to level of education

EDUCATION (GRADE)	Frequency	Percentage
0	209	17.2
1-5	367	30.2
6-8	336	27.7
9-10	229	18.8
11-12	53	4.4
> 12	21	1.7
Total	1,215	100.0

Table 15: Distribution of respondents according to level of education and gender

	1-5	6-8	9-10	11-12	> 12	Total
Male	25.9%	31.7%	28.4%	9.9%	4.1%	100.0%
Female	48.1%	30.2%	17.8%	2.4%	1.5%	100.0%
Total	40.7%	30.7%	21.3%	4.9%	2.4%	100.0%



Workers' Voice

Table 16: Distribution of respondents according to reason for not attending school/school drop-out

	Frequency	Percentage
Disliked studying	84	6.9
Death of parent	92	7.6
Marriage	112	9.2
Financial problems	415	34.2
Illness of parent	31	2.6
Need to work	23	1.9
Distance of school	27	2.2
Failed exam	23	1.9
Domestic problems	304	25.0
Lack of motivation	79	6.5
Other	18	1.5
Missing answers	7	0.6
Total	1,215	100.0

Table 17: Distribution of respondents according to reason for not attending school/school drop-out and gender

	Male	Female	Total
Dislike studying	9.9%	5.5%	6.9%
Death of parent	6.8%	7.9%	7.6%
Marriage	.3%	13.3%	9.2%
Financial problem	35.1%	33.7%	34.2%
Illness of parent	1.8%	2.9%	2.6%
Need to working	3.1%	1.3%	1.9%
Distance of school	1.3%	2.6%	2.2%
Did not pass exam	3.1%	1.3%	1.9%
Domestic problem	26.2%	24.5%	25.0%
Lack of motivation	10.7%	4.6%	6.5%



Workers' Voice

Others	1.0%	1.7%	1.5%
Missing answers	.5%	.6%	.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 18: Distribution of respondents according to interest in starting/continuing education (yes/no)

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	491	40.4%
No	724	59.6%
Total	1215	100.0%

Table 19: Distribution of respondents according to interest in starting/continuing education and gender (yes/no)

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	44.5%	38.5%	40.4%
No	55.5%	61.5%	59.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 20: Distribution of respondents according to motivation to start/continue education

	Frequency	Percentage
Get a good job	94	7.7
Like to study	391	32.2
Other	6	0.5
Don't want to continue or start education	724	59.6
Total	1,215	100.0



Workers' Voice

Table 21: Distribution of respondents according to motivation to start/continue education and gender

	Male	Female	Total
To get a good job	9.2%	7.1%	7.7%
I like to study	35.3%	30.7%	32.2%
Others	.0%	.7%	.5%
Not Applicable	55.5%	61.5%	59.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 22: Distribution of respondents according to reason to join RMG industry

	Frequency	Percentage
Better facilities	361	29.7
Domestic problems	258	21.2
Disliked studying	9	0.7
Disliked village life	12	1.0
For future of children	22	1.8
Lack of education/qualification	258	21.2
To support family	205	16.9
Other	90	7.4
Total	1,215	100.0

Table 23: Distribution of respondents according to reason to join RMG industry and gender

	Male	Female	Total
Better facilities	39.8%	25.1%	29.7%
Domestic problems	15.7%	23.8%	21.2%
Disliked studying	1.3%	.5%	.7%
Disliked village life	1.3%	.8%	1.0%
For future of children	.0%	2.6%	1.8%
Lack of education/qualification	23.8%	20.0%	21.2%



Workers' Voice

To support family	9.9%	20.0%	16.9%
Others	8.1%	7.1%	7.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 24: Distribution of respondents according to designation

DESIGNATION	Frequency	Percentage
Operator	819	67.4
Helper	149	12.3
Supervisor	6	0.5
Quality controller	128	10.5
Iron man	40	3.3
Trainee	1	0.1
Cleaner	16	1.3
Checker	4	0.3
Cutter	15	1.2
Finishing	2	0.2
Other	35	2.9
Total	1,215	100.0

Table 25: Distribution of respondents according to designation and gender

DESIGNATION	Male	Female	Total
Operator	62.0%	69.9%	67.4%
Helper	3.9%	16.1%	12.3%
Supervisor	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Quality controller	17.8%	7.2%	10.5%
Iron man	8.4%	1.0%	3.3%
Trainee	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%
Cleaner	0.3%	1.8%	1.3%
Checker	0.5%	0.2%	0.3%
Cutter	2.1%	0.8%	1.2%
Finishing	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%



Workers' Voice

Other	3.9%	2.4%	2.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 26: Distribution of respondents according to years of experience in RMG Industry

YEARS IN PRESENT FACTORY	Frequency	Percentage
<2	248	20.4
2 – 5	398	32.8
5 – 10	446	36.7
>10	123	10.1
Total	1,215	100.0

Table 27: Distribution of respondents according to years of experience in RMG Industry and gender

YEARS IN PRESENT FACTORY	Male	Female	Total
< 2	15.7%	22.6%	20.4%
2 – 5	35.3%	31.6%	32.8%
5 – 10	37.2%	36.5%	36.7%
> 10	11.8%	9.4%	10.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 28: Distribution of respondents according to years in present factory

YEARS IN PRESENT FACTORY	Frequency	Percentage
<2	647	53.3
2-5	351	28.9
5-10	180	14.8
>10	37	3.0
Total	1,215	100.0

Table 29: Distribution of respondents according to years in present factory

YEARS IN PRESENT FACTORY	Male	Female	Total
< 2	50.3%	54.6%	53.3%



Workers' Voice

2-5	32.7%	27.1%	28.9%
5-10	14.1%	15.1%	14.8%
> 10	2.9%	3.1%	3.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 30: Distribution of respondents according to number of factories worked in

# OF FACTORIES	Frequency	Percentage
1	466	38.4
2	308	25.3
3	227	18.7
4	102	8.4
5	54	4.4
6	27	2.2
7	15	1.2
8	8	0.7
9	1	0.1
10	6	0.5
20	1	0.1
Total	1,215	100.0

Table 31: Distribution of respondents according to number of factories worked in and gender

# OF FACTORIES	Male	Female	Total
1	34.8%	40.0%	38.4%
2	21.2%	27.3%	25.3%
3	18.1%	19.0%	18.7%
4	13.4%	6.1%	8.4%
5	6.3%	3.6%	4.4%
6	2.4%	2.2%	2.2%
7	1.6%	1.1%	1.2%



Workers' Voice

8	1.0%	.5%	.7%
9	.3%	.0%	.1%
10	1.0%	.2%	.5%
20	.0%	.1%	.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 32: Distribution of respondents according to years in the same factory and wage

	1-2999	3000-4999	5000-6999	7000-8999	9000-15000	Total
< 2 years	1.3%	83.5%	9.6%	3.9%	1.7%	100%
2-5 years	1.7%	78.0%	17.1%	2.3%	.9%	100%
5-10 years	2.8%	77.4%	13.6%	5.6%	.6%	100%
> 10 years	5.4%	62.2%	18.9%	8.1%	5.4%	100%

Table 33: Distribution of respondents according to years in the industry and number of factories worked in

	< 2 years	2-5 years	5-10 years	> 10 years
1	69%	40%	24%	24%
2	23%	33%	24%	12%
3	5%	18%	27%	16%
4	2%	5%	13%	15%
5	2%	2%	6%	11%
6	0%	1%	2%	11%
7	0%	1%	2%	2%
8	0%	0%	0%	5%
9	0%	0%	0%	1%
10	0%	0%	1%	2%
20	0%	0%	0	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 34: Distribution of respondents according to wage

WAGE (BDT)	Frequency	Percentage
------------	-----------	------------



Workers' Voice

1-2999	21	1.8
3000-4999	964	80.3
5000-6999	152	12.7
7000-8999	46	3.8
9000-15000	17	1.4
Total	1200	100.0

Table 35: Distribution of respondents according to wage and gender

WAGE (BDT)	Male	Female	Total
1-2999	9.5%	90.5%	100.0%
3000-4999	24.0%	76.0%	100.0%
5000-6999	57.2%	42.8%	100.0%
7000-8999	84.8%	15.2%	100.0%
9000-15000	88.2%	11.8%	100.0%
Total	31.4%	68.6%	100.0%

Table 36: Distribution of respondents according to years in the industry and wage

	1-2999	3000-4999	5000-6999	7000-8999	9000-15000	Total
< 2 years	2.5%	90.6%	4.9%	1.6%	.4%	100%
2-5 years	1.8%	80.2%	14.5%	2.5%	1.0%	100%
5-10 years	1.1%	79.8%	13.2%	4.5%	1.4%	100%
> 10 years	2.5%	62.3%	20.5%	9.8%	4.9%	100%

Table 37: Distribution of respondents according to wage and number of factories worked in

	0-2999	3000-4999	5000-6999	7000-8999	9000-15000	Total
1	3.2%	84.5%	9.0%	1.9%	1.3%	100%
2	.3%	84.7%	11.4%	2.3%	1.3%	100%
3	.9%	80.5%	10.6%	5.8%	2.2%	100%



Workers' Voice

4	1.0%	61.8%	21.6%	9.8%	5.9%	100%
5	3.7%	50.0%	33.3%	7.4%	5.6%	100%
> 5	.0%	74.1%	20.7%	5.2%	.0%	100%

Table 38: Distribution of respondents according to wage and education

WAGE LEVEL (BDT)	Schooling (Grade)						Total
	0	1-5	6-8	9-10	11-12	12+	
1-2999	47.6%	23.8%	23.8%	4.8%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
3000-4999	18.7%	32.3%	26.9%	16.6%	4.0%	1.6%	100.0%
5000-6999	9.2%	22.4%	34.9%	25.7%	4.6%	3.3%	100.0%
7000-8999	4.3%	17.4%	28.3%	47.8%	2.2%	.0%	100.0%
9000-15000	5.9%	23.5%	17.6%	23.5%	29.4%	.0%	100.0%
Total	17.2%	30.2%	27.7%	18.8%	4.4%	1.7%	100.0%

Table 39: Distribution of respondents according to number of working days per week

DAYS PER WEEK	Frequency	Percentage
6	1051	86.51
7	164	13.49
Total	1215	100.0

Table 40: Distribution of respondents according to number of working days per week and gender

DAYS PER WEEK	Male	Female	Total
6	83.5%	87.9%	86.5%
7	16.2%	12.1%	13.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



Workers' Voice

Table 41: Distribution of respondents according to number of working hours per day

HOURS PER DAY	Frequency	Percentage
10.00	477	39.3
11.00	253	20.8
12.00	239	19.7
13.00	101	8.3
8.00	96	7.9
14.00	31	2.6
15.00	12	1.0
9.00	4	.3
18.00	2	.2
Total	1215	100.0

Table 42: Distribution of respondents according to number of working hours per day and gender

HOURS PER DAY	Male	Female	Total
8.00	9.7%	7.1%	7.9%
9.00	.5%	.2%	.3%
10.00	35.9%	40.8%	39.3%
11.00	20.2%	21.1%	20.8%
12.00	20.4%	19.3%	19.7%
13.00	9.7%	7.7%	8.3%
14.00	2.4%	2.6%	2.6%
15.00	1.3%	.8%	1.0%
18.00	.0%	.2%	.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 43: Distribution of respondents according to suffering physical ailments (yes/no)

	Frequency	Percentage



Workers' Voice

Yes	960	70.0%
No	240	20.0%
Total	1200	100.0%

Table 44: Distribution of respondents according to suffering physical ailments and gender (yes/no)

	Yes	No	Total
Male	75.7%	24.3%	100.0%
Female	82.0%	18.0%	100.0%
Total	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%

Table 45: Distribution of respondents according to sick leave granted in present factory (yes/no)

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	804	66.2
No	411	33.8
Total	1,215	100.0

Table 46: Distribution of respondents according to sick leave granted in present factory and gender (yes/no)

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	73.0%	63.0%	66.2%
No	27.0%	37.0%	33.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 47: Distribution of respondents according management's response to workers' illness

	Frequency	Percentage
Arrange medical treatment	27	2.2
Force to keep working	60	4.9
Indifference	122	10.0
Sympathy	228	18.8
Annoyance and misbehavior	339	27.9



Workers' Voice

Give punishment	7	0.6
Suggest to go to doctor	53	4.4
Suggest to take leave/ approve leave	281	23.1
Suggest to take rest	40	3.3
Suggest to work slowly	15	1.2
Deduct from salary if unable to work	17	1.4
Other	6	0.5
Not Applicable	20	1.6
Total	1,215	100.0

Table 48: Distribution of respondents according management's response to workers' illness and gender

	Male	Female	Total
Arrange medical treatment	1.8%	2.4%	2.2%
Force to keep working	6.0%	4.4%	4.9%
Indifference	10.5%	9.8%	10.0%
Sympathy	19.4%	18.5%	18.8%
Get annoyed and misbehave	19.6%	31.7%	27.9%
Give punishment	.0%	.8%	.6%
Suggest to go to doctor	4.7%	4.2%	4.4%
Suggest to take leave/ approve leave	28.0%	20.9%	23.1%
Suggest to take rest	3.7%	3.1%	3.3%
Suggest to work solely	1.3%	1.2%	1.2%
Deduct from salary if unable to work	2.9%	.7%	1.4%
Others	.5%	.5%	.5%
Not Applicable	1.6%	1.7%	1.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 49: Distribution of respondents according to experience of abuse (yes/no)

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	422	34.7



Workers' Voice

No	793	65.3
----	-----	------

Table 50: Distribution of respondents according to experience of abuse and gender (yes/no)

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	32.5%	35.8%	34.7%
No	67.5%	64.2%	65.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 51: Distribution of respondents according to type of experienced abuse

	Frequency	Percentage
Verbal abuse	355	81.6
Attempted physical abuse	18	4.1
Salary deduction	7	1.6
Bad behavior	54	12.4
Others	1	.2
Total	435	100.0

Table 52: Distribution of respondents according to type of experienced abuse

	Male	Female	Total
Verbal abuse	78.0%	83.2%	81.6%
Attempted physical abuse	3.0%	4.6%	4.1%
Salary deduction	1.5%	1.7%	1.6%
Bad behavior	16.7%	10.6%	12.4%
Others	0.8%	0.0%	.2%
Total	100%	100%	100.0%

Table 53: Distribution of respondents according to frequency of experienced abuse

Frequency of abuse	Frequency	Percentage
Only once	76	17.5
Sometimes	189	43.4



Workers' Voice

Often	77	17.7
Very often	93	21.4
Total	435	100.0

Table 54: Distribution of respondents according to frequency of experienced abuse and gender

Frequency of abuse	Male	Female	Total
Only once	19.7%	16.5%	17.5%
Sometimes	54.5%	38.6%	43.4%
Often	14.4%	19.1%	17.7%
Very often	11.4%	25.7%	21.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 55: Distribution of respondents according to experienced abuse and education

	Schooling (grade)					Total
	1-5	6-8	9-10	11-12	12+	1-5
Yes	42.4%	33.4%	18.2%	3.6%	2.4%	100.0%
No	33.5%	33.4%	25.0%	6.1%	1.9%	100.0%
Total	36.5%	33.4%	22.8%	5.3%	2.1%	100.0%

Table 56: Distribution of respondents according to experienced abuse and age

	age group						Total
	<18	18-22	23-27	28-32	33-37	38+	
Yes	44.4%	34.2%	31.4%	37.7%	45.5%	39.7%	34.8%
No	55.6%	65.8%	68.6%	62.3%	54.5%	60.3%	65.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



Workers' Voice

Table 57: Distribution of respondents according to experienced abuse and experience in the industry

	Number of years in Garments Industry				
	<2	2 - 5	5 - 10	>10	Total
Yes	16.1%	28.4%	44.3%	11.1%	100.0%
No	22.7%	35.1%	32.7%	9.6%	100.0%
Total	20.4%	32.8%	36.7%	10.1%	100.0%

Table 58: Distribution of respondents according to frequency of experienced abuse and age

Frequency of abuse	Age group						
	<18	18-22	23-27	28-32	33-37	38+	Total
Only once	.0%	6.0%	7.1%	6.9%	9.1%	.0%	6.3%
Sometimes	22.2%	14.4%	14.5%	16.4%	24.2%	19.0%	15.6%
Often	11.1%	6.6%	6.1%	6.3%	4.5%	6.9%	6.4%
Very often	11.1%	7.9%	5.5%	8.8%	7.6%	15.5%	7.7%
Not Applicable	55.6%	65.0%	66.8%	61.6%	54.5%	58.6%	64.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 59: Distribution of respondents according to frequency of experienced abuse and education

Frequency of abuse	Schooling (grade)						
	0	1-5	6-8	9-10	11-12	12+	Total
Only once	14.5%	26.3%	35.5%	18.4%	5.3%	.0%	100.0%
Sometimes	16.9%	35.4%	22.8%	17.5%	4.2%	3.2%	100.0%
Often	20.8%	36.4%	28.6%	10.4%	1.3%	2.6%	100.0%
Very often	33.3%	34.4%	24.7%	6.5%	1.1%	.0%	100.0%
Total	20.7%	33.8%	26.4%	14.0%	3.2%	1.8%	100.0%



Workers' Voice

Table 60: Distribution of respondents according to frequency of experienced abuse and experience in the industry

Frequency of abuse	Years in Garments Industry				Total
	<2	2 - 5	5 - 10	>10	
Only once	4.0%	7.3%	5.6%	9.8%	6.3%
Sometimes	12.9%	15.6%	16.8%	16.3%	15.6%
Often	5.2%	5.0%	7.8%	7.3%	6.3%
Very often	6.0%	3.5%	12.1%	8.1%	7.7%
Not Applicable	71.8%	68.6%	57.6%	58.5%	64.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 61: Distribution of respondents according to response to experienced abuse

	Frequency	Percentage
Do nothing	312	71.7
Complain to administration	41	9.4
Attempt to resign	18	4.1
Other	9	2.1
Protest	55	12.6
Total	435	100.0

Table 62: Distribution of respondents according to response to experienced abuse and gender

	Do nothing	Complain	Attempt to resign	Others	Protest	Total
Male	67.2%	10.9%	5.0%	3.4%	13.4%	100.0%
Female	68.9%	9.8%	4.5%	2.1%	14.7%	100.0%
Total	68.4%	10.1%	4.7%	2.5%	14.3%	100.0%

Table 63: Distribution of respondents according to response to experienced abuse and age

Age group	Do nothing	Complain	Attempt to resign	Others	Protest	Total
-----------	------------	----------	-------------------	--------	---------	-------



Workers' Voice

<18	75.0%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%	100.0%
18-22	71.9%	8.1%	3.2%	2.2%	14.6%	100.0%
23-27	69.0%	11.9%	4.8%	1.6%	12.7%	100.0%
28-32	77.0%	13.1%	1.6%	3.3%	4.9%	100.0%
33-37	63.3%	6.7%	3.3%	3.3%	23.3%	100.0%
38+	83.3%	4.2%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	71.9%	9.4%	4.1%	2.1%	12.4%	100.0%

Table 64: Distribution of respondents according to response to experienced abuse and education

School Grade	Do nothing	Complain to administrator	Attempt to resign	Others	Protest	Not Applicable	Total
0	34.4%	3.8%	.5%	.5%	3.8%	56.9%	100.0%
1-5	29.2%	3.3%	1.6%	.3%	5.7%	59.9%	100.0%
6-8	21.7%	3.3%	2.7%	.9%	5.7%	65.8%	100.0%
9-10	19.2%	3.9%	.4%	1.3%	1.7%	73.4%	100.0%
11-12	20.8%	1.9%	1.9%	.0%	1.9%	73.6%	100.0%
12+	23.8%	.0%	.0%	4.8%	9.5%	61.9%	100.0%
Total	25.7%	3.4%	1.5%	.7%	4.5%	64.2%	100.0%

Table 65: Distribution of respondents according to response to experienced abuse and experience in the industry

Years	Do nothing	Complain	Attempt to resign	Other	Protest	Total
< 2	75.7%	7.1%	1.4%	2.9%	12.9%	100.00
2-5	70.4%	14.4%	0.8%	1.6%	12.8%	100.00
5-10	72.5%	7.9%	6.9%	1.6%	11.1%	100.00
> 10	66.7%	5.9%	5.9%	3.9%	17.6%	100.00
Total	71.7%	9.4%	4.1%	2.1%	12.6%	100.00



Workers' Voice

Table 66: Distribution of respondents according to positive view of own work place

	Frequency	Percentage
Factory environment	334	27.5
Clean toilet	32	2.6
Pure Drinking water	33	2.7
Co-workers	70	5.8
Clean floor	22	1.8
Good behavior of mgt. / supervisor	126	10.4
Proper dining space	24	2.0
Timely salary/ OT	290	23.9
Proper OT payment	8	0.7
Bonus payment	7	0.6
Medical treatment facility	30	2.5
Listening to music while working	8	0.7
Child care center	13	1.1
Leave facility	41	3.4
Good Tiffin	6	0.5
Good canteen	17	1.4
Good rules & regulations	19	1.6
Education facility	1	0.1
Less work pressure	23	1.9
Less/ no OT hour	1	0.1
Other	3	0.2
Transport facility	3	0.2
No Answer / Nothing	104	8.6
Total	1,215	100.0

Table 67: Distribution of respondents according to positive view of own work place and gender

	Male	Female	Total
--	------	--------	-------



Workers' Voice

Factory environment	29.6%	26.5%	27.5%
Clean toilet	2.4%	2.8%	2.6%
Pure Drinking water	1.8%	3.1%	2.7%
Co-workers	6.3%	5.5%	5.8%
Clean floor	2.4%	1.6%	1.8%
Good behavior of management/ supervisor	9.9%	10.6%	10.4%
Proper dining space	1.3%	2.3%	2.0%
Timely salary/ OT	24.1%	23.8%	23.9%
Proper OT payment	.5%	.7%	.7%
Bonus payment	.3%	.7%	.6%
Medical treatment facility	2.9%	2.3%	2.5%
Listening to music while working	.0%	1.0%	.7%
Child care center	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%
Leave facility	5.2%	2.5%	3.4%
Good Tiffin	1.0%	.2%	.5%
Good canteen	1.0%	1.6%	1.4%
Good rules & regulations	2.9%	1.0%	1.6%
Education facility	.0%	.1%	.1%
Less work pressure	.5%	2.5%	1.9%
Less/ no OT hour	.3%	.0%	.1%
Others	.0%	.4%	.2%
Transport facility	.0%	.4%	.2%
No Answer / Nothing	6.5%	9.5%	8.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 68: Distribution of respondents according to negative view of own work place

	Frequency	Percentage
Narrow staircase	13	1.1



Workers' Voice

Dirty toilet	79	6.5
Co-workers	10	0.8
Dirty floor	10	0.8
Lack of pure drinking water	56	4.6
Improper leave facility	157	12.9
Bad behavior of mgt. / supervisor	323	26.6
Improper dining space	26	2.1
Delayed salary/ OT payment	119	9.8
Improper/ no OT payment	16	1.3
Less/ no OT hour	17	1.4
Excessive OT hour	36	3.0
Insufficient medical treatment facility	10	0.8
Working in weekly holiday	10	0.8
No child care center	22	1.8
No/ sufficient canteen	23	1.9
Comparatively low salary	10	0.8
Unjustified salary deduction	18	1.5
Unjustified termination of workers	24	2.0
Other	23	1.9
Narrow space	5	0.4
High temperature inside the factory	6	0.5
Bad environment	15	1.2
No dormitory facility	1	0.1
No bonus payment	7	0.6
Excessive work pressure	53	4.4
No Answer / Nothing	126	10.4
Total	1,215	100.0



Workers' Voice

Table 69: Distribution of respondents according to negative view of own work place and gender

	Male	Female	Total
Narrow staircase	1.3%	1.0%	1.1%
Dirty toilet	7.3%	6.1%	6.5%
Co-workers	1.3%	.6%	.8%
Dirty floor	1.0%	.7%	.8%
Lack of pure drinking water	4.5%	4.7%	4.6%
Improper leave facility	15.2%	11.9%	12.9%
Bad behavior from management/ supervisor	24.3%	27.6%	26.6%
Improper dining space	1.0%	2.6%	2.1%
Delayed salary/ OT payment	11.5%	9.0%	9.8%
Improper/ no OT payment	.0%	1.9%	1.3%
Less/ no OT hour	1.6%	1.3%	1.4%
Excessive OT hour	3.7%	2.6%	3.0%
Insufficient medical treatment facility	1.6%	.5%	.8%
Working in weekly holiday	.8%	.8%	.8%
No child care center	1.6%	1.9%	1.8%
No/ sufficient canteen	.8%	2.4%	1.9%
Comparatively low salary	1.0%	.7%	.8%
Unjustified salary deduction	1.6%	1.4%	1.5%
Termination of workers for no good reason	3.7%	1.2%	2.0%
Others	1.8%	1.9%	1.9%
Narrow space	.3%	.5%	.4%
High temperature inside the factory	.8%	.4%	.5%
Bad environment	1.6%	1.1%	1.2%
No dormitory facility	.3%	.0%	.1%
No bonus payment	.8%	.5%	.6%



Workers' Voice

Excessive work pressure	3.7%	4.7%	4.4%
No Answer / Nothing	7.1%	11.9%	10.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 70: Distribution of respondents according to change desired in own workplace

	Frequency	Percentage
Good behavior of management and supervisors	166	13.7
Good factory environment	99	8.1
Spacious factory	6	0.5
Proper dining facility	28	2.3
Cleanliness of factory	3	0.2
Proper child care center	11	0.9
Reduce work load	32	2.6
Increase production	1	0.1
Create utility	5	0.4
Eliminate gender discrimination	5	0.4
Eliminate physical/ verbal abuse	87	7.2
Provide dormitory facility	7	0.6
Proper/ sufficient leave facility	53	4.4
Pure drinking water facility	25	2.1
Ensure job security	8	0.7
Increase salary	74	6.1
Ensure timely payment of salary/ OT	150	12.3
Ensure proper OT payment	33	2.7
Ensure first aid training facility	6	0.5
Sufficient medical treatment facility	18	1.5
Others	43	3.5
Ensure proper bonus payment	5	0.4
No answer	350	28.8



Workers' Voice

Total	1,215	100.0
-------	-------	-------

Table 71: Distribution of respondents according to change desired in own workplace and gender

	Male	Female	Total
Management's good behavior	13.1%	13.9%	13.7%
Good factory environment	8.6%	7.9%	8.1%
Specious factory	.3%	.6%	.5%
Proper dining facility	1.3%	2.8%	2.3%
Cleanliness of factory	.0%	.4%	.2%
Proper child care center	.0%	1.3%	.9%
Reduce work load	3.4%	2.3%	2.6%
Increase production	.0%	.1%	.1%
Create utility	.3%	.5%	.4%
Eliminate gender discrimination	1.0%	.1%	.4%
Eliminate physical/ verbal abuse	4.2%	8.5%	7.2%
Provide dormitory facility	1.0%	.4%	.6%
Proper/ sufficient leave facility	3.7%	4.7%	4.4%
Pure drinking water facility	1.8%	2.2%	2.1%
Ensure job security	.8%	.6%	.7%
Increase salary	5.5%	6.4%	6.1%
Ensure timely payment of salary/ OT	13.9%	11.6%	12.3%
Ensure proper OT payment	2.1%	3.0%	2.7%
Ensure first aid training facility	.3%	.6%	.5%
Sufficient medical treatment facility	1.3%	1.6%	1.5%
Others	3.1%	3.7%	3.5%
Ensure proper bonus payment	1.0%	.1%	.4%
No answer	33.2%	26.8%	28.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



Workers' Voice

Table 72: Distribution of respondents according to general opinion of work in industry

	Frequency	Percentage
Enjoy working	205	16.9
Indifferent	847	69.7
Do not enjoy working	163	13.4
Total	1,215	100.0

Table 73: Distribution of respondents according to general opinion of work in industry and gender

	Male	Female	Total
Enjoy working	17.3%	16.7%	16.9%
Indifferent	69.4%	69.9%	69.7%
Do not enjoy working	13.4%	13.4%	13.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 74: Distribution of respondents according to living situation

	Frequency	Percentage
Alone	42	3.5
With family	838	69.1
Friend	170	14.0
Colleague	135	11.1
Other	27	2.2
Total	1,212	100.0

Table 75: Distribution of respondents according to living situation and gender

	Male	Female	Total
Alone	3%	4%	3.5%
With family	56%	75%	69.1%
Friend	26%	9%	14.0%
Colleague	14%	10%	11.1%



Workers' Voice

Other	1%	3%	2.2%
Total	3%	4%	100.0%

Table 76: Distribution of respondents according monthly cost of accommodation

Cost in BDT	Frequency	Percentage
Below 1,000	105	9.0
1,000-1,999	333	28.6
2,000-2,999	469	40.3
3,000-3,999	175	15.0
4,000- 4,999	40	3.4
5,000-5,999	15	1.3
6,000 and above	27	2.3
Valid total	1164	100.0
Missing	51	
Total	1215	

Table 77: Distribution of respondents according monthly cost of accommodation and gender

Cost in BDT	Male	Female	Total
Below 1000	53.3%	46.7%	100.0%
1000-1999	28.2%	71.8%	100.0%
2000-2999	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
3000-3999	29.7%	70.3%	100.0%
4000-4999	42.5%	57.5%	100.0%
5000-5999	26.7%	73.3%	100.0%
6000 & above	40.7%	59.3%	100.0%
Total	31.6%	68.4%	100.0%

Table 78: Distribution of respondents according to number of co-residents

# OF PERSON SHARING ROOM	Frequency	Percentage
--------------------------	-----------	------------



Workers' Voice

1	47	3.9
2	349	29.3
3	342	28.7
4	261	21.9
5	113	9.5
6	44	3.7
7	22	1.8
8	8	.7
9	7	.6
Total	1,192	100.0

Table 79: Distribution of respondents according to number of co-residents

NUMBER OF CO-RESIDENTS	Male	Female	Total
1	3.2%	4.2%	3.9%
2	29.6%	29.1%	29.3%
3	27.8%	29.1%	28.7%
4	23.8%	21.0%	21.9%
5	8.5%	10.0%	9.5%
6	3.7%	3.7%	3.7%
7	1.9%	1.8%	1.8%
8	.8%	.6%	.7%
9	.8%	.5%	.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 80: Distribution of respondents according to travel time to factory

TRAVEL TIME (MINUTE)	Frequency	Percentage
<15	759	62.7
15-30	178	14.7
30-45	251	20.7
>45	23	1.9
Total	1,211	100.0



Workers' Voice

Table 81: Distribution of respondents according to travel time to factory and gender

TRAVEL TIME (MINUTE)	Male	Female	Total
0	.3%	.6%	.5%
<15	66.5%	58.7%	61.2%
15-30	18.8%	12.8%	14.7%
30-45	10.7%	25.3%	20.7%
>45	1.0%	2.3%	1.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 82: Distribution of respondents according to travel cost to factory

COST OF TRAVEL (BDT)	Frequency	Percentage
No cost	1,061	88.1
<20	61	5.1
20-40	78	6.5
>40	4	0.3
Total	1,204	100.0

Table 83: Distribution of respondents according to travel cost to factory and gender

COST OF TRAVEL (BDT)	Male	Female	Total
no cost	86.3%	89.0%	88.1%
<20	7.9%	3.3%	4.7%
20-40	5.3%	7.0%	6.5%
>40	.0%	.4%	.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 84: Distribution of respondents according to activities after work

	Frequency	Percentage
Household work	426	35.1
Shopping	3	0.2
Spend time with family	8	0.7



Workers' Voice

Take a walk	24	2.0
Watch TV	8	0.7
Go to cinema	5	0.4
Hang out with friends	10	0.8
Take rest/ sleep	318	26.2
Gossiping	94	7.7
Listen to music	12	1.0
Praying	1	0.1
Handicraft work	5	0.4
Travel	3	0.2
Other	3	0.2
Studying	4	0.3
Invalid Answer	291	24.0
Total	1,215	100.0

Table 85: Distribution of respondents according to activities after work and gender

	Male	Female	Total
Household work	14.7%	44.4%	35.1%
Shopping	.5%	.1%	.2%
Spend time with family	.5%	.7%	.7%
Take a walk	3.9%	1.1%	2.0%
Watch TV	1.8%	.1%	.7%
Go to cinema	.3%	.5%	.4%
Hangout with friends	1.0%	.7%	.8%
Take rest/ sleep	37.2%	21.1%	26.2%
Gossiping	12.3%	5.6%	7.7%
Listen to music	1.6%	.7%	1.0%
Praying	.3%	.0%	.1%
Handicraft work	.8%	.2%	.4%
Travel	.8%	.0%	.2%



Workers' Voice

Others	.0%	.4%	.2%
Studying	.5%	.2%	.3%
Invalid Answer	23.8%	24.0%	24.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 86: Distribution of respondents according to recreational activities after work

	Frequency	Percentage
Household work	500	41.2
Shopping	23	1.9
Spend time with family	69	5.7
Take a walk	8	0.7
Watch TV	158	13.0
Go to cinema	9	0.7
Meet/ visit/ talk to relatives	26	2.1
Hang out with friends	65	5.3
Take rest/ sleep	150	12.3
Gossiping	28	2.3
Listen to music	14	1.2
Praying	12	1.0
Wandering around	13	1.1
Handicraft work	13	1.1
Play indoor games	5	0.4
Play outdoor games	5	0.4
Travel	27	2.2
Tailoring	23	1.9
Visit neighbors	7	0.6
Go to village	26	2.1
Other	13	1.1
Studying	8	0.7
No answer	13	1.1



Workers' Voice

Total	1,215	100.0
-------	-------	-------

Table 87: Distribution of respondents according to recreational activities after work and gender

	Male	Female	Total
Household work	25.4%	48.4%	41.2%
Shopping	3.4%	1.2%	1.9%
Spend time with family	5.8%	5.6%	5.7%
Take a walk	1.3%	.4%	.7%
Watch TV	14.9%	12.1%	13.0%
Go to cinema	1.8%	.2%	.7%
Meet/ visit/ talk to relatives	2.6%	1.9%	2.1%
Hang out with friends	12.8%	1.9%	5.3%
Take rest/ sleep	8.1%	14.3%	12.3%
Gossiping	2.1%	2.4%	2.3%
Listen to music	1.8%	.8%	1.2%
Praying	1.8%	.6%	1.0%
Wandering around	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%
Handicraft work	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%
Play indoor games	1.3%	.0%	.4%
Play outdoor games	1.3%	.0%	.4%
Travel	3.9%	1.4%	2.2%
Tailoring	1.3%	2.2%	1.9%
Visit neighbors	1.0%	.4%	.6%
Go to village	2.9%	1.8%	2.1%
Others	2.1%	.6%	1.1%
Studying	1.0%	.5%	.7%
No answer	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



Workers' Voice

Table 88: Distribution of respondents according to recreational activities pursued when more time available/holiday

	Frequency	Percentage
Household work	40	3.3
Shopping	1	0.1
Spend time with family	60	4.9
Watch TV	6	0.5
Go to cinema	2	0.2
Meet/ visit/ talk to relatives	48	4.0
Hang out with friends	11	0.9
Take rest/ sleep	73	6.0
Listen to music	1	0.1
Praying	1	0.1
Wandering around	11	0.9
Handicraft work	20	1.6
Play indoor games	2	0.2
Play outdoor games	1	0.1
Travel	52	4.3
Tailoring	16	1.3
Visit neighbors	11	0.9
Go to village	782	64.4
Studying	11	0.9
Cycling	5	0.4
Look for new job	5	0.4
Look for extra income	25	2.1
Other	12	1.0
Invalid answer	19	1.6
Total	1,215	100.0



Workers' Voice

Table 89: Distribution of respondents according to recreational activities pursued when more time/holiday available and gender

	Male	Female	Total
Household work	3.1%	3.4%	3.3%
Shopping	.0%	.1%	.1%
Spend time with family	4.2%	5.3%	4.9%
Watch TV	.0%	.7%	.5%
Go to cinema	.5%	.0%	.2%
Meet/ visit/ talk to relatives	1.6%	5.0%	4.0%
Hang out with friends	2.4%	.2%	.9%
Take rest/ sleep	6.3%	5.9%	6.0%
Listen to music	.0%	.1%	.1%
Praying	.0%	.1%	.1%
Wandering around	.0%	1.3%	.9%
Handicraft work	.3%	2.3%	1.6%
Play indoor games	.3%	.1%	.2%
Play outdoor games	.3%	.0%	.1%
Travel	5.5%	3.7%	4.3%
Tailoring	1.0%	1.4%	1.3%
Visit neighbors	1.6%	.6%	.9%
Go to village	64.1%	64.5%	64.4%
Studying	1.3%	.7%	.9%
Cycling	.8%	.2%	.4%
Look for new job	.3%	.5%	.4%
Look for extra income	4.5%	1.0%	2.1%
Others	.8%	1.1%	1.0%
Invalid answer	1.3%	1.7%	1.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



Workers' Voice

Table 90: Distribution of respondents according to future plan

	Frequency	Percentage
Build own house	139	11.4
Start own business	280	23.0
Educate children	186	15.3
Go overseas	29	2.4
Send husband/ child overseas	10	0.8
Save money	249	20.5
To be housewife	23	1.9
To be an efficient worker	7	0.6
To be rich	3	0.2
To have good husband	29	2.4
To lead better life	29	2.4
To get better job	33	2.7
To have a happy family	24	2.0
Other	32	2.6
Open a tailor shop	52	4.3
No / Invalid Answer	90	7.4
Total	1,215	100.0

Table 91: Distribution of respondents according to future plan and gender

	Male	Female	Total
Build own house	5.5%	14.2%	11.4%
Start own business	41.9%	14.4%	23.0%
Educate children	5.8%	19.7%	15.3%
Go overseas	5.8%	.8%	2.4%
Send husband/ child overseas	.0%	1.2%	.8%
Save money	22.5%	19.6%	20.5%
To be housewife	.5%	2.5%	1.9%
To be an efficient worker	.8%	.5%	.6%
To be rich	.3%	.2%	.2%



Workers' Voice

To have good husband	1.0%	3.0%	2.4%
To lead better life	1.6%	2.8%	2.4%
To get better job	5.5%	1.4%	2.7%
To have a happy family	.5%	2.6%	2.0%
Others	2.4%	2.8%	2.6%
Open a tailor shop	3.1%	4.8%	4.3%
No / Invalid Answer	2.9%	9.5%	7.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 92: Distribution of respondents according to wish

	Frequency	Percentage
Educate children	137	11.3
To have savings	56	4.6
Work independently	122	10.0
To be housewife	10	0.8
To be a doctor	7	0.6
To be a good tailor	81	6.7
Start own business	212	17.4
To be an efficient worker	29	2.4
To have a happy family	73	6.0
Build own house	153	12.6
Send husband/ child overseas	7	0.6
To lead better life	69	5.7
Other	104	8.6
To have good husband	11	0.9
Go overseas	19	1.6
No answer	125	10.3
Total	1,215	100.0



Workers' Voice

Table 93: Distribution of respondents according to wish and gender

	Male	Female	Total
Educate children	6.8%	13.3%	11.3%
To have savings	4.5%	4.7%	4.6%
Work independently	12.3%	9.0%	10.0%
To be housewife	0.0%	1.2%	0.8%
To be a doctor	0.0%	0.8%	0.6%
To be a good tailor	2.4%	8.6%	6.7%
Start own business	36.9%	14.2%	17.4%
To be an efficient worker	1.8%	2.6%	2.4%
To have a happy family	5.8%	6.1%	6.0%
Build own house	12.8%	12.5%	12.6%
Send husband/child overseas	0.5%	0.6%	0.6%
To lead better life	5.5%	5.8%	5.7%
Others	9.2%	8.3%	8.6%
To have good husband	0.3%	1.2%	0.9%
Go overseas	4.2%	0.4%	1.6%
No answer	9.4%	10.7%	10.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

